

Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS)

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Centre/Organisation	Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply
Programme(s)	Level 2 Introductory Certificate in Purchasing and Supply
Awarding Body(s)	CIPS
Learner numbers	500/600 in 2007/8
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Background

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) is a small awarding body with candidates spread across both public and private centres in the UK and worldwide. CIPS offers a wide range of qualifications, primarily at Level 3 and above. However, CIPS wanted to introduce a Level 2 qualification and decided that they would deliver the examination associated with the qualification via an e-test.

How they started

One reason for deciding to use e-testing was the expectation that a number of the candidates for the qualification would be based outside the UK and they considered that it would be both flexible and more cost effective to use an e-testing system from the beginning of the new qualification. This qualification is the first to be offered at this level and the first to be assessed through the use of e-assessment.

Initially, CIPS found it difficult to find impartial advice and guidance on how they should approach e-testing as a small awarding body and are still concerned that the smaller awarding bodies find it difficult to access impartial e-assessment advice and guidance. There was also concern that the overall reputation of CIPS qualifications should not be compromised by any negative perceptions of the use of e-testing either in terms of test content or in the way the e-testing was conducted.

However, having chosen a technology partner and designed a system to meet their needs, The information on the efutures website in particular the use of *e-assessment - a guide to effective practice* has proved extremely valuable in providing CIPS with:

- The necessary information to develop their own e-testing guidance documentation.
- An application process for centres wishing to become test centres.
- The design of the training programme that centre staff will need to undertake prior to approval to offer the qualification and use the e-testing system.

CIPS have used appropriate parts of the e-testing sections in full to ensure that the centres will meet all their requirements and standards.

Progress to date

CIPS is now in the process of signing up centres to offer the new qualification and to undertake the approval process to offer e-testing. The tests will be available initially

on 4 weeks notice within a 9am - 5pm support window using fixed papers from a test bank. The CIPS market for the qualification will be primarily those in employment and, with this in mind, they have devised standard MCQ question papers. Following the initial period of system testing and familiarity, CIPS intends to offer tests on a 24/7 basis and to extend their use outside the UK, beyond an initial small group of overseas centres.

The application process has been well advanced and the initial tests have been written to meet the needs of the qualification specification. In June 2007 an initial, small group of centres piloted the system and the tests over the summer months. CIPS are keen to ensure that their examination staff undertake the appropriate LLUK units as these become available and will encourage staff in their centres to do the same. CIPS want to investigate further use of e-assessment, perhaps in the assessment of some aspects of their higher level qualifications using an e-portfolio system.

CIPS now has 9 centres up and running with their on-line testing system and, of these, two have completed tests. One of these had significant numbers of candidates.

In general the introduction of the system to date has caused no major problems for CIPS themselves.