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Business & Professional

Practical qualifications for ambitious professionals

Accounting, project management, HR, marketing and leadership qualifications recognised by UK employers and chartered bodies.

AT A GLANCE

Levels	Level 2 to Level 7
Awarding bodies	AAT, CMI, CIPD
Duration	3 to 18 months
Study mode	100% online
Funding	Pay monthly available

TRUSTED BY 4.5 MILLION+ LEARNERS

AAT licensed

CMI accredited

CIPD aligned

Speak to a course advisor

Free advice, no obligation. Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 6:00pm.

CALL US ON

01202 006 464

In plain English

Q. Which business qualification should I study?

Recognised qualifications mapped to recognised job roles Choose your qualification by the job you want, not by level. CIPD covers HR and people management. CMI and ILM cover leadership and management. CIM covers marketing. AAT covers accounting. learndirect offers regulated qualifications from each of these awarding bodies, from Level 2 entry-level certificates to Level 7 strategic diplomas.

Inside this guide

A 36-page guide mapping every major business qualification to job roles, salary uplift, and progression routes.

- CIPD, CMI, ILM, AAT, and CIM explained in one place
- Salary uplift data for each qualification (2026 ONS)
- Employer-preference matrix by sector
- How to use the apprenticeship levy to fund your study

Choose your professional route Match your career goal to the awarding body that owns that profession.

STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3

People & HR – CIPD Leadership – CMI & ILM Marketing & Finance CIPD is the chartered body CMI is Royal Chartered and CIM is the chartered for HR and people ILM is part of City & Guilds. marketer route, with development. Level 3 Both award management Foundation Certificate (Level 3), Certificate (Level 4), HR assistants, Level 5 (Team Leader) to Level 7 Diploma (Level 6). AAT is the (Associate Diploma) for HR (Strategic Management). standard route into business partners, Level 7 for Choose based on your accountancy, covering Level senior strategic roles. All employer's preferred body. 2 through Level 4 leading to accepted by UK employers. MAAT status.

Why study Business & Professional with

learndirect 100% online, fully flexible Study from anywhere, anytime. No commute, no classroom hours. Designed to fit around full-time work, parenting, and shift patterns.

Tutor support throughout

Dedicated subject specialists mark your assignments, answer your questions, and guide you from enrolment to certificate.

Pay monthly with 0% interest Spread your fees across 9, 12 or 24 months with no credit checks and no hidden charges. Start your course today, settle the rest later.

Trusted by 25,000+ Trustpilot reviewers learndirect is one of the UK's largest and most established online learning providers, with a five-star rating across thousands of independent reviews.

Recognised qualifications

Every course leads to a regulated certificate from a UK awarding body, ready to share with employers, universities, or professional bodies.

Courses in Business & Professional

This faculty currently offers 27 regulated qualifications. Prices below are full one-off fees. All courses also offer 0% monthly payment plans spread across 9, 12 or 24 months.

Course Awarding body From

CMI Diploma in Management and Leadership Level 5

CMI £1,495

(RQF)

CIPD Associate Diploma in People Management Level

CIPD £2,195

5 (RQF)

CMI Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership

CMI £1,849

Practice Level 7 ...

Level 5 CIPD in People Management & Future-Focused

CIPD £2,348

HR Leadership Bun...

CIPD Foundation Certificate in People Practice Level 3

CIPD £1,549

(RQF)

CIPD Associate Diploma in Organisational Learning and

CIPD £2,195

Development Le...

CMI Diploma in Principles of Management and

CMI £1,395

Leadership Level 3 (RQF)

AAT Level 2 Certificate, Level 3 and Level 4 Diploma in

AAT £1,399

Professional...

CMI Level 7 Diploma in Leadership Coaching and

CMI £1,849

Mentoring (RQF)

CMI Award in Management and Leadership Level 5

CMI £599

(RQF)

AAT Level 2 Certificate in Accounting (Q2022) AAT £549

ILM Level 3 Diploma in Leadership and Management ILM £699

AAT Level 2 Certificate and Level 3 Diploma in

AAT £849

Accounting Combined (...)

Course Awarding body From

CMI Certificate in Strategic Management and

CMI £1,199

Leadership Practice Leve...

CMI Certificate in Management and Leadership Level 5

CMI £899

(RQF)

Level 5 CIPD in Organisational Learning &

CIPD £2,348

Development & Future-Focus...

CMI Level 5 Diploma in Professional Coaching Practice

CMI £1,495

(RQF)

CMI Award in Strategic Management and Leadership

CMI £649

Practice Level 7 (R...

AAT Level 2 Certificate in Bookkeeping (Q2022) AAT £299

Level 2 Certificate in Principles of Business

TQUK £407.54

Administration (RQF)

AAT Level 3 Diploma in Accounting (Q2022) AAT £599

CIM Certificate in Professional & Digital Marketing Level

CIM £649

4 (RQF)

CMI Certificate in Principles of Management and

CMI £799

Leadership Level 3 (...)

AAT Bundle: Level 2 Certificate and Level 3 Certificate

AAT £699

in Bookkeepi...

CIM Foundation Extended Certificate in Professional &

CIM £499

Digital Market...

See the full live list at pathways.learndirect.com/faculties/business-professional.

How payment works

Option How it works Best for

Pay in full Single one-off payment when you enrol. Learners who want the simplest option.

9-month plan Equal monthly instalments over 9 months. 0% interest. Most popular. Lines up with course duration.

12-month plan Equal monthly instalments over 12 months. 0% interest. Lower monthly outlay.

24-month plan Equal monthly instalments over 24 months. 0% interest. Longest, smallest monthly cost.

No interest, no credit checks, no hidden fees. If you ever want to pay off your balance early, you can settle the remainder at any time at no extra cost.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Are CIPD qualifications recognised by UK employers?

Yes. CIPD is the chartered body for HR and people development. Its qualifications are the standard credential for HR roles in the UK. Foundation Certificate (Level 3) is the minimum, and many senior HR jobs require Level 5 or Level 7.

Q. Should I choose CMI or ILM?

Both are equally regulated and accepted. CMI is Royal Chartered with a stronger focus on management theory; ILM is more vocational and aligned with apprenticeship standards. Choose based on your employer's preference, otherwise CMI for theory, ILM for practical application.

Q. How long does a Level 5 CIPD take?

The CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management typically takes 12 to 18 months to complete on a part-time basis. Self-paced learners can complete in 9 to 12 months.

Q. Will my employer fund a CIPD or CMI qualification?

Many employers fund professional qualifications, especially CIPD, CMI, and CIM. Use the apprenticeship levy route if your employer pays the levy, otherwise ask about Learning & Development budget allocation.

Q. Is AAT enough to become an accountant?

AAT Level 4 plus relevant experience qualifies you for AAT Membership (MAAT) and roles as a bookkeeper, accounts assistant, or junior accountant. To become a chartered accountant you would typically progress to ACCA or CIMA after AAT.

Q. Are these qualifications Ofqual-regulated?

Yes. All CIPD, CMI, ILM, CIM, and AAT qualifications offered through learndirect are Ofqual-regulated. They appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications and are formally recognised by UK employers and other regulators.

Q. Can I study while working full-time?

Yes. All business and professional courses are designed for working professionals. Learning is online, assignment-based, with no fixed lecture times. Most learners spend 6 to 10 hours per week studying.

Progress your professional career Speak to an adviser about which qualification fits your role and how to fund your study.

Speak to an advisor: 0800 101 901 | pathways.learndirect.com

This guide was prepared by content may change. For the latest details visit pathways.learndirect.com.