CIPD

L3 HR Support

Essential Guide to the Consultative Project

Issue 4

Guidance for the Consultative Project Level 3 HR Support

In this document you'll find essential guidance and information on

- The Consultative Project
- Hints and tips on how to pass your Consultative Project
- A full list of the Consultative Project Components for Level 3 HR Support (These are the criteria against which you'll be assessed)
- Grading amplification to indicate what the assessor is looking for within each component and is for guidance purposes as the project will be judged against full coverage of the Level 3 components.

What is the Consultative Project?

The Consultative Project must be a significant piece of work completed after the Gateway.

- It should be chosen because it meets the needs of your business.
- It must be relevant to your role and allow you the opportunities to demonstrate **clear and robust evidence** of the assessment criteria i.e., the knowledge and skills that you need to show in order to achieve a pass at Level 3 HR Support. These can be found at the end of this document.

It's imperative that you read and understand the assessment components before you choose your project and begin work on it. These are the criteria which the CIPD (as your independent End Point Assessment Organisation) will grade your project against to decide if you meet the standard and have passed your End Point Assessment (EPA).

You must meet the standards for **every** component listed on the assessment plan in order to Pass your Consultative Project.

How is my project approved?

The project's subject and scope must be agreed between you and your employer and must allow you to gain suitable experience and opportunities to demonstrate the assessment requirements. Use the scope document as the basis of your project plan and to consider where you may have some gaps for components that need to be assessed in the Professional Discussion (PD). A maximum of three components can be assessed in the PD instead of in the Consultative Project.

In a situation where your selected project topic is quite specific, for example recruitment, performance management, reward etc, you need to ensure that you provide adequate depth and breadth of coverage of components it might be necessary for you to provide examples of HR knowledge and skills outside of your project topic to capture the breadth of evidence of the competencies you perform in your HR role. This should only be done in circumstances where there is insufficient evidence directly within the project to satisfy the full component requirements.

There are 9 knowledge components and 11 skills components, and you must ensure that they are all covered completely as indicated in the grading amplification.

Remember for skills in a project you have to be able to write how you demonstrate the skills being assessed. For example, service delivery, S1.1 you need to be able to demonstrate example(s) of instances where you have built managers expertise in HR matters.

Part of the Gateway process involves completing and signing the Consultative Project Scope form. Once it's been checked and 'signed off' by CIPD you'll have 10 weeks to complete and write up your 3000-word Consultative Project, please ensure that you use the CIPD Consultative Project Template in the Level 3 HR Support EPA Toolkit.

What if my Project does not enable me to show some of the knowledge and skills required?

It's permissible for a maximum of three of the assessment criteria, (known as components), to be assessed in the Professional Discussion if the project cannot cover all the knowledge and skills components. These components must be agreed at Gateway and recorded in the Consultative Project Scope Form. It is important that you think carefully about your choice of project, matching it carefully to the assessment criteria (the components set out in at the end of this document.)

Writing your report

The structure of your project should follow the layout as provided below but you must ensure to evidence the full breadth and depth of the components as guided in the **Consultative Project Assessment Grading Amplification** in the Level 3 HR Support EPA Toolkit.

Having a clear structure will assist you when planning your project and help you to cover all of the components.

There are 9 knowledge components and 11 skills components that have to be met. The knowledge components are about understanding and skills about demonstration of how you have applied your knowledge within your project and/or work context

- Knowledge is: what have you learnt, are aware of and know that demonstrates understanding of something e.g. knowing about our HR policies
- Skill is: able to do something, ability to apply knowledge to specific situations. As it is a project you need to be quite explicit in how you demonstrate it e.g. this is how we shaped our policies to factor in relevant legislation.

When writing the Consultative Project, start off writing broadly to cover the range of the components. You may need to write about HR within your organisation and your broader working experience and consider aspects of your role beyond the project. Remember, you must demonstrate all of the knowledge and skills for this component within your report.

The Structure of the Project

When you write your Consultative Project, you should use the following structure. We have also given examples of which components maybe included in each section of the Consultative Project.

Please note this is only a guide and some of the components may be covered in different sections depending on your project title, company and scope.

Introduction - In telling us about your organisation explain the external market and sector, products and services. Include your understanding of how the organisation is structured, where your role fits, values of the organisation and how these apply to your role. (K1.1 & K1.2)

You might also include how HR operates within your organisation and any unique features of the sector your organisation is in and what standards you specifically need to meet in your role. (K3.1) (K2.1) (K4.2)

Project Objectives - these need to state the aims of what you plan to achieve by doing the project through to completion.

It may include:
- Explanation of how your project improves HR performance and service (S5.1)
- Explanation of what KPIs may be improved through the project (S1.4)
- Explanation of how the project aligns to the HR business plan and priorities (K3.2)

Scope of Work – here you need to define what you intend to deliver and focus on by doing the project.

It may include:
- Explanation of HR Legislation and HR policies within your organisation that need to be considered when implementing your project (K2.2)
- Explanation of HR policies that are relevant to the project or your role and where you find expert advice (K2.3)
- Reference to codes of conduct and external support organisations for benchmarking (K2.3)

Problem or Business Need - this needs to identify what your chosen project topic is aiming to address/solve/contribute.

It may include:
- Justification for the project and how this impacts on the wider HR or business goals and objectives. (K3.2)

Methodology Used – this needs to identify what methods you are going to use to investigate your chosen topic.

It might include primary data, such as reviewing forms of statistical or numerical data or other methods such as interviews where you need to capture understanding people's views and perceptions. This section doesn't need to be highly detailed it just need to inform the reader what methods you have adopted to explore the topic of your project.

It may include:
- Explanation of the systems, tools and processes used in your role (K4.1)
- Explanation of the HR database and/or core HR systems (K4.1)
- Explanation of the agreed systems and processes you follow to deliver HR services in your role (S1.3)
- Explanation of how you have used questioning and listening skills when planning your project. (S2.1)

Relevant Information Gathered – this needs to explain the types of information you have gathered in order to identify themes, trends, patterns.

It may include
- Explanation of the information you gathered to inform your project. (S2.1)
- Details of the main HR policies and legislation you need to consider when implementing your project (K2.2)
- Explanation of how you have maintained HR records when planning your project (S6.1)

Analytical Findings – here you identify and explain what you have found based on the evidence you have drawn from the sources of information that has been gathered.

This could include:
- Explanation of how you analyse data and how do you present this data and report it (S6.2)

Conclusions and Recommendations – your conclusions should bring together the outcomes of the project and lead into the recommendations which should be based on your analysis of the topic being investigated.

It may include:
- Explanation of how you have answered HR queries for managers both within the project and more broadly (S1.1)
- Explanation of how you have built managers expertise to deliver the project or handle other HR related situations (S1.2)

Implementation – This needs to set out the actions and you have taken to address the identified problem/situation/ business need from your findings.

It may include:
- Explanation of how you have supported the change and implementation (S5.2)
- Explanation of how you have answered HR queries for managers both within the project and more broadly (S1.1)
- Explanation of how you have built managers expertise to deliver the project or other handle other HR related situations (S1.2)
- Explanation of what you specifically have done to ensure KPIs on the project or more broadly have been met. (S1.4)
- Explanation of how you schedule, plan and organise your work autonomously to meet KPI's on the project or more broadly (S1.5)
- Explanation of your areas of responsibility on the project and how you escalate if can't resolve (S2.2)
- Explanation of how your project improves HR performance and service (S5.1)
- Details of any HR records that needed to be made/stored/updated as part of the project or more broadly. (S6.1)
- Details of any reports or management information you have produced as part of the project (S6.2)

Please note the outline above is only a guide. Some or all of the components may be covered in different sections depending on the nature of your project. You may have more covered in some sections and less in others.

You can, but don't have to use these titles as subheadings, you may embed them within other headings as appropriate, but do not let them be a distraction from the criteria you're being assessed against.

The most important thing is to ensure you address all of the assessment components in your report with examples and evidence of your knowledge and skills as set out at the end of this document.

It will not be sufficient to simply write about your project using the structure above and not include evidence which shows how you've applied your knowledge and skills of the Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship Standard.

These are some suggested Consultative Project examples:

- Support the delivery of a project which creates an HR solution to a business problem.
- Work with line managers to provide guidance on HR matters.
- Contribute to the delivery of a project which achieves an HR improvement.
- Support the development of a new HR policy.
- Undertake a data analysis project and produce an HR report for colleagues.
- Take a supporting role on the development an HR system or organisation wide process.

Hints and tips for completing a successful consultative project

- The project should be written in 3000 words (not including the title) +/- 10

  Please ensure you read the word count policy. Do not exceed the word count, anything above an additional 10% will not be assessed

- Remember the consultative project assessment is graded on the specific knowledge and skills components (shown at the end of this document), cross reference and make sure you have covered them **ALL** in your written submission

- Write for the assessor. Remember your consultative project is an assessment graded only on the knowledge and skills within the HR Support apprenticeship standard.

- It should be written retrospectively; Unlike a typical business project review, we recommend writing in the first person, this allows you to put emphasis and add weight on what you specifically did to apply your knowledge and skill against the components, whilst still maintaining a professional tone. You may want to avoid 'we' statements.

- Submit evidence which clearly describes your complete and correct understanding of the component and/or your ability to perform the skills.

- Choose words carefully and think of their impact.

- Plan and manage your time for both completing the consultative project and writing it up

- Use the template found in your toolkit

- Evidence should be presented in a business-like format with clear, concise, and factual statements.

- There's no need for 'actual' products of work, as evidence. For example, if you've produced a recruitment strategy, you don't need to include it.

- Avoid jargon or technical terms, they might not have meaning outside your organisation.

- It should not be submitted as an academic assignment so there's no need for Harvard referencing or a bibliography etc. We want to hear about the work **you** did on the project and how **you** have evidenced your Level 3 knowledge and skills.

The Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard Components for the Consultative Project

These are the components you'll be assessed against. You must show evidence and examples that meet each component to pass. Within the Consultative Project you need to cover all of the assessment components listed below. You are permitted to carry up to three of these to be assessed at the professional discussion. If you chose to transfer components you must indicate this on the Consultative Project Scope & Declaration at Gateway.

	Component Title	Code	Description	What the Assessor is looking for
K1	Business Understanding	**K1.1**	Understands the external market and sector within which their organisation operates, the products and services it delivers	*Provides clarification of the external market e.g., financial services, hospitality, and competition Provides clarification of the sector the organisation operates in, e.g., public, private, third sector* *Identifies the types of products and/ or services the organisation provides to its customers and clients.*
		K1.2	Understands the structure of the organisation, where their role fits in the organisation; the 'Values' by which it operates and how these apply to their role.	*Describes the type of organisation structure e.g., tall, bureaucratic, hierarchical, matrix etc Explains where their HR role fits into the organisation. Describes the values and how these guide their approach to their work*
K2	HR Legislation and Policy	K2.1	Basic understanding of HR in their sector and any unique features.	*Describes how HR operates and is impacted by the market /sector e.g., private sector - hospitality - seasonal workers.*
		K2.2	Good understanding of HR legislation and the HR Policy framework of the organisation.	*Outlines the main HR policies their organisation utilises and shows awareness of how HR legislation underpins these. Provides an example of where employment legislation informs policies and practices.*

		K2.3	Sound understanding of the HR Policies that are relevant to their role. Knows where to find expert advice.	*Describes two examples of HR policies that are relevant to their own operational HR role and includes detail of where they can find expert knowledge to support this such as codes of practice, specialist people or websites, ACAS, CIPD, legal practices, benchmarking, etc*
K3	HR Function	K3.1	Understands the role and focus of HR within the organisation	*Explains the role HR plays (e.g., generalist, specialist, change agent, business partner) and the type of services it provides e.g., transactional, operational, strategic*
		K3.2	Understands the HR business plan / priorities and how these apply to their role.	*Outlines how their responsibilities and objectives support the achievement of the wider HR goals and objectives*
K4	HR Systems and Processes	K4.1	Understands the systems, tools and processes used in the role, including the organisation's core HR systems	*Describes the HR systems used to support effective management of the various HR processes such as HR planning, employee relations, reward, PM, compliancy etc. Provides at least one example of each (e.g., System - Applicant Tracking System Process- selection process Tools - Proforma or checklist plus Core HR system e.g., HR database.*
		K4.2	Understands the standards that have to be met in the role	*Describes at least two standards that are expected to be met in their HR role e.g., service level agreements, targets deadlines, KPIs, compliance*
S1	Service Delivery	**S1.1**	Delivers excellent customer service on a range of HR queries and requirements, providing solutions, advice and support primarily to managers	*Describes at least three examples of how they provide support and guidance that is customer focused, timely and of high quality to managers, employees and wider stakeholders. This could be on policy, recruitment, handling discipline and grievances, performance and reward, redundancies, interviewing, contractual enquiries, personal issues relating to work etc*

		S1.2	Builds manager's expertise in HR matters, improving their ability to handle repeated situations themselves where appropriate.	*Explains how they have enabled a manager to deal with frequently occurring situation e.g., developing a manager's knowledge and understanding of recruitment, applying people policies, handling discipline and grievance, contractual issues, performance & reward, L&D, diversity & inclusion, well-being etc*
		S1.3	Uses agreed systems and processes to deliver service to customers	*Demonstrates how to follow procedures and established guidelines to deliver HR service. This could include the use of technology and standard ways of working.*
		S1.4	Takes the initiative to meet agreed individual and team KPIs in line with company policy, values, standards	*Demonstrates within the project how they have taken a proactive approach to meet individual and team performance indicators aligned to overall standards expected.*
		S1.5	Plans and organises their work, often without direct supervision, to meet commitments and KPIs.	*Demonstrates how they manage and schedule their work, often autonomously, to meet Key Performance Indicators and commitments.*
S2	Problem Solving	S2.1	Uses sound questioning and active listening skills to understand requirements and establish root causes before developing HR solutions	*Engages with others to explore the requirements and root causes of a problem by applying appropriate questioning and listening techniques prior to identifying HR solutions.*
		S2.2	Takes ownership through to resolution, escalating complex situations as appropriate.	*Demonstrates how they have recognised, owned and resolved a problem and demonstrated awareness of where they may need to involve others in order to do this.*
S5	Process improvement	S5.1	Identifies opportunities to improve HR performance and service, acting on them within the authority of their role	*Provides two examples where they have personally and proactively identified an area of improvement and taken this forward, e.g., how they have made recommendations in the project or their role.*

		S5.2	Supports implementation of HR changes/projects with the business.	*Describes their involvement in the rollout of a HR change initiative or project that relates to improving a HR people, process or business solution.*
S6	Managing HR Information	S6.1	Maintains required HR records as part of services delivered.	*Demonstrates how they routinely collect, update, amend distribute, store and record HR information securely e.g., in relation to recruitment, performance, induction, D&G, absence, equality and diversity*
		S6.2	Prepares reports and management information from HR data, with interpretation as required	*Demonstrates how they present meaningful information from a variety of different sources of HR data to support evidence-based decision making, e.g., highlighting a trend or pattern in sickness absence.*