

# a sideways LOOK

News from Elevation Learning

## In brief...

- Nationally recognised qualifications in Professional Consulting that are equivalent to HND and postgraduate levels are available from 1 September 2012.
- They are based on a credit accumulation framework that enables individuals to take training on consulting topics to suit their own needs.
- Offering qualifications will make employers more attractive to potential recruits and their talent management more effective.
- The qualifications are available via selected CMI Approved Centres, of which Elevation Learning is one.

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## New qualifications in Professional Consulting

Qualifications in Professional Consulting are available from 1 September 2012. They have been launched by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and the Institute of Consulting and have been accredited by Ofqual.

For the first time, therefore, there are now qualifications for consultants that are recognised nationally and (through the European Qualifications Framework) internationally.

Qualifications are of direct value to individual consultants, consulting practices and clients.

### Benefits to consultants

Qualifications provide a lifelong and a public recognition of a consultant's ability. The work needed to take a qualification also provides a powerful way of consolidating the learning on a training programme and applying it to develop performance back at work.

### Benefits to employers

This is also a reason why qualifications are of interest to an employer: they provide an incentive to consultants to apply and demonstrate their learning by improving their performance, to the benefit of the consulting practice and its clients. Employers will also find qualifications useful in talent management: knowing that a period of employment is going to lead to a lifelong qualification could appeal to potential recruits and also deter defections to employers who do not offer this benefit.

### Benefits to clients

Worldwide there is a flight from risk, so clients increasingly look for reassurance from prospective consultancy providers that they are competent to do the work needed. Reputation and track record are relevant to a practice, but qualifications may also contribute to a client's confidence that a particular consultant is suitably equipped to carry out a piece of work.

Qualifications are available through CMI Approved Centres; Elevation Learning is an Approved Centre and is offering training that leads to these qualifications.

This edition of A Sideways Look provides information about the qualifications and how you might apply them within your development programme.

# About the qualifications in Professional Consulting

Some 5 years ago the Institute of Consulting launched a Certificate in Management Consulting Essentials and a Diploma in Management Consultancy. These qualifications are validated through the Institute of Consulting, but have no currency beyond.

The new qualifications, however, are accredited by Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Therefore, they fit into the national Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which contains qualifications from, for example, GCSEs equivalent at level 2 through to PhDs equivalent at level 8. The qualifications in Professional Consulting will be available at level 5 (equivalent to an HND) and level 7 (equivalent to a post-graduate level).

## How you get these qualifications

A number of units covering topics in Professional Consulting have been defined with an agreed syllabus and standards for their successful completion. A learner who successfully completes a unit is given a predetermined number of credits.

This has three main benefits for learners:

1. Credits earned from a single unit can be added to previous credits so that learners can gradually move through the sizes of Award (which requires the smallest number of credits), through Certificate, to Diploma (which requires the most credits).
2. Learners can choose those units covering the topics that are of most value to them at a particular time; there is therefore considerable flexibility to create a programme that suits the specific needs of an individual or practice.
3. Credits are transferable, so that those won in the area of Professional Consulting might allow exemption from the requirements of other qualifications through the accreditation of prior learning. (For example, it can help in moving towards achieving Chartered Manager). Similarly, credits acquired in related areas may count towards a qualification in Professional Consulting.

The units in Professional Consulting are shown in the table, together with the number of credits applicable to each.

## Units in Professional Consulting

LEVEL 5		Credits	LEVEL 7		Credits
Introduction to consulting essentials	8	Organisational structure and culture	8		
Planning and managing consultancy interventions	8	Entry and diagnosis	9		
The client relationship	8	Group dynamics and facilitating skills	7		
Communication for consultants	7	Communication strategies for consulting	7		
Problem solving tools and techniques for consultants	9	Managing consultancy interventions	6		
The role and responsibilities of a consultant	6	Tools and techniques for effective consulting	9		
		Managing the business of consulting	7		
<b>Optional units</b> (relevant only to those taking the Diploma)					
Project development and control	6	Professional practice	6		
Management coaching practice	6	Professional development in consulting	7		
Management of action learning	6	Strategic performance management	7		
Managing the change process	7	Organisational direction	9		
		Strategic project management	6		
		Organisational change	7		
		Leadership coaching and mentoring skills	7		
<b>Number of credits needed for...</b>					
Award	7	Award	6		
Certificate	13	Certificate	13		
Diploma	43	Diploma	52		

Also shown are the numbers of credits needed to get a qualification at a particular size. There are rules of combination; some of the units are mandatory - ones that you have to take in order to qualify for an Award, Certificate or Diploma, while others are optional - you can use them only to build up the number of credits needed to get the Diploma.

# How can a consulting practice use these qualifications?

## A consultant training framework

Typically a consulting practice might have a training framework as shown in the diagram.

Career progression	Hallmark training - for example	Core skills - for example	In-depth skills - for example
Practice leader	Practice management protocols	Managing a consulting business	Account management
Senior consultant	Proprietary tools and techniques	Selling skills	Managing organisational change
Consultant	Induction	Delivery skills	Presentation skills, Writing skills

Every practice will have what we call “Hallmark training” that covers topics special to the practice such as induction or particular proprietary tools and methodologies. Beyond that there will need to be a “Core skills programme”, which covers the essential topics of delivery, selling and managing a practice as a consultant’s career progresses. Finally there is training in “In-depth skills”, which takes selected topics and develops the related skills.

A practice may therefore like to align some or all of its standard courses with the units in Professional Consulting, or it may consider adding courses to their curriculum that cover additional units. It’s probable that qualifications at level 5 will be appropriate for new consultants in their first 2 - 3 years of experience, while level 7 qualifications are suited to more experienced consultants.

It’s worth noting that the qualifications do not cover commercial skills such as selling or account management for consultants.

## What work do individual learners need to do?

Learners need to register through a CMI Approved Centre (for example, Elevation Learning) for the qualifications; the Centre will provide the training needed and arrange the assessments required.

The training programme consists of a mix of academic study and practical activities, including face to face training, projects, research and other activities. In addition, learners will do work on their own account - for example, reading around a topic. The amount of this additional work will depend on the previous experience of a learner; one who is familiar with a topic will need to do less than a newcomer to the subject.

Assessments are on assignments, professional discussions, questioning, presentations and work-based activities, and other methods depending on the topics being assessed.

## What is Elevation Learning doing?

Elevation Learning is a CMI Approved Centre and we have adapted our standard training courses so they match the requirements of the qualifications. Over the years we have provided training in the topics covered in the units that CMI has defined and so will link these to qualifications if desired.

Our clients, therefore will, have the option of adding the formal qualification to training; this will require additional work from candidates which will be conducted through distance learning, e.g. web-based training, coaching through email, and webinars. Learners will also need to take the appropriate exam.

## Training we offer

Level 5		
Our course	Unit(s) this covers	Credits
Introduction to consulting essentials	An introduction to consulting essentials	8
Core consultancy skills	Planning and managing consultancy interventions The client relationship	16
Client engagement skills	The client relationship	8
Presentation skills for consultants	Communication for consultants	7
Writing skills for consultants	Problem solving tools and techniques for consultants	9
Systematic problem solving	The role and responsibilities of a consultant	6

## Training we offer (continued)

Level 7		
Our course	Unit(s) this covers	Credits
Managing the business of consulting	Managing the business of consulting	7
Organisational dynamics	Organisational structure and culture	8
Developing consulting insight	Entry and diagnosis	9
Tools and techniques for effective consulting	Tools and techniques for effective consulting	9
Effective engagement	Managing consultancy interventions	6
Facilitation skills for consultants	Group dynamics and facilitating skills	7
Compelling communication	Communication strategies for consulting	7

The diagram above shows the links between our standard training courses and the units. In addition, we provide training in all the other units in Professional Consulting.

## Our recommendations



### For those who have already taken the Certificate in Management Consulting Essentials

#### CMI Level 5 Certificate in Professional Consulting (QCF)

Elevation Learning has qualified more than 100 consultants in the Institute of Consulting Certificate in Management Consulting Essentials. Consultants who have already taken the Certificate now have the opportunity to upgrade this to an Award, or indeed a Certificate, at Level 5 by taking an additional examination. This is through a “top up” process, which Elevation Learning will be offering through a distance learning programme.

### For those who want to concentrate on delivery skills

#### CMI Level 5 Certificate in Professional Consulting (QCF)

Take our Core consultancy skills course plus the additional distance learning module. Successful completion of the examination at the end of this should enable you to get a Certificate at level 5.

### For more experienced consultants

#### CMI Level 7 Award or Certificate in Professional Consulting (QCF)

Take the course “Managing the business of consulting”. This covers the key challenges that senior consultants have to address in a management role within a consulting practice. Successful completion of the course and the additional work required will enable you to get an Award at level 7.

You could upgrade this to a Certificate at level 7 by taking one of the additional core units.

### For internal consultants and other professional service deliverers

#### CMI Level 5 Certificate in Professional Consulting (QCF)

If you are new to the role of a consultant, take the “Introduction to consulting essentials” course to get an Award at level 5. You can then convert this to a Certificate by taking the “Client engagement skills” course.

More experienced professional service deliverers may want to take only the “Client engagement skills” course, which leads to an Award at level 5.

### Developing your own framework towards

#### CMI Level 5 or Level 7 Qualifications in Professional Consulting (QCF)

And of course, it may be that you would like to develop your own training framework within your practice, made up of a mix of core and optional units. Learners can progress through these to acquire the qualifications at both levels.