

## CIPR Specialist Diploma (Sustainability Communications)

### Syllabus

The aim of the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Sustainability Communications) is to enable candidates to develop knowledge and expertise in how sustainability can be integrated into strategic public relations planning and management. It has been developed in line with the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education, with specific reference to: Principle 1: Purpose, Principle 2: Values, and Principle 6: Dialogue.

The CIPR Specialist Diploma (Sustainability Communications) will be of interest to senior PR practitioners working in public relations, corporate communication, marketing communication, internal communication, public affairs and media relations, in consultancy or in-house, or in a related discipline within the strategic management framework. This qualification will equip the candidate with the knowledge and tools to effectively lead the organisation's (commercial, public sector or non-profit-making) strategic management of sustainability in complex situations.

Candidates will research and develop ethical sustainability strategies and plans that enable organisations to enhance and protect their reputation and stakeholders to achieve their strategic objectives and make a positive impact on communities.

Candidates would be awarded the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Sustainability Communications) on successful completion of the assessment.

### Syllabus

The CIPR Specialist Diploma (Sustainability Communications) provides a sound theoretical and practical understanding of ethical sustainability communications leadership.

An analytical perspective is applied to enable candidates to take a reflective approach in critically examining their own experience alongside case studies of organisations and communities.

### Qualification objectives

Successful candidates will be able to:

1. Apply relevant macro, meso and micro contexts of strategic communications leadership including:

- the role of PR in advocating the relationship between organisations and sustainability
- the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- UN Principles for Responsible Management Education
- sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility
- Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG)
- how best practice in diversity supports sustainability goals
- how the context (global, international, national and/or local) impacts on attitudes to sustainability
- the impact of the organisation's context and culture on its sustainability agenda

- researching, interpreting and analysing sustainability data (including relevant case studies)
  - identifying and responding to objections to sustainability
  - recognising and responding to disinformation and misinformation about sustainability
  - referencing the growing practice of brand/CEO/corporate activism.
2. Define sustainability engagement to internal and external audiences by:
- exploring the link between sustainability and reputation, issues and crisis management
  - analysing and evaluating stakeholders' importance to sustainability
  - establishing a sustainability agenda including setting organisational sustainability goals
  - engaging practically with comprehensive stakeholder analysis, resource-based review and resulting recommendations
  - identifying and addressing ethical, legal and other impacts on stakeholder groups within the context of sustainability.
3. Critically evaluate the role of PR in advancing a corporate sustainability strategy by:
- applying sustainability tools, concepts and ethical principles to the organisational context
  - evaluating the success of sustainability PR strategies and tactics
  - evaluating the impact of the organisation's sustainability goals
  - critically analysing potential areas of conflict, for example:
    - the potential disproportionate impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
    - how structural inequalities might be exacerbated
    - transparency
    - "green-washing"
    - passionate advocacy vs private adherence ("secretly sustainable")
    - "climate anxiety"
    - adverse mental health impacts
  - applying relevant models of reflection.

**Assessment:** Executive report and summary situation analysis

**Aim:** To enable candidates to demonstrate competence in undertaking an analysis of a case study situation/issue.

**Topic of inquiry:** Candidates will be required to evidence professional judgement in identifying a suitable case study as their chosen topic of inquiry. This could be based on the candidate's own organisation, a client, or another organisation of the candidate's choice that can be associated with a sustainability strategy.

**Submission:** The assignment will comprise:

1. 3,000-word (+/- 10%) executive report or management proposal comprising:
  - a) A clear and concise statement describing the case study situation/issue, justifying its relevance as a problem or opportunity facing a specific organisation and/or sector, and

- verifying that it can be addressed by a sustainability strategy;
- b) Articulation of goals and identification of stakeholders, i.e. the approach, tools and techniques used to collect and analyse evidence from secondary research regarding the situation, and provide insight into its current or potential impact on the organisation and/or sector and its stakeholders;
  - c) Using the key findings from above, advise on the development of a sustainability strategy to include, where relevant, objectives, messages, and key influencers/opinion formers. Where possible, this should include the current and potential impact on the organisation and/or sector and stakeholders;
  - d) Evaluation and recommendations for implementation.
2. Supporting 2,000-word (+/- 10%) statement of reflection including critical examination and evaluation of:
- The research methods (including relevant tools and techniques) used to analyse and gain insight into the case study situation (reflecting on part 1(a) above);
  - Concepts, models and frameworks relevant to sustainability used to inform recommendations (reflecting on parts 1(b) and (c) above);
  - Ethical concerns and responsibilities that emerge for PR practitioners using sustainability concepts and tools to address the case study situation (reflecting on part 1(d) above).
  - A reference list of sources using an appropriate, consistent method of referencing.

**Completion of the assignment** involves the following activities:

- Evidence-based decision-making – candidates are required to undertake data collection using a range of secondary research methods (literature, archives, published surveys, reports, etc.) to examine the chosen topic of inquiry.
- Insight – candidates are required to use a range of appropriate models, tools and methods to analyse the external and internal environment, the organisation or societal issue and relevant stakeholder groups.
- Communication – candidates are required to review and structure their analysis of a situation in the form of an executive report.
- Reflection – candidates are required to use problem identification concepts and approaches to identify a relevant topic of inquiry. This will be a current issue of concern (or opportunity) for a specific organisation and/or sector, and may relate to the candidate's own experience.

### **Example topics**

- The role of PR in advancing a sustainability agenda within a public sector organisation: The case of X
- Integrating UNSDGs within a university's corporate brand strategy: Communication issues and challenges

### **Word count**

A substantive response to both Components is necessary to meet the requirements for a Pass.

The word count for each task, and the total word count, must be recorded in the appropriate spaces provided on the cover sheet and at the end of the relevant text in the main documents.

Bibliographies and footnotes, if any, are not included in the word count. Footnotes must not contain appendices or be used to include additional text that should have been in the main body of the work.

Candidates are allowed a +/- 10% leeway on the **total** word count for the assignment and must ensure they **DO NOT** exceed the +10% tolerance. Anything above this allowance will result in the indicative mark being reduced by one grade. No grading reduction will be implemented if they are below the -10% word tolerance but remember that it is very likely that the paper will fail because the tasks will not have been adequately addressed.

### Referencing

Teaching centres must provide guidance to candidates on appropriate methods of referencing that are suitable for a business document.

### Further information:

- CIPR website [www.cipr.co.uk](http://www.cipr.co.uk)
- CIPR Course Regulations
- CIPR Specialist Qualifications Student Handbook
- Suggested Reading List