

# Qualification Specification

APRIL 2022 | SCQF LEVEL 9 PRACTICAL INVESTMENT PLANNING



Practical  
Financial  
Exams

# Contents

Qualification Objective .....	2
Entry Guidance.....	2
Qualification Level .....	2
Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria .....	3
About Your Assessment .....	5
Marking Criteria and General Considerations .....	6
Written Assignment .....	7
Work-Based Evidence Portfolio .....	11
Examples of Complete Work-Based Evidence .....	16
Professional Discussion .....	18
How We Support Our Learners.....	22
Scientific Calculator.....	22

# Introduction

## **Welcome to SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning!**

SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning is a single unit qualification which aims to develop the competence and capability of UK retail Investment Advisers, including the soft skills involved in client interactions, and in the synthesis of professional investment advice.

The key word here is “practical” – this is a practical, pragmatic qualification for practical, pragmatic Financial Advisers. Its focus is on enhancing “real world” investment planning skills, not testing “exam world” scenarios which bear little resemblance to the day-to-day work of Financial Advisers.

## Qualification Objective

To develop the competence and capability of UK retail investment Advisers, including the soft skills involved in client interactions, and in the synthesis of professional investment advice. This is achieved via the study and practise of investment planning and its corresponding soft skills; and assessed via a portfolio of a written assignment and work-based evidence, supported by a professional discussion.

## Entry Guidance

While there are no formal entry requirements for SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning, it is expected that Learners have completed their Level 4 Diploma with the CII, CISI, or LIBF. Furthermore, it is assumed that Learners are currently working either as a Financial Adviser, or in a related support role.

## Qualification Level

Practical Investment Planning has been credit rated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) at Level 9 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This is the same level as a bachelor’s degree, and broadly comparable to RQF Level 6 in England.

Practical Investment Planning provides 10 SCQF credits, which means that most Learners are expected to spend around 100 hours completing this qualification. Once enrolled, Learners have twelve months to complete their assessment, which is plenty of time.

# Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria

The Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria comprise the SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning syllabus.

- The Learning Outcomes are the overarching abilities and skills that will have been achieved.
- The Performance Criteria are the ways that the achievement of each Learning Outcome must be demonstrated by the Learner.

While the SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning study text is written to address the Learning Outcomes in detail, the assessment is based on the Performance Criteria, not the study text or any other learning support materials.

These Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria will be tested between January 2022 and December 2022, based on English law and practice in the relevant tax year unless otherwise stated, and on the legislative position at the time of the assessment.

Upon completion, Learners will be able to:

- 1. Deliver effective, compliant, professional, structured telephone pitch meetings and face-to-face/virtual fact-find meetings to retail investment clients.**
  - 1.1 Deliver an effective, compliant, professional, structured telephone pitch meeting.
  - 1.2 Demonstrate the ability to structure and control client meetings effectively.
  - 1.3 Present and explain a set of disclosure documents, including the firm's business model and how charges work.
  - 1.4 Establish and agree SMART investment planning objectives with the client, including critical assessment of their potential achievability.
  - 1.5 Critically assess and agree the risk profile of a retail client, as a combination of their attitude to risk and capacity for loss.
  - 1.6 Explain to retail clients the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies.
- 2. Synthesise professional, compliant, suitable investment plans for retail investment clients.**
  - 2.1 Produce a professional, compliant suitability report comprising a piece of innovative investment advice, the client's objectives, the reasons why the advice is suitable, and any disadvantages of the advice.
  - 2.2 Demonstrate the suitability of the advice via deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models.

**3. Present professional, compliant, suitable investment plans for retail investment clients.**

- 3.1 Professionally and compliantly present an innovative investment plan, along with corresponding regulatory supporting documents, answering any client questions, and gaining the client's agreement to proceed with the advice.

# About Your Assessment

SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning assessed via two coursework assignments, supported by a professional discussion. We believe that this triangulated approach adequately tests the achievement of all Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria. Learners have twelve months to complete their assessments.

Once the Learner has been provided their first coursework assignment, and the twelve-month clock will begin. Learners are therefore advised not to leave everything until the last minute, or they risk running out of time.

Learners should submit their assessments in the following order:

1. Their written assignment
2. Their work-based evidence portfolio

This is because if **innovation** is not evident in their written assignment, Learners must evidence that they can plan innovatively via their work-based evidence portfolio.

Once these assessments have received passing grades, the professional discussion can be arranged. The objective of the professional discussion is to support the written assignment and work-based evidence portfolio in demonstrating the achievement of all three Learning Outcomes.

Coursework resubmissions (“reassessments”) are dealt with under our Reassessment Policy.

# Marking Criteria and General Considerations

Learners' evidence is assessed against comprehensive checklists which break down the Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria and provide descriptions and examples of pass-standard evidence.

Pass/fail criteria is binary. Either the Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria have been achieved, or they have not, and the Learner must pass all Performance Criteria to pass.

Each piece of assessment evidence submitted must meet the following general standards of quality:

- The evidence is compliant with FCA regulations and UK law.
- The evidence is compliant with Practical Financial Exams Limited's policies, processes, and procedures (e.g., no breaches of our Malpractice Policy).
- The evidence clearly demonstrates achievement of the relevant Performance Criteria. Assessors should consider in each case: *"Would a reasonable person believe, solely on the basis of the evidence provided by the Learner, that they have achieved the relevant Learning Outcomes/Performance Criteria?"*
- The evidence is comprehensive, demonstrating the achievement of at least one full Criterion, not merely part of a Criterion, unless otherwise stated in the checklist.
- Real-life client personal details must be redacted/censored.
- One piece of evidence may be used as evidence for the achievement of multiple Learning Outcomes and/or Performance Criteria.

**The burden of proof is on the Learner to convince the Assessor – via their written assignment, work-based evidence portfolio, and professional discussion – that they have achieved the Learning Outcomes.**

# Written Assignment

The written assignment involves the Learner being provided with a completed fact-find document. The Learner is then expected to produce a written suitability report and the relevant regulatory supporting documents to justify their advice.

Practical Financial Exams Limited has produced several fact-finds of a similar complexity which allow for the recommendation of innovative investment planning solutions. Learners are not permitted to collaborate with anyone else in the construction of their assignment. Learners should refer to our Malpractice Policy for further details.

The objective of the written assignment is to evidence the achievement of Learning Outcome 2.

As per Learning Outcome 2, Learners must produce a professional, compliant suitability report comprising a piece of innovative investment advice, the client’s objectives, the reasons why the advice is suitable, and any disadvantages of the advice, and demonstrate the suitability of the advice via deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models. This is based on the fully completed fact-find provided.

To pass the assessment, the report must be **professional, compliant, innovative, and suitable**. Where **innovation** is not evident but everything else is, the assignment will pass, but the ability to produce an innovative plan must be evidenced via a piece of additional work-based evidence. Where the report is not professional, compliant, or suitable, the assignment will not pass at all.

Within the context of the written assignment, we consider the terms “professional”, “compliant”, “innovative”, and “suitable” as follows:

<b>Professional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report is well-structured and easy to understand and navigate</li> </ul>
<b>Compliant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content of the suitability report is sufficiently compliant with COBS 9.4</li> <li>The recommendations are sufficiently justified according to the regulation in COBS 9.2 and guidance in COBS 9.3</li> <li>The report is in keeping with the Conduct Rules as detailed in COCON 4.1, and the FCA Principles for Business in PRIN 2.1</li> <li>The report is accompanied by relevant regulatory support documents</li> <li>The report is accompanied by a list of documents which would be included on the client file, were this a real case</li> </ul>
<b>Innovative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is evident that the Learner has approached the assignment creatively, with an inventive take on investment planning</li> </ul>
<b>Suitable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations are appropriate for the client, and sufficiently justified</li> <li>The report contains deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models which evidence the suitability of the advice</li> </ul>



These definitions are applied to written assignments as follows:

Checklist Requirements	Example Pass-Standard Evidence
The content of the suitability report is sufficiently compliant with COBS 9.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report contains the client’s objectives, the reasons why the advice is suitable, and any disadvantages of the advice.</li> <li>• Where an investment bond or other type of life assurance-based investment has been recommended, there is a statement of why that particular policy would best meet the client’s objectives.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links</u>  <a href="#">COBS 9.4 Suitability reports - FCA Handbook</a></p>
The recommendations are sufficiently justified according to the regulation in COBS 9.2 and guidance in COBS 9.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report sufficiently justifies the recommendations; it is convincing. And the recommendations have the potential to enable the client to meet their stated SMART objectives.</li> <li>• There is evidence of critical evaluation within the report, such as brief details of products considered and discounted, and the reasons for this.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, each “reason why” is linked back to the client’s objectives and/or other information the fact-find.</li> <li>• The recommendations consider the client’s investment knowledge and experience, financial situation, investment needs and objectives, time horizon, attitude to risk, and capacity for loss.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links</u>  <a href="#">COBS 9.2 Assessing suitability - FCA Handbook</a>  <a href="#">COBS 9.3 Guidance on assessing suitability - FCA Handbook</a></p>
It is evident that the Learner has approached the assignment creatively, with an inventive take on investment planning	<p>Innovative solutions may include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax wrapper diversification</li> <li>• The use of structured products, smoothed funds, or non-standard, but regulated, retail investment products</li> <li>• A mix of different and complementary investment strategies, perhaps to reduce risk or help manage pound-cost ravaging</li> <li>• A different format of cashflow modelling</li> </ul> <p>“Innovation” does not mean “weird” or “whacky”. However, the fact-finds we’ve produced provide a great deal of flexibility for a creative approach, and we want to see Learners embrace this and use it to demonstrate their technical knowledge and critical understanding of investment planning. We don’t just want to see a single fund recommended, for example.</p> <p><b><i>Where the assignment has not been approached creatively, Learners will be required to demonstrate that they can take an innovative approach to investment planning in their work-based evidence portfolio.</i></b></p>
The report is well-structured and easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report contains a summary page at the beginning.</li> <li>• The report has clear headings and spaces between paragraphs.</li> </ul>

<p>to understand and navigate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report follows a logical structure; it does not jump from one point to the next but flows naturally from point to point.</li> <li>• The report is 25 pages or less.</li> <li>• The report is written in Layman’s terms and any unavoidable jargon is clearly explained.</li> <li>• The report is written in a professional, legible font such as Ariel, Verdana, or Calibri, size 10-12, and in black.</li> <li>• Editing, formatting, spelling, and grammar errors are kept to a minimum.</li> </ul>
<p>The report is in keeping with the Conduct Rules as detailed in COCON 4.1, and the FCA Principles for Business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report is factually correct; there are no technical errors</li> <li>• The advice in the report is professional, suitable, and justified</li> <li>• The fact-find has been adequately analysed and evaluated</li> <li>• The report is clear, fair, and not misleading</li> </ul> <p><u>Links</u>  <a href="#">COCON 4.1 Specific guidance on individual conduct rules - FCA Handbook</a>  <a href="#">PRIN 2.1 The Principles - FCA Handbook</a></p>
<p>The report contains deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models which evidence the suitability of the advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report includes deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models which demonstrate at least in theory that the investment plan has the potential to meet the client’s needs and objectives.</li> <li>• Stress tests evidence that while the recommendations have the potential to meet the client’s needs and objectives, this is not guaranteed.</li> <li>• Cashflow models are not overcomplicated and are suitable for the level of sophistication of the client.</li> <li>• Cashflow model outputs are clearly explained within the report.</li> <li>• Where relevant, inflation, personal taxation, and charges are factored into the model.</li> <li>• All assumptions are justified, such as regarding inflation, charges, and net return.</li> </ul>
<p>The report is accompanied by relevant regulatory support documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIDs, KIIDs, KFIs, and KFDs where relevant, depending on whether the recommended products are PRIIPs or non-PRIIPs.</li> <li>• Fund factsheets for all recommended funds.</li> <li>• Alternatively, a written statement explaining the regulatory support documents that would accompany the report, were this a real case.</li> </ul>
<p>The report is accompanied by a list of documents which would be included on the client file, were this a real case.</p>	<p>A list confirming (where relevant):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client agreement / statement of engagement</li> <li>• Disclosure documents</li> <li>• Customer Privacy Notice</li> <li>• Client ID verification</li> <li>• Completed fact find</li> <li>• Risk profiling evidence</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Product and fund literature</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suitability report</li><li>• Application forms / data capture forms</li><li>• Call/meeting recordings</li><li>• Suitability report agreement to proceed</li><li>• Ongoing advice agreement</li><li>• Confirmation the transaction has completed</li><li>• Any additional relevant information</li><li>• Any supplementary conversations with the client</li><li>• Their business card and CV</li><li>• The signed client declaration</li><li>• The Adviser’s brochure used to explain the customer journey</li></ul> <p>And a short explanation of what each of these are.</p>
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# Portfolio Assignment

The second coursework assignment is to compile a portfolio of work-based evidence which demonstrates the achievement of the Performance Criteria. **You can do this on your own, or you may collaborate.**

This assignment is designed to test client interaction (“soft”) skills, and practical skills such as objective setting, risk profiling, and managing conversations with vulnerable customers. This can’t easily be tested using traditional assessment methods such as written exams, so it is tested via a portfolio of different pieces of evidence provided by the Learner. Individually, these pieces of evidence don’t provide comprehensive proof of achievement of the Learning Outcomes, but together, they do.

A typical portfolio may include, but is not limited to, suitably redacted:

- Pitch, fact-find, and/or presentation meeting notes
- Recorded roleplays and video/audio-based evidence, or transcripts of this
- Client feedback
- Statements from the Learner’s line manager
- Learners’ own reflective statements explaining what they did to achieve the different Performance Criteria, how they did it, and what they’d do differently next time
- File review reports
- Client meeting observation reports

Where evidence is difficult to obtain, which may be due to limitations in their day-to-day role, Learners can book time with an Assessor not involved in their assessment to roleplay and/or hold structured discussions which can be recorded and used as work-based evidence.

The work-based evidence portfolio should be submitted in the form of a written report, perhaps two sides of A4, detailing each Performance Criterion, the evidence submitted, and an explanation of how each piece of evidence evidences the achievement of one or more of the Performance Criteria. The report should be accompanied by all the evidence referenced within it.

**Where evidence is provided in the form of audio and/or video recordings, or transcripts thereof, Learners must specify the relevant minutes/timings of the recording, and/or pages of the transcript, which they believe evidence their achievement of the specific Performance Criteria. Audio and/or video recordings, or transcripts thereof, with no minutes/timings, risk being rejected by Assessors.**

The objective of the work-based evidence portfolio is to evidence the achievement of Learning Outcomes 1 and 3.

Learners must gather at least **two** pieces of work-based evidence for each Performance Criterion. It is up to the Assessor whether a piece of evidence is acceptable.

Where fewer than **three** pieces of evidence have been provided for a Criterion, additional evidence will be required to be presented in the professional discussion.

Learners' own reflective statements are not enough to be counted as one of the minimum two pieces of evidence **but may be counted as the third**.

Where evidence is video or audio-based, the Learner's confidence must be evident. If it appears the Learner is reading from a script, or the evidence presented demonstrates anything less than consummate professionalism as the result of many hours of practice of the soft skills learned in the study text, it will not be acceptable.

Criterion	Example pass-standard evidence
1.1 Deliver an effective, compliant, professional, structured telephone pitch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recording of a real-life pitch meeting, with the client's personal details redacted/edited out, which demonstrates:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Compliance with COBS 4.8</li> <li>○ Compliance with FCA Principle for Business 7 (clear, fair, not misleading)</li> <li>○ An effective, professional way to speak, including pitch, volume, speed, tone, enunciation, and sincerity</li> <li>○ Numerous verbal and non-verbal indicators of active listening</li> <li>○ Effective questioning techniques enabling sufficient information to be gathered for a fact-find meeting to be booked</li> <li>○ The ability to control and direct the meeting, not let the client control it</li> <li>○ An explanation of one or more fact-find preparation strategies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Alternatively, a recording or transcript of a roleplay to this effect</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming that the Learner has done this.</li> <li>• A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that the Learner has done this.</li> <li>• The Learners' own reflective statement confirming how they approached the call, and the outcome.</li> <li>• The learner's pitch meeting notes, ideally in the client's own words and using the client's phrases.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links</u>  <a href="#">COBS 4.8 Cold calls and other promotions that are not in writing - FCA Handbook</a>  <a href="#">PRIN 2.1 The Principles - FCA Handbook</a></p>
1.2 Demonstrate the ability to structure and control client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The production of a written agenda the Learner uses in fact-find, presentation, and/or review meetings.</li> <li>• A video/audio recording or transcript of a real-life or roleplay fact-find, presentation, and/or review meeting, with the client's personal details redacted/edited out, which demonstrates meeting control</li> </ul>

meetings effectively	<p>and logical structure, via following a set agenda and bringing the meeting back to the agenda if conversation becomes irrelevant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furthermore, the effective management of different types of client responses such as exaggerations and answering questions with questions.</li> <li>• The use of the TEXAS and IDEA drills when working with clients who could be on the vulnerability spectrum.</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming the Learner exercised control and that the meeting was suitably structured.</li> <li>• A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that the meeting was controlled and structured well by the Learner.</li> <li>• The Learners’ own reflective statement confirming how they controlled and structured the meeting, including the mechanisms and strategies used, examples of the actions taken by the Learner when the client went off on a tangent, and which is evident that the meeting was suitably controlled and structured.</li> <li>• A fact-find meeting observation with this aspect of the meeting graded “effective” or equivalent.</li> </ul>
1.3 Present and explain a set of disclosure documents, including the firm’s business model and how charges work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A video/audio recording of the Learner presenting and explaining a set of disclosure documents, including the firm’s business model and how charges work. This should include all relevant points covered under the Disclosure Documents section of the SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning study text, such as data protection. As an alternative to a video/audio recording or transcript, a video/audio recording or transcript of a real-life client meeting or roleplay to this effect. Explanations should be clear, concise, and compliant, with any unavoidable jargon explained, and the benefits/drawbacks of each part of the disclosure documents explained.</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming the Learner compliantly and competently explained the firm’s disclosure documents, including the firm’s business model and how charges work.</li> <li>• A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that, having been through the disclosure documents with the Learner, they fully understand them, including the firm’s business model and charging structure, and that they felt the Learner went through them in a clear, concise, engaging, and comprehensive way.</li> <li>• A script written by the Learner detailing exactly what they would say in a real-life interaction with a client to present and explain a set of disclosure documents, including the firm’s business model and how charges work.</li> <li>• A fact-find meeting observation with this aspect of the meeting graded “effective” or equivalent.</li> </ul>
1.4 Establish and agree SMART investment planning objectives with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A video/audio recording or transcript of the Learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Educating a client on inflation</li> <li>○ Explaining the SMART method to a client</li> <li>○ Letting the client explain their objectives in their own words</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>the client, including critical assessment of their potential achievability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Confirming with the client whether objectives are realistically potentially achievable</li> <li>● A line manager statement confirming the Learner compliantly and competently established and agreed SMART investment planning objectives with a client, including critical assessment of their potential achievability</li> <li>● A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that, having discussed their objectives with the Learner, that they fully understand what SMART objectives are, and that they feel their SMART objectives are accurate and complete.</li> <li>● Detailed notes recording SMART objectives by the Learner, in the client’s own words</li> <li>● Cashflow models and/or mathematical formulae evidencing the realistic potential achievability of SMART objectives.</li> <li>● Written critical evaluation of the realistic potential achievability of SMART objectives, including justification for any assumptions used such as inflation, charges, personal taxation, and investment returns.</li> <li>● A fact-find meeting observation with this aspect of the meeting graded “effective” or equivalent.</li> <li>● The Learners’ own reflective statement confirming how they explained and established a client’s SMART financial objectives, what they’ve learned, and how they would do things differently in future.</li> </ul>
<p>1.5 Critically assess and agree the risk profile of a retail client, as a combination of their attitude to risk and capacity for loss</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A video/audio recording or transcript of the Learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Educating retail clients on the main asset classes, the relationship between risk and reward, and how risk profiles are assessed. Explanations should be balanced, clear, concise, and compliant, with any unavoidable jargon explained.</li> <li>○ Questioning the client on their knowledge and experience of investment matters</li> <li>○ Employing multiple methodologies to assess attitude to risk, such as questionnaires, indicative minimum and maximum gain/loss figures, written descriptions of the different risk profiles, and example asset allocations.</li> <li>○ Agreeing attitude to risk with the client</li> <li>○ Explaining capacity for loss to the client</li> </ul> </li> <li>● A video/audio roleplay is just as acceptable.</li> <li>● A line manager statement confirming the Learner compliantly and competently critically assessed and agreed the risk profile of a retail client, as a combination of their attitude to risk and capacity for loss.</li> <li>● A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that, having discussed their risk profile with the Learner, that they understand the main asset classes, the relationship between risk and reward, and how risk profiles are assessed, sufficiently to put them in an informed position to agree their risk profile with the Learner, and that they are confident in the assessment of their risk profile.</li> <li>● Detailed notes recording the risk profiling process by the Learner, in the client’s own words, including risk profiling tool outputs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Learners’ own reflective statement confirming how they established and agreed a client’s risk profile, what they’ve learned, and how they would do things differently in future.</li> <li>• A fact-find meeting observation with this aspect of the meeting graded “effective” or equivalent.</li> </ul>
<p>1.6 Explain to retail clients the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A video/audio recording of the Learner presenting and explaining the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies, including CIPs, advised portfolios, managed portfolios, DFM solutions, and ethical/religious investment preferences. Explanations should be balanced, clear, concise, and compliant, with any unavoidable jargon explained, and the main benefits/drawbacks of each strategy explained.</li> <li>• As an alternative to a video/audio recording, a recording or transcript of a real-life client meeting or roleplay to this effect.</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming the Learner compliantly and competently explained the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies.</li> <li>• A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that, having been through the the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies, they fully understand them and were able to make an informed decision as to their preference, and that they felt the Learner went through them in a balanced, clear, concise, engaging, and comprehensive way.</li> <li>• A script written by the Learner detailing exactly what they would say in a real-life interaction with a client to present and explain the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies.</li> <li>• The Learners’ own reflective statement confirming how they explained the investment strategies to a client, and established their preference, what they’ve learned, and how they would do things differently in future.</li> <li>• A fact-find meeting observation form with this aspect of the meeting graded “effective” or equivalent.</li> </ul>
<p>2.1 Produce a professional, compliant suitability report comprising a piece of innovative investment advice, the client’s objectives, the reasons why the advice is suitable, and any</p>	<p>The achievement of this Criterion is fully evidenced via the written assignment. No further evidence is required. However, where innovation was not evident in the written assignment, Learners may provide any <b>one</b> of the following as evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A real-life suitability report, with client details redacted, which has been graded “effective” or “suitable” which involves an innovative solution, with an accompanying explanation of why the Learner thinks the solution is innovative.</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming the Learner produced an innovative piece of investment planning which was graded “effective” or “suitable”, with an accompanying explanation of why the Line Manager thinks the solution is innovative.</li> </ul>



disadvantages of the advice	<b><i>This is only required where innovation was not evident in the written assignment.</i></b>
2.2 Demonstrate the suitability of the advice via deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models	The achievement of this Criterion is fully evidenced via the written assignment. Where no cashflow model is provided, or if it fails the checklist requirements, the written assignment will fail. No further work-based evidence is required.
3.1 Professionally and compliantly present an innovative investment plan, along with corresponding regulatory supporting documents, answering any client questions, and gaining the client's agreement to proceed with the advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A video/audio recording or transcript of the Learner presenting an investment recommendation to a real-life client, or in a roleplay scenario, which includes answering client questions and gaining the client's agreement to proceed with the advice.</li> <li>• The Learner's presentation meeting notes.</li> <li>• A presentation meeting observation with the overall meeting graded "effective" or equivalent.</li> <li>• A line manager statement confirming the Learner professionally and compliantly presented an innovative investment plan, along with corresponding regulatory supporting documents, answering any client questions, and gaining the client's agreement to proceed with the advice.</li> <li>• A customer feedback statement or questionnaire confirming that, having had their advice presented to them, they understand the reasons why the advice is suitable, and any disadvantages of the advice, so that they were in a sufficiently informed position to determine whether they wanted to take the advice or not.</li> <li>• The Learners' own reflective statement confirming how they delivered a presentation meeting, answered client questions, and gained the client's consent to proceed with the advice, what they've learned, and how they would do things differently in future.</li> </ul>

# Examples of Complete Portfolios

Everyone's portfolio will be slightly different depending on their role, circumstances, and access to resources, so we've provided relevant examples rather than dictate "you must do this..."

In each of the following examples, the Learner has provided THREE pieces of evidence. Learners only need two to pass, but three makes for a better portfolio; the achievement of the Learning Outcomes is easier for us to evaluate.

<b>Example 1</b> <b>Simon, a self-employed Financial Adviser.</b>	1. A completed client feedback questionnaire ( <a href="#">freely downloadable from our website</a> ) which is filled out and signed by a real-life client.
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. A one-to-two-page reflective statement outlining the study activities he has completed which demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcomes.</li> <li>3. Full notes (with identifying client information appropriately redacted) from a real-life case, including initial/pitch meeting notes, the completed fact-find and risk report, and any presentation meeting notes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Example 2</b></p> <p><b>Tony, an employed Financial Adviser. His supervisor is Adele.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A completed client feedback questionnaire (<a href="#">freely downloadable from our website</a>) which is filled out and signed by a real-life client.</li> <li>2. A one-to-two-page reflective statement outlining the study activities he has completed which demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcomes.</li> <li>3. A written statement from Adele confirming that Tony has demonstrated the Learning Outcomes in his work.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Example 3</b></p> <p><b>Grace, an employed Paraplanner. Grace has access to Adele, her line manager, and Louise, L&amp;D Manager.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A one-to-two-page reflective statement outlining the study activities she has completed which demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcomes.</li> <li>2. Full notes from roleplay exercises that Grace conducted with either another PIP candidate, Adele, or Louise, including pitch meeting notes, a fully completed fact-find document, and written agendas for the fact-find and presentation meetings.</li> <li>3. A written statement from either Adele or Louise that Grace has achieved the Learning Outcomes and demonstrated them in a training exercise.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Example 4</b></p> <p><b>Greg, a Paraplanner. He doesn't have a line manager or L&amp;D Manager available to help him.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A one-to-two-page reflective statement outlining the study activities he has completed which demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcomes.</li> <li>2. Recorded roleplay exercises conducted with another PIP candidate via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, including pitch meeting, fact-find, and presentation.</li> <li>3. Full notes from the roleplay exercises that Greg conducted with another PIP candidate, including pitch meeting notes, a fully completed fact-find document, and written agendas for the fact-find and presentation meetings.</li> </ol>

# Professional Discussion

A professional discussion is a recorded, structured, one-hour conversation with an Assessor conducted via Microsoft Teams. It includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Competency-based questions related to the achievement of the Learning Outcomes.
- Small roleplay elements, particularly where work-based evidence of soft skills is lacking.
- An opportunity for Learners to present additional evidence of the achievement of the Learning Outcomes outside their written assignment and work-based evidence.

The content of the professional discussion will depend on the portfolio of the written assignment and work-based evidence already presented. Where sufficient evidence has been gathered within the written assignment and work-based evidence for specific Learning Outcomes, the professional discussion will focus more on the Learning Outcomes where evidence is lacking.

Unless otherwise stated, the professional discussion will feature **one** competency-based question or short roleplay for each Performance Criterion, or **three** where there are fewer than three pieces of work-based evidence for a Criterion.

To pass, the Learner must convince the Assessor that the Learning Outcomes have been achieved. It is up to the Assessor whether a Learner's answer is sufficient. Where any answer is insufficient, for which there may be legitimate reasons, the Assessor may ask an alternative question where available, and/or re-word the question to make it relevant to the Learner, so to allow the Learner to provide an answer but without providing an unfair advantage.

Where the Learner is unable to answer the required number of questions to a satisfactory standard for any one Performance Criterion, the evidence for that Criterion will be insufficient and the Learner will not pass the overall assessment.

Given the personal nature of the questions, and the infinite number of possible answers, it is not practical to produce a set of model answers. However, the following principle should apply in addition to the General Principles explained earlier:

**Learners should answer the question asked, followed by an explanation of why their answer helps to evidence the achievement of the Learning Outcomes.**

E.g.

Assessor – *“Tell me about your firm’s charging structure”*

Learner – *“For investment business, we charge a fixed fee of £3,000 plus ongoing of 1% per annum. On a net investment of £100,000 this is approximately £1,000 per annum, and this will increase proportionally*

*if the client's portfolio increases due to investment returns. This evidences the achievement of Performance Criterion 1.3 because the ability to explain our charging structure is a key part of this.*

Where discussions are perhaps more general, and based on established technical knowledge or soft skills, Assessors should refer to the relevant parts of the SCQF Level 9 Practical Investment Planning study text.

Criterion	Question Bank
1.1 Deliver an effective, compliant, professional, structured telephone pitch meeting	<p>Short roleplay of a telephone pitch meeting (webcams turned off).</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about a time you delivered an effective pitch meeting</li> <li>• Explain how you know it was compliant</li> <li>• Tell me about the soft skills you employed</li> <li>• Tell me about the impact of your soft skills on the call</li> <li>• Tell me how you ensured a logical structure to the meeting</li> <li>• What was the outcome of the call, and why do you think this was the outcome?</li> </ul>
1.2 Demonstrate the ability to structure and control client meetings effectively	<p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the agendas you use to structure client meetings</li> <li>• Tell me what you would do if a client started taking the meeting off on a random tangent and you were starting to lose control</li> <li>• Tell me what you would do if you felt a client was exaggerating about their salary and bonus</li> <li>• Tell me a time when you used questioning techniques to gather information from a client to populate a fact-find</li> <li>• Tell me how you would wrap up a meeting</li> </ul>
1.3 Present and explain a set of disclosure documents, including the firm's business model and how charges work	<p>Short roleplay of a presentation of some key parts of the disclosure documents, such as FCA regulation, independent/restricted advice, and the complaints procedure.</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about your firm's charging structure</li> <li>• Explain your firm's business model</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you presented a set of disclosure documents, including how you did it, and its effect on your relationship with the client</li> <li>• Explain the soft skills you use when presenting disclosure documents</li> </ul>
1.4 Establish and agree SMART investment planning objectives with the client, including	<p>Short roleplay of a presentation of some key parts of the SMART objective setting process, including drawing out SMART onto a piece of paper and explaining what SMART means.</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p>

critical assessment of their potential achievability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about how you establish and agree your client’s needs and objectives</li> <li>• Explain how you record your clients’ SMART objectives for the firm’s records</li> <li>• Tell me about a time you critically assessed a client’s SMART objectives as achievable, or not</li> </ul>
1.5 Critically assess and agree the risk profile of a retail client, as a combination of their attitude to risk and capacity for loss	<p>Short roleplay of the Learner educating the client on investment, risk, and risk profiling.</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how you would ensure a client was in a sufficiently informed position to undertake a risk profiling exercise</li> <li>• Tell me about a time you critically assessed and agreed your client’s attitude to risk; what were the processes involved, and how was it recorded?</li> <li>• What were some of the soft skills you employed throughout this process?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time you critically assessed a client’s capacity for loss; what were the processes involved, and how was it recorded?</li> <li>• Explain to me your understanding of “critical assessment” in the context of risk profiling</li> </ul>
1.6 Explain to retail clients the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies	<p>Short roleplay of the Learner educating the client on the main features, advantages, and disadvantages of the main investment strategies.</p> <p>Short roleplay of the Learner educating the client on ethical and religious investment.</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how you would ensure a client was in a sufficiently informed position to provide you with a personal preference for their investment strategy</li> <li>• Describe how you would explain the advantages and disadvantages of an advised/managed/DFM portfolio to a retail client</li> <li>• Explain your firm’s investment process; does it have a CIP, if so, what is it?</li> </ul>
2.1 Produce a professional, compliant suitability report comprising a piece of innovative investment advice, the client’s objectives, the reasons why the	<p><b><i>Only one competency-based question should be asked.</i></b></p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to me how you approached your written assignment</li> <li>• Tell me why you felt your recommended strategy was innovative</li> <li>• Explain to me your creative process for the formatting and layout of your written assignment</li> </ul>

<p>advice is suitable, and any disadvantages of the advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In simple terms, explain the recommendation in your written assignment to me</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional question only to be asked where innovation was not evident in the written assignment.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about a time when you produced an innovative piece of investment advice, and why you feel it is innovative.</li> </ul>
<p>2.2 Demonstrate the suitability of the advice via deterministic and/or stochastic cashflow models</p>	<p><b>Only one competency-based question should be asked.</b></p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to me why you feel the cashflow models you've used in your written assignment help demonstrate the suitability of your advice</li> <li>• Tell me why you used your chosen approach to cashflow modelling in your written assignment</li> <li>• Explain your rationale for the stress tests you included in your written assignment</li> <li>• Explain the reasons for the assumptions for inflation and net return you used in your written assignment</li> </ul>
<p>3.1 Professionally and compliantly present an innovative investment plan, along with corresponding regulatory supporting documents, answering any client questions, and gaining the client's agreement to proceed with the advice</p>	<p>Short roleplay of a part of a presentation meeting, using the client's written assignment and corresponding regulatory supporting documents.</p> <p>Competency-based questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain why you have submitted these regulatory supporting documents with your written assignment</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you closed a piece of investment business with a client / gained the client's agreement to proceed</li> <li>• Tell me about a time you effectively answered a client's question regarding their recommendation within the fact-find meeting</li> <li>• Tell me what you would do if a client asked a question in relation to their recommendation that you didn't know the answer to</li> <li>• Tell me about the process you used when cashflow modelling for your assignment, and why you made the creative decisions you did</li> </ul>

# How We Support Learners

Practical Financial Exams Limited supports our Learners in the following ways:

<b>Study Text</b>	This study text is the core of Learners' study. It has been written specifically to address the Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria in plain English, with technical terms explained, by an investment planning specialist and highly experienced training consultant.
<b>Exam Helpline</b>	Learners have unlimited access to our Exam Helpline via e-mail, by e-mailing <a href="mailto:contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk">contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk</a> . Learners supported by our Deluxe Package have up to three hours' support via Microsoft Teams, and 1-2-1 assessment feedback sessions. Full details are in our Terms of Service, available on our website at <a href="http://www.practicalfinancialexams.co.uk">www.practicalfinancialexams.co.uk</a> .
<b>Fast-Track Week</b>	From time to time, Practical Financial Exams Limited may run Fast-Track Weeks, providing hands-on coaching and support through our accreditation process.

In addition to the above paid-for learning support services, we also provide free content via the News and Insights section of our website, and on our YouTube channel.

*Learners who may require additional support can get in touch at [contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk](mailto:contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk) and we will explain the additional support services available.*

## Scientific Calculator

Learners are likely to require a scientific calculator as they progress through their studies. The model recommended by Practical Financial Exams Limited is the Casio fx-82MS because of its simplicity and two-line display.

*If you can't get it quickly or cheaply, e-mail us at [contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk](mailto:contact@practicalfinancialexams.co.uk) and we'll recommend a suitable alternative.*