End Point Assessment (EPA)

The Consultative Project Guidance

*Level 5 HR Consultant Partner
Apprenticeship Standard*

Guidance for the Consultative Project
Level 5 HR Consultant Partner

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

- The Consultative Project
- Hints and tips on how to write your Consultative Project
- A full list of the Consultative Project Components for Level 5 HR Consultant Partner (These are the criteria against which you will 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 5 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 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 5 HR Consultant Partner. These can be found at the end of this document.

It is 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 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.

There are five project briefs to choose from:

- Deliver a project which creates an HR solution to an organisational problem.
- Lead on the implementation and evaluation of an HR project.
- Take the HR lead on a business change project.
- Take the lead on the development of a new organisational wide HR policy or process.
- Deliver a project which achieves a process improvement within HR.

Alongside your project choice you must also select which following HR specialisms your work will be applied to:

- Core HR
- Resourcing
- Total Reward
- Organisation Development
- HR Operations

If you select Core HR or Organisation Development, you must highlight the subcategory for each of these specialisms on your Consultative Project template:

Core HR
- Employee Relations,
- Performance Management
- Employee Engagement

Organisation Development
- Organisation Development
- Learning & Development
- Talent Management

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 for all 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, Building HR Capability S4.1 you need to be able to demonstrate example(s) of instances where you have taken the lead in developing HR skills.

Part of the Gateway process involves completing and signing the Consultative Project Scope form. Once it has been checked and 'signed off' by CIPD you will then have 10 weeks to complete and write up your 5000-word (+/- 10%) Consultative Project, please ensure that you use **the CIPD Consultative Project Template** in the Level 5 HR Consultant Partner EPA Toolkit.

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

It is 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 really 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 5 HR Consultant Partner 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. with 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 may 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, challenges and issues, how these apply to your role and policies and processes. (K2.1) (K3.1)

It might also include how HR operates in your organisation and any unique features of your sector, measurements of business performance and KPIs (K1.2) (K2.2)

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 what the project will achieve and how it delivers a solution that is appropriate to the organisational context (S1.1)
- Explanation of how you use best practice and emerging thinking in your project or in your role (K1.3)
- Explanation of how technology is impacting the business and the HR function in your organisation (K4.2)

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

It may include:
- Explanation of the main HR functions, HR policies, legislation and procedures within your organisation and where your project will impact these (K1.1)
- Explanation of how the HR function and practices operate with comparison to other sectors and how this may impact the project (K1.2)
- Explanation of the HR systems and how data is managed in your organisation and how social media impacts the business. (K4.1) (K4.2)
- Explanation of your role in leading the project/change programme (S3.1)

Description of the situation, problem or business need – this needs to identify what your chosen project topic is aiming to address/solve/contribute.

It may include:
- Demonstration of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of HR Specialisms or Technical Expertise (K5)
- Justification and feasibility for the project and explanation of the business need and organisational context and legislative implications (S1.1) (S2.2)

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 research you have undertaken and how this has been used in the project or your role (K1.3) (S5.1)
- Explanation of the systems, tools, data, processes, technology, social media used in the role and how these are benchmarked (K4.1) (K4.2)
- Demonstration of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of HR Specialisms or Technical Expertise (K5)

Information gathered – this needs to explain the themes, trends and patterns you have identified and how you have begun to develop your thinking and engage with stakeholders.

It may include:
- Explanation of how you have gathered and used information to persuade stakeholders to adopt solutions (S1.2)

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

It may include:
- Analysis of your research explaining how this has supported your project (S5.1)
- Explanation of the HR and business data you analyse, how you present this and how it is used to track performance. (S5.1)

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.

This could include:
- Explanation of your role in leading the implementation of the project (S3.1)
- Justification for your project based on your findings – how you have advised the business on the interpretation and application of HR processes (S2.1)
- How you have provided clarity, support and advice on applying HR policies, making sound judgements within the boundaries of the law (S2.1) (S2.2)
- Explanation of how you have ensured there is sufficient people capability within the business or within your own team to deliver the project (S4.1)

Implementation – This needs to set out the actions and demonstrate how have addressed the identified problem/situation/ business need from your findings. Consideration of resourcing, costs, metrics, responsibilities, contingences etc.

It may include:
- Explanation of how you have led/implemented the HR project/change plan. (S3.1)
- Explanation of how you have taken ownership of problems and escalated where necessary (S2.3)
- Explanation of how you have led improvements in HR performance and implementation and how advised and coached managers for your project or in your role (S4.1 and 4.2)
- How you have developed HR policies and procedures for your project or in your role (S1.4)
- How you have provided clarity, support and advice on applying HR policies, making sound judgements within the boundaries of the law (S2.1) (S2.2)
- Explanation of how you have adapted HR services to meet different requirements of the business in your project or your role (S1.3)
- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of HR Specialisms or Technical Expertise (K5)

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.

Within the content of your written consultative project you must describe your HR specialism.

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 are being assessed against.

It is not sufficient to simply write about your project using the structure above you must include evidence and examples that show how you have applied your knowledge and skills of the Level 5 HR Consultant Partner Standards.

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 5 HR Consultant Apprenticeship Standard

Hints and tips for completing a successful consultative project

- The project should be written in 5000 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

- Don't try to cram everything you know about HR into your work, focus on the knowledge and skills components, overall project brief and your specialism.

- Write for the assessor. Don't assume they know your role or the organisation you work for.

- Do not use statements such as 'I have experience of working in Employment Law'. You need to evidence your knowledge with examples.

- 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

- 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 5 knowledge and skills.

The Level 5 Apprenticeship Standard Components for the Consultative Project

These are the components you will 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	HR Technical Expertise	K1.1	Good understanding across all HR disciplines, HR legislation and an excellent working knowledge of the organisation's HR policies and procedures.	*Explains what is involved in each of the main HR areas of activity, how these are applied in practice through HR policies and procedures and what relevant HR legislations underpins these.*
		K1.2	Sound understanding of HR in their sector and any unique features.	*Explains how the HR function and practices operate, taking into account the similarities and differences to other sectors.*
		K1.3	Up to date with best practice and emerging thinking – able to use this in their dealings with the business.	*Demonstrates they have researched and applied up to date knowledge in the context of the project.*
K2	Business Understanding	K2.1	Understands what the organisation does, the external market and sector it operates in, its challenges and issues.	*Identifies the industry their organisation serves and the range of products and/or services it offers and provides evaluation of the current business context including current issues and challenges e.g., competitive environment, labour market, demographics.* *Clarification of the external market e.g., financial services, hospitality and competition* *Clarification of the sector the organisation operates in, i.e,. public, private, third sector.*
		K2.2	Understands business and HR KPIs and metrics, building a clear picture of how the business is	*Describes how the business is performing using business and HR metrics (e.g., growth, contraction, market position,*

				performing. Understands the impact of this on their role.	*turnover, profit, performance against budget absence levels, engagement, retention etc)* *Explains how this influences the work they do.*
K3	HR Function	K3.1		Understands the structure and responsibilities of the HR function, policies and processes, and where to source HR specialist expertise.	*Explains how the HR team is structured (i.e., traditional approach generalist/specialist, centres of expertise, business partners, shared services etc.)* *and its core activities around the employee life cycle. Demonstrates knowledge of the policies and processes that underpin these. Explains where they seek advice and guidance on HR matters internally/externally.*
K4	MI and Technology	K4.1		Understands HR systems and where to find HR and management data, both internally and externally, including benchmarking.	*Explains where different forms of employee related data can be found, internally and externally. Also demonstrates where benchmarking information can be found (e.g., internal across dept, external across organisations, year on year comparisons etc.)*
		K4.2		Knows how technology, including social media, is impacting the business and HR.	*Provides examples of how technology (computers, equipment, smart phones, tablets, wearable tech, A.I., V.R. etc.) and how social media impact the business e.g., in terms of ways of working, communication, reputation, branding etc.*
S1	HR Consultancy	**S1.1**		Develops and delivers HR solutions to the business that are appropriate to the organisational context.	*Demonstrates how they have generated and presented feasible HR recommendations/proposals to solve business related issues.*
		S1.2		Influences leaders and managers to adopt appropriate solutions.	*Demonstrates how they have persuaded and gained approval from senior stake holders to implement the solutions/recommendations.*

		S1.3	Provides tailored HR services to the business as required by their role.	*Demonstrates how they adapt HR services to meet different requirements of the business within the context of their role.*
		S1.4	Contributes to the development of relevant HR policies & procedures and/or HR initiatives.	*Demonstrates that they have been actively involved in the development of HR policies, and procedures, or initiatives/ projects.*
S2	Providing Support and Advice	S2.1	Tailors business-centred advice on the interpretation and application of HR policies and processes.	*Demonstrates they have provided clarity, support and advice on how to apply HR policies and processes according to specific circumstances.*
		S2.2	Makes sound judgments based on business need, ensuring the business operates within the boundaries of employment law.	*Demonstrates how they have provided support and advice and exercised professional judgement to ensure the business complies with employment legislation when addressing business needs.*
		S2.3	Deals with escalated people issues and works with the business to resolve them.	*Demonstrates how they provide support and advice on people related problems and collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure a positive outcome when normal HR/business practices have not been successful before.* *This could be where there is a need to deviate from established procedures, an action or decision is required outside scope of authority of those previously involved, or exception handling in some way.*
S3	Contributing to business change	S3.1	Leads the HR contribution to business projects and change programmes to support positive behavioural, business or organisational change.	*Demonstrates they have taken the lead HR role in a business project or change initiative.*
S4	Building HR Capability	S4.1	Leads the improvement of people capability within the business or own team.	*Demonstrates how they have taken a lead role in developing HR skills, abilities & knowledge in others.*

		S4.2	Advises and coaches managers to deal successfully with people issues from a generalist or specialist perspective, incorporating best practice where appropriate.	*Explains how they have advised and coach managers using coaching techniques to build capability to achieve successful outcomes. Guides them on the most effective approach as appropriate.* **best practice is supported by evidence for its impact and effectiveness. Evidence include research, expert options, field lessons and theoretical rationale.*
S5	HR Information Analysis	S5.1	Researches, analyses and presents HR / business data (both internal and external) to provide insight, support solutions to business issues and track performance.	*Explains how they have sourced, examined and evaluated internal and external HR and business data to provide understanding that supports business solutions and enables the monitoring of performance.*

Option – HR Specialisms

You must select one of the following specialisms.

If you select Core HR or Organisation Development, you must also highlight on your project template a subcategory as per the highlighted sections below

	Component Title	Code	Description	What the Assessor is looking for
K5	HR Technical Expertise	K5.1	Core HR Excellent working knowledge of the principles and practices in one of* Employee Relations, Performance Management, Employee Engagement and their application in delivering HR solutions to business challenges	*Guidance:* *Demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of either one of the three Core HR options or one of the four specialist options.* *(Principles i.e., the reasons underpinning the practices/processes involved. Principles include legislation regulations ethics etc.; Practices include processes and activities.)* *The project should demonstrate how they have applied their technical expertise in their chosen option or specialism to create solutions, aimed at resolving a range of specified business challenges.*
		K5.2	Resourcing Excellent working knowledge of the principles and practices of resourcing, covering the complete process, from attraction to induction, including the use of social media and their application in delivering HR solutions to business challenges.	*Specialist area standards:* *Resourcing: covering the complete process from attraction to induction, including the use of social media.*

		K5.3	Total Reward Excellent working knowledge of the principles and practices of reward, compensation and benefits and their application to all levels of the organisation.	*Total Reward: compensation and benefits and their application to all levels of the organisation*
		K5.4	Organisation Development Excellent working knowledge of the principles and practices in one of* Organisation Development, Learning & Development, Talent Management and their application in delivering HR solutions to business challenges.	*Organisational Development:* • *Organisation Development* • *Learning & Development* • *Talent Management,*
		K5.5	HR Operations Excellent working knowledge of the principles and practices of running HR Operations, including a service centre, technology and HR data/analytics to provide services required by the business.	*HR Operations: running HR Operations, including a service centre, technology and HR data/analytics to provide services required by the business.*