

**CPQ ADVANCED STAGE
REPORT BY THE STAGE CHAIR ON CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE
IN JANUARY 2026 EXAMINATIONS**

Overview

Total number of attempts across all modules	Number of Passes	Overall Pass Rate
786	628	80%

The January 2026 session saw a significant increase in candidate entries, representing a 21% rise compared with the June 2025 session. The overall pass rate remained stable at 80%, indicating a consistently strong standard of performance across the growing cohort. Candidates generally demonstrated good levels of preparation and produced responses that reflected the high-quality teaching and support provided by training providers.

The Advanced Stage assessments require candidates to demonstrate specialist technical knowledge, apply legal principles to complex client scenarios, and communicate clearly in an appropriate professional tone. Stronger responses were characterised by logical structure, accuracy, and well-reasoned advice tailored to the client's circumstances. Candidates are also expected to recognise professional ethics issues, and familiarity with conduct rules remains essential.

General Comments

Each Advanced Stage module (excluding the A4 and A5 Professional Skills papers) is divided into two sections. Section A consists of 30 auto-marked questions presented in a mixture of multiple-choice formats. Section B contains a combination of auto-marked and examiner-marked questions structured around a progressive case scenario that reflects realistic client matters.

While many candidates performed well across both sections, weaker responses often lacked fully developed reasoning or relied too heavily on generic legal explanations. Some candidates also struggled with communication tasks, particularly where tone and structure needed to be adapted to the intended recipient. A minority found it challenging to identify relevant ethical issues arising in the scenario.

Overall, candidates who approached the assessment with a clear structure, a strong understanding of the task requirements, and consistent application of legal principles to the facts achieved the highest marks.

Congratulations to all successful candidates on their achievements and to the training providers who supported them effectively.

Grade boundaries

CILEX takes extensive steps to ensure that CPQ examinations are fair, accurate and set at the right level. Prior to releasing results, performance data for each question is scrutinised. The notional pass mark for all Advanced modules is 60%. Where necessary, remedial action is taken—such as adjusting grade boundaries—to ensure that results issued are fair and reflect the true performance of the cohort.

Individual Module Reports

The following module reports have been compiled with the assistance from the Module Leads.

A1 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The pass rate for January 2026 was 75%, consistent with previous sessions despite a substantial increase in candidate numbers. Strong performance was evident in areas such as limitation, track allocation, appeals, settlement offers and disclosure. However, some candidates struggled with practical aspects of litigation strategy, including costs budgeting, issuing and serving Part 7 claims, and drafting witness statements. Candidates who applied procedural rules accurately and logically performed well.

A2 CRIMINAL LAW AND PRACTICE

The pass rate of 72% reflects broadly stable performance. Many candidates demonstrated clear understanding of criminal damage, theft, the Criminal Procedure Rules, pre-sentence reports and the Full Code Test. Weaker responses showed uncertainty regarding bail, plea advice, charging decisions and offences such as manslaughter. There were also difficulties in some answers relating to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. Those performing at the higher end of the cohort presented coherent, well-structured legal analysis.

A3 PROPERTY AND CONVEYANCING

In this session, the pass rate saw a decrease to 53%; however, several candidates performed strongly, with some achieving well into the 80% range. High-performing candidates demonstrated strong understanding of restrictive covenants, adverse possession and registration processes. In these areas, candidates were generally able to identify the relevant legal principles and apply them appropriately to the facts of the scenario. It was also encouraging to see strong answers in response to questions concerning the formalities for the creation of an express trust of land, unregistered title, registration of title at HM Land Registry and remedies. Weaker responses showed difficulty with breach of covenant, limitation, co-ownership and discharge of contract.

Performance in the open-response section also revealed some recurring areas of misunderstanding. In particular, a number of candidates demonstrated uncertainty when dealing with the operation and effect of indemnity covenants in conveyancing transactions. Some responses suggested an incorrect allocation of responsibility between the parties, which led to inappropriate conclusions that were not supported by the correct legal analysis. There were also instances where candidates struggled to identify the correct legal framework for addressing interference with rights affecting land, for example, easements and nuisance. Some responses mischaracterised the nature of the legal right and issue arising and, as a result, proposed remedies that would not ordinarily be appropriate in the circumstances.

These examples highlight the importance of candidates demonstrating not only knowledge of the relevant legal principles but also a clear understanding of how those principles operate in practice and how they should be applied to the facts of a transaction.

A clear application of law to the scenario remained essential for success.

A6 WILLS, PROBATE AND PRIVATE CLIENT

This module continues to perform strongly with a 96% pass rate. Candidates generally demonstrated excellent understanding of will drafting, estate administration and charitable gifts. Many candidates were able to identify relevant risks and provide appropriate advice, with many achieving full marks on several tasks. A small number of weaker responses showed confusion around intestacy rules.

Candidates are reminded to pay close attention to the required output format, for example, a letter. Without noting the context, responses are unlikely to align with the expected content and may limit the range of marks which could be achieved.

A7 FAMILY LAW AND PRACTICE

The pass rate was 73%. As in previous sessions, some candidates performed very strongly, achieving marks well into the 80% range. Candidates performed well on marriage formalities, effects of divorce on wills, legal services orders and non-molestation and occupation orders. Weaker responses revealed misunderstandings relating to domicile, cohabitation and section 25A MCA 1973. Stronger candidates demonstrated clear legal reasoning and sensitivity when addressing child and safeguarding issues.

Overall, candidates who demonstrated both a sound understanding of the legal framework and the ability to communicate advice clearly and appropriately performed well on this paper.

A8 BUSINESS / EMPLOYMENT LAW

The pass rate increased to 88%. This represents a strong performance across the cohort, with some candidates achieving marks well into the 90% range. Candidates performed well across business structures, employment rights and statutory frameworks. Some weaker answers lacked sufficient reference to statutory provisions or case law or demonstrated confusion regarding the roles of shareholders and directors.

A small minority of candidates also lost marks through inaccuracies when referring to key legislation, including provisions of the Companies Act and basic employment law tests. Greater attention to precision and careful reading of the question would help candidates maximise the marks available.

Overall, however, performance in this module was strong, reflecting sound preparation by both candidates and training providers.

SKILLS PAPERS

A4 PROFESSIONAL SKILLS:

DISPUTE RESOLUTION; CRIMINAL LAW & PRACTICE; PROPERTY & CONVEYANCING

January 2026 pass rates remained high at 92% (Dispute Resolution) and 91% (Criminal Law). Performance was strong, with the majority of candidates demonstrating a good level of professional communication and awareness of the relevant ethical and professional considerations. Candidates generally produced well-structured written communications with appropriate tone and clear focus on client needs. Weaker responses tended to be overly dense or included unnecessary legal detail. Candidates should be reminded that the primary focus of this examination is the demonstration of professional skills rather than the provision of detailed legal advice and that they must demonstrate awareness of legal and regulatory frameworks, including relevant Codes of Practice.

A5 PROFESSIONAL AND LEGAL SKILLS:

LEGAL RESEARCH, ACCOUNTS AND COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

Pass rates increased to 94%. The January sitting saw the largest cohort of candidates to date undertaking this assessment. Stronger candidates approached research tasks with a clear structure, identified relevant issues and applied findings effectively. Areas for improvement include defining the scope of research, correctly identifying sources as primary or secondary and ensuring that all aspects of the scenario are fully addressed. Some responses relied heavily on material reproduced from external sources without sufficient analysis or explanation.

Candidates who approached the research task in a structured and analytical way, and who clearly applied their findings to the scenario, were able to achieve high marks. The results reflect the growing confidence of candidates in undertaking practical legal research and related professional skills.