



P1 Professional Skills

Guidance for Trainees

Assessment Guidance V1.5 May 2025

Professional Skills: A Business Report

Module Overview

The aim of this module is to enable you to demonstrate your ability to design and carry out an independent piece of research-based work that directly contributes to the strategic objectives of your legal practice or organisation. With a focus on critical thinking and problem solving, you will independently identify organisational, sector or consumer-based problems, opportunities or issues that require structured research to draw meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

Building on the skills developed through the CPQ, engaging different stakeholder groups, liaising effectively, and appreciating competing interests, you will present a way forward which is viable, aligned to the strategy of your organisation and persuasive.

Learning Outcomes

To support your research, this module will introduce you to, and build awareness of, the knowledge associated with the following learning outcomes. Your chosen research area and business report will determine the extent to which you study the knowledge associated with each learning outcome.

1. Recognise effective leadership and understand how to communicate with and motivate others, exhibiting emotional intelligence
2. Build an awareness of approaches to manage the performance of a team or project
3. Demonstrate a focus on client experience and an awareness of how to build new relationships and business opportunities
4. Build an awareness of how to improve processes and working practices for clients/the consumer and the organisation; evaluate financial impact, risks and compliance with the regulations governing the legal profession.
5. Recognise how to utilise legal technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness

The module will introduce you to the following themes. Note, there is no requirement for the business report to cover a specified number of themes.

Assessment preparation:

- Critical thinking
- Research techniques
- Collection and analysis of data in research
- Structuring and presenting ideas in the business context

Business themes:

- Influencing, negotiation and managing conflict
- Emotional intelligence
- Managing a team
- Managing change
- Managing and driving a project
- Managing stakeholders
- Improving working practices
- Marketing in law firms
- Managing and growing accounts
- Understanding customers, their user experience and product innovation
- Operations in law firms
- Business finance
- Business analysis and creative problem solving
- Making decisions using data
- Legal technology
- System selection and procurement
- Getting started with managing technology/system implementation

Assessment Outcomes

1. Identify and define a problem/opportunity/issue which should relate to your organisation, customer (external client) or team. Where this is not possible, a sector challenge may be used as the basis for the project.
2. Work independently, with an awareness of the commercial viability of the project and its relevance to business.
3. Practice various methods to research the defined problem/opportunity/issue, including the evaluation of data and the review of relevant theory
4. Consider any limitations of the research findings and further opportunities to develop the project
5. Prepare a business report/business case, outlining the project's findings and recommendations
6. Present the report to a high standard

Assessment requirements

- Project proposal form
- Business report between 5,000 and 7,000 words that details research methodology and findings

Meeting Professional Experience Outcomes

When submitting your project proposal form to CILEX, along with your business report, you might consider which Professional Experience outcomes you believe you have met. You can find guidance on how to record the evidence you are using towards your Professional Experience on your myCILEX account.

The Professional Experience requirement of the CPQ may be met by your legal practice experience alone. However, your research project may give you additional evidence or the opportunity to meet some of the commercially aligned competences, as outlined in the CILEX Competency Framework.

Guidance for Trainee CILEX Lawyers

This module requires you to produce a business report based on an independent piece of research that directly contributes to the strategic objectives of your legal practice or organisation.

Your report should not exceed 7,000 words.

Research Area

Establishing your research area and the focus of your report may require you to work with colleagues to really understand how your legal practice/organisation is currently performing, its strategic objectives, and to seek approval for the research task you will be undertaking.

If you are not employed in a legal role, it may be possible to create a report based on data available on the legal sector or a consideration for setting up your own legal entity.

You may find it challenging to identify your reports research statement, but you should:

- Ensure that the research topic focuses on a question, a problem, or an opportunity.
- Ensure that your research area is based on the legal sector/legal function and is strategic in nature.
- Ensure that your research area will link to one or more themes required by the module learning outcomes.
- Start by identifying the main themes/concepts in your research statement - question/problem/opportunity. You might want to do some initial research against those concepts to help you to establish how much information is available, which will indicate if you need to rethink your report title and research area.
- Consider whether your research statement will allow you to achieve the assessment objectives.

The statements below are ideas for research areas which may be refined and adapted, depending on your role, your organisations strategic objectives or your interest.

The statements in italics could be adapted by CILEX members not employed in a suitable role and are potential areas for projects, based on the legal sector or independent business plan.

- Evaluate business performance and make recommendations for improved financial margin.
- Critically evaluate customer journey considerations in the digitisation of business processes in your organisation.
- Evaluate your organisation's brand, marketing, and customer interactions, making recommendations to drive business growth.
- Evaluate the strategic issues facing your organisation's key business function(s) and make recommendations for how to focus activities to respond.
- Explain how data analytics is impacting every aspect of your business, making observations and recommendations.
- Analyse process data and use it to describe the relationship between the process and the outcomes with reference to efficiencies, finance, and risk.
- Critically evaluate the importance of customer centricity through digital transformation in your organisation - internal efficiency of automation vs client expectation.

- *Critically evaluate the opportunity for a new product or service, presenting the case and a clear customer value proposition.*
- *Make justified recommendations about technology platforms and your organisation's uses of emerging technology.*
- *Recognise the culture of the teams and organisation and make recommendations to improve working relationships.*
- *Prepare a new business plan (entity application), considering recent and current changes to the legal services market.*
- *Consider complaints made in the legal sector, drawing conclusions and recommendations for improving access and experience of the consumer.*

Your tutor should not write or change any content you present to them, but they may ask questions for clarification, provide challenge to help clarify your thoughts, provide guidance on the scope to achieve the assessment outcomes and finally, comment on your report structure. Your tutor should not comment on their view of the overall success of the report.

Your report should be a business report; suitable to present to a senior leadership team, and include the following headings:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Findings & Analysis
- Recommendations and Conclusions

Step 1 - Submitting your project and research plan

You should prepare a draft proposal and receive validation from your employer to ensure your research project aligns to the organisation and that you have permission to conduct the relevant research. This is likely to involve data and should be considered as part of your organisations data policies.

It is vital that your proposed project objectives are shared with your Training Provider prior to commencing work on the project. Although formal approval is not required from your training provider, the guidance they can offer you to ensure your project will allow you to demonstrate each of the assessment criteria to a satisfactory level, that you complete the exercise thoroughly and that you work to a submission window, should be viewed as valuable. If your training provider is a university, they may require further internal documentation to be completed to be compliant with policies associated with research projects.

The proposal form, signed by your employer and outlining any comments you have received from your training provider (although not essential), should be submitted to CILEX along with your completed report.

Your submitted proposal form will not be formally assessed by CILEX, and any amendments made to your proposal following the submission will not impact the marking of your report; however, your initial outline is helpful to our examiners so that they may see how your report has progressed through the research you have conducted.

Your proposal should include:

- The title of your proposal
- Your role in the organisation (if applicable)
- Module learning outcomes expected to be met by the project
- Background and context including:
 - The relevance of the research
 - Your relationship with the topic area
 - Research objective(s)
 - Research benefits for your organisation, legal sector, or your own strategic aspirations
 - High level research methodology you will follow, including accordance with GDPR, permission and storage of personal data
 - Possible challenges in conducting the required research e.g., engagement or your organisation or difficulty in accessing data
 - Anticipated submission window

Step 2 - Submitting your report

There is no time limit attached to the completion of your report, but it is anticipated this will take between 6 months and 1 year. To submit your report, you must make a booking before the Examination/Project entry deadline (See Key Dates and Deadlines in myCILEX). You will then liaise with your Training Provider, who will submit the project on your behalf within the submission window (see Examination Timetables in myCILEX). There are two Professional skills project (P1) assessment windows per year - January and June (see Examination Timetables in myCILEX)

- NB. You will not be able to complete CPQ Professional stage and qualify as a CILEX Lawyer until you have submitted your report and passed the module.

Step 3 - Receiving your result

Your report will be marked as Fail, Pass or Distinction.

Where a result of 'Fail' has been awarded, guidance will be shown on the criteria which were not met. All CPQ results are displayed in your myCILEX account.

Where a Distinction has been achieved, the overall result for the CPQ Professional stage will remain a Pass. Your module result will display the enhanced achievement.

Step 4 - Resubmissions

Resubmission of the report will be permitted in the designated assessment windows available to book on myCILEX.

Amendments should be clearly indicated, either via a cover note, track changes or through a font colour.

Up to three resubmissions will be permitted and are bookable via your myCILEX account.

Writing your report

Planning

Identifying a suitable research topic on which you will base your report may be time consuming but is the key to your success. You may choose to focus your report on a development effecting the legal sector; on a live issue your team, department or organisation is facing; an opportunity, whether that be internal working relations, improving operation efficiencies or an opportunity to improve revenue.

We recommend that you discuss opportunities for a suitable project area with your supervisor or with a manager in an area of the organisation which may interest you. The project should have strategic considerations, and the output should be of value to the organisation. You will also need to discuss the availability of information and any data policies you should abide by, particularly GDPR.

Although you are submitting your report to CILEX for final assessment, you may also be presenting your findings to your employer, and so it is important to think about stakeholders in the organisation and who will be reading your report, as part of your planning process.

When writing your report, think about:

- Who will read the report and what are they looking for?
- What they need to know – articulating the context, issue, opportunity, or implications of the research topic
- Keeping stakeholders interested – make the report succinct so that colleagues take time to read it and understand the value of your research findings
- Outcome – your recommendations should be clear and influence next steps

Further considerations:

When working on the scope of your report it is helpful to set clear aims and objectives; it should be clear to anyone reading your report what the purpose is and what you are aiming to do.

You might like to refer to the topics covered by the Professional Skills module learning, as these indicate how you can add depth to your report. For example, have you indicted the implications of interpersonal factors; emotional intelligence, management, or culture? or the financial implications? or risk? Have you considered the consumer's voice, their experience and perhaps, underpinning processes?

Once you know the size and scope of your report you can then start to estimate the work required and the time available to do it. It is also helpful at the planning stage to anticipate potential problems and barriers and how you might address these if they occur.

If you are taking this module as part of the CILEX Professional Qualification (CPQ), of further consideration should be the evidence you are required to demonstrate for your Professional stage Professional Experience, which will be reviewed by CILEX and CILEX Regulation. On completion of your Professional Experience and Professional stage law exam, you will be awarded practice rights in your specialist area. Your professional skills report may allow you the opportunity to evidence many of the behaviours and skills required by that process.

Research

There are several ways to conduct your research.

Engaging with different stakeholders: Collaborating across your organisation and working with colleagues will enable you not only to refine your report title but also to understand different perspectives, work which may already be underway, work which has been completed and any articles/proposals or business cases which may already be in existence. You may also have the opportunity to access crucial data to support your research.

The scope of your project may also allow you to engage with external stakeholders, employees in other legal organisations, academics, or authors of research, and we encourage this.

This is not an academic dissertation and therefore a literature review section is not required; however, embedded into your report, you should explain your research methodology processes/choices, reference key points from literature or other research sources in your analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations to meet assessment objective 2. *Practice various methods to research the defined problem / opportunity / issue, including the evaluation of data where applicable.*

Resources

Your Training Provider will liaise with CILEX to arrange a one - year's subscription to access a range of resources from the Chartered Management Institute. The resources are not essential to gain a Pass/Distinction in the module and therefore, there will be no extension given to the one-year's access. There is no correlation between the length of time taken to complete the project and the membership of CMI.

Writing your report

A business report is a structured form of writing, designed to be read quickly and accurately. This project is not a dissertation and therefore has an advised word count of no more than 7,000 words. The following outlines the conventions of report-writing.

Title: The title should clearly indicate the focus of the report.

Executive summary: This is a brief summary of the report, no longer than one page, which is designed to help the reader decide whether they wish to read the full report. This should be written last and should capture your recommendations.

Please include:

- the purpose of the report
- the areas researched
- a brief overview of the findings
- the key recommendations and take away points

Table of contents: This shows how the report is structured and indicates the page numbers of the key elements.

Introduction: The purpose of the introduction is to set the scene and show how the chosen area of research seeks to address an issue/opportunity of strategic relevance to the organisation or legal sector.

Please include:

- Project rationale - explanation of the organisational context can highlight the key drivers that are influencing the business.
- Aims and objectives of the study; the aim clarifies what the report is trying to achieve while the objectives are more specific and show how the issue will be addressed.
- Scope of the report including any boundaries or constraints that may apply.
- Outline the types of research method you will use to support your recommendations.

Research, findings, analysis, and discussion:

Present your results as clearly as possible for your reader.

- Analyse and interpret the results by drawing on the research you have collected and explaining its significance.
- Suggest explanations for your findings and any outline any issues that may have influenced the results.
- Anonymise your research with individuals unless you have the express written permission of the individual to refer to their response by name.
- You are not required to a literature review section in your report, but you should refer to research methodology, sources (primary and secondary), further reading or different approaches.
- State any limitations of your research.

Conclusions and recommendations:

You should draw together the key issues identified in the report and refer back to the aims and objectives. Has the report achieved what it set out to do?

The recommendations should be of value to your organisation and should enable the reader to make an informed decision. You may present a series of options, with costs, benefits, ROI, and risk considered. You may set out a list of actions with a considered rationale. You might prioritise the recommendations that are likely to achieve the greatest effect.

Your implementation plan/next steps should give some indication of timescales and cost implications. Should further research be recommended, the benefits should be explained.

You should list the publications and other material that you have quoted or referred to in the report itself or as an appendix. The appendix will not be included in the report word count limit.

Referencing will be required, and you might consider Harvard style of citation and referencing. The guidance in Cite them Right!¹ also follows the Harvard style and is used by many colleges and universities.

Appendices: This is a place to put the additional material that is related to the study but not essential to read. Appendices should be signposted from the main report and numbered.

Material in the appendices must add value to the reader/your report.

¹Available at: [Cite Them Right](#)

Standards

CILEX requires your report to be presented to a high professional standard, particularly if this is to be shared with your organisation (this is at your discretion) and if your recommendations are to be considered.

Your report should:

- be your own work,
- be free from spelling mistakes and typographical errors,
- have clear headings that follow a logical structure,
- contain short and concise paragraphs,
- have clearly numbered pages,
- use simple language, and
- properly label graphs, charts, and diagrams.

Marking Criteria

Requirement point	Requirement Detail	Fail descriptor	Pass descriptor	Distinction descriptor
1.	Introduction - Project objectives	Very limited, lacks effective focus and clear rational, poorly defined.	Clearly stated, some relevance, straightforward	Well stated purpose, appropriate and realistic explanation of the context/problem/opportunity
2.	Introduction - research Methodology	No outlined and poor reference to research methodology - no discussion or justification of approach. <i>Basic indication of primary and secondary research, including coverage of relevant literature. Inconsistent referencing</i>	Reasonably explained. Some evidence of a theoretical basis for the research methodology where relevant.	Good coverage, awareness of relevant prior research and any relevant theoretical basis; clear structure; stated selection criteria.
3.	Conducting research	Limited collection of data, poorly identified data. Analysis lack's structure, limited evaluation against unclear or inappropriate criteria, mostly descriptive. A basic coverage of relevant literature. Inconsistent referencing.	Standard approach to collection of data, limited validity, limited and basic, but acceptable evaluation or techniques. Some evidence of a theoretical basis for the research methodology, reasonably explained. The literature referenced offers some additional understanding of the problem/opportunity/development of the project/report	Adopts a standard approach to collection, clear validity and reliability, critical analysis using appropriate techniques and appropriate criteria. Consistent referencing, relevant referenced literature informs and adds to the development of the report title/project; an awareness of strengths and weaknesses of approach.
4.	Analysis and discussion	Findings are not effective; discussion shows no learning from the evidence presented.	Adequate level of critical analysis of findings. Includes discussion of implications of the findings and reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the research or development.	Some links with theory, discussion justified with appropriate evidence, good critical analysis of the implications of the findings, and reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the research or development.
5.	Conclusions and Recommendations	Conclusions poorly justified by evidence; they have a poor relationship to the topic of the report, their development is of poor quality and is unclear. No recommendations for recommendations/ further development are not of practical use. There is a very limited discussion of the implications, and limitations of the research or development. Discussion shows a very limited awareness of theory and attempt to link this to the findings.	Adequate attempt to use evidence to reach appropriate conclusions that relate to the topic of the dissertation, conclusions may be general and uncritical, adequate recommendations/ opportunities for further development	Clear conclusions relating to the topic of the project and justified by the evidence. Identifies and makes clear and persuasive recommendation/opportunities for further development.
6	Clarity and Presentation	Poor presentation of report, many spelling and grammatical errors, difficult to understand, inappropriately structured. Poor citation.	Adequate use of graphics and charts, good command of spelling and grammar, some typos, some omissions or inconsistencies in reference list, most sections have a logical flow and structure.	Clear and effective use of graphics and charts, no spelling or grammatical errors, appropriate and consistent referencing, logical, clear and coherent structure.

Project Proposal Form

(Attach this form to your final report).



Provide the information detailed on this form and submit to your training provider for review.

Once you have received feedback and validation from your employer and training provider you can have confidence to continue with your research project.

This proposal form should be submitted to CILEX along with your final completed report. This should be part 1 of your report.

Qualification	CPQ Professional stage
Module	P1 Professional Skills
CILEX member/candidate	
Employer	
Job title	
Your role and responsibilities	
Training provider	
Lead tutor	

Report title	
Expected date of submission	
☐ Learning Outcomes to be met by your project	
☐ Your relationship with the topic area	
☐ Research objective(s) including the scope	
☐ Research benefits for your organisation, legal sector	
☐ Expected research methodology	
☐ Does your research involve human subjects? By conducting interviews, or focus groups, distributing surveys, or involving them in tests, for example?	

○ Does your research involve any of the following? ➤ Persons under the age of 18 ➤ Vulnerable adults - Deception of participants ➤ Financial inducement, reward or expenses be offered to participants	
○ How many participants will be involved?	
○ What is the age range of participants involved?	

Notice to Candidates

The work you submit for assessment must be your own.

Your report will not be marked if there is evidence of plagiarism or malpractice, procedures will be followed.

Ethical research practices must be followed.

Ethical practice requires that research participants are fully informed about the nature of the research they are participating in and are free to opt-in to the research activity, or to withdraw, at any time. Research participants and their employers where relevant, must give their written consent to the research and you must confirm that a participant's confidentiality and anonymity will be assured, and data securely stored with detail on how long the data will be kept.

Declaration of Authentication

I have read and understood the Notice to Candidates above.

Signed (Candidate)

Date

To be completed by your Employer (where applicable):

Name of Company	
Contact within company	
Project Proposal Feedback	
Feedback	
Signed	
Date	

Training provider:

Training provider	
Lead tutor	
Project Proposal Feedback	
Feedback	
Signed	
Date	

Training Provider Feedback Form

Attach this form to your final report if you have received feedback from your training provider.

Final Report

This form must be completed by the training provider/tutor supporting a CILEX trainee with the P1 Professional Skills report.

Training providers must give comments based on the project proposal form, as well as the final report, in relation to the:

- clarity of the research title
- methodology chosen
- ethical research practices
- proposed structure for the report
- general feedback on what has been written
- specific problems encountered in meeting the project brief submitted

Qualification	CPQ Professional stage
Module	P1 Professional Skills
CILEX member/candidate	
Training provider	
Lead tutor	
Submission 1	
Feedback	
Signed	
Date	

Qualification	CPQ Professional stage
Module	P1 Professional Skills
CILEX member/candidate	
Training provider	
Lead tutor	
Optional submission 2	
Feedback	
Signed	
Date	

Authentication Form



Attach this form to your final report.

This form must be signed by the CILEX trainee submitting a P1 Professional Skills report.

Without a signed form, the submitted report will not be marked, and a resit will be required in the next available window.

Qualification	CPQ Professional stage
Module	P1 Professional Skills
CILEX member/candidate	

Notice to Candidates

The work you submit for assessment must be your own.

Your report will not be marked if there is evidence of plagiarism or malpractice, procedures will be followed.

Declaration of Authentication

I have read and understood the Notice to Candidates above.

I can confirm that the work produced is authentic and my own.

Signed (Candidate)

Date

	BEHAVIOUR 1: COLLABORATIVE	Tick
	Descriptor	
1.1	I encourage openness to ensure people share their views and opinions	
1.2	I establish, and seek to extend, mutually beneficial relationships throughout the organisation involving and engaging the right people at the right time to achieve the designated goals	
1.3	I facilitate collaborative activities and encourage shared ownership for goals and objectives	
1.4	I share my knowledge, expertise and experience and I engage with others to ensure team objectives are met.	
1.5	I pre-empt conflict by addressing underlying issues and I mediate to resolve any existing conflict	
	BEHAVIOUR 2: CRITICAL THINKER	
2.1	I gather information and data relating to the wider business context to understand issues from a broader angle	
2.2	I do not accept information at face value – I look for justification and supporting evidence as to its validity	
2.3	I pull together complex issues to gain a wider perspective	
2.4	I create innovative and integrated solutions to problems to find new ways of resolving issues	
	BEHAVIOUR 3: INFLUENCER	
3.1	I am recognised and respected by the client as a knowledgeable, valued professional	
3.2	I communicate with high impact to inspire others	
3.3	I do not allow myself to be unreasonably dissuaded even against strong resistance	
3.4	I am an accomplished and consistent negotiator	
	BEHAVIOUR 4: DRIVEN TO DELIVER	
4.1	I prioritise, plan and review progress and reschedule activities in line with changing priorities to meet changing business demands	
4.2	I set high standards for personal and team delivery and deliver objectives	
4.3	I embed quality assurance processes and encourage innovation to deliver operational excellence	
4.4	I maintain composure and high levels of performance when under pressure and support my team during such times	
	BEHAVIOUR 5: AUTHENTIC	
5.1	I offer professional, up to date, relevant advice, guidance and opinions to others and am often sought out to do so	
5.2	I am trusted by others to act in the best interests of the team, organisation, and the client	
5.3	I take responsibility for my own performance, behaviour and emotions and role model a consistent way of working to the team	
5.4	I know the limits of my capabilities and I escalate issues when needed	
5.5	I give, seek and act upon honest feedback	
	BEHAVIOUR 6: CURIOUS	
6.1	I explore developments in the legal sector and the wider economic and political environment and gauge their impact on my organisation	
6.2	I take every opportunity to expand my knowledge, skills, and experience and to support the development of others	
6.3	I actively seek out colleagues' and clients' views, perspectives, and opinions	
6.4	I bring new and fresh ideas to inform performance improvement and encourage others to do the same	