

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

ILM Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers

March 2024

Full Programme and Unit Options

1. Who is eligible?

Both school-based applicants and those not working in a school or education setting may be accepted onto the Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers programme. The programme it has replaced was originally referred to as the Certificate of School Business Management or CSBM.

a) Applicants with school business manager experience

As an applicant with school business manager (SBM) experience you will either be:

- employed as an SBM (or equivalent) within a state-maintained school, academy or early years setting
- working for a local authority or the Department for Education with SBM responsibilities (and normally with a school identified where you can carry out work-based study)
- employed as an SBM (or equivalent) within an independent school (home or overseas) – **please refer to section 12**

For the purpose of these programmes, the SBM role is defined as undertaking or having experience of a combination of managing school finances, risk, procurement, marketing or human resources in your daily job, at either senior administrator or management level. Other appropriate roles may include: finance managers/officers, HR managers, school bursars, school administration managers/officers, school office managers, head's PA and senior administrators, etc.

b) Applicants not working in a school or education setting (aspiring applicants)

We also welcome applications from individuals currently operating outside the education sector ('aspiring SBM applicants') but who now wish to pursue a career in school business management.

If you don't have experience of working in a school but think that this might be the profession for you then you will normally need to enrol on our Aspiring School Business Manager programme before applying for the full Level 4 Diploma programme. The programme for Aspiring school business managers explores the challenging role of an SBM and helps prepare participants for the successful study of the Level 4 Diploma programme.

Note: you must have a support school in place before you start the Level 4 Diploma programme.

See the separate Aspiring SBM page on our website www.sbmpartnership.org.uk for more details. Please contact us to discuss your eligibility for the most appropriate programme.

2. Who can apply?

If you satisfy the eligibility conditions of either (a), or (b), above then you can apply for the Level 4 Diploma programme – please submit an online application form on the Level 4 Diploma area of our website www.sbmpartnership.org.uk

You must also:

- **confirm the support of the headteacher and chair of governors at the school supporting your application**
- **be able to commit to approximately 6-8 hours (or more at certain times) of personal study time per week**

3. What are the costs?

Please see the learning centre website www.sbmpartnership.org.uk and access the latest price list (print or download) for details of current prices.

Apply now – pay later. We will invoice you 3 - 4 weeks before your programme starts, so payment is not required at the time of application. ILM accreditation is included in the full programme price (accreditation is an additional cost for individual units).

A month before your programme starts you will be sent a formal **offer letter** by email by the SBM Partnership (via our partners Adfecto). This must be signed and returned to accept your place. Once you have accepted your offer of a place you will be invoiced shortly before the start of a programme or unit (14 days' payment terms).

Payment for a programme must be received before the start date to ensure that you have full access to the materials. Note: this programme is not part of the apprenticeship scheme and does not qualify for apprenticeship funding.

Please refer to our SBM Terms & Conditions document for full details of payment methods and charges.

4. What is the delivery mode?

The Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers full programme is a fully online programme.

5. How will the full Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers benefit me?

- Manage resources within a school more efficiently, effectively and sensitively
- Develop your understanding of the purpose of business management in a school context
- Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of business management operations within a school
- Understand the nature of school business management
- Links to the ISBL Professional Standards.
- Demonstrate the impact of your professional learning on yourself and on a school setting

Aims

The qualification’s aim is to provide learners who are new or aspiring school business management (SBM) professionals with the knowledge and skills required to progress in their career and on to further study.

The Level 4 Diploma comprises **four** mandatory units:

- Leading Support Services
- Finance in a School
- Human Resources Management in a School
- Procurement in a School

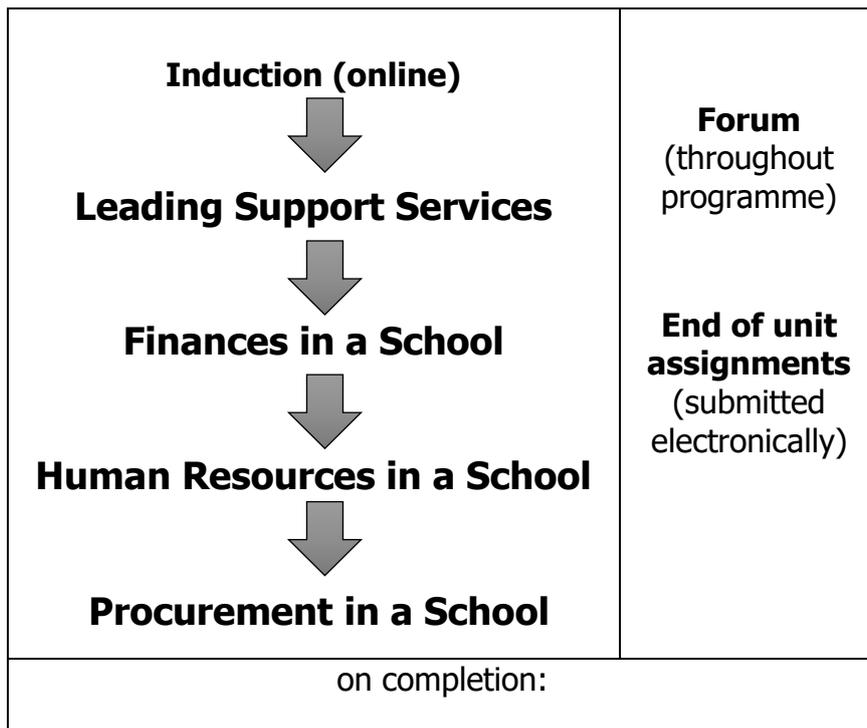
Career objectives

We recognise that participants on the programme will be at different stages in terms of their career development. Some will be experienced business managers who wish to consolidate and extend their skills in particular areas; some will be comparatively inexperienced and seek to extend their skills; some may be new or potential SBMs, perhaps with experience in a related profession, who are now seeking to transfer those skills to the new context of school business management.

6. What is the structure of the full programme?

You will follow a structured programme over a 15-month period (approx.). This begins with an online induction week which introduces you to online learning and our e-learning resources, and then includes a combination of online learning and resources and online facilitator support. The programme is essentially a self-study distance learning course. If you are interested in a higher level of individual support from coaches, etc, then you might wish to consider the Level 4 School Business Professional apprenticeship (see website for more details).

Units are studied in consecutive blocks of approximately 14 - 18 weeks. There are **four mandatory units** to complete to achieve the full Level 4 Diploma qualification (see diagram):



Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers (ILM)

Are there any study options?

Selected units can also be purchased and studied as online individual, self-contained units (see also next section). If you follow one of these pathways and then decide, within 12 months of starting them, to apply for the full programme, any unit(s) you have successfully passed will count towards your final qualification.

We suggest that if you want to complete the full qualification but are unsure about making such a commitment, then the best pathway would be to complete one individual unit (IU) first and then sign up to the full programme to complete the qualification. This route will cost more than studying the full programme in one go, but also ensures that you maintain continuity of studies if you did want to split the course up.

Please email us if you are thinking of signing up to one or more IUs, and also for more information about using individual units as a step towards completing the full qualification.

7. What happens if I complete an Individual Unit and then decide to study the full programme?

Sometimes you may want to “test the water” and try one (or more) individual units before committing to the full programme. You may need to submit a fresh application for the full programme (contact us to discuss), but you will not need to study the unit(s) you’ve already completed again.

Two stand-alone individual units are available:

- **Finance in a School**
- **Human Resource Management in a School**

The Finance and HR units can count towards the full qualification if you study one of them and then decide to move on to complete the full programme. See section 10 below for information on each unit’s content.

If you study just **one** individual unit and then register for the full programme, we will deduct part of the unit price you have already studied from the cost of the full programme but you must start the full programme within a year of starting your unit (see Terms & Conditions for details). This is the most cost-effective option if you do not want to study the full qualification in a single intake.

However, if you study more than one individual unit and then decide to complete the full programme, we will only deduct a small portion of the cost you have already paid. Please email sbmpartnership@serco.com for more details (also see below for conditions).

See separate Price List for more details.

Important: You can only complete the full Level 4 Diploma by enrolling onto the full programme at some point.

You must start the full programme within 12 months of starting your most recent individual unit to qualify for a cost deduction.

For an individual unit to count towards your final Level 4 qualification you must complete the full programme within 3 years of starting your individual unit.

If you want your individual unit payment to be deducted (in part) from the final cost of the full programme, then you must start the full programme **within 12 months** from the start of your individual unit (or from the start of the last individual unit if you have completed more than one).

Contact: sbmpartnership@serco.com

Once you join the full programme having studied an individual unit(s), your facilitator will be made aware that you have already completed a part of the programme. We do however recommend that you review the Induction materials again (especially if it has been more than a few months since you completed your individual unit).

In addition, as we are constantly reviewing and updating our materials, it is possible that some of the policy and/or other documents may have been updated since you studied an individual unit(s) previously. It may be useful to briefly review the unit materials again to check that there have been no significant changes since you completed the individual unit.

If you have any further queries about studying one, or more, individual unit(s) and then continuing onto the full programme please contact us directly.

8. Will I get the chance to meet or network with other SBMs?

Both the full programme and the single unit options will provide you with the opportunity to discuss issues with fellow SBMs through the online discussion areas that each learning group has access to.

Research has shown that participants who engage well with their programme peers generally achieve a higher level of success on completion than those who choose not to engage. We believe that the networking opportunities provided are one of the programme's most valuable aspects.

9. What will I study?

After the one-week Induction phase you will then start the first unit, beginning with details of the structure, content, guidance for study time (to help keep you on track) and the assessment process.

The four mandatory units you will study are outlined in brief below:

a) **Leading Support Services in a School**

Leading Support Services in a School aims to develop the learners' knowledge and skills relating to leadership and development in a school, managing change and policy and legislation that affects schools. It involves understanding leadership and development in a school, and equips learners with the knowledge and skills required to lead, develop and co-ordinate support services within a school or trust.

This unit underpins the Level 4 and can only be studied as part of the full Level 4 Diploma programme.

b) **Finance in a School**

Finance in a School aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to support finance decisions in a school, contribute to budget planning and delivery and how to manage financial control systems. It develops an understanding of school budget planning and delivery. The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the management of finances in a school.

It is a mandatory unit on the full programme and also available separately as an individual unit.

c) Procurement in a School

Procurement in a School covers content relating to procurement strategy, managing the tendering process, and supporting contractor and supplier management. The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the tendering process to ensure value for money and oversee the management of contractors and suppliers in a school environment.

This unit underpins the Level 4 and can only be studied as part of the full Level 4 Diploma programme.

d) Human Resource Management in a School

The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to manage human resources within a school environment and ensure regulatory and legal compliance. The HR unit includes: Understanding how employment and discrimination law impact school operations; reviewing school staffing structures; recruitment and selection processes, plus other sections on reward and recognition, etc.

It is a mandatory unit on the full programme and also available separately as an individual unit.

Please refer to our main SBM Partnership Level 4 web page to see programme dates and prices: www.sbmpartnership.org.uk

10. How will I be supported and be assessed?

As with most distance learning and e-learning courses, the ILM Level 4 programme is mainly a **self-study course**, although you also receive some online support and assignment feedback from your facilitator.

Your facilitator helps facilitate and direct your learning, builds on your existing knowledge base and provides support where appropriate.

Facilitator v Tutor roles

The Level 4 Diploma programme is delivered and supported by facilitators. A *facilitator* differs from a *tutor* in important ways. A tutor usually acts more as a teacher and tends to impart knowledge. A facilitator helps participants or a learning group to 'find answers' to their questions rather than just 'telling them the answers' (as a tutor might typically do).

Support is available via colleagues and your facilitator through the easy to use online forum areas for each study group.

Assessments

These are usually submitted electronically as assignments, project reports or shorter written assignment tasks as part of a portfolio. To help you to prepare for the assessment of each unit, you will receive concise feedback on certain elements of your work within the relevant study window. Details are provided at the start of the programme.

If, for any reason, a participant does not achieve a pass for the first submission of an assignment, then they are able to resubmit within a fixed resubmission window (conditions apply).

11. Guidance for participants from the independent sector (and overseas participants)

Although the Level 4 programme materials are designed around the maintained sector in England, we do attract a number of participants from the independent sector too.

If you are a participant from the independent sector, please note that some assessment tasks will be centred on practice within the maintained sector and a guidance document will suggest how you can approach these tasks. Some of these questions can also be answered from the perspective of independent schools. The separate guidance document is available once you start the programme.

Note: The guidance information is also useful for overseas participants.

If you are an applicant from an independent school, or an overseas applicant, we recommend that you discuss your application with us first.

12. Is the programme accredited?

The Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers programme is accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). ILM accreditation is included in the full programme cost but is an additional cost for individual units. For details visit our website: www.sbmpartnership.org.uk/level-4-diploma-csbm/ilm

13. What if I don't think I'm ready for the Level 4 Diploma yet?

Should you be concerned about the level of your experience you may wish to consider undertaking our School Administration Foundation Certificate (delivered at Level 3 standard), before you begin the Level 4 Diploma.

If you are not currently employed in a school, academy or similar setting, we recommend that you start with the short Aspiring SBM programme – see further details on our website or call our team to discuss what is best for you.

The FAQ document should be read in conjunction with the latest *SBM Terms and Conditions* document available on our website for more information.

Contact us

See website for further programme details: www.sbmpartnership.org.uk

Contact Serco at: sbmpartnership@serco.com
T: 0121 2815215 (office hours)

Alternatively contact Adfecto at: sbmpartnership@adfecto.org.uk
T: 01242 220 684 (office hours)

Updates

Some details may from time to time be subject to change without notice as part of our normal programme review and improvement process and therefore they should be regularly checked. The continued use of the site or a programme activity after a change has been made is your acceptance of any changes.

SBM Partnership



The School Business Management Partnership is a collaboration between Serco, Adfecto and ISBL (Institute of School Business Leadership) to jointly deliver school business management programmes.

Revised March 2024