



Ministry  
of Defence

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Our Reference:  
FOI2015/07383

Date: 23 Sept 2015

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your enquiry of 25 August 2015 relating to information about the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Certificate of Competence (CoC). You requested the following information.

- 1. the statistics behind your email ie what 'period of grace' was offered and how many students submitted their CoC accordingly, and how many students fell through the net*
- 2. your correspondence with CIPS at the time and to the present date i.e, the notification from CIPS, discussions regarding exemptions*
- 3. copies of information regarding the requirement to submit CoC to CIPS disseminated by Commercial Capability within ABW*
- 4. why students were allowed to commence and continue at level five and six with no valid level four qualification*

I am treating your enquiry as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held. I will answer your questions individually below.

- Information on the 'period of grace' offered by CIPS is not held by the MOD. Under Section 16 of the FOI Act (advice and assistance), I can advise you that the last CoC examinations were held in April 2012 and the last date for CoC submissions was 31 May 2013. The MOD is aware of six successful CoC submissions between June and October 2014. Since September 2014, MOD records indicate that seven people have not been granted an exemption for their CoC, but the reasons for this are unique to each individual's circumstances.
- The only correspondence held between the MOD and CIPS regarding exemptions is that relating to personal cases. As such, these emails fall within scope of absolute exemption Section 40(2) of the FOI Act and have been withheld in order to protect personal information, as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Under Section 16 of the Act (advice and assistance) you may, however, be interested in an email which the MOD received from CIPS after you submitted your FOI request which is attached at Annex A. This provides some limited comments from CIPS on the exemptions. For

completeness, the attachment referred to in the email is also included; this is the certificate outlining the accelerated entry programme published at the onset of the CoC. Also attached is a further email, at Annex B, between the MOD and the Defence Academy, which offers some general thoughts on the CoC, exemptions and the CIPS qualification. In accordance with Section 40(2) of the FOI Act, names on the emails have been redacted.

The MOD holds no further correspondence between the Department and CIPS on the CoC exemptions.

3. Due to the length of time that has passed since any announcements would have occurred, the only information that the MOD has been able to locate which highlights the requirement for MOD staff to submit CoCs to CIPS is a *Commercial Break* article published in spring 2013. This is attached at Annex C.
4. In answer to your final question about students proceeding to levels five and six of CIPS, the email from CIPS attached at Annex A states that "*students are able to study the qualifications in whichever order suits them, we have many people who want to learn specific units and these may not be on concurrent levels therefore we allow people to take the qualifications in various orders*". No further information is held by the MOD.

Under Section 16 of the Act (advice and assistance), you may find it useful to contact CIPS directly for further information about the qualifications and exemptions which may apply. You can contact CIPS at [CIPSCapitasupport@cips.org](mailto:CIPSCapitasupport@cips.org). You can also find some useful information on the CIPS website at <http://www.cips.org/en-GB/Qualifications/About-CIPS-Qualifications/exemptions/>. For MOD-specific guidance, you can contact the Commercial Capability team at [DefComrclCap-Enquiries@mod.uk](mailto:DefComrclCap-Enquiries@mod.uk).

You may also find the attached MOD commercial policy statements useful, as they include information about the CoC, and guidance on CIPS membership and qualifications published during the relevant period. These are at Annex D and E. Later versions of the CoC policy statement were updated to reflect the discontinuation of the CoC.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

