

Chartered Banker

Leading financial professionalism

RDR – PREPARING FOR HIGHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Higher professional standards for those providing investment advice is viewed by the regulator - the Financial Services Authority (FSA) - as crucial to increasing trust in and restoring consumer confidence in the sector. The FSA has set a deadline of December 2012 for existing advisers to meet the new standards, raising the minimum level of qualification from QCA Level 3 to QCA Level 4, allowing them to continue working as advisers.

Flexible qualifications and a commitment to training from employers are key to advisers (deemed competent as at 30 June 2009) meeting the December 2012 deadline. Each adviser will be at a different stage of development and experience and will therefore have differing needs in reaching the new standards.

To identify the gaps between an existing adviser's current knowledge and skills and make for a successful transition to the new standards, the Institute launched a Diploma in Investment Planning – Existing Advisers (DIP), designed specifically for the retail banking market. The DIP, which is on the FSA's list of 'appropriate qualifications' for the new standards, focuses on practical learning and includes a range of case studies using situations reflecting advisers' day to day roles. The emphasis is on advisers' ability to apply their knowledge to provide sound advice to customers in a clear way.

Simon Thompson, Chief Executive of CIOBS, commenting on the new qualification and the role of the Institute explained: "One of the key outcomes of the FSA's Retail Distribution Review (RDR) has been the requirement for those giving and selling advice to raise their professional standards. As the UK's only remaining professional banking institute, we realise that the RDR poses particular challenges for the retail banking sector. The launch of the Diploma in Investment Planning for existing advisers, together with the Institute's programme of continuing professional development, centred around professionalism and ethics, will support advisers in maintaining their commitment to the new standards."

CIOBS's industry-leading experience of using online technology to provide examinations means that candidates can take the paper when they are ready and in line with their organisation's operational needs, rather than waiting for a set date and results are issued within six weeks.

This practical focus, taking a structured approach to meeting individual advisers' needs and allowing them and their customers to reap the benefits well ahead of the 2012 deadline, was largely behind a leading bank's decision to enrol 800 of its Financial Planning Managers throughout the UK in the DIP.

The Institute also offers a Diploma in Investment Planning – New Advisers, designed for advisers in the retail banking market who need to meet the FSA's new professional standards.