



# Excit-ING!

Staff at the bank's Reading and Cardiff call centres pressed for a recognised professional qualification. ROWAN MORRISON discovers how the Institute provided a solution to fit their ambition.

**T**his summer, ING Direct responded to staff requests for professional banking qualifications by launching an important new learning initiative with CIOBS. As a result, the Institute is now

providing qualifications – “such an exciting initiative” – to employees across ING Direct, including all members of its Executive Committee.

ING Direct is a forward-looking direct bank which prioritises professionalism. Launched in the UK in 2003 with a focus on savings accounts, it has added mortgages and insurance to its mix, operating from call centres in Reading and Cardiff. Input from its staff there showed that they wanted to undertake a professional qualification, specifically focused on banking.

“Employee engagement is part of our culture,” explains Rhian Langham, Head of Organisation Development, “and it’s one of the

things which sets us apart as an employer. We’ve always offered a lot of internal learning and development and quite frequently ask staff what they’d like to see in their learning and development pathways.

**“TAKE UP HAS ALREADY BEEN FANTASTIC, EXCEEDING THE NUMBERS WE EXPECTED. THE WHOLE EXECUTIVE TEAM IS ALSO UNDERTAKING SMART CHARTERED BANKER.”**

“Last year, we were hearing more and more that people were looking for a professional, recognised qualification that embraced the sector we’re working in, particularly from our call centre staff.” Alongside the desire for a recognised qualification was the aim to widen





# Chartered Banker

The voice of financial professionalism

“WE’VE ALWAYS PLACED A VALUE ON PROFESSIONALISM, BUT THESE QUALIFICATIONS GIVE AN IMPORTANT SEAL OF APPROVAL – AND ADDITIONAL KUDOS TO OUR STAFF.”

## Professional Banker Certificate/Diploma (PBC/PBD)

The Professional Banker Certificate is an introductory qualification for individuals working in retail, business and private banking environments. It requires no prior learning or qualifications and is available to individuals wishing to demonstrate their commitment to professionalism.

The Professional Banker Diploma involves the completion of the Professional Banker Certificate together with two additional modules.

banking knowledge and increase personal development.

After looking at several providers, ING Direct chose CIOBS. “We met people from the Institute and could see that its culture would fit well with ours,” Langham recalls. “We were impressed that the qualifications being offered were very much about banking and targeted towards the areas we work in.”

At June open days in ING Direct’s Cardiff and Reading centres, Institute and Bank representatives provided information and examples of course material, and answered questions about the qualifications. More than 100 people confirmed they’d like to undertake the Professional Banker Certificate (PBC).

“We’ve held open events like this before, but not with an external qualifications provider on this scale,” says Langham. “The willingness to be ‘hands on’ and the enthusiasm for this approach was one of the things that made the Institute stand out to us. And having the road shows definitely increased take-up of the qualifications, which was great.”

Starting at PBC level, staff will also have the opportunity to progress to the Diploma or Advanced Diploma if they wish. “Take up has

already been fantastic, exceeding the numbers we expected. The whole Executive Team is also undertaking SMART Chartered Banker, which provides a flexible way to achieve Chartered Banker status by recognising senior roles and responsibilities.”

ING Direct is also applying to be accredited as an Exam Centre, so staff can sit Institute exams conveniently on-site. “We’ll wait to get the first group of people through the PBC and see how it worked for them, the amount of time it took, and so on,” says Langham. “Then we’ll look to move people through to the Diploma if this is the route they want to take.”

She continues: “We’ve always placed a value on professionalism, but the CIOBS qualifications give an important seal of approval to what we already do. We’ve had this focus internally, but holding a recognised qualification gives additional kudos to our staff in meeting external expectations around quality and customer service.

“Investing in these qualifications has made our staff feel valued, particularly in our call centres where people can say that, within six months of starting, they’re already undertaking a professional, recognised qualification.

“We’re really pleased with the way things are going so far. It’s been such an exciting initiative to launch!”



## SMART Chartered Banker

The Senior Management Accelerated Route to Chartered Banker status (SMART CB), allows senior banking professionals to gain Chartered Banker status in a way which recognises and underlines prior learning plus existing experience and knowledge, in the form of a Masters level qualification.

It is a common-sense approach, which ‘fast-tracks’ candidates through this qualification, allowing those already demonstrating high level on-the-job experience to achieve Chartered Banker in under one year.

For more information, go to: [www.charteredbanker.com/Home/Qualifications](http://www.charteredbanker.com/Home/Qualifications)