



The National Training Strategy
for Town & Parish Councils

The Portfolio Guide

Certificate in
Local Council
Administration
(CiLCA)
2013

Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA): The portfolio of evidence

This guide, published by the Monitoring and Verification Board (M&VB), helps you to put together your portfolio of evidence and gain credit as a qualified clerk. The certificate issued for completing the portfolio successfully is an important feature in your council's application for Quality Parish status. To gain Quality status a council must fulfil a checklist of requirements – known as the quality test. One of these requirements is for a qualified clerk.

Areas of knowledge and skills in which all clerks must demonstrate competence are represented by standards at foundation (core) level, introduced by the National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils in November 2001. Your task is to compile a portfolio of evidence of competence in these areas in order to achieve the first level of qualification for clerks. A clerk with the formal qualification, awarded by the M&VB, is essential if your council is to obtain Quality Parish status. The qualification is known as the 'Certificate in Local Council Administration'.

The CiLCA is also the basic qualification for membership of the Institute of Local Council Management, whose aim is to support and develop professionalism in local council management. Further information on the Institute can be found on the website of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) at www.slcc.co.uk

Note that holders of the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy (or its predecessor and successor qualifications), awarded by the University of Gloucestershire, do not need to take the CiLCA, as qualification has already been demonstrated and assessed through this advanced training course. They will, however, need to take additional single modules from time to time to maintain qualified status.

If you work for more than one council the cost of training and fees should be shared by the councils concerned. (You may also include papers/examples from more than one council providing the source is clearly indicated). Do note however, that the Certificate is a personal qualification awarded to the clerk rather than to the council or councils for which you work.

This guide explains how to present your evidence and outlines the process of compiling and submitting the portfolio for marking.

Who can take this qualification?

Anyone can undertake the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). Although it is has been designed predominantly for parish and town council clerks, it can be undertaken by assistant clerks, aspiring clerks, councillors, staff of county associations of local councils or anyone with an interest in the sector generally. All you need is access to a parish council's papers and guidance from a trainer on how to compile your portfolio of evidence. The more experience you have, the easier it will be for you to compile the portfolio. However we recommend that all candidates enrol on a course (and there are many available to suit all needs) via your nearest County or Regional Training Partnership (C/RTP) prior to attempting the portfolio. There are more details in the pages to follow.

How do I register?

Your first step is to register. This is done by acquiring a registration form from your nearest C/RTP.

You can complete the portfolio on the basis of experience but you are strongly advised to attend training courses through your C/RTP. If there is no C/RTP in your county you can approach a C/RTP elsewhere for advice and information. C/RTP contact details as well as information on registration can be found on the websites of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) at www.nalc.gov.uk and the SLCC at www.slcc.co.uk . But remember, your first point of contact must be a C/RTP.

The portfolio

There are three types of evidence required for the portfolio to demonstrate your skills, your knowledge and your understanding.

- Copies of existing/draft documents
- Lists of information
- Short written explanations

If you are not normally responsible for producing the documentation listed, or if you have not been with the council for very long, you must demonstrate your awareness of best practice by writing comments and suggestions on copies of council documents produced by someone else. You highlight the good points and make recommendations for change.

When you are asked to write short paragraphs explaining your understanding of a topic, you are expected to use your own words rather than copying from other sources unless you acknowledge the source from which you quote.

How is the portfolio organised?

Please include the following:

1. A title page including your full name, the name of your council(s) and the date of submission
2. The two pages giving formal details and signed statements (copied from pages 6 & 7 of this guide)
3. A contents page matching the list of evidence on page 8.
4. An introductory page giving details of the organisation(s) for which you work, the communities it serves and your role in the organisation. If you are not a clerk then explain why you are taking the qualification to give some context to your submission. (This introduction should be approximately 200 words).

Methods of compiling the portfolio:

- Hold the papers together with treasury tags. (An A4 ring binder is awkward to post but is probably a good way of keeping the material together in the right order *until* submission, but do not post it in a folder)
- Do not use plastic pockets for individual pages or sets of pages.
- Arrange the contents in the same order as the schedule of topics given in the guide that follows.
- Number and title the items to match the schedule.
- Dividers with numbered tabs (1-24) help verifiers find their way around more easily.

What happens to the portfolio once it is completed?

You are advised to take a full photocopy of your portfolio before submission. This is a precaution in the unlikely event that any of the items go missing.

Once your portfolio is completed you are required to send it to CiLCA Administrator, SLCC, 8 The Crescent, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4EA. The SLCC will then send it to a designated verifier.

The verifiers are subject specialists who make professional judgements evaluating your evidence against agreed objective standards. These criteria include the characteristics of each item that are essential and acceptable if the document is to demonstrate competence. All verifiers follow strict guidelines issued by the Chief Verifier and are regularly assessed to ensure that standards are maintained.

Outcomes of the marking process

You may be awarded either a pass or distinction. You are awarded a pass if your work meets the pass criteria for each topic. Note that the word limit must be observed to secure a pass.

A Certificate with Distinction will be awarded if the verifier is of the opinion that overall the evidence presented in the portfolio is excellent or outstanding in comparison with good work which meets all the pass criteria. Distinctive work will be a precise and sound interpretation of the task, presented in a clear and concise, yet detailed, manner. It will be an accurate representation of appropriately selected information showing sound judgement on the part of the candidate.

If your work reaches the standard required, you will be notified of your success. The verifier will inform the SLCC who will issue your certificate.

If your portfolio does not reach the required standard (even if this relates to only one criterion), you will be given the opportunity to make a re-submission. You are given 6 months to complete the re-submitted sections of your portfolio from the date on which you are notified of the outcome. If you fail to resubmit within 6 months you will be required to re-register with the full fee of £150 payable. You are required to pay an additional resit fee, the Resit Form and information on fees can be found on the websites of the SLCC, NALC , or by contacting your County Training Partnership. If you wish to have any or all of your failed sections returned to you in order to aid your re-submission please contact the SLCC CiLCA Administrator.

Your portfolio will be held at SLCC Headquarters in Taunton for 3 months. After this time your portfolio will be returned if you tick the relevant box on the formal details page. If you do not tick this box your portfolio will be destroyed.

The Chief Verifier takes random samples of portfolios to check that verification standards are maintained. In the event that you are dissatisfied with the result of your submission, there is a formal appeal process, with the Chief Verifier acting as ombudsman.

The certificate is awarded by the Monitoring and Verification Board (M&VB) The M&VB is the:

- Awarding body for the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), the core professional qualification for clerks to parish and town councils in England and of clerks to community and town councils in Wales (CiLCA Wales);
- 'Recognising body' of training provision for the local council sector. This will support the 'continuous professional development' of clerks.

It performs these functions on behalf of the following membership bodies within the local council sector in England and Wales: the National Association of Local Councils; One Voice Wales; and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Further assistance

If you have queries concerning your portfolio, contact your County or Regional Training Partnership for parish and town councils or your training provider. Details of these can be found on both the NALC and SLCC websites.

For other information, contact the officer supporting the National Training Strategy for Town and Parish Councils at NALC by email at nalc@nalc.gov.uk

Portfolio: Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)

Formal details

Please print clearly

Full name	
The name to be put on your certificate	
Your home address	
Your daytime telephone number Your evening telephone number	
Your e-mail address	
The name(s) and address(es) of the council(s) or organisation for which you work	
Your position in the council or organisation	
The date of submission	

Please continue overleaf.....

The name and address of your training provider (Including section 7, The general power of competence)	
Inclusive dates of related course(s) undertaken Date of general power of competence training	
Certificate(s) awarded for training completed successfully	

	Please sign in this column
I take full responsibility for the contents of this portfolio, and confirm that I have read and understood the Monitoring & Verification Board's Policy on Plagiarism	
I am aware that the Society of Local Council Clerks and the C/RTPs will create and maintain computer and paper-based records containing course-related personal data and that these records will be used for administration and monitoring statistics as required.	
I agree that my contact details may be disclosed to organisations associated with council training.	

	Please place a tick in this column
Please indicate if you wish to have your portfolio returned to you by placing a tick in the box opposite.	

The evidence

For the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)

The portfolio is organised into six topics with twenty four sections. The evidence required for each topic is explained in the next few pages. In presenting your portfolio it is important to keep to the order of headings given below. When completing your portfolio you may approach the sections in any order providing your final presentation is as follows:

Topic	No	Section
Roles and Responsibilities	1	Roles, duties and responsibilities of chair, councillors, clerk and council
	2	Employment issues
	3	Continuing professional development
	4-5	Public relations and communication
Law	6	Powers and duties of local councils
	7	The general power of competence
	8	New legislation and sources of advice
Procedures	9-10	Agenda setting and meeting procedures
	11	Standing orders and committees
	12	Freedom of information
Finance	13-14	Accounting and statutory guidance
	15	Budgeting, precept and income
	16	Grant awarding policies
	17	Insurance
	18	Sources of advice on financial matters
	19	VAT
Planning	20	The planning framework
	21	Effective observations on planning applications
Community action	22	Partnership working
	23	Funding sources
	24	Community engagement

Each section is a separate test of your skills and knowledge, for this reason you must reach an acceptable standard in each of the 24 sections to achieve a pass.

Schedule of topics

Roles and responsibilities

1	<p>Roles, duties and responsibilities of chair, councillors, clerk and council</p> <p>Your task is to explain the different roles, duties and responsibilities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The clerk• Councillors as individuals• The chairman• The council as a corporate body. <p>Write approximately 200 words on each role – a total of 800 words.</p> <p>Where relevant, refer to the statutory basis of the position.</p>
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Pass criteria

- A clear response to each element of the task
- A precise explanation of each role as required
- A good understanding of the duties and responsibilities inherent in each role
- An accurate description of the statutory requirements and legal basis of each role

2	<p>Employment issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List the standard terms and conditions you would expect to see in a clerk's contract of employment.• Submit a person specification and job description tailored to your council for the post of clerk.
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Pass criteria

- A list of standard terms and conditions contained in a clerk's contract of employment
- Documentation appropriate to your council
- Clearly integrated but separate person specifications and job descriptions

3	<p>Continuing professional development</p> <p>Write a short explanation of your training needs for the next year (approximately 200 words). Identify the areas of your work that you feel you need to work on and suggest opportunities for training that will meet those needs. This should be presented as a paper for submitting to your council for consideration.</p>
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Pass criteria

- A concise explanation of areas in your work where training is needed to enhance performance
- A clear strategy with precise details (e.g. dates, costs) for specific training to address identified training needs
- A formal statement designed to be presented for consideration by the council

4	<p>Public relations and communication (i)</p> <p>By creating and designing two items from the list below demonstrate how you can raise the profile of your council in the community. Present and submit the documents in a smart and professional manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Leaflet • Newsletter • Local magazine • A report for a public readership • An article for a local magazine • An annual report
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Pass criteria

- Two appropriate items as required, created and designed by yourself
- A professional standard of presentation including accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation

5	<p>Public relations and communication (ii)</p> <p>Submit the council's procedures for handling a formal complaint against the council.</p>
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Pass criteria

- An accurate statement of required procedures
- A complaints procedure tailored to your council

Law

6	<p>Powers and duties of local councils</p> <p>Write a paragraph of approximately 200 words explaining what is meant by the 'statutory powers' of local councils, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The difference between the terms 'powers' and 'duties'.• A brief account of the Local Government Act 1972 section 137 as amended, including one example of s137 expenditure.• Two examples of specific powers or duties used by your council other than s137 and the general power of competence to carry out its functions.
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Pass criteria

- A clear understanding of the distinction between powers and duties
- A good understanding of s137 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended
- Appropriate examples of specific powers or duties used other than s137 and the general power of competence

7	<p>The general power of competence</p> <p>Write a paragraph of approximately 200 words answering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the general power of competence and where is it found?• What criteria must local councils meet to be eligible to use the general power of competence, and when must a council confirm that it remains eligible?• List four restrictions to consider before using the power for a specific purpose.• List three activities that your council might undertake using the general power of competence, giving any restrictions that might apply to these activities.
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Pass criteria

- A clear understanding of the general power of competence.
- A clear explanation of the eligibility criteria and arrangements for confirming eligibility
- A list of four possible restrictions to consider before using the power
- List of three activities with possible restrictions.

8	<p>New legislation and sources of advice</p> <p>Provide details of two appropriate contacts and two works of reference offering advice on law and procedures for local council administration.</p>
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Pass criteria

- Clear details of two appropriate contacts (eg job title, name, date, organisation, telephone, e-mail, address)
- Accurate citations of two appropriate works of reference with relevant details (eg author, title, date, edition, publisher and ISBN)

Procedures

9	<p>Agenda setting and meeting procedures (i)</p> <p>Submit the public notice, agenda and minutes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The annual meeting of the council• An ordinary meeting of the council <p>The documents must show that the council is acting within the law and that there is no danger of the council making unlawful decisions. Agendas must note clearly the business to be discussed and they must be signed. There is no need to include supporting documents.</p> <p>Highlight and annotate the agendas and minutes to demonstrate your understanding of the following meeting procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convening meetings• The importance of apologies• Rights of the public to attend meetings• Declaration of interests• Resolutions
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Pass criteria

- Documents that comply with legal requirements
- Clear and succinct documentation
- Clear highlighting and annotation providing relevant explanations with legal references, as appropriate

10	<p>Agenda setting and meeting procedures (ii)</p> <p>Submit a calendar of all council meetings; include committee meetings and the annual parish meeting for any one year period.</p>
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Pass criteria

- A well-constructed and user-friendly calendar of council and committee meetings for a full year
- Knowledge of appropriate timing of the annual meeting of the council and the annual parish meeting

11	<p>Standing orders and committees</p> <p>Submit a copy of adopted or draft standing orders, tailored to meet the needs of your council.</p> <p>Add a short paragraph (approximately 200 words) explaining reasons for and against a committee system, even if the council does not have committees.</p>
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Pass criteria

- Appropriate standing orders for your council (adopted or in draft)
- A good understanding of the reasons for and against a committee system

12	<p>Freedom of information</p> <p>Submit a copy of your council's publication scheme</p> <p>If your council does not yet have a publication scheme, you must draft proposals for a scheme to be adopted by your council in the forthcoming year.</p>
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Pass criteria

- An adopted or draft copy of your council's publication scheme
- A publication scheme which complies with the Information Commissioner's requirements

Finance

13	Accounting and statutory guidance (i) Submit copies of pages from the council's cashbook, either handwritten or computer generated, showing receipts and payments. The extract can relate to any month except the year end. Attach a bank reconciliation, with a copy of the appropriate bank statement (s). If you do not prepare these documents yourself, annotate to demonstrate your understanding of the required information.
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Pass criteria

- An accurate bank reconciliation linked to the bank statement
- An appropriate copy of pages from the cashbook demonstrating your understanding of the required information
- Clarity of presentation using appropriate column analysis including VAT and s137

14	Accounting and statutory guidance (ii) Submit a copy of the council's financial regulations. This copy should be in addition to the copy of standing orders used for section 11. If your council does not have financial regulations, you must draft proposals to be adopted by your council. Add a short paragraph of approximately 200 words explaining your council's arrangements for internal control procedures and internal audit, demonstrating a good understanding of internal control and internal audit procedures
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Pass criteria

- Appropriate financial regulations for your council (adopted or draft)
- A good understanding of internal control and internal audit procedures

15	Budgeting, precept and income Submit budget proposals presented to the council for adoption and justifying the precept demand. Draw attention to sources of income other than the precept.
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Pass criteria

- Clear budget proposals constructed for presentation to the council for discussion and adoption
- Appropriate comparisons between last, present and future years
- Clear identification of sources of income
- A convincing justification for the precept demand

16	Grant awarding policies Submit a copy of the council's grant awarding policy to support community organisations, demonstrating a fair and transparent process. If the council does not have a policy document or guidelines for applicants, then you should draft documents for submission.
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Pass criteria

- A copy of the council's grant awarding policies and/or guidelines for applicants
- If draft documents are submitted provide evidence that policies/guidelines are appropriate to your council

17	Insurance Write a short paragraph of approximately 200 words explaining when, how and why your council reviews its insurance provision.
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Pass criteria

- A description of the council's insurance cover
- A clear understanding of when, how and why the council reviews insurance provision
- An explanation of statutory requirements

18	Sources of advice on financial matters Give details of two appropriate contacts and two works of reference offering financial advice on the financial framework applicable to local councils.
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Pass criteria

- Clear details of two appropriate contacts (eg job title, name, date, organisation, telephone, e-mail, address)
- Accurate citations of two appropriate works of reference with relevant details (eg author, title, date, edition, publisher and ISBN)

19	VAT Submit a copy of the council's VAT reclaim form In addition note at least three relevant points that apply to local councils from VAT regulations.
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Pass criteria

- A well presented copy of the councils VAT reclaim form
- A least three relevant points of VAT regulations that are applicable to local councils

Planning

20	<p>The planning framework</p> <p>The aim is to demonstrate your awareness of the planning legislation, national policies and strategic plans for your locality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List three pieces of legislation that regulate planning• Quote three statements from the National Planning Policy Framework and note, in no more than 200 words, why they are relevant to planning for your community• Identify the local development plan(s) in current use for your area
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Pass criteria

- An awareness of relevant legislation regulating planning including statutes or statutory instruments
- Three appropriate statements from the NPPF indicating relevance to your local community
- Accurate details of the strategic planning documents cited (e.g. authoring organisation, title, date, status)

21	<p>Effective observations on planning applications</p> <p>Submit documentation identifying one observation made by the council opposing an application, giving clear and appropriate reasons for recommending refusal.</p>
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Pass criteria

- A clear example of opposition to an application
- A sound justification for recommending refusal with evidence of understanding the concept of material considerations

Community action

22	Partnership working List four organisations with which your council does (or could) work in partnership. Briefly describe what is needed to make partnerships work effectively explaining the role of the clerk in the relationship. Write a short paragraph of approximately 200 words.
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Pass criteria

- Evidence of how your council does (or could) work with a range of organisations
- A sound awareness of the council's role demonstrating an understanding of partnership working
- A good explanation of the clerk's role

23	Funding sources Give details of three funding sources from which, in the last two years, your council has requested financial support for one or more council projects either through fund raising or grant applications. Note briefly which specific projects were involved. If your council has not sought funding in the last two years, suggest three funding sources that might support specified projects in the next two years.
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Pass criteria

- An awareness of three funding sources other than the precept and loans referring to either genuine requests from the last two years or future sources
- An explanation of funding sources in relation to the project (s) involved

24	Community engagement How does (or could) your council find out the views of all parts of its community and what part might the clerk play in the process? Write a short paragraph of approximately 200 words.
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Pass criteria

- A range of ideas for gathering community views including real and potential examples
- A good awareness of different elements in the community served by your council
- A good explanation of the clerk's role

