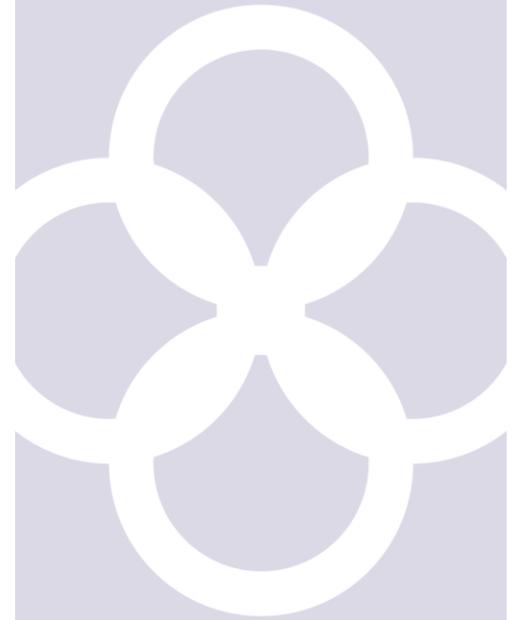




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Introduction

The Consultancy Management Standard is the UK public relations consultancy industry's assurance of commitment to excellence and professionalism.

During 1995 to 1996, the PRCA led a fundamental review of the Association's objectives, marketing and support for members. One result was that the membership supported moves for the introduction of a quality standard for member consultancies.

The first Consultancy Management Standard was approved by at the Annual General Meeting in May 1997. Following successful piloting at seven member consultancies in 1997, the standard was introduced from 1 January 1998 and it became mandatory for full PRCA membership on 31 December 2000.

In June 2001, the work began by the Best Practice Committee to review the Standard. DNV Consulting were employed to manage the process. Following extensive member and client research, it was concluded, that this review would be embraced by both the membership and the public relations client community. The main objectives of the review were to raise the bar and to continue to encourage the adoption of best practice in consultancy management throughout the membership.

DNV Certification is the PRCA's officially appointed auditor for the consultancy management standard. They were involved in the development of the initial standard in 1997 and in 2002 were appointed to audit the standard internationally for fellow member associations of the International Communications Consultancies Organisation (ICCO).

During 2002, four pilot audits of the revised Standard were successfully conducted at member consultancies and from May 1 2003, all consultancy management standard audits will be conducted using the revised Standard.



The key changes to the Consultancy Management Standard include the:

- Removal of the membership criteria
- Addition of a new section looking at leadership and communication
- Addition of a new section looking at continuous business improvement.

The Consultancy Management Standard now covers eight key business areas:

- Leadership and Communications (30 points)
- Business Planning (50 points)
- Business Improvement (50 points)
- Financial Systems (50 points)
- Campaign Management (60 points)
- Client Satisfaction (40 points)
- New Business (40 points)
- People Management (60 points).

To attain the standard, member consultancies must attain 75% of the total of 380 points. They must also attain 50% of the possible points in each element of the standard. In the report to the consultancy, the auditors will provide the scores attained for each element and a total scoring. These scorings are only intended for internal use only and no member consultancy is allowed to communicate them to any external audiences.

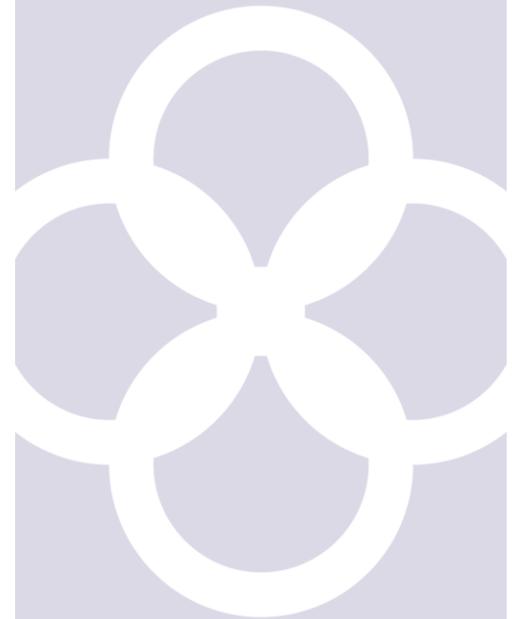
The re-assessment period for the revised Consultancy Management Standard is every two years.

Through ICCO, the Standard has been used by member consultancies of the public relations consultancies trade associations in Turkey, Holland and the Czech Republic.



Consultancy Management Standard

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Leadership and Communication

Consultancies must demonstrate that the consultancy is well-managed and that responsibilities at all levels are clearly defined and communicated throughout the organisation.

<p>1.1 Have the management structure and responsibilities been defined and communicated? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>All management responsibilities should be defined and communicated throughout the consultancy. This can be achieved through use of organograms, management structure diagrams, job and role descriptions and project/client briefs.</p> <p>The management structure should be communicated to demonstrate the appropriate division of responsibility between individual members of the management team.</p> <p>Individual members of staff should have clear and adequate authority to affect business decisions as well as a clear understanding of what the business expects of them and what they are required to deliver.</p>
<p>1.2 Are the risks to the business associated with major internal or external changes identified and planned for? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify any short or long term risk to the business• evaluate the potential impact of each of the risks identified• make any necessary plans to control these risks. <p>Where the potential risk is considerable the consultancy should develop appropriate contingency plans. These plans should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• competency issues, i.e. the ability to continue to service clients• effects on the management structure• effects on stakeholders, i.e. employees, clients, partners/affiliates, parent companies, etc. <p>A risk analysis should also be made of organisational changes that may have a significant effect on the business. Examples of such organisations changes include: office moves, IT investments, management re-organisation, recruitment or loss of personnel.</p>
<p>1.3 Is there a system to ensure effective communication to external parties? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should firstly identify all its key stakeholders. It should also identify which issues and news information should be communicated as well as when it should be communicated. Stakeholders will typically include: shareholders, the media, local community, new business agencies, government agencies, non-government agencies, trade associations, professional bodies and educational establishments.</p> <p>An external communications policy or procedure should document the above along with the appropriate authorisation levels.</p>



2. Business Planning

Consultancies must prove that their business plan is a realistic, long-term programme based on a clear view of the consultancy's marketplace, potential and direction. The plan should define goals and objectives that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound. The consultancy must demonstrate that the plan is used systematically by the management team to run the business. The plan must be communicated throughout the consultancy and reviewed on a regular basis.

<p>2.1 Does the consultancy have a business plan? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>You must demonstrate a business plan that clearly sets out the short term and long term goals and objectives for your consultancy. This plan must be the 'engine' that drives the search for continual improvement. The business plan is normally produced annually and is developed alongside and reviewed against the consultancy's statement of visions, values and long term improvement activities. See section 3.1.</p> <p>The business plan will typically include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• summary of market trends• financial status of consultancy• new and existing market opportunities• financial goals and objectives (e.g. target fee income, profitability, etc)• business goals and objectives (e.g. ranking in the marketplace, sector and specialist offerings, etc)• any major improvement projects• identification of future resource requirements (training, recruitment, IT, etc.).
<p>2.2 Does the business plan define clear goals and objectives? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The plan should define business goals and objectives that are SMART:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific• Measurable• Achievable• Realistic• Time bound.
<p>2.3 To what extent is the business plan communicated to all levels in the consultancy? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>It may not be appropriate to communicate the entire business plan with all employees but at the very least, you must be able to demonstrate that the key goals and objectives have been communicated throughout the consultancy.</p>



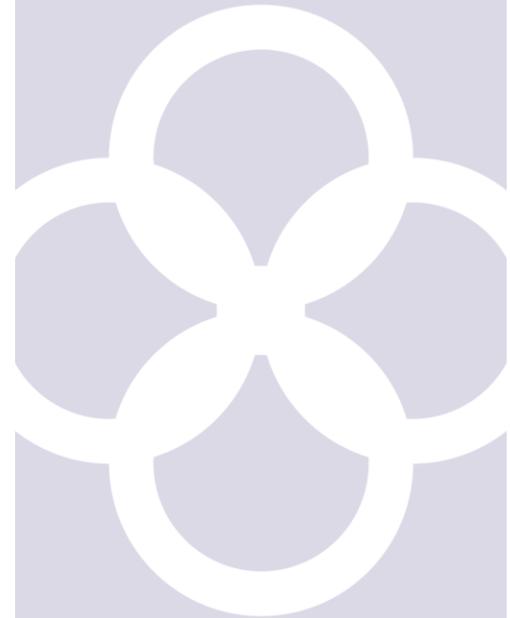
<p>2.4 Is consultancy's performance reviewed against the plan's goals and objectives? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>It is important that the consultancy's performance is monitored and compared against the goals and objectives established in the business plan. Any deviations between current performance and the desired performance of the plan should be reviewed and corrective action should be taken, i.e. reset the goals and objectives or amend the actions and timescales to achieve the original set of goals and objectives.</p> <p>It is up to the consultancy to determine the frequency of the reviews but they should be sufficient to cover the period of the business plan, i.e. an annual plan should be reviewed quarterly or at least six monthly and long term goals (three to five years) should be reviewed annually.</p> <p>You should produce minutes of meetings to demonstrate that the review process is an established and continuous process.</p>
<p>2.5 Is the plan reviewed for adequacy? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>At review, it may be necessary to change the business plan due to external influences (e.g. changing market circumstances) or internal influences (e.g. change in business direction, loss of key personnel). You should produce evidence of such reviews processes in your minutes of the review meetings.</p>



Business Improvement

The Consultancy Management Standard demands that consultancies operate a programme of continued business improvement activities in order to achieve its long terms goals and objectives.

<p>3.1 Has the organisation established the vision and key values for the organisation which set out its purpose and long terms goals? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The vision and key values for the consultancy will be typically expressed as a simple statement of the overall aims and objectives of the organisation. They should directly link with the long term goals of the consultancy.</p> <p>The consultancy's vision statement is an important component of its brand definition and may refer to the following elements: client satisfaction, people management, performance, key values and quality of service.</p> <p>Key values may be expressed as trust, excellence, professionalism, growth development, enthusiasm, commitment and ownership.</p> <p>This statement should ideally be developed with employee involvement and signed by senior management. It needs to be underpinned by strategies and policies that address proactive, long-term improvement consistent with the consultancy's business plan.</p>
<p>3.2 To what extent does the organisation involve staff at all levels in the business improvement activities? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should involve staff in improvement initiatives to foster their ownership and commitment.</p> <p>Examples of business improvement activities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• suggestion schemes• away days• competitions• recognition schemes• presentation of improvement ideas at team meetings• best practice workshops.



<p>3.3 Does the organisation carry out the benchmarking as a means to business improvement? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>Benchmarking is defined as “the process of comparing something or someone with best practice”. The consultancy should clearly define what it will compare and whom to compare against.</p> <p>On “What to Compare”, there are three types of benchmarking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance – comparing performance levels against other consultancies to position the consultancy against the rest of the industry, e.g. PRCA Benchmarking Survey, PR Week League Tables, PR Week Salary Surveys, Willott Kingston Smith Financial Surveys.• Process – identifying best practice process and comparing your consultancy’s process against it, e.g. PRCA Best Practice Paper on Graduate Recruitment or latest HR industry data on graduate recruitment• Strategic – identifying the strategic policies of your competitors and comparing your consultancy’s strategies against them, i.e., benchmarking your acquisition or growth strategy against key competitors. <p>With regard to “Whom to Compare against”, there are the following types of benchmarking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal – against different teams and divisions within a consultancy or within a group company of consultancies• Competitive – against competitors, e.g. other consultancies or sector specialists• Generic – against companies in other industries, e.g. management consultants, brand or change consultancies.
<p>3.4 Is there a system to manage major improvement projects? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>Examples of major improvement projects would include: major investment projects – IT or capital investment, developing new markets and launch of a new service.</p> <p>The project’s system must be consistent with the business plan and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• defined responsibilities• establishment of procedures• defined approval stages• milestones and deliverables• final review• implementation plan.



3.5
Is there a system for collecting, reviewing and utilising key information to increase management control and maximise business efficiency?
(Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)

Management should identify and manage all key business information and define the system to ensure that necessary information is communicated up and down the consultancy's structure. Key business information includes:

- business improvement activities
- review of business plans
- management accounts
- review of campaign management activities
- review of client satisfaction performance
- service delivery performance
- recruitment, development and retention of personnel.

The system should clearly identify what meetings are held and detail their scope, frequency, agenda and attendance. It should ensure that the information is of appropriate quality, on time and communicated to the necessary personnel.



Financial Systems

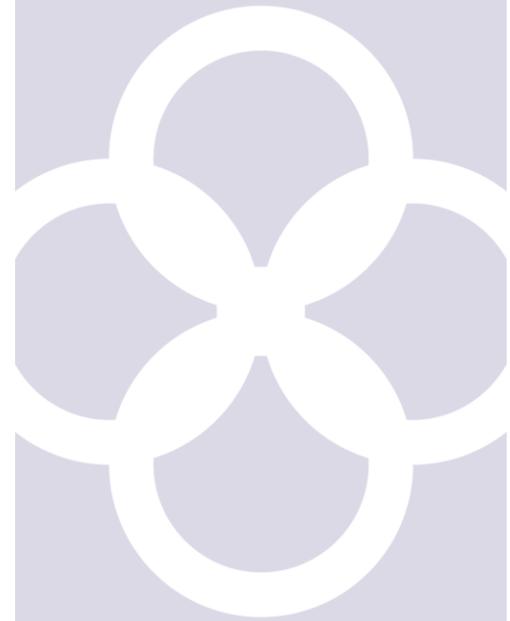
A consultancy must demonstrate that its financial management systems are adequate to ensure effective operational financial management. This element is not intended to be a comprehensive financial audit but an exercise to ensure that basic financial management controls are in place and working for the consultancy.

<p>4.1 Does the organisation have adequate management accounts? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should produce relevant financial management information, for example: profit and loss accounts, balance sheets, key ratios/indicators and financial summary reports that are produced for management.</p> <p>The consultancy should also produce evidence of any financial benchmarking studies (see section 3.3) undertaken and any analysis of key consultancy areas such as over-servicing.</p>
<p>4.2 Does the organisation have effective credit controls systems? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate effective credit control and make available relevant financial management information, for example: credit control procedures, client credit evaluations, evidence of provision for bad debt, aged debtor lists and lists of creditors.</p>
<p>4.3 Does the organisation have effective systems to manage time reporting, invoicing and price negotiations? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate systems and processes that provide appropriate control over aspects such as: pricing negotiations, time reporting, invoicing and levels of servicing.</p>
<p>4.4 Does the organisation have an adequate system for financial reporting? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should produce evidence of sound financial reporting in the form of: audited accounts, financial performance reporting, taxation and pension fund information.</p>



4.5
Does the organisation have an effective system for control of capital?
(Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)

The consultancy should demonstrate systems for control of capital such as: cash flow controls, investment decisions, equity management and currency controls.

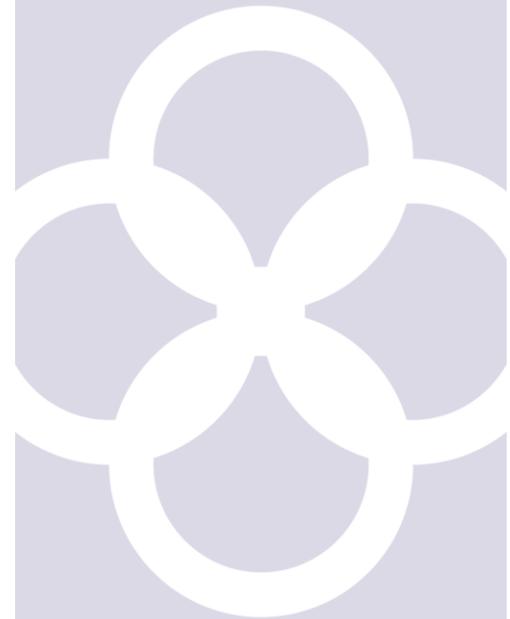




Campaign Management

A consultancy must prove to the assessors that it has the systems in place to ensure effective planning, management and evaluation of campaigns.

<p>5.1 Does the consultancy have an effective system for capturing client requirements? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>From receipt of the client's brief (whether an existing client or new business enquiry), the consultancy should have systems in place to capture client requirements covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clients' objectives• clients' expectation – both stated and implied• clients' needs• clients' desired outputs• clients' inputs• critical success factors – the key activities necessary to ensure a successful campaign• key performance indicators• milestones and deliverables• clients' approval process.
<p>5.2 Does the consultancy have an effective planning system to ensure delivery to clients' expectation? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy must demonstrate use of planning activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• pre-campaign research• campaign planning• allocation and availability of appropriate resources: time, personnel, budget• ensuring the availability of necessary competence of personnel to resource the clients' campaigns• communications processes: points of contacts, feedback on progress and meetings.
<p>5.3 Does the consultancy have effective information control? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should have effective systems for the identification of critical information, for example: electronic and manual filing, handling, back-up, retrieval, disposal and security.</p> <p>Critical information will include: correspondence, photography, logos, proposals, plans, complaints, reports and invoices.</p>



<p>5.4 Does the consultancy ensure the consistent delivery of services by suppliers? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy must demonstrate that its suppliers go through a process of selection, approval and monitoring to ensure adequate and consistency of service. An effective system may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• process for evaluation, approval and review• approved list of suppliers• performance monitoring <p>The consultancy should also demonstrate, where applicable, evidence of partnering and building relationships with preferred suppliers.</p>
<p>5.5 Does the organisation monitor campaign performance and take appropriate actions? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate regular campaign performance measurement to ensure effective implementation of the campaign plan, that the clients' requirements are met and that the consultancy's reputation is maintained or enhanced.</p> <p>The consultancy should identify and agree with the client the most appropriate forms of performance evaluation such as setting the: key performance indicators, critical success factors, milestones and deliverables.</p> <p>Where performance falls short of expectations, appropriate corrective action should be identified and taken. Significant failures should be investigated fully to identify the root cause and system improvement activities initiated to prevent re-occurrence.</p> <p>Evidence of campaign performance monitoring will include: status reports, minutes of internal meetings and minutes of clients' meetings.</p>
<p>5.6 Does the organisation periodically compare campaign management performance across clients accounts? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that it reviews the effectiveness of its campaign management across the organisation. The evidence, such as a report or minutes of meetings, should provide: insight into the review of campaign management, identification of any trends, identification of poor and excellent performance and any improvement activities undertaken.</p> <p>This is similar to 6.4 but here it addresses the review of the overall management of campaigns.</p>



Client Satisfaction

A CMS consultancy must show evidence of tracking client satisfaction on a consistent and continuing basis. The consultancy appreciates that to improve its professional competence it must methodically investigate clients' opinions of its performance and use this information to enhance the services it offers to its clients.

<p>6.1 Does the consultancy have a system to measure customer satisfaction? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should have a system for measuring customer satisfaction, which encompasses all clients. This system should be appropriate to the size of consultancy and the complexities of the client relationships.</p> <p>The system will typically include some of the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• regular review meetings• regular informal meetings or lunches• formal annual or six-monthly reviews• perception surveys/questionnaires• complaints systems• reviews from other account directors within the consultancy. <p>The system should indicate the frequency of the review activities, the forms of measurement being used and it should set key performance indicators for client satisfaction.</p> <p>The consultancy must document the outputs from its client review system.</p>
<p>6.2 Does the client satisfaction measurement address all elements of the service? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>In order to ensure that the client's perception of the consultancy's service matches their expectation, it is important for the consultancy to understand all aspects that will impact on client satisfaction. The client review system should measure the consultancy's performance service levels on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding the client's expectation• meeting the client's expectation• communication with the client• market knowledge• creativity• strategic thinking• team work• timeliness of delivery• quality of service delivery• client's overall perception of the overall service.



<p>6.3 Is the client satisfaction measurement effectively implemented? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy must demonstrate that client satisfaction is measured against the set performance targets and that actions are taken as a result. Results must be communicated throughout the consultancy and action points agreed with staff as appropriate. It is important that results of surveys are communicated back to the clients and individual feedback may be appropriate with particular clients.</p>
<p>6.4 Does the consultancy periodically compare client satisfaction across accounts? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should conduct regular management reviews of overall client satisfaction performance through the consultancy. This should include trend analysis of satisfaction levels across accounts and account teams. It should also address how effective the system is in monitoring client satisfaction.</p> <p>This is similar to 5.6 but here the focus is on comparing the levels of client satisfaction across accounts and account teams.</p>



New Business

A CMS consultancy must have an effective system for business development, including managing its enquiries and sales process in order to meet its goals and objectives.

<p>7.1 Does the consultancy have a system for business development to achieve its goals and objectives? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The business development strategy must be derived from the goals and objectives outlined in the consultancy's business plan. The strategy will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• marketing plans• defined responsibilities• business cases, i.e. analysis of the market or sector opportunities• performance monitoring. <p>The strategy may also include a sectoral plan. This will be required when target market sectors requiring different development strategies have been identified, e.g. where a consultancy has identified that it would like to move into a new sector or specialist service offering.</p>
<p>7.2 Does the consultancy have an effective system for the management of its enquiries and sales? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy must be able to demonstrate an effective process for handling and management of all enquiries, proposals, credentials meetings, pitches, contracts and sales. An effective system will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• logging, handling, follow-up and closing of all enquiries and proposals• analysis of successful and lost credential meetings and pitches• briefings to new business agencies and intermediaries• management of prospect relationships including database maintenance and periodic review of lost pitches and accounts.



People Management

A CMS consultancy must have a clearly-defined and universally-understood system for appraisal, training and career development of all employees. Credit will be given to consultancies for use of programmes such as Investors in People.

<p>8.1 Are the processes for selection of prospective employees determined according to the needs of the position? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that its recruitment is determined on the needs of the position. This can be shown through the use of: job descriptions, role profiles, competence analysis, capability analysis, organisation values and training plans.</p> <p>The employee selection methods used by the consultancy may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review of qualifications• relevant experience• psychometric/personality profiling• testing of PR skills• structured interviews.
<p>8.2 Is a general induction conducted for new employees in their first week of employment? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The content of the induction will vary depending on the position of the new employee and may include introduction to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• consultancy background and credentials• the team• relevant clients• internal systems and processes• client handling system• criteria and methods for campaign planning, research and evaluation• human resources• health and safety• pension and finance issues• PRCA Professional Charter and Codes of Conduct• PRCA Consultancy Management Standard.



<p>8.3 Does the consultancy conduct training needs analysis? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p> <p>If No, proceed to 8.6</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that it conducts a needs analysis to identify the training necessary for specific roles within the organisation which is necessary to implement the business plan at company, team and individual levels. It will focus on what training is required to meet business needs rather than what individuals would like to be trained in.</p> <p>A training needs analysis will include a review of tasks and job descriptions and a review of existing competencies. It should be conducted for business improvement initiatives, introduction of new services, changes in the market and major organisational changes.</p> <p>Useful references for conducting a training needs analysis are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PRCA Best Practice Paper on Core Competencies• IPR's Continual Professional Development Scheme.
<p>8.4 Are personal development plans developed for staff based on training needs analysis? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that the personal development plans for individual staff match the organisation's training needs analysis. Effective personal development plans will contain SMART goals and targets for employee training and development (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound)</p> <p>The consultancy should give evidence through records of training delivery for both internal and external training activities.</p>
<p>8.5 Is training performed in accordance with personal development plans? (Assessor's Judgement – maximum 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that the training provided is in line with personal development plans through its training records. The auditor will also seek verification of training activities through personal interviews.</p>
<p>8.6 Does the consultancy have a formal appraisal system? (Yes/No – 10 points)</p>	<p>The consultancy should demonstrate that it has a formal appraisal system which is designed to review performance against the personal goals and targets of each member of staff. These goals and targets will include both business and personal development.</p> <p>The consultancy will determine the frequency of formal appraisals but must demonstrate the occurrence of appraisals, review of follow-up action and that it feeds into the consultancy's recognition and reward systems for the retention of key staff.</p>



DNV Certification Limited

Established in 1864, DNV is an independent foundation with the objective of safeguarding life, property and the environment and is the leading international provider of services for managing risk. With 300 offices in 120 countries DNV is well respected worldwide; accredited in 22 countries, it has issued over 40,000 management system certificates internationally. Amongst the standards that DNV audits companies against are ISO9001(Quality), ISO14001 (Environment), OHSAS 18001(Safety). DNV is also heavily involved in areas such as Greenhouse Gas Verification, Social Accountability and Corporate and Social Responsibility. Its client portfolio includes many of the largest global companies.

DNV Certification Ltd. has been involved with PRCA since 1997 and played an active role in the creation of the Consultancy Management Standard; since that time its auditors have performed over 100 audits of the Standard. In 2001 PRCA appointed DNV as the sole certification body for the Standard and an agreement has just been reached with ICCO to the same effect.

DNV's PRCA Assessors have in depth experience auditing a variety of different types of consultancies; their insight, practical experience and advice has benefited many PRCA members since the standard was first established.

Jon Dillon-Welch and Amy Pettit are both happy to discuss any questions or queries you have regarding the Consultancy Management Standard and can be contacted on +44 (0)20 7716 6518/6698.

For more information on DNV, visit our website at www.dnv.com



A Guide to the Audit Process

Work through the standard yourself and rate the consultancy against it. If you are satisfied that your company will meet the criteria and the pass rate (50% minimum per element and 75% overall), contact DNV Certification who will provide you with a quotation.

You can, if you wish, opt for a preliminary assessment/gap analysis. This is typically a one-day visit by the auditor to discuss all the elements of the standard, assess your state of readiness, discuss areas of interpretation and generally answer any questions you may have about the process. This may assist you in your final preparations. It is an optional service at additional cost and DNV can provide a quotation on request.

Once a date has been agreed with you, a short while before the audit, the auditor will contact you to discuss the programme for the visit. He/she will also ask for a list of your clients so that approximately three can be selected at random for audit that provide a representative sample of your services and clients. Once the contract has been signed, DNV will ask the allocated auditor to contact you to agree an audit date. The number of audit days depends upon the size of the consultancy.

On the day/first day of the audit the auditor will arrive at the agreed time and there will be an opening meeting of approximately 15 minutes duration. The purpose of the meeting is to explain how the audit will be carried out and reported and answer any questions there might be. You can invite as few or as many people as you want to this meeting.

It is useful to provide the auditor with a room/desk that he/she can return to during the audit to write notes or plan the next interviews.

Typically, the day will start with the senior management looking at Business Planning, Financial Systems, Leadership, Business Improvement, People Management etc and this will usually take half a day. The remainder of the time is spent sampling the accounts/clients selected and sitting with the people/team involved, usually at their desks as most of the information will be held on their computers.

It is not necessary to prepare portfolios of evidence in advance of the audit, as the auditor will search for this evidence during the audit.



The audit is not about looking for errors but seeing that the business processes are robust and that the clients are getting the levels of service that they are expecting. Any observations or suggestions for improvement, including best practice based on auditing experience with many consultancies, will be highlighted at the time to the consultancy and presented in the final report.

Note that the auditor will be very experienced in working with public relations consultancies and hence be aware that client and contractual requirements will differ from client to client. The audit process is designed to evaluate that the key stages, milestones and activities are documented such that any risk to the consultancy is minimised.

At the end of the audit process, the auditor will write up the report, including all previously identified findings and observations, and present these at a closing meeting of similar duration to the opening meeting, again with as many attendees as desired by the consultancy. In some instances the auditor may decide to write up the report “off site” and email it shortly afterwards.

At the closing meeting the result of the audit will be announced. The score will be communicated to the consultancy but this is for internal use only. A pass will result in a recommendation to PRCA to award a certificate, or if the pass criteria have not been met, a follow up visit will need to be arranged once the consultancy has addressed the findings. The duration and focus of this visit will be discussed at this meeting.

The cycle of audits is biennial, so DNV will contact you prior to the two year renewal audit date.

Confidentiality - DNV Certification has signed a confidentiality agreement which prevents disclosure of any information witnessed during the audit to any party. The audit report itself is confidential between DNV Certification and the consultancy and is NOT forwarded to PRCA. PRCA are simply notified of the result and the recommendation by the auditor.

Scoring – the audit report provided to the consultancy will contain the scoring points so for each section of the Standard. These scorings are only intended for internal use only and no member consultancy is allowed to communicate them to any external audiences. This will be covered in your agreement with DNV.



Endorsements

The Consultancy Management Standard has achieved a wide range of support from leading companies and relevant industry commentators.

Clients & Opinion Formers

“The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard provides instant assurance to clients that the agency’s commitment to excellence is guaranteed. The Consultancy Management Standard stamp marks professionalism of the highest order.”

Iain Burns, Head of Corporate Communications, **British Airways**

“From a retail perspective, quality standards are critical to us in delivering excellent customer service. I commend the PRCA for introducing such a rigorous standard, which we wholeheartedly support.”

Rachel Spackman, PR & Marketing Controller, **WH Smith**

“The Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply (CIPS) welcomes the introduction of the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard. Such a standard will provide a solid basis for good supplier/buyer relations to be developed between clients and PRCA consultancies - supplier relationships being a key element of good purchasing and supply management practice.”

Carolyn Munton, Director of Marketing & Communications, **Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply**

“The British Standards Institute supports the establishment of the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard. The benefits of establishing a management system based in part on the ISO 9000 standard for quality will ensure a sound robust process framework to deliver both internal and external improvement. Providing external independent accreditation delivers the added reassurance that compliance with the standard is consistent and continuous.”

Frank Post, Group Marketing Director, **BSI**

“A significant frustration for any client is when a consultancy fails to deliver after pitch. All clients can be re-assured that the holders of the Consultancy Management Standard are professional and reliable.”

Debbie Morrison, Director of Membership Services, **ISBA**

“We welcome the move to enhance your high professional standards in the public relations sector.”

Office of Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry



“The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard is a welcome instrument for a profession which has, for many years, seemed notoriously hard to measure, in terms both of performance standards and results. The more widely this standard is adopted as a benchmark the better, to give consultants something to aim for, and to reassure clients that they are truly in the hands of professionals.”

Steve Painter, Head of Corporate Communications, **Bayer plc**

“I welcome and endorse the introduction of the PRCA consultancy management standard. This can only assist in the professionalism of the industry.”

Alastair Eperon, Director of Public Policy & External Relations, **Boots**

“The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard gives us the assurance that high standards are being met by our public relations agency. This standards 'kitemark' means that we have confidence in our agency's business processes, leaving us to concentrate on our own business.”

Brenda Crosby, PR and Planning Manager, **Toshiba Information Systems (UK)**

“Any initiative that encourages best practice, better process and a strong return on investment for clients is to be applauded. The Consultancy Management Standard is a good move in setting higher standards in public relations.”

Deborah Tilley, Senior Press Officer, **Nestlé**

“Quality and management standards can only be a good thing for clients. Its good to know that PRCA members are rigorously and regularly inspected.”

Patrick Hamilton, Corporate Communications & Public Affairs Manager, **Motorola**

“Management standards are essential for any professional services organisation, and the PRCA in applying such tough and routine inspections for all members is assuring a level of professionalism and quality.”

Derek Hardman, Marketing Director, **Fujitsu Services**

“From our point of view The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard is a badge of reassurance and recommendation, it says a lot about a public relations company before one has even met them.”

Paul Madden, Brand Manager, **Innkeeper's Lodge**



“Heinz strives to achieve world class standards in all aspects of marketing and we look for the same commitment from our suppliers. That is why I commend the PRCA for its Consultancy Management Standard. There is no substitute for quality and the Standard provides a valuable benchmark for the public relations industry.”

Michael Mullen, General Manager, Corporate Communications, **Heinz**

“Domino's Pizza welcomes the introduction of the new consultancy management standard by the PRCA. Initiatives such as this, designed to drive up standards in the public relations industry, provide clients will reassurance and a useful benchmark.”

Bernadette Eddisford, PR & Communications Officer, **Domino's Pizza Group**

“The PRCA's quality standard is a valuable benchmark. We would recommend consulting the PRCA and using their Consultancy Management Standard as a guide to securing public relations services.”

Paul Mallorie, Business Development Manager, **Murphy Group**

“Knowing that our consultancy is part of the PRCA and therefore undergoes rigorous external scrutiny on a regular basis means we can be confident that we are dealing with a quality company with a good service record.”

Major Derrick Harwood MBE TD, Recruiting & Publicity Officer, **Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Greater London**

“In an environment when it is essential to ensure that the ever increasing demands on our return on communications investment are met, the fact that our public relations consultancy has achieved the rigorous standards of the Consultancy Management Standard set by the PRCA means we receive first class service.”

Andy Palmer, VP EMEA, **Foundry Networks**

“It is reassuring to know that the PRCA is fully committed to monitoring and raising the quality standards of its members - this is exactly where the organisation should be focusing its attention.”

Tim Brill, Communications Director, **Avaya EMEA**

“In the absence of industry benchmarks the appointing of contracts and projects becomes a complex issue, when clients end up establishing their own criteria against which to measure potential performance from contract partners. I welcome the Consultancy Management Standard, not as an alternative to professional judgment but as a hallmark of excellence which presents the minimum baseline for comparison.”

Mark Bainbridge, Marketing Director, **British Army Recruiting**



Industry

“The PRCA's Consultancy Management Standard is one of the most important developments to have come out of the industry in the last decade, and the scrutiny applied to consultancy structures and the business practices that accredited agencies have in place, are likely to have played an important part in the continued survival of the industry against a difficult economic backdrop. The continuing revision of the Consultancy Management Standard also sends out a very important message to the business world at large.”

Kate Nicholas, Editor, **PR Week**

“Research recently undertaken by Echo Research for PR Week's PR and the Media conference (PRWeek March 28 issue), revealed a worrying perception that public relations is an industry without formal standards. In this context, and at a time when client companies are being increasingly cautious about external public relations expenditure, the Consultancy Management Standard provides a very valuable assurance to budget holders.”

Kate Nicholas, Editor, **PR Week**

“Any formal process that enhances the reliability and financial credentials of public relations consultancies is to be highly commended and so the PRCA deserves maximum support for its Consultancy Management Standard.”

Robert G Willott, Chairman, **Fintellect Limited**

“Everyone in the agency business welcomes invitations that lend to improved quality and competitiveness, and I applaud the PRCA for taking steps to raise professional standards further.”

Stephen Woodford, President, **IPA**

“Every client expects creativity from their public relations agency, but many are disappointed by the lack of commercial competence shown by the same agencies. The Consultancy Management Standard provides assurance of highly professional ability enabling public relations programmes to be mounted locally and internationally at a consistent standard.”

Chris McDowall, Secretary General, **ICCO**

“This is long overdue and an excellent initiative to ensure quality standards in the public relations industry are set and upheld.”

Claire Watson, Director General, **The Marketing Society**

“The Centre for Public Relations Studies at Leeds Business School welcomes the PRCA Consultancy Management Standards. Initiatives like this that seek to improve the quality of service to clients are to be applauded and supported. They benefit clients, consultancies and the public relations industry at large by helping to drive up standards and enforce professionalism. “

Anne Gregory, Professor of Public Relations, **Leeds Metropolitan University**



“Business Link for London is committed to helping the capital's small and medium-sized business community survive, grow and prosper. A vital element in achieving this is the adoption by small firms of best practice and industry quality management standards. As such we see strong benefits for businesses within the public relations industry adopting the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard.”

Judith Rutherford, Chief Executive, **Business Link for London**

“In our experience, the difference in work practices between a Consultancy Management Standard company and a non-Consultancy Management Standard company is massive. They are culturally on different planets.”

Mark Adams, Partner, **Pembridge Partners LLP**

“The PRCA’s Consultancy Management Standard is an excellent initiative which clearly signposts to any potential client which consultancies are running efficient businesses from both an operational and financial point of view.”

Alastair Gornall, Director, **Madsen Gornall Ashe**

“Increasing professionalism amongst clients demand a comparable response from the public relations industry. So the PRCA quality standard is a reassuring beacon of certifiable high standards for clients. It demands maximum support from an industry which should intimately understand the value of enhancing its own corporate reputation.”

Jim Surguy, Managing Partner, **Results Business Consulting**

“Through the development of the Consultancy Management Standard, the PRCA has set an exciting new benchmark for client reassurance. Having the advanced knowledge that an agency meets the Consultancy Management Standard in business planning, financial and people management, performance and client satisfaction, will not only provide a valuable start point when finding new agencies but will undoubtedly speed the selection process.”

Alan Thompson, Consultant, **The Haystack Group**

“We live in a standards-driven age, when stakeholders expect to see evidence that the companies they deal with meet uniform and accepted levels of business management. The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard provides this for public relations consultancies.”

Michael Bland, Managing Director, **Michael Bland Communication Consultancy**



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How can we best prepare for the Consultancy Management Standard audit?

Answer: There is no “off the shelf” solution to this question. Many consultancies adopt different approaches. Someone needs to be the owner of the project to achieve the Standard and drive it through. Some consultancies appoint “element champions” to take specific elements and look at how the consultancy meets the Consultancy Management Standard criteria. Others have business improvement initiatives and teams looking at this or organise an awayday to brainstorm it. A lot of what is required will already be happening, but may not be as evident or formalised as it might be so the task is often not as daunting as it first appears.

Question: What help and advice can we get during the preparation phase?

Answer: DNV are more than happy to provide assistance and answer questions during the preparation phase. You can telephone DNV and ask to speak to an auditor at any time. Alternatively you can opt for a pre-assessment/Gap Analysis.

Question: What is a pre-assessment/gap analysis?

Answer: This is typically a one day visit at additional cost where the auditor will spend time with you and go through the Standard section by section, indicating what you will need to do to meet the criteria and what sort of evidence will be sufficient. It is an opportunity to show the auditor what you have already done, see that you are on the right track and to resolve any questions you may have about the audit process. It is also a good opportunity for people to meet the auditor in advance of the main audit and allay any fears or concerns that people may have.

Question: How do we arrange an audit when we think we are ready?

Answer: Contact DNV and ask for a quotation. DNV will provide a quote based on the size of consultancy (by number of people employed and number of office sites) and ask you for an indication of timescales. Please note that lead times are usually 6-8 weeks on average.

Question: How much will it cost?

Answer: DNV and PRCA have agreed a day rate. For 2003/4 this is £650 excluding VAT and expenses. Most audits are of one day’s duration but larger or multi-site consultancies will require more time.



Question: What is a typical audit programme for the day(s)?

Answer: Your DNV Auditor will contact you prior to the audit and agree a programme for the visit including a selection of several clients/accounts that represent a cross section of services provided by the consultancy. Examples of a typical audit programme are available from DNV.

Question: Do we need to prepare a folder/portfolio of evidence?

Answer: No, absolutely not. The auditor will search and ask for the information during the audit. For clients/accounts, the auditor will sit with the account team and view documents/electronic information as necessary. Obviously the more strategic documentation such as business plans, financial reports can be copied prior to the audit.

Question: Who needs to be involved?

Answer: Senior management, people with specific responsibilities for certain elements (e.g Financial, HR, New Business, etc.) and those people involved in the management of the accounts selected. Other people may well be interviewed during the audit but it is unlikely that all employees will be involved.

Question: How will the audit be conducted?

Answer: The audit is a sampling exercise and the auditor will use open ended questioning techniques to elicit the information required. The responses need to be supported with documentary evidence where appropriate. The audit will be focused on business processes with the client's requirements and service levels always at the forefront of the auditors mind. The auditor will prefer to sit with people at their workstation as this is where the majority of records reside. It is not a process of trying to catch people out. It is a process of verifying that the consultancy is delivering the service levels and contractual requirements that the client has requested or expects. Observations and suggestions for improvement will be highlighted during the audit and written up in the final report. Overall, it should be seen as a very positive and fresh look by an independent person, at the way the business is performing.

Question: When will we know the outcome?

Answer: The auditor will advise the outcome at the end of the audit and will either write up the report "on-site" or will email it shortly afterwards.



Question: **What happens if we fail?**

Answer: There is no “failure” in the truest sense of the word. It may be that there is further improvement or documentation required in certain areas and the auditors experience here will be invaluable. A follow up visit will be necessary, and this visit will focus specifically on those areas that were weaker or needed some improvement.

Question: **When will we get our certificate?**

Answer: PRCA are the owners and issuer of the certificates and they will be notified by DNV of the result on the day of the audit. The PRCA will then issue a certificate to the member consultancy.

Question: **How often are the audits carried out?**

Answer: In order to maintain certification, DNV will visit the consultancy every two years and will contact to agree dates. Should there be significant change during this period, e.g. merger, sell-off, acquisition, which results in the new entity being radically different, a re-audit may well be required and DNV will need to be notified of such changes.

Question: **Who are my main contacts at DNV?**

Answer: First point of contact will be Amy Pettit who is responsible for coordinating all of the PRCA audits. Jon Dillon-Welch is DNV’s Commercial Manager and Project Manager for the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard.

Contact details as follows:

Tel: 020 7716 6518 (Amy), 020 7716 6698 (Jon)

Fax: 020 716 6739

Email: amy.pettit@dnv.com or jon.dillon-welch@dnv.com

Web: www.dnv.co.uk/certification



Consultancy Management Standard Questionnaire

Your company name:

Objective of this Questionnaire:

To enable the PRCA to quantify the business benefits of achieving the Consultancy Management Standard

Range of Questions

Our questions are aimed to access your:

- views on the Consultancy Management Standard before undertaking the Audit
- preparation for the Audit
- perspective on the Audit itself
- outcomes following the Audit.

Contact details

On completion of the questionnaire, please photocopy the next six pages and fax them through to the PRCA on 020 7828 4797



Question 1

Which of the following would best describe your consultancy's view of the Consultancy Management Standard **prior** to your recent audit?
(Please tick one box only)

- Fully embraced the principles of the Consultancy Management Standard
- Fully embraced the Consultancy Management Standard but felt it was getting in the way of real business
- Interested in the Consultancy Management Standard but not always convinced of its benefits
- Realised that it could be useful to the business but feared the process and outcomes
- A necessary chore to retaining PRCA membership

Question 2

Which of the following approaches did you adopt in preparing for the audit?
(Please tick one box only)

- Build a project team from across the consultancy
- Allocated the project to a senior member of staff
- Allocated the project to a junior member of staff
- Other, please describe:

Question 3

Which of the following internal communications strategies did you carry out?
(Please tick one only)

- Briefed all staff on the project and invited appropriate participation
- Reported the activity to all staff
- Briefed the senior team only
- Reported the activity to the board
- Other, please describe:

Question 4

How much work was involved in the pre-audit preparations?
(Please tick one box only)

- A review of all business systems to ensure that they were up to the Consultancy Management Standard level
- A review of some business systems and the introduction of some new systems
- A major overhaul of most business systems
- Other, please describe:



Question 5

Did you attend a Consultancy Management Standard Briefing Seminar?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

If yes, how useful was it:

If no, why not:

Question 6

Did you have a pre-audit meeting with DNV?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

If yes, how useful was it :
(Please circle one only)

Extremely Useful

Very Useful

Useful

Not Useful

Not at all Useful

If no, would you do this next time: Yes / No

Question 7

How did you find the audit?

Question 8

How would you rate the performance of the auditor against the following headings?

Professionalism

(Please circle one only)

Very Highly / Highly / Fair / Low / Very Low

Relevancy to PR consultancy

(Please circle one only)

Very High / High / Fair / Low / Very Low

Friendliness

(Please circle one only)

Very High / High / Fair / Low / Very Low

Flexibility

(Please circle one only)

Very High / High / Fair / Low / Very Low

Bureaucratic

(Please circle one only)

Very High / High / Fair / Low / Very Low



Question 9

Had you prepared adequately?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

Question 10

Please give an overall rating of how useful the Consultancy
Management Standard audit process has been to your
business?

(Please circle one only)

Extremely Useful

Very Useful

Useful

Not Useful

Not at all Useful

Question 11

What specific benefits has the audit process brought to your
business?



Question 12

Please rate how you feel the Consultancy Management Standard process will impact on the following areas?

Profitability

(Please circle one only)

Exceptionally positive impact

Strong positive impact

Little positive impact

No impact

Negative impact

Very negative impact

People Retention

(Please circle one only)

Exceptionally positive impact

Strong positive impact

Little positive impact

No impact

Negative impact

Very negative impact

New Business

(Please circle one only)

Exceptionally positive impact

Strong positive impact

Little positive impact

No impact

Negative impact

Very negative impact

Client Retention

(Please circle one only)

Exceptionally positive impact

Strong positive impact

Little positive impact

No impact

Negative impact

Very negative impact



Question 13

Having gone through the Consultancy Management Standard process, would you say your business structure and processes are more stable?
(Please circle)

Yes / No / Remained the same

Question 14

Has going through the Consultancy Management Standard process had any immediate tangible benefits on your business?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

If yes, please give details:

Question 15

Would you say that Consultancy Management Standard will have a positive impact upon your consultancy's success?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

Question 16

Do you think that a re-audit in two years' time is the correct timing?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

If no, please give suggested re-audit timeframe with reasons:

Question 17

What other areas of your business should the Consultancy Management Standard audit?



Question 18

Will you be using Consultancy Management Standard in all marketing materials and credentials presentations to clients?
(Please circle)

Yes / No

If not, what particular audiences would you not promote Consultancy Management Standard to and why not?

Question 19

What tips could you give to fellow PRCA members from your experience?

Question 20

Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Consultancy Management Standard and the audit process?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please fax it to the PRCA on: 020 7828 4797.