



# Developing tomorrow's public finance leaders



# The journey starts here



**Rob Whiteman, CBE**  
CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Whiteman".

The work of a Chartered Public Finance Accountant (CPFA) is both more complex and more critical to the public sector than at any point in our history.

Digital technologies, highly charged political contexts, regulatory reform, climate change, increased service demand and the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic – are just a few of the key issues impacting how public financial management, reporting and audit are conducted now and in the future.

At the heart of our mission to build public trust by strengthening public financial management is CIPFA's Professional Accountancy Qualification – or the CIPFA PAQ.

It is the leading qualification for those charged with delivering sustainable public value. Both challenging and highly rewarding, it is designed to give students the best possible foundation for a career in public finance.

We look forward to welcoming you.

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# Why choose the CIPFA Professional Accountancy Qualification?



“One of the things I learned very soon in the health service was the credibility of the CIPFA qualification – the professionalism it instils in you as an individual. That doesn’t leave you.”

Andy Hardy FCPFA, CEO University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust



It is the only accountancy qualification designed specifically for aspiring finance professionals working in public services.



It features a world-class learner management system and e-assessment platform for an enhanced digital learning experience.



It leads to the internationally recognised Chartered Public Finance Accountant (CPFA) designation, which signals your technical competency and public sector expertise.



There are four clear stages, each with its own award, to support progression through the qualification.



It has a future-ready syllabus that balances technical knowledge, ethical principles, sustainable public value and strategic thinking.



There are continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to complement learning throughout the qualification and beyond.



The qualification explores green finance, environmental reporting and performance measures, big data, data analytics and new technologies.



Students gain access to the extensive range of benefits and resources that come with student membership, including the CIPFA Student Network.



It offers a dynamic, interactive learning experience, led by qualified and experienced trainers and supported by tools that encourage student interaction and networking.



Plus there is support whenever it's needed from CIPFA's online Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub and our trained mental health first aiders.

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# How is the PAQ structured?

The CIPFA PAQ is made up of 12 modules. These are completed in four consecutive stages. As students progress through the qualification, they achieve awards at the conclusion of each stage – a certificate and three diplomas.

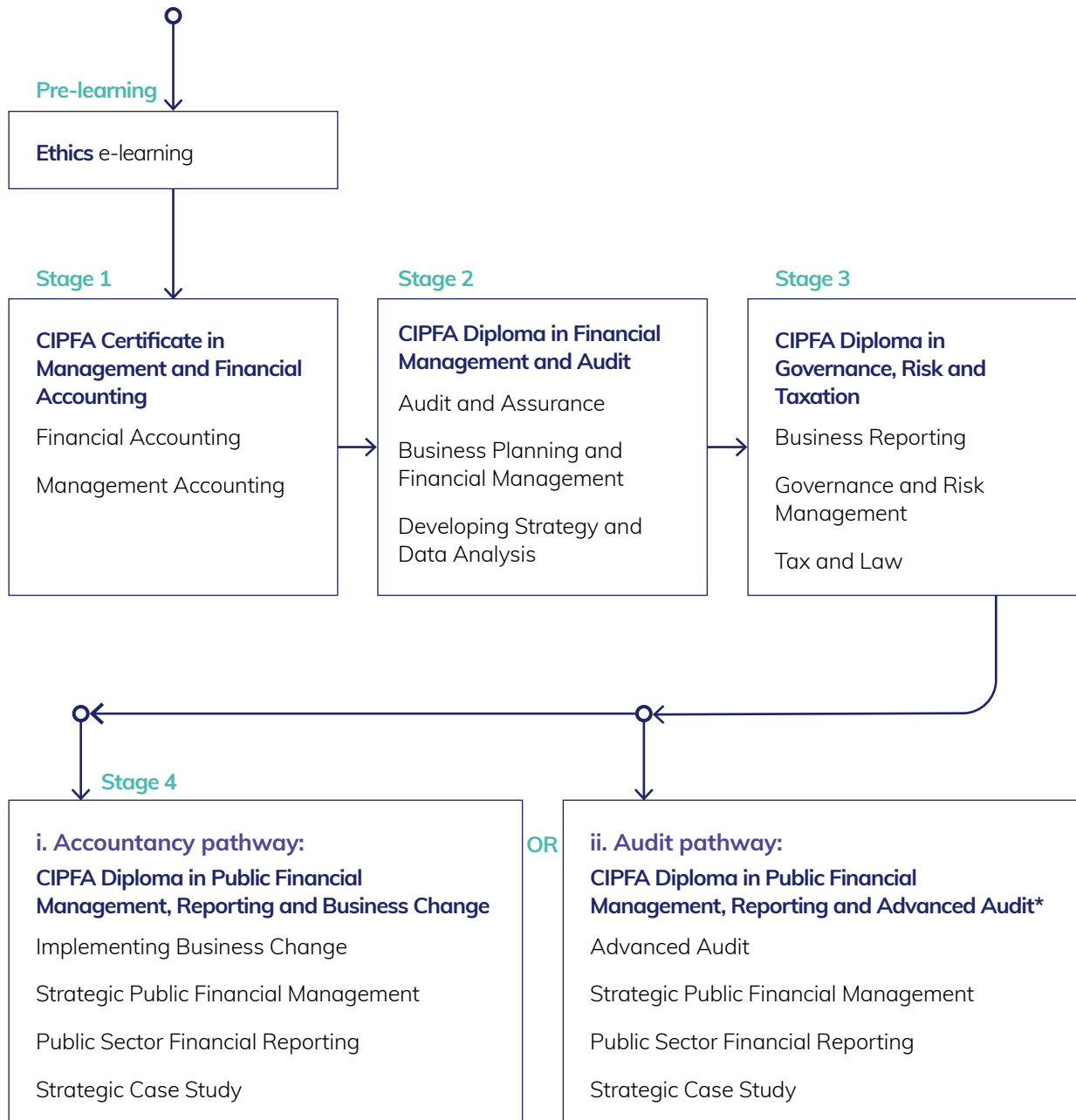
The qualification and its component stages have been mapped by CIPFA as being equivalent to undergraduate to postgraduate study and there are two pathways to choose from – one for those specialising in accountancy (i) and one for those specialising in audit (ii).

The PAQ typically takes three and a half years to complete, and this will vary depending on students' prior qualifications and relevant work experience.



“The beauty of the CIPFA qualification is that it’s a passport to any sort of career you want. It’s both an accounting and a management qualification. It trains you to think about finance in the widest sense, as it applies to a whole raft of organisational settings – yes, in the public sector, but also more broadly.”

Joe Sealy CPFA, NED, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer, Greater Pacific Capital



More information:  
[cipfa.org/paq](https://cipfa.org/paq)

\*In the UK, the CIPFA Diploma in Public Financial Management, Reporting and Advanced Audit qualification is only available to students working for a CIPFA-approved training employer.

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# How is the PAQ assessed?

CIPFA PAQ modules are assessed via online exams, which are held quarterly, in March, June, September and December.

The qualification culminates in the final Strategic Case Study module and exam, which assesses the skills and learning from across the 11 previous modules.

In addition to exams, students must also complete and submit a portfolio – a log of practical workplace experience and evidenced skills recorded over the duration of their studies. This is a prerequisite to becoming a Chartered Public Finance Accountant.



More information:  
[cipfa.org/examdetails](https://cipfa.org/examdetails)





“Becoming a CPFA enabled me to move from being a trainee to holding a leadership position within central government. The other benefit to undertaking the CIPFA qualification was the valuable work experience I gained through placements. This enabled me to broaden my horizons, garner some excellent experience, and to thrive in different settings.”

Precious Akinmoju CPFA, Head of Strategic Financial Planning, Reporting and Analysis, Department for International Trade

# Spotlight on: CIPFA membership

Everyone undertaking the CIPFA PAQ registers as a CIPFA student. This means immediate access to the CIPFA Student Network and a wealth of membership resources and opportunities that are designed to support the learning journey.

These include our e-learning service CPD Bites, speaking opportunities, career development events, social and networking events. Plus access to publications and expert commentary on the public finance arena.

Students can also achieve additional membership grades as they work towards becoming a Chartered Public Finance Accountant:

- Successful completion of the Certificate in Management and Financial Accounting can lead to CIPFA Affiliate status and use of the designatory letters CIPFA Affil.
- Successful completion of the Diploma in Governance, Risk and Taxation can lead to CIPFA Associate status and use of the designatory letters CIPFA Assoc.

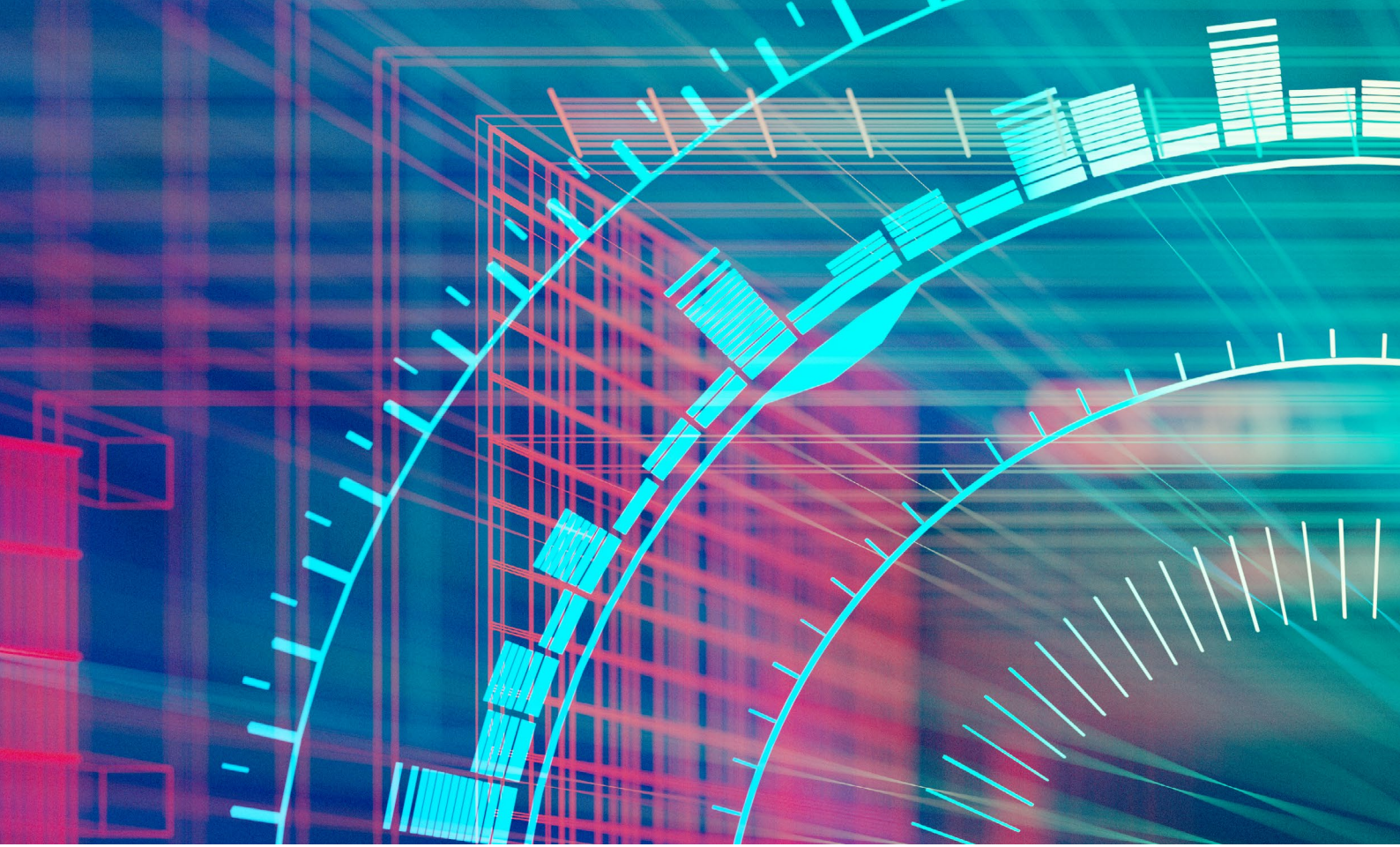


More information:  
[cipfa.org/  
membershipbenefits](https://cipfa.org/membershipbenefits)



“You receive a lot of support from the CIPFA Student Support team. They have always been so helpful any time I’ve had a query. The tutors themselves are really good – they have a huge depth of knowledge, they’re approachable, friendly, and they’re always contactable when you’re doing the course.”

Jamie Shah, CIPFA Student and Finance Manager – Financial Planning & Monitoring, Corporate Finance, Westminster City Council



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# How is the PAQ taught?

The CIPFA PAQ is taught by qualified and experienced CIPFA Education and Training Centre (CETC) tutors.

Our training delivery offers flexibility and choice and caters for a broad range of learning preferences.

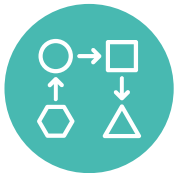
We use a mix of blended learning, including:

- face-to-face classes,
- live web classes; and
- access to CIPFA's online learning platform,

where students can find additional resources, such as learning materials, specimen exam questions, student forums and class recordings.

# What are the funding options?

There are three funding options available:



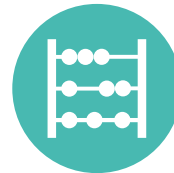
## Self-funded

The student pays for the qualification themselves, registering and accessing the course, materials and exams on a 'pay as you go' basis.



## Employer-funded

The employer pays for or sponsors the student, on a 'pay as you go' basis.



## Levy-funded apprenticeship

In England, employers can use their apprenticeship levy accounts to fund the training costs of new and existing employees.



“I've received so much support and friendship as part of the CIPFA family... the fact you can pick up the phone and talk to someone directly at CIPFA HQ is just incredibly helpful. It feels that people in the Institute care – they want to see people succeed and have the resources they need to maximise their potential.”

Claire Graviil CPFA, Head of Finance, Direct Commissioning/COVID-19 Vaccination Programme for NHS England, North East and Yorkshire

# Spotlight on: the apprenticeship route

Levy-funded apprenticeships are a very cost-effective way of upskilling existing staff and bringing fresh talent into an organisation.

In England, our Level 7 Accountancy Professional Apprenticeship includes study for the CIPFA Professional Accountancy Qualification and leads to the internationally recognised Chartered Public Finance Accountant (CPFA) designation. It also offers valuable on-the-job experience and the development of workplace skills.

The following skills and behaviours are developed throughout the duration of the apprenticeship:

## Skills

- Building Relationships
- Business Insight
- Communication
- Leadership
- Problem Solving & Decision Making

## Behaviours

- Adds Value
- Continuous Improvement
- Ethics & Integrity
- Flexibility
- Professional Scepticism



More information:  
[cipfa.org/level7](https://cipfa.org/level7)



CIPFA is an approved and established apprenticeship training provider, and we were recently awarded a 'Good' rating by Ofsted.

# Entry routes and exemptions

Students don't need to have an accountancy degree to study our qualification. We welcome students from a broad range of academic backgrounds and offer exemptions to those who have relevant experience, previous study and/or qualifications:



More information:  
[cipfa.org/entryroutes](https://cipfa.org/entryroutes)



School leavers:  
See our minimum entry requirements on [page 16](#).



Fully qualified accountants:  
Exemptions will be granted, and fast track routes are available for those who recently qualified.



Graduates:  
Those with a relevant finance or accountancy-related degree may be eligible for exemptions.



Fully qualified internal auditors:  
We offer a fast track route for fully qualified members of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (Chartered IIA).



Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) qualification holders:  
We are the only UK accountancy body to give exemptions to AAT members at no cost.



Senior finance professionals:  
We offer an accelerated route for senior finance professionals who do not currently hold a professional accountancy qualification.

# What are the entry requirements?

Students must be aged 18 and over and be of graduate calibre.

- Three GCSEs, grades A-C (or grades 4 and up), and two A-Levels, grades A-C, or accepted equivalent (subjects must include Maths and English at either level)
- Scottish, Northern and Southern Ireland equivalents are accepted
- BTEC and SCOTVEC national certificates are accepted
- Minimum vocational requirement is NVQ/GNVQ level 3, or Scottish equivalent

We also welcome students who do not meet the academic requirements. These students must be 21 or over and have their employer's support and more than three years' relevant work experience.

For students who wish to register as a local auditor in terms of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 this requirement is seven years' relevant work experience.



More information:  
[cipfa.org/  
entryrequirements](https://cipfa.org/entryrequirements)



# Ready to get started?

## Employers

Whether you're considering upskilling an existing member of your team or looking to recruit someone new, contact us to discuss the best solution for your organisation.

T: +44 (0)20 7543 5600

E: [employers@cipfa.org](mailto:employers@cipfa.org)

## Students

Contact one of our student advisors to discuss your circumstances and requirements.

We also recommend speaking to your employer about the support they can offer you and the funding options available.

T: +44 (0)20 7543 5600

E: [students@cipfa.org](mailto:students@cipfa.org)



“Working and training at KPMG, the CIPFA qualification gave me the technical knowledge I needed to work across a whole range of public sector clients... I have used every aspect of my CIPFA training, and as my role broadens, I increasingly draw on the wide range of CIPFA policy and guidance.”

Vicky Rock CPFA, Managing Director, Finance, Performance and Portfolio,  
House of Commons

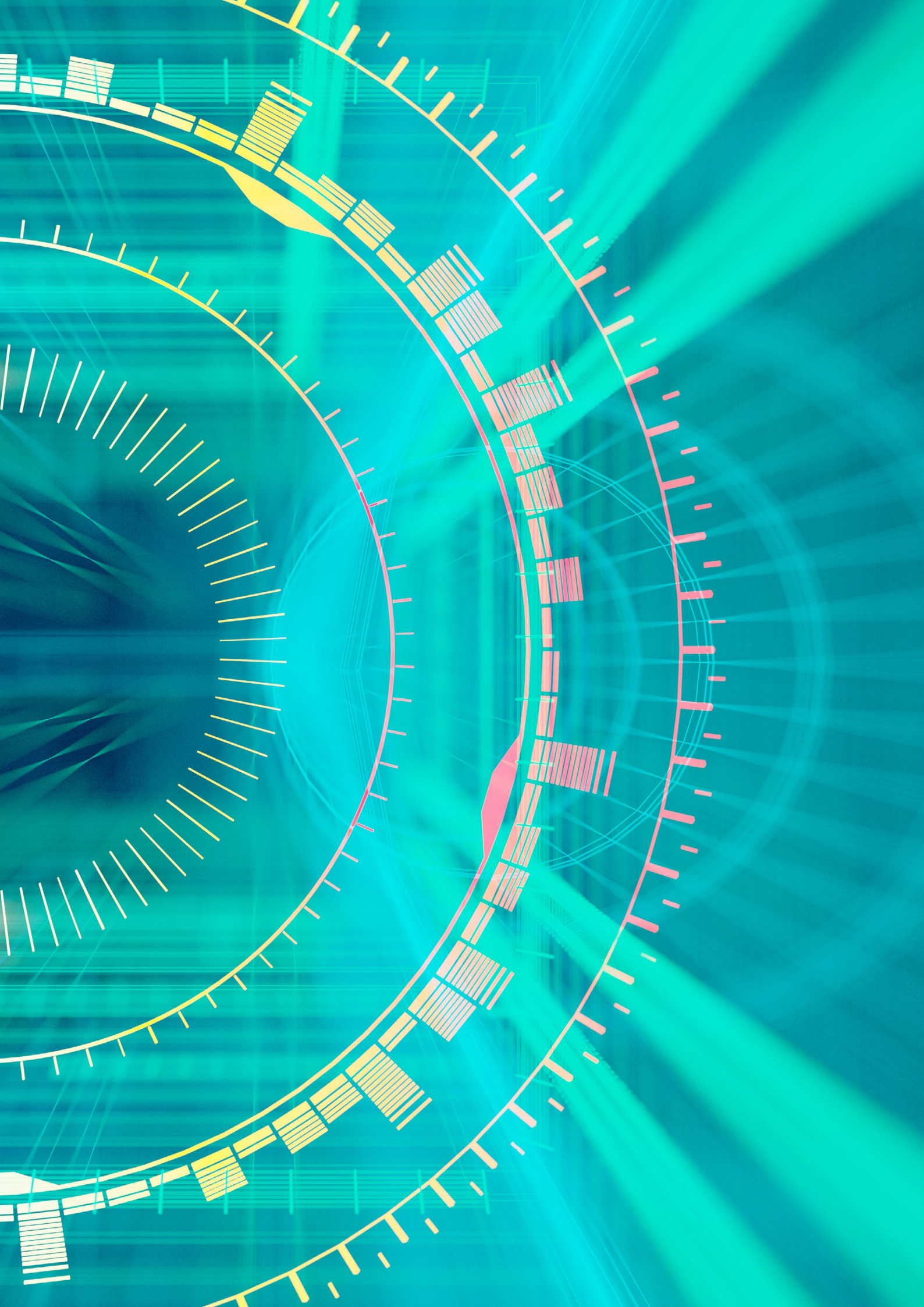


# About CIPFA

CIPFA is a UK-based international accountancy membership and standard-setting body.

We are the only professional accountancy body in the world exclusively dedicated to public finance. Our 14,000 members work throughout the public services, in national audit agencies, in major accountancy firms, and in other bodies around the world where public money needs to be effectively and efficiently managed.

We work with donors, partner governments, accountancy bodies, academic institutions and the public sector around the world to advance public finance and support better public services. Our priority is to expand and strengthen Public Financial Management (PFM) globally.





### Employers

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