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HR and standards

Learn about British and International standards in human resource and human capital management, and the CIPD's role in their development

Introduction

Standards are a defining feature of reputable professions and a vital part of organisational life providing a 'quality assured' basis for ethical and effective practice. Whether or not organisations have a dedicated HR team, they will at some point need guidance on good human resource management practice in areas such as workforce planning, recruitment, diversity and inclusion, learning and development, and human capital reporting. British and International standards provide such guidance. They are developed by experts globally, with input from key stakeholders. Organisations who adopt these standards can improve their performance through people management practices that contribute to their success.

This factsheet explains what British and International standards are and why they matter. It briefly describes the British and International HR standards already published or under development. It also outlines how the CIPD is involved in their development and looks at their relationship with the law.

What are standards?

Organisations large or small, and regardless of their sector or field of activity, use British and International standards covering a wide range of subjects, for example business continuity, energy management, health and safety, and quality management. Standards provide an agreed way of doing something, for example, the detailed technical specifications for making something or the quality requirements for management systems. Their aim is to provide a reliable basis for organisations and people to share the same expectations about a product or service.

British and International Standards are developed through the collaboration and consensus of technical experts in specific fields. The experts are brought together by

national standards bodies, including the British Standards Institution (BSI) and the International Standards Organization (ISO). These standard-setting bodies, and the expert groups they set up, represent key stakeholders for the standards being developed. Examples are government agencies, industry, academia, special interest and user groups, and industry and employer bodies.

British and International HR standards provide organisations with a focus on specific areas of professional practice. They complement the CIPD's professional standards which define what it means to be a 'people professional'. By that we mean people working in HR, learning and development (L&D), organisational development and other disciplines, not just in terms of their knowledge and skills, but also their shared values and ability to make ethical and evidenced-based judgements.

Why do standards matter?

Standards are important to organisations that seek to optimise compatibility, interoperability, safety and quality of their products and services, and to ensure efficient coordination of systems and processes across increasingly complex supply chains. They matter to government as they provide a basis for public policies and amplify regulation. They matter to the standards users because they ensure the quality, safety, characteristics and specification of a product or service. While standards users provide invaluable feedback, the principal driver is economic as standardisation creates value by building global interoperability which in turn support global supply chains and international trade.

Why do HR standards matter?

In 2011, the British Standards Institution (BSI) set up a committee to develop national standards in people management, and to contribute to international standards in human resource management led by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The terms 'human resource management' and 'human capital' are used interchangeably in this factsheet to reflect the terms used in the 'suites' of standards being developed nationally and internationally. These standards provide clear, constructive approaches, challenging leadership and management to develop organisational cultures that support good work, and recognise the value of the people working for an organisation.

People metrics are essential to organisations and the decisions they take. Metrics standards are designed to support a data-driven, evidence-based approach to making

people management and development decisions in a sustainable and principled way. As the demands from organisational leaders, shareholders and investors for analytical and predictive insights increase, and as technologies and systems evolve and collect more data to support the measurement of inputs, processes and outputs, it's likely that our future people management practices will also change.

There are also standards for organisations on governance, resilience and business continuity and smart working that will also influence future organisational priorities and direction.

British human capital standards

The British Standards Institution (BSI) publish British standards in human capital. It works with experts representing employers, academia, and industry and professional bodies. As well as the CIPD, this includes the University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD), Acas, The Trades Union Council (TUC) and the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

The suite of British standards on human capital provide a principles-based framework for valuing people, diversity and inclusion, and learning and development.

The standards are all based on principles for valuing people in organisations:

- People working on behalf of the organisation have intrinsic value, in addition to their protections under the law or in regulation, which needs to be respected.
- Stakeholders and their interests are integral to the best interests of the organisation.
- Every organisation is part of wider society and has a responsibility to respect its social contract as a corporate citizen and operate in a manner that is sustainable.
- A commitment to valuing people who work on behalf of the organisation and to meeting the requirements of the standard is made and supported at the highest level.
- Each principle is of equal importance.

This principles-based approach supports organisations in making sound decisions about investing and developing their people. The broad technical guidance provided in standardised people management processes and practices is intended to help

organisations better understand their role in the network of relationships between employees, contractors, volunteers, supply-chain partners and customers.

These standards provide a framework for organisations to establish managerial accountability and flexible, innovative and sustainable practices to achieve the full potential of their people:

- BS 76000 Valuing people in organizations (2015): This Management System standard promotes a structured approach to help organisations assess how their HR policies and practices promote long term effectiveness, shared values and social sustainability to ensure the mutual respect and contribution of everyone who works on their behalf.
- BS 76005 Valuing people through diversity and inclusion (2017): Presented as a Code of Practice, it's focus is fairness and dignity at work. It provides a framework of recommendations for reviewing, assessing and undertaking a competent and principled approach to diversity and inclusion to enable an organisation to demonstrate its commitment to valuing people in its widest sense.
- PD 76006 A guide to learning and development (2017): This Published Document provides an essential 'roadmap' to using learning and development to develop individual potential and support organisational performance. It includes identifying priority learning and development areas, innovative ways to meet learning needs, and options to evaluate the success of learning practices.

Future work will focus on health and well-being and principles of measurement.

International human resource management standards

In 2011, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) formed a Technical Committee (TC 260) to develop human resource management standards to offer broad, coordinating guidance for organisations in aligning and streamlining their HR practices for their own benefit as well as their stakeholders. These standards codify organisational guidelines, processes, practices and systems in people management and development. They are being developed by experts representing 30 member countries, including two experts nominated by the CIPD to represent the UK.

These human resource management standards have been developed and published by ISO TC260:

- [ISO 30400 Human resource management – Vocabulary](#): Presents the fundamental terms used in this suite of human resource management standards.
- [ISO 30401 Knowledge management systems](#): The requirements for effective organisational knowledge management.
- [ISO 30405 Human resource management – Guidelines on recruitment](#): Effective recruitment processes and procedures for anyone involved in recruiting.
- [ISO/TR 30406 Human resource management - Sustainable employability management for organizations](#): Guiding principles for developing and implementing sustainable employability policies.
- [ISO/TS 30407 Human resource management- Cost-per-hire](#): Measures to determine the economic value of the effort taken to fill vacancies.
- [ISO 30408 Human resource management – Guidelines on human governance](#): Guidelines on structuring an effective and responsive organisational human governance system that fosters increased collaboration across all stakeholders.
- [ISO 30409 Human resource management – Workforce planning](#): Guidelines to help organisations respond effectively to their current and projected workforce requirements.
- [ISO/TS 30410 Human resource management – Impact of hire metrics](#): Principles to determine the impact of critical positions on organisational performance.
- [ISO/TS 30411 Human resource management – Quality of hire metrics](#): Options to measure the quality of hire.
- [ISO 30414 Human resource management - Human capital reporting](#): Guidelines for organisations on the transparent human capital reporting for internal and external stakeholders.

Standards that TC260 workgroups are actively developing include:

- [ISO 30415 Diversity and inclusion](#).
- [ISO 30421 Turnover and retention](#).
- [ISO 30### Employee engagement](#).
- [ISO 30422 Learning and development](#).
- [ISO 30426 Compensation system](#).

- [ISO 30434 Workforce allocation](#).
- ISO/AWI 10667: Assessment service delivery ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)).

There are also several Technical Specifications being developed to support the human capital reporting metrics relating to organisational culture; occupational health and safety; compliance and ethics; leadership; recruitment; succession planning; productivity and costs that are identified in ISO 30414.

The CIPD's role in developing British and International standards

We're proactively engaged in directing and developing these British and International HR standards. We lead the UK approach and make clear that managing and developing people requires a strong ethical underpinning. We believe it's important to share our expertise, knowledge and our evidenced-based point of view to support people management practices in smaller organisations and countries where professional practice may be less well established.

Because we believe that people and their development are, and will remain, an important source of value creation, our investment in these British and International standards is strategic. The aim is to make sure the standards are principles-led, specific, consistent and measurable, and benefit organisations, their stakeholders and wider society. Currently two of CIPD staff and several CIPD members are actively involved in developing and reviewing standards.

Get involved

Our profession has an important role to play as the experts on people, work and change - so no matter what your interest in people management and development is, or where you live and work, you can contribute your expertise.

All British and International standards work is done within a network of committees. It needs the voluntary contribution and commitment of experts. To get involved in standards work, individuals must become a member of a national or international standards committee. This requires the support of a nominating organisation, such as a trade association, professional body or academic institution, to represent their views. Anyone interested in participating in a national or international committee should contact the national standards setting body – see a [list of participating member countries and the](#)

contact details for each national standards setting body.

But anyone can comment on standards during the essential public consultation phase, by registering. on the BSI standards development site.

Standards and the law

Standards aren't the same as regulation or legislation, but the technical detail of standards often informs drafting of policy guidance, regulation and legislation by governments.

Because legislation can change, standards rarely cite the law within their technical content.

Organisations need to meet their legal obligations, but complying with a national or international standard shows they take their responsibilities seriously and demonstrates commitment to doing things well.

False claims of compliance or compliance failings can be a matter for a trading standards unit at a local authority - and potentially lead to being on the wrong side of the law.

Useful contacts and further reading

Contacts

British Standards Institution (BSI)

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

ISO TC260

Books and reports

MULVIE, A. (2018) *Working with external quality standards and awards*. London: Routledge.

MULVIE, A. (2018) *Working with external quality standards and awards: strategic implications for human resource and quality management*. CIPD Applied Research Conference. Reviewed in *In a Nutshell*, issue 88.

WONG, W., ANDERSON, V. and BOND, H. (2019) *Human capital management standards: a*

complete guide. London: KoganPage.

Visit the [CIPD and Kogan Page Bookshop](#) to see all our priced publications currently in print.

Journal articles

ANDERSON, V. (2017) HRD standards and standardization: where now for human resource development? *Human Resource Development International*. Vol. 20, No.4, pp327-345.

CIPD members can use our [online journals](#) to find articles from over 300 journal titles relevant to HR.

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This factsheet was written by Heather Bond, CIPD's nominated expert, and Wilson Wong, Chair of the BSI Committee.