

Compliance Officer

Introduction

Compliance officers help senior managers to make sure that the activities of their organisation, and each person in it, meet the required standards of the regulatory authority. They help to set policies, investigate areas of concern and prepare reports for senior managers and directors.

Also known as

- Analyst, Compliance
- Consultant, Compliance
- Manager, Compliance
- Group Compliance Officer



Work Activities

Most firms and organisations are regulated in one way or another, and have to comply with the requirements of the government or government-appointed regulators.

Typical examples are in connection with health and safety, or data protection. There are also many EU Directives that apply to organisations in the UK. Responsibility for complying with whichever regulations apply to each particular firm belongs to the senior management of the firms concerned.

In the case of sole traders, that will be the sole traders themselves. In the case of small firms, one of the Directors or Partners will often take on the responsibility, perhaps with several other duties. In larger firms, there is usually a compliance department, headed by a 'Compliance Officer' who advises the board on the regulations which apply to the firm, and how the firm needs to comply with them.

Reporting to the Compliance Officer there are often Compliance Managers, Technical Advisers and monitoring staff, checking that departments are being compliant.

Companies offering financial services such as mortgages, life assurance, investment management, financial planning and pensions are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) or the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA).

These organisations cover the way regulated firms conduct their business, the ways in which products are advertised and sold and complaints are handled, the way firms are organised, whether they are solvent and if they have appropriate systems and controls. The FCA also deals with qualifications that certain staff must have.

The FCA and the PRA regulate partly by specific rules and partly by generally worded principles, including a code of conduct. It is the responsibility of senior management, the Partners and Directors to make sure that their organisations comply with the rules, and to decide how they will interpret the principles. One member of the senior management must assume overall responsibility for compliance.

This person could also be the Compliance Officer, but in larger firms, you could also be the person managing the compliance department, providing advice and guidance to senior management and overseeing the compliance function on a day-to-day basis.

It is very important that senior management listen to your concerns because the regulator can impose disciplinary penalties, including large fines, if firms do not meet the standards.

You are involved in preparing policies, staff handbooks and training schedules. You work closely with human resources departments to make sure that the correct staff training is carried out and recorded properly. You might sometimes give training yourselves. You need to convince colleagues that compliance should be part of the culture of the entire company.

You monitor all the activities of your organisation, investigate any areas of concern and prepare and present reports. You take an active role in making sure that all sales, advertising and promotional strategy and materials are clear, fair and not misleading.

Compliance Officers build good relationships with the regulating authority. You prepare for and manage compliance visits and follow up any action required as a result of the visit.

You keep up to date with new regulations. You might be asked to investigate new business areas to make sure that they will comply with the law.

Compliance professionals who work as consultants travel around to visit many different client companies.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Compliance Officer, you'll need:

- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- to be able to pay close attention to detail
- report-writing skills
- to be self-motivated
- presentation skills
- to be able to prioritise tasks and manage your time well
- general IT skills
- confidence and determination

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £20,000 - £22,500
- With experience: £25,000 - £29,500
- Senior Compliance Officers earn £32,000 - £36,000

Hours of work

Compliance Officers usually work around 35-40 hours, Monday to Friday, with extra hours according to the demands of the job. Some work much longer hours. Part-time and job-share opportunities are sometimes available.

Where could I work?

Employers include:

- banks
- building societies
- insurance companies
- firms of investment specialists
- investment banks

Other organisations offering financial services to the public require a compliance function and might use the services of a self-employed compliance consultant.

Opportunities for Compliance Officers occur in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for experienced Compliance Officers to work independently as self-employed consultants.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in the following places:

- local/national newspapers
- employers' websites
- Jobcentre Plus
- insurancejobs.co.uk

- online insurance jobs
- insurance times jobs

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

Many entrants are graduates with relevant experience in financial services, insurance, mortgages or investments. Relevant degree subjects include finance, economics, accountancy and business law.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

A Degree Apprenticeship is also a great place to start. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

There are some postgraduate qualifications in financial regulation and compliance.

It is also possible to enter general financial services work with A levels or equivalent and progress to compliance work.

Another good place to start is studying for an Institute of Financial Services (IFS) level 3 diploma in financial studies. This course is assessed by a multiple choice test and a written paper. The units you could be studying include:

- unit 1: financial capability for the immediate and short term
- unit 2: financial capability for the medium and long term
- unit 3: sustainability of an individual's finances
- unit 4: sustainability of the financial services system

Check the website for dates and availability.

Other courses could be available in your area.

Training

There are relevant qualifications for compliance practitioners, including:

- The International Compliance Association's advanced certificate and diploma in compliance (in association with Alliance Manchester Business School, the University of Manchester)
- the chartered institute for securities and investment diploma in investment compliance for people working in the securities and investment industry

Progression

Compliance staff can progress to compliance management, Head of Compliance and Director posts.

Work Experience

Some entrants have a business or finance related background. New entrants could start in insurance or financial services and move into compliance functions when they have developed more general skills.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

In a large firm, the Compliance Officer might be on the board as a Director and will therefore be an Approved Person. In this case, the post will be an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to. This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

Qualifications

For entry to a degree in finance or financial services, the usual minimum requirement is:

- 2/3 A levels
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in 2/3 other subjects
- English and maths GCSEs at grade C/4 or above

Alternatives to A levels include:

- BTEC Level 3 qualifications
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

However, course requirements vary, so check prospectuses carefully.

UCAS tariff points from the ifs certificate or diploma in financial studies might be accepted by some institutions in combination with other qualifications.

To get onto a Degree Apprenticeship, you will usually need at least 2 A levels.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Skills/experience

Some entrants have a business- or finance-related background. New entrants could start in insurance or financial services and move into compliance functions when they have developed more general skills.

Larger firms might recruit graduates with a legal or accountancy background.

Access courses

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (for example, Access to Business) could be the way in.

These courses are designed for people who have not followed the usual routes into higher education. No formal qualifications are usually needed, but you should check this with individual colleges.

Distance learning

A number of organisations offer relevant qualifications by distance learning. These include the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII) and the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI).

A distance learning postgraduate programme is offered by Reading University (MSc in Capital Markets, Regulation and Compliance).

Funding

The International Capital Market Association (ICMA) offers scholarships for the course at Reading. Applications are made through the university department.

Sponsorship from some of the larger financial services firms can be available for those studying degree-level courses.

Statistics

- 4% of people in occupations such as compliance officer are self-employed.
- 22% work part-time.
- 18% have flexible hours.
- 8% of employees work on a temporary basis.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Recruit.co.uk**
Publisher: Financial Skills Partnership (FSP)
Address: 51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ
Tel: 0845 2573772
Email: directions@financialskillspartnership.org.uk
Website: www.directions.org.uk/careers
- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk
- **Financial Skills Partnership (FSP)**
Skills for the financial, finance and accountancy sectors
Address: 51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ
Tel: 0845 2573772
Email: info@financialskillspartnership.org.uk
Website: www.financialskillspartnership.org.uk
- **Inside Careers**
Specialists in graduate careers
Address: Unit 6, The Quad, 49 Atalanta Street, Fulham, London SW6 6TU
Tel: 020 7565 7900
Website: www.insidecareers.co.uk
- **London Institute of Banking and Finance**
Address: 8th Floor, Peninsular House, 36 Monument Street, London EC3R 8LJ
Tel: 020 7444 7111
Email: customerservices@ifslearning.ac.uk
Website: www.ifslearning.ac.uk
- **International Compliance Association (ICA)**
Address: Wrens Court, 52-54 Victoria Road, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1SX
Tel: 0121 3627534
Email: ict@int-comp.com
Website: www.int-comp.org
- **Jobs in Risk**
Publisher: Incisive Media
Email: info@jobsinrisk.com

Website: www.jobsinrisk.com/careers

- **People Exchange Cymru (PEC)**
Public sector recruitment portal for Wales
Email: peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales
Website: www.peopleexchange@cymru.org.uk/home

Related Careers

- Economist
- Independent Financial Adviser
- Paraplanner
- Commodity Broker
- Credit Manager
- Investment Analyst
- Trader
- Pensions Consultant
- Stockbroker
- Debt Collector
- Investment Manager
- Tax Adviser
- Credit Controller
- Finance Manager
- Legal Cashier
- Corporate Treasurer