

IR Society professional development programme

Developing your own IR career journey

In this article, Kim Anderson gives an overview of the Society's wide-ranging learning opportunities, including courses and qualifications aimed at every level.



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As you move through your career in investor relations, you will wish to develop a broad range of skills to either help you in your day-to-day role or perhaps progress into a more senior role – or take a ‘sideways’ step into other areas of IR. The IR Society offers a suite of courses and qualifications at every stage of your career to enable you to do just that, and this guide sets out clearly what those are and when you might like to think about them on your chosen career path. It will also ensure you have the tools, techniques and knowledge to perform your role as effectively as possible.

Essentially, our course programme is split into three course types:

- core courses (which allow IR practitioners to develop their knowledge in the essential areas of IR);
- advanced courses (aimed at those who may already have attended one or more core courses linked to their particular role); and
- specialist courses (for IR practitioners who may not necessarily be in a pure IRO role).

Here we present a full guide for our readers.

You're new to IR, or would simply like to understand a little more about what you do and why?

Introduction to IR and the financial markets (*Core*)

This full-day course provides an excellent introduction to the world of IR, listed companies and the financial markets in which they operate. It explains clearly how the markets are regulated as well as looking at equity investors and the underlying investment principles. A Q&A session with an IR professional also provides an invaluable opportunity for delegates to clarify any practical areas of particular interest.

“Very clear and well broken down. As someone with no background in IR/finance, this really helped explain the financial environment/markets and the role of IR.”

IR for assistants & co-ordinators (*Specialist*)

This full-day course is very similar in content to our introduction to IR and the financial markets course. However, it provides an opportunity for those in a support role to network with their peers in similar roles, and share experiences. We therefore recommend this course to, for example, EAs, PAs and administrative staff who deal with investors or external advisers as part of their role. The course also explains financial jargon, who the key IR ‘players’ are, rules around information disclosure and how best to support senior management.

“I really enjoyed the course and learnt a lot from it. I thought the trainer was an excellent tutor and explained everything very well.”

Introduction to writing for IR (*Core*)

Although this course is aimed particularly at professionals who wish to improve their writing skills in a corporate context, it also helps those who may be new to writing for IR and who may need

to learn (or improve) how to simplify their communication, give it more clarity and, at the same time, keep on (the corporate) message. The course also briefly covers common grammatical errors people often make in their writing and what to avoid in external communications; it also provides comprehensive guidance using real-life examples of good, strong IR communication (and what not to do!)

“A very good course with the opportunity for discussion, which was helpful. Very useful to hear from others in similar roles too.”

Demystifying company accounts & valuations (Core) and IR regulation & compliance essentials (Core)

Aimed at all levels, these courses support our Certificate in Investor Relations (CIR) and International Certificate in Investor Relations (ICIR) programmes.

The ‘demystifying’ course is a two-day course and provides the foundation knowledge needed to understand a set of accounts and answer questions from analysts, investors and the financial media. Module one clearly explains financial jargon, along with the relevance and limitations of financial statements. Delegates will also learn how to identify which key numbers are important when communicating a company’s story, and why. Module two covers in depth how financial analysts and investors view and value companies, along with commonly used valuation methods.

The IR regulation and compliance essentials course is also a two-day course and provides a basic IR ‘toolkit’ covering the fundamental areas of regulation and compliance that affect investor relations on a day-to-day basis, together with more specific situations, such as IPOs and transactions.

“Excellent intro and development course on a complex topic.”

“A super two days. Excellent trainer – whose incredible knowledge and vast experience showed.”

You’re already an IR practitioner and are looking to increase your knowledge or move into a slightly more senior IR role?

For those who are not necessarily new to IR, or have perhaps moved into a new or more specialist role, we have more targeted courses. These also act as excellent follow-on courses to those covered in the previous section. These include:

Understanding investors, analysts and the financial media (Core)

This is a practical next step for those who have attended either the Introduction to IR and the Financial Markets or our IR for Assistants and Co-ordinators courses. This half-day course, presented by senior practitioners, helps IR professionals to build strong relationships with their key stakeholders by developing a better understanding of the priorities for an IR function. It explains the day-to-day roles within fund management, sell-side and advisory firms, as well as the media and its unique expectations of IR.

“Very informative overview with the right level of interaction.”

Investor targeting and engagement (Core)

This insightful half-day course will help you understand the benefits of proactive investor targeting. Aimed at shareholder

analysis teams, as well as company secretaries and finance team members, delegates will also gain a perspective on the key requirements and tools for executing successful investor engagement. Another excellent follow-up course to our introduction to IR and the financial markets course.

“I felt the course was useful and well-structured and that the presenters provided a great perspective on investor targeting generally.”

IR script writing for management presentations (Core) and advanced writing skills (Core)

Depending on whether your career journey has taken you into script writing or more into putting together results or CMD presentations (or possibly both!), these two courses are useful to either IR professionals who have already taken the introduction to writing for IR course or as a starting point for anyone already familiar with the more basic elements of writing for IR. Both are half-day courses.

“The tutor did a great job managing a high level of interaction despite the virtual environment.”

Annual reporting: best practice in practice (Core)

This half-day course provides a comprehensive overview of recent developments in best practice reporting (both in print and online) as well as an up-date on the impact of new reporting requirements. It is aimed at anyone involved in the production of annual reports, including service providers.

“Very well organised and informative. All speakers had relevant insightful information that was conveyed clearly. Accessible and manageable delivery of information.”

Finally, you’re a senior IRO looking to develop a specific skill set or attend an advanced course?

For those who are more experienced in IR or who may perhaps wish to focus on a different, or more specific, area of IR alongside their current role, we offer a suite of advanced and specialist courses, and these are set out below:

ESG/SRI: sustainability issues for IR (Advanced)

This half-day course gives delegates a much better understanding of the key sustainability issues, current and future trends and how to successfully identify and engage with key stakeholders. Delegates will also learn how to respond to the growing interest of institutional investors in the sustainability performance and corporate governance practices of quoted companies. The course is primarily aimed at those who interact with SRI/ESG teams and those wishing to develop an effective SRI programme.

“Interesting overview of SRI landscape/trends. Also interesting to hear new SRI content.”

Leadership in IR (Advanced)

This interactive one-day course will explore what leadership means for IR professionals and provides practical advice on how to manage and influence others. Delegates will examine their own leadership style, strengths and personal brand within a

supportive environment. This course would be of particular benefit to those looking to progress into a senior IR role and also those considering our Diploma in IR (DipIR) certificate (further information set out below).

“Overall, I found the course worthwhile and am pleased I attended. It was a welcome opportunity to take some time away from the day job to consider leadership in the context of IR, with individuals in similar roles. I found the conversation with the speakers, facilitated by Sue [Scholes], useful and enjoyed the panel session in particular.”

Financial modelling (*Specialist*)

This intensive one-day course will help delegates with financial models through a range of practice model-building exercises. It will assist in the overall understanding of valuations and will review the most common methodologies used in the market.

“Good session. Very well presented and exercises are very to the point and helpful.”

Building your debt IR capability (*Specialist*)

Aimed at experienced and equity-focused IROs looking to increase their knowledge of debt IR, and IROs with a responsibility for debt IR, this half-day course looks at current best practice, how to deliver an effective debt IR programme, and the benefits of proactive debt IR engagement.

“A thorough grounding in debt IR.”

Other Courses

Best practice in IR

Aimed at all levels, this discussion-based half-day course explores ‘best practice IR’ and identifies the tools and techniques available to IROs to help them achieve this. It’s designed to help delegates understand the practical aspects of running a good IR programme.

Regulation update (*all levels*)

The regulatory landscape is constantly changing. This half-day course will bring you up-to-date with all the latest developments impacting IR practitioners. Delegates will explore the impact of changes currently being made as well as those planned for the future. The course is aimed at those who have already attended our IR regulation and compliance essentials course and would like an update on changes to regulation; it would also be of particular help to company secretaries or CFOs/FDs. (The IR Society recommends all IR practitioners attend this course at least once every two years to ensure they keep up-to-date with legal and best practice guidance).

Bespoke

We can also tailor our course content to create a bespoke course to meet your exact needs and deliver it at a time and place to suit you. Many have found this especially useful if they have either groups of new starters, or groups of people within their business expressing an interest in the same course(s). In this instance, we are often able to offer discounted rates.

Are you looking for a formal IR qualification?

CIR (Certificate in Investor Relations) and ICIR (International Certificate in Investor Relations)

The CIR/ICIR is an internationally recognised qualification for the investor relations profession. The qualification allows successful candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the financial and market environment, the regulatory and reporting requirements of listed companies and a sound understanding of the principles of IR, thus enabling them to operate competently and safely.

This is a self-study qualification based on the IR Society’s comprehensive CIR study guide and is assessed by an exam comprising 60 multiple choice questions, based on topics set out in the syllabus. The programme is suitable for anyone working in IR or related professions (at all levels) or considering a move into IR, either in the UK or overseas.

“I decided to take the CIR to complement my role as a chartered secretary. I found the administration around the course well-organised and appreciated the flexibility around fixing an exam date. I have already had clients comment on the achievement and the additional skills in the boardroom are immediately proving worthwhile.”

CIR revision course

This course will help candidates revise subjects ahead of the exam and assist candidates with any questions they may have on specific sections of the syllabus. It covers the key areas of the syllabus, with a focus on sections covering corporate entities and governance, market conduct and reporting.

“The CIR revision course was excellent. Not being from a finance background, I found the subject material difficult but the trainer really brought it to life in an easy to follow and engaging session. The regular use of polls was also really helpful for maintaining focus.”

DipIR (Diploma in Investor Relations)

DipIR is our senior level qualification. Developed by expert IR practitioners and educational organisations, the Diploma allows candidates to demonstrate the skills, tools and expertise necessary for leaders in the profession.

Candidates are considered for the programme based on their own merits. In general, it’s expected that DipIR candidates will be members of the IR Society, will have successfully completed the CIR/ICIR qualification and will have a minimum of five years’ experience in IR or a related profession.

“The IR Diploma was a fantastic opportunity for me to refresh my IR knowledge, fill any gaps and put it all to the test! I particularly enjoyed the interaction with my peers, sharing our practical experiences in different areas and learning from each other.”

“Taking the IR Diploma really helped me cement my knowledge and experience, and provided a great opportunity to plug the gaps in my knowledge. It was also a great way to meet other IR professional and discuss topics you are previously unfamiliar with.” ■