

## Aspiring SBM Programme: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### *Who is an aspiring SBM?*

If you wish to train to become a School Business Manager (SBM) but are not employed in a school as a SBM or in a similar role, e.g. Finance Manager, Buildings Manager, HR Officer, Administration Manager, Administration Officer, then you are referred to as an 'aspiring SBM'.

The role of a typical school business manager has been changing in recent years and has often become a more complex role involving supervision or management across many day-to-day business activities in a school. The new 2018 ILM Diploma programmes for school business managers reflect these latest changes to the role.

### *Who can apply to join the Aspiring programme?*

The Aspiring SBM programme is designed for those not currently working in school settings who are interested in changing direction and developing their career as a school business manager (or similar).

### *Do I have to attend an aspiring programme before joining an SBM programme?*

The Aspiring SBM programme is highly recommended for aspiring applicants wishing to study the Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers programme. The Aspiring SBM programme is an induction and support process, in which individuals with relevant transferable skills from industry and other sectors can learn about the SBM role and the education sector. The induction process is generally the same regardless of which level of programme participants wish to apply for.

### *What are the costs?*

Please see our SBM Partnership website [www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk) for details of current prices. You will be invoiced two to three weeks before the start of the Aspiring programme and must pay in full before the programme begins.

### *What will I study?*

The Aspiring SBM programme is a fully online programme studied over about six weeks. It includes a series of WebExes (online conferencing or 'webinars') which will help prepare you to study the Level 4 or Level 5 Diploma programmes, making you aware of the challenges ahead. There are a few short tasks to complete between some of the WebEx sessions.

During the programme you will explore the role of the SBM and the wider educational context. You will also be given the opportunity to analyse key policy initiatives impacting on schools and SBMs, such as the new school systems and school/academy funding reforms.

Importantly, the programme will provide suggestions to help you find a support school and find a job. You will also have an opportunity to talk to SBMs who were once aspiring participants but who are now SBM graduates.

### ***Do I need a support school to study the Aspiring SBM Programme?***

No. You only require a support school when you are applying for/ studying the Level 4 or Level 5 Diploma programmes or individual unit(s). Your support school normally needs to be confirmed before you apply for the full Diploma programme or an individual unit – see below for more information on support (or link) schools.

### ***After the Aspiring SBM programme, which programme should I then apply for?***

As an aspiring participant we recommend that you begin with the Level 4 Diploma because this gives you an opportunity to explore the range of responsibilities of a SBM. The Level 4 programme covers the day to day operational responsibilities of the typical school business manager (or similar role). It is also the qualification that most schools when recruiting school business managers (or similar) look for.

Should your transferable skills be based upon extensive experience outside of the education sector then it may be possible to successfully study the Level 5 Diploma programme without first completing the Level 4. In order to join the Level 5 Diploma programme you will have to find a support school that is willing to let you work closely with its Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as the assignments assume that you have this access.

### ***Why do I need a support (or link) school when I study the full Diploma?***

The assignments for each of the SBM programmes are based upon the activities of a SBM. The Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers (an updated Diploma programme first offered in early 2018) is a 'vocational' qualification in which tasks and evidence refer to the schools context. Your support (link) school will provide the vital hands-on experience of how a school operates and more importantly an insight into the role of the SBM.

Support schools can coach and mentor an aspiring participant on how the school operates in key areas such as finance, budgeting, HR, risk, procurement and facilities management, as well as team leadership and strategic management, and much more. When studying the SBM programmes you will need access to relevant school documentation, for example the school's finance, budgeting, HR, health & safety and safeguarding policies, as well as in-school procedures to enable you to complete the assessed elements of the programme.

You will also need to see other key documents, such as school accounts/ budgets, performance management policy and the school development plan (SDP). It is possible that you may also need to access or view some information of a confidential nature, but you will receive some guidance on this as part of the Aspiring programme (and more guidance is provided within the full Diploma programme content).

### ***Support school commitment***

The number of times you will need to visit or contact the support school as an aspiring participant will vary widely. You will probably need to arrange several meetings in the early stages of the programme (or individual unit) but may then be able to maintain contact and discuss your requirements remotely after that, with less frequent meetings. Sometimes, an

aspiring participant may want to visit the school briefly once a week, or fortnightly, in the early stages, but this will entirely depend on circumstances.

Ideally the support school will provide you with a designated in-school mentor, preferably a member of the senior leadership team (or the school business manager), who will be able to guide you through important school documents. The main role of the mentor is to discuss with you how your projects and assessed pieces of work will fit the needs of the school as well as discussing your professional development.

Many of your tasks are used to compile a **portfolio of evidence** which you will maintain as you progress through the Level 4 Diploma programme; your assessed tasks will form a part of the portfolio.

Please note that it is not possible to successfully complete the assignments without a support/link school. It is essential that your support school is able to commit to providing you with the information you require. Please see the relevant programme **FAQ document** (please visit [www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk) ) which provides an overview of the content for each unit within the programme.

The four units studied within the full Level 4 programme (from 2018) are:

1. Leading Support Services
2. Finances in a School
3. Procurement in a School
4. Human Resources in Schools

**Important: You should discuss the content of units to be covered in the programme with your support school so that they are aware of your requirements and the level of commitment they will need to make to yourself.**

Further advice on support schools and their role is provided as an integral part of the Aspiring SBM programme.

### ***How do I find a support school once I am ready to apply for the full Diploma programme?***

Before contacting any school, it is advisable to carry out some research about the school and the SBM role in general. We recommend that you review the school's website, research articles in the local press about the school and read its prospectus. Also read the school's most recent Ofsted report.

Please be aware that if a school is undergoing significant changes (e.g., a rebuilding project, new head teacher in post, academisation, or newly formed federation, etc.) or has a notice to improve, the staff may be too busy to act as a support school.

Further information about how a school might support you is included as part of the Aspiring SBM programme.

### ***What is a DBS check and why do I need one?***

The DBS check or *Disclosure and Barring Service Check* (previously CRB check) is a requirement for all adults who work with children in a school setting. Aspiring participants

will need to regularly visit their support school so will need to complete a DBS check. The school will provide you with an application form; you cannot apply for this independently.

Once you have completed the application form you will need to return it to your support school along with proof of your identity. The school will then apply for your DBS check. As you will be working in your support school on a voluntary basis you should not normally be charged for the DBS check. More information about the DBS check can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>

Further details, information and support will be provided as part of the Aspiring SBM programme.

**To apply for the Aspiring School Business Manager programme please visit:**  
[www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk)

Should you be concerned about the level of your experience you may wish to consider undertaking our Level 3 equivalent qualification, the School Administration Foundation Certificate before you begin the Level 4 Diploma.

See also our *SBM Terms and Conditions* document on our website for more information.

### **Why study with us?**

- We are the leading national provider of SBM programmes
- All of our SBM full programmes are ILM accredited (accreditation is an option for individual units)
- Many thousands of SBMs have successfully gained their qualifications after studying with us - no other provider has our depth of experience
- We have consistently achieved a high pass rate on each accredited SBM programme.
- Our experience is unrivalled
- We have continued to design, develop and update all of the SBM programmes since 2004

### **How to contact us**

For application enquiries contact the Serco SBM team on [sbmpartnership@serco.com](mailto:sbmpartnership@serco.com) or T: 01452 727272 (office hours)

Alternatively, you can contact the Adfecto SBM team on [sbmpartnership@adfecto.org.uk](mailto:sbmpartnership@adfecto.org.uk) T: 01242 220684 (office hours)

**The SBM Partnership (Serco, Adfecto, and ISBL) is the leading national provider of school business management (SBM) programmes**

[www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk)

Note that 'SBM' is an interchangeable acronym and is used as an abbreviation for both 'school business manager' and 'school business management' depending on the context.