

# Entry requirements, skills and interests needed (purchasing and contract management)

You can work your way up into purchasing and contract management, through a business administration apprenticeship, after a degree or with relevant experience

## Entry requirements

There are a variety of entry routes into a career in management. The following are general entry requirements. For specific entry requirements check the person specification for individual job vacancies.

- [With moderate to high grade GCSEs and/or work experience](#)
- [With A levels/equivalent/as a graduate](#)
- [If you already have relevant management experience](#)

### With moderate to high grade GCSEs and/or work experience

You can join the NHS at an administrative level and work your way up into purchasing and contract management, supported by in-house and external training schemes. For most junior administrative positions, you will need four or five [GCSEs at Grades A-C](#) <sup>[1]</sup> or equivalent. Employers may also consider applicants with fewer formal qualifications if they can demonstrate they have the right skills, for example, previous clerical experience. There are sometimes opportunities to enter through an [apprenticeship](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in business administration.

### With A levels/equivalent/as a graduate

You could consider a general business studies course. Some BTEC Business Studies courses include purchasing and supply modules. There are sometimes [higher apprenticeships](#) <sup>[2]</sup> available

There are a number of degrees where you can specialise in purchasing. Many are accredited by the [Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply \(CIPS\)](#) <sup>[3]</sup> so you get a degree combined with a professional qualification.

### If you already have relevant management experience

We welcome applications from people who have already built up relevant management experience and are appropriately qualified from the private sector or in other public or voluntary organisations. You can often join at a level corresponding to your skills and expertise. Some managers are recruited directly for specific positions.

The skills and qualifications needed vary according to the type of post. For example, you're likely to need CIPS qualifications and/or membership of CIPS for most roles in purchasing and contract management.

Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career in purchasing and contract management <sup>[4]</sup>

## • **Skills, qualities and interests needed**

For a career in purchasing and contract management, you'll need a variety of skills and qualities, typically including:

- effective business acumen
- strong negotiating skills
- good communication skills
- leadership skills
- organisational skills
- a willingness to work with others and respect their views
- confidence with numbers
- confidence with information technology
- the ability to challenge the way things are and find better alternatives
- a commitment to the ideals of quality and fairness in delivering healthcare.

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

The NHS values form a key part of the NHS Constitution <sup>[5]</sup>.

Find out more about the NHS Constitution <sup>[6]</sup>

## • **Example requirements for specific roles**

When applying for specific vacancies, always check the person specification to see what skills, qualifications and experience are required. Here are some brief examples.

- deputy head of procurement
- contract management
- associate director of procurement and supplies

## **Deputy head of procurement**

Candidates would be required to be professionally qualified, have experience of contracting, and be computer literate and able to demonstrate effective personal and communication skills.

## **Contracts manager**

Applicants are expected to have or be working towards membership status of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS), with good communication, negotiation and project management skills.

## **Associate director of procurement and supplies**

Membership of the CIPS is required, along with highly developed interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills.

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### **Links**

[1] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#GCSEs\\_at\\_grades\\_A-C](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#GCSEs_at_grades_A-C) [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes> [3] <http://www.cips.org/> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/general-management/purchasing-and-contract-management/training-and-development> [5] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS\\_Constitution](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS_Constitution) [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>