

# GSDC

GLOBAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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WEEK-BY-WEEK PLAN

# Become a DPO in 90 Days

A week-by-week plan from your current role  
to certified

A free, practical plan that takes you from wherever you are today to a certified Data Protection Officer in twelve weeks. Includes the complete week-by-week career path, a printable skills checklist to track progress, an exam study plan, and an honest CIPP-vs-CDPO comparison to help you choose.



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28-Page Field Guide • 12-Week Plan • Printable Checklist • Exam Study Plan

## Ninety days, one clear plan

“Become a DPO” is a goal; this is the schedule. Over twelve weeks of part-time study, you’ll learn the law, build the practical skills, prepare for the exam, and certify — with a printable checklist tracking your progress the whole way. No privacy background required.

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | The complete career path, week by week             | 4 | CIPP vs CDPO: which is better for your goals |
| 2 | A printable DPO skills checklist to track progress | + | Career outcomes & building your portfolio    |
| 3 | How to pass the certification exam — study plan    | + | Staying on track, FAQ & week-1 starter       |

**12**

weeks, 3 phases

**~5 hrs**

per week, part-time

**\$131K**

avg. US DPO salary\*

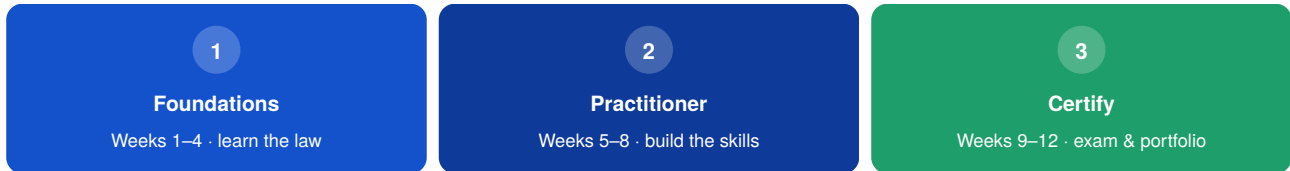
\*Glassdoor, US market. The plan is self-paced — move faster if you can give it more time.

## SECTION 1

# The Plan at a Glance

*Three phases, twelve weeks*

The ninety days break into three clean phases. Each builds on the last, so by the end you're not just certified — you can do the job.



Phase	Weeks	You'll come away able to...
1 · <b>Foundations</b>	1-4	Explain GDPR, rights & the DPO role
2 · <b>Practitioner</b>	5-8	Run DPIAs, ROPA & breach response
3 · <b>Certify</b>	9-12	Pass the exam & show a portfolio

**The rule of the plan:** the pace flexes to your life, but the order doesn't. Foundations before practice, practice before exam — each phase makes the next one easier.

## How to use this plan

A few simple habits make the difference between a plan you read and a plan that gets you certified.

**1 Block the time**  
Reserve ~5 hours a week — consistency beats cramming

**2 Score the checklist first**  
Benchmark yourself in Week 1 so you can watch the number climb

**3 Build as you learn**  
Start a portfolio folder; add an artifact most weeks

**4 Practise early**  
Don't leave practice questions to the final week

### A sustainable weekly rhythm

- 2–3 short study sessions
- 1 hands-on task or artifact
- A few practice questions
- A quick progress check

### Start the 90 days the right way.

**50% OFF**

This plan is built around the GSDC Data Protection Officer certification — enrolment unlocks the modules, materials and exam each week points to. [Begin here.](#)

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## PHASE 1 · WEEKS 1–4

# Foundations

*Learn the law that everything rests on*

You can't advise on rules you don't know. Phase 1 builds a confident grasp of what data protection is, the GDPR framework, individuals' rights, and the DPO role itself.

**By the end of Phase 1 you can...**

Explain personal data, the 7 principles, the 6 lawful bases, the key data subject rights, and what a DPO is responsible for.

**Artifacts to start**

Your first portfolio piece — a one-page summary of the GDPR principles and rights in your own words.

**Mindset for Phase 1:** aim for understanding, not memorising. If you can explain a concept to a friend in plain English, you know it well enough to build on.

## Weeks 1–2

**W1**

### Data protection foundations

- ▶ Score yourself on the skills checklist (Section 2)
- ▶ Learn what personal & special-category data is
- ▶ Understand why GDPR exists & who it applies to
- ▶ Start your portfolio folder

**W2**

### Principles & lawful bases

- ▶ Learn the 7 GDPR principles — especially accountability
- ▶ Learn the 6 lawful bases & when each applies
- ▶ Understand controller vs processor roles
- ▶ Draft your one-page principles summary

**Checkpoint:** by the end of Week 2 you should be able to pick the right lawful basis for a given activity without looking it up.

## Weeks 3–4

**W3**

### Data subject rights

- ▶ Learn the individual's rights (access, erasure, more)
- ▶ Walk through handling a DSAR end to end
- ▶ Note the 1-month response timeline
- ▶ Add a sample DSAR procedure to your portfolio

**W4**

### The DPO role & Articles 37–39

- ▶ Learn designation, position & tasks (Art 37–39)
- ▶ Understand DPO independence & conflict of interest
- ▶ Know when a DPO is legally required
- ▶ Re-read your Phase 1 notes & self-test

### Get the materials behind every week.

**LIMITED TIME**

The plan points to modules, a case study and practice questions. Enrol now to unlock them — enrolment is open for a limited window.

ENROLMENT OPEN FOR A LIMITED WINDOW

**Enroll Now >**

## PHASE 2 · WEEKS 5–8

# Practitioner Skills

*Turn knowledge into the work of the role*

Phase 2 is where you stop describing privacy and start *doing* it — the hands-on tasks a DPO performs every week, each producing a portfolio artifact.

### By the end of Phase 2 you can...

Run a DPIA, maintain a ROPA, handle a breach within 72 hours, and apply privacy by design.

### Artifacts you'll have built

A completed DPIA, a records-of-processing register, and a breach response playbook.

**This is the phase employers care about most.** Anyone can quote the law; the candidate who can show a DPIA they built stands out instantly.

## Weeks 5–6

**W5**

### DPIAs — assessing risk

- ▶ Learn what a DPIA is & when it's required
- ▶ Work the 5 DPIA steps on a real-ish scenario
- ▶ Identify risks & design mitigations
- ▶ Add a completed DPIA to your portfolio

**W6**

### Records & accountability

- ▶ Learn the Record of Processing Activities (Art 30)
- ▶ Build a sample ROPA for a small process
- ▶ Connect records to the accountability principle
- ▶ Add your ROPA to the portfolio

**Checkpoint:** two concrete artifacts done. Your portfolio is now more than a certificate-in-waiting — it's proof.

## Weeks 7–8

**W7**

### Breach & incident response

- ▶ Learn the 72-hour notification rule (Art 33/34)
- ▶ Map a simple breach-response sequence
- ▶ Draft a breach response playbook
- ▶ Add the playbook to your portfolio

**W8**

### Transfers & privacy by design

- ▶ Learn international transfer mechanisms (adequacy, SCCs)
- ▶ Understand privacy by design & by default
- ▶ Skim the global landscape (CCPA, LGPD, DPDP)
- ▶ Re-score the skills checklist — note the climb

**Halfway-plus check:** with Phase 2 done you have the knowledge *and* a starter portfolio. Phase 3 is about converting that into a pass and a credential.

PHASE 3 · WEEKS 9–12

# Exam & Certify

*Convert the work into a credential*

The final phase turns everything you've learned and built into a pass and a recognised certification — plus a polished portfolio to show employers.

### By the end of Phase 3 you have...

A passed exam, the credential and badge, and a tidy portfolio of real artifacts.

### The focus

Targeted revision by exam weighting, timed practice to a comfortable pass, and final portfolio polish.

**Confidence by design:** because you practised throughout, the exam in Week 12 is a formality — not a cliff-edge you cram for.

### Make the final stretch count.

50% OFF

Phase 3 is exam & certification. Claim half-price enrolment on the Data Protection Officer program and finish the 90 days certified.

HALF-PRICE ENROLMENT AVAILABLE NOW

[Enroll Now >](#)

## Weeks 9–10

**W9**

### Map the exam & baseline

- ▶ Study the exam blueprint & domain weighting
- ▶ Take a first full practice exam
- ▶ Identify your weakest 2–3 domains
- ▶ Plan targeted revision around them

**W10**

### Targeted revision

- ▶ Revise weak domains first (most marks)
- ▶ Drill scenario-style practice questions
- ▶ Memorise key numbers (72 hours, 1 month)
- ▶ Re-test the weak domains to confirm progress

**Checkpoint:** by the end of Week 10 your practice scores should be trending comfortably above the pass line.

## Weeks 11–12

**W11**

### Final practice & polish

- ▶ Sit 2–3 timed practice exams to a consistent pass
- ▶ Close any last knowledge gaps
- ▶ Polish your portfolio artifacts
- ▶ Book your exam

**W12**

### Certify & launch

- ▶ Sit and pass the certification exam
- ▶ Add the credential & badge to LinkedIn & CV
- ▶ Finalise your portfolio for interviews
- ▶ Start applying for DPO & privacy roles

**Day 90:** certified, portfolio in hand, and on the market. From “I want to be a DPO” to exactly that — in twelve weeks.

## SECTION 2

# Printable Skills Checklist

Score on Day 1, re-score on Day 90

Rate each skill 0–3 (0 = new, 3 = confident). Print it, score yourself in Week 1, and watch the numbers climb.  = tick when confident.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Skill (Foundations)	Day 1	Day 90
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain personal & special-category data	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	The 7 GDPR principles	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	The 6 lawful bases	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Controller vs processor	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Data subject rights & DSARs	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	The DPO role & Articles 37–39	—	—

Foundations skills above; practitioner & exam skills on the next page.

**48-HOUR OFFER**

### Track your progress to certified.

This checklist tracks the skills; the program builds them, week by week. Enrol now — this offer is open for 48 hours.

OFFER VALID FOR 48 HOURS ONLY

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## Skills checklist — continued

<input type="checkbox"/>	Skill (Practitioner)	Day 1	Day 90
<input type="checkbox"/>	Run a Data Protection Impact Assessment	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain a Record of Processing (ROPA)	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Handle a breach within 72 hours	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Apply privacy by design & default	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage international transfers	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Skill (Exam & soft skills)	Day 1	Day 90
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognise CCPA / LGPD / DPDP differences	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advise stakeholders & liaise with regulators	—	—
<input type="checkbox"/>	Score 65%+ on practice exams	—	—

14 skills in total — add your scores for a Day-1 baseline out of 42.

## How to track your progress

The checklist isn't just a Week-1 exercise — it's your progress meter for the whole 90 days. Here's how to use it well.

**1****Baseline in Week 1**

Score honestly — a low start just means more room to grow

**2****Re-score at the phase breaks**

End of Week 4 and Week 8 — watch the foundations and practitioner rows climb

**3****Target your study**

Any skill still at 0–1 late on is exactly where to spend time

**4****Final score on Day 90**

A column of 3s is your readiness — and a confidence boost before the exam

**DAY 1 — TYPICAL START**

Most beginners score around 5–15 out of 42. That's normal — and exactly who this plan is for.

**DAY 90 — THE GOAL**

Aim for 35+ out of 42, with every skill at 2 or 3. That's a candidate ready to be hired.

## SECTION 3

# How to Pass the Exam

*A study plan that fits the 90 days*

The certification exam is an online, multiple-choice test — **40 questions** — taken when you're ready. It checks applied understanding, not rote recall. With the plan's built-in practice, a pass is very achievable.

GDPR principles & lawful bases

~25%

DPO role & data subject rights

~30%

DPIAs, breaches & accountability

~30%

Transfers & global laws

~15%

**The plan already builds this in:** Weeks 9–11 are dedicated to exam prep — mapping the blueprint, finding weak spots, and practising to a comfortable pass.

## Exam techniques that work

Four habits turn study into a confident pass.

### Study by weighting

Spend most time where the marks are — the DPO role, rights, DPIAs and breaches together carry the majority.

### Think in scenarios

Questions describe situations. Practise deciding which principle, right or rule applies — not reciting definitions.

### Use practice exams

They reveal weak domains far better than re-reading. Test, target, re-test.

### Lock in the numbers

72-hour breach window, one-month DSAR response, Articles 37–39 — know them cold.

**The golden rule:** don't save practice for the end. Doing a few questions every week from Phase 2 onward means Week 12 is revision, not panic.

### Walk in exam-ready.

50% OFF

The program includes the materials and practice questions that make a pass comfortable. Claim half-price enrolment and prepare with confidence.

HALF-PRICE ENROLMENT · EXAM-READY

[Enroll Now >](#)

## High-yield topics to master

If you nail these, you've covered most of the exam. Keep returning to them.

### The must-know list

- The 7 principles (esp. accountability)
- All the data subject rights
- The 72-hour breach rule
- Controller vs processor duties
- The 6 lawful bases & when each fits
- When a DPIA is required & its steps
- DPO tasks & independence (Art 37–39)
- Transfer mechanisms (adequacy, SCCs)

If a question mentions...	Think...
"within 72 hours"	Breach notification to the authority
"one month"	Responding to a data subject request
"high risk to individuals"	A DPIA is likely required
"decides why & how"	The controller

## SECTION 4

# CIPP vs CDPO

*An honest comparison*

Two of the most-discussed privacy credentials. They're different tools for different goals — here's a fair side-by-side.

	CIPP (IAPP)	CDPO (GSDC)
Focus	Privacy law & policy depth	The practical DPO role
Style	Legal / knowledge (“the what”)	Operational / hands-on
Recognition	Premier, ANAB-accredited	Globally recognised
Exam	~90 MCQ, 2.5 hrs	40 MCQ, online
Study & cost	Higher; + membership	Self-paced; accessible
Best for	Legal/corporate, esp. EU/US	Entering & doing the role

*CIPP/E is widely regarded as the gold standard for GDPR **legal** knowledge; CDPO is geared to the **practical** work of the DPO role.*

## Which is better for your goals?

Neither is “better” outright — it depends on where you’re heading. Use this honest guide.

### LEAN CIPP IF...

- ▶ You're in or targeting legal/compliance roles
- ▶ An employer specifically asks for CIPP
- ▶ You work across EU/US corporate privacy
- ▶ You want the most-recognised name & will invest more

### LEAN CDPO IF...

- ▶ You want a practical route *into* the DPO role
- ▶ You're a career-changer or beginner
- ▶ You value self-paced, accessible study
- ▶ You want to prove you can do the work, fast

**The honest take:** they're complementary. Many professionals start with a practical DPO credential to enter the field and demonstrate capability, then add CIPP later for legal depth and recognition. This plan gets you certified and working — the ideal first move.

**LIMITED-TIME**

### Get a practical, recognised head start.

If your goal is to enter and perform the DPO role, the GSDC credential is a fast, accessible route. Limited-time enrolment is open now.

LIMITED-TIME ENROLMENT · ACT TODAY

**Enroll Now** ›

## Where the path leads

Completing the 90 days puts you on a clear, well-paid privacy ladder.

<b>Chief Privacy Officer</b> Executive ownership of privacy	\$200K–\$270K+
<b>Senior / Lead DPO</b> Leads privacy across the organisation	\$150K–\$190K
<b>Data Protection Officer</b> Advises, monitors, owns compliance	\$119K–\$160K
<b>Privacy Analyst / Officer</b> Supports the privacy programme	\$70K–\$135K

▲ the 90-day plan gets you onto this ladder

US ranges synthesised from Glassdoor, IAPP & Jobicy (2025–26); vary by experience, sector & location.

## Build your portfolio as you go

The plan is designed so that by Day 90 you have more than a certificate — you have evidence. Here's the portfolio you'll have assembled, week by week.

**W2** **GDPR principles summary**

The concepts, in your own words

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**W3** **DSAR handling procedure**

How you'd action an access request

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**W5** **A completed DPIA**

Risk assessed and mitigated

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**W6** **A records register (ROPA)**

Article 30 accountability in action

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**W7** **A breach response playbook**

The 72-hour workflow, ready to run

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**Why it wins interviews:** being able to open a folder and show real artifacts — not just name a certificate — is what separates you from other candidates.

## Staying on track

Life happens and weeks slip. The plan is resilient — here's how to keep momentum without giving up.

### If you fall behind

Don't restart — just slide the schedule. The order matters more than the dates; a 16-week version still works.

### If you're ahead

Compress. Motivated full-timers finish in 4–6 weeks. Move to exam prep as soon as the practitioner artifacts are done.

### When motivation dips

Re-score the checklist — seeing how far you've come is the best fuel for the final push.

### If a topic won't stick

Teach it to someone (or out loud). Explaining a concept exposes — and fixes — the gaps.

**The only failure is stopping.** A slower finish is still a finish — and a certified DPO is a certified DPO, whether it took 12 weeks or 20.

## Frequently asked questions

### Can I really do this in 90 days with a full-time job?

Yes — the plan assumes about 5 hours a week of part-time study. If you have more time, you'll finish sooner.

### Do I need a privacy or legal background?

No. The plan starts from foundations and is built for career-changers as much as experienced professionals.

### Should I do CIPP or CDPO first?

If your goal is to enter and do the DPO role practically and affordably, start with the CDPO route; many add CIPP later for legal depth.

### What if I need longer than 90 days?

That's fine — it's self-paced. Slide the schedule; the sequence is what matters, not the exact dates.

### What do I have at the end?

A recognised certification, a verifiable badge, and a portfolio of real artifacts to show employers.

### Begin your 90 days today.

**50% OFF**

The plan works best with the program behind it. Claim half-price enrolment on the GSDC Data Protection Officer certification and start week one.

HALF-PRICE OFFER WHILE IT LASTS

**Enroll Now** >

## The 90-day plan on one page

The whole journey, at a glance — tear this out and pin it up.

Week	Focus	Artifact / milestone
1	Foundations & checklist baseline	Portfolio started
2	Principles & lawful bases	Principles summary
3	Data subject rights	DSAR procedure
4	DPO role & Articles 37–39	Phase 1 self-test
5	DPIAs	A completed DPIA
6	Records & accountability	A ROPA
7	Breach response	Breach playbook
8	Transfers & privacy by design	Re-score checklist
9	Map exam & baseline practice	First practice exam
10	Targeted revision	Weak domains closed
11	Final practice & polish	Consistent pass scores
12	Certify & launch	<b>Certified DPO</b>

## Your week-1 starter checklist

Don't over-plan — just start. Tick these off in your first week and the momentum carries you.

### Set up

- ✓ 2713 Enrol in the DPO program
- ✓ 2713 Score the skills checklist (baseline)
- ✓ 2713 Pick your target exam week
- ✓ 2713 Create your portfolio folder

### Learn

- ✓ 2713 Read what personal data is
- ✓ 2713 Skim the 7 principles
- ✓ 2713 Note the 72-hour & 1-month rules
- ✓ 2713 Block weekly study time

### Commit

- ✓ 2713 Tell someone your 90-day goal
- ✓ 2713 Try 5 practice questions
- ✓ 2713 Mark Week 1 of 12 complete
- ✓ 2713 Plan Week 2

**The clock starts when you do.** Ninety days from your first study session, you can be a certified Data Protection Officer.

# GSDC

## 90 days from now, you could be a certified DPO.

A week-by-week career path, a printable skills checklist, an exam study plan, and an honest CIPP-vs-CDPO comparison — everything you need to go from your current role to certified. The plan is done; the first step is yours.

### Next steps & resources

**Explore the pathway**

See the full route to certification.

**Enrol in the program**

Self-paced, globally recognised, portfolio-building.

**Grab the study materials**

Modules, case study & practice questions.

**Talk to an advisor**

Unsure where to start? Ask.

**Day 1 starts now.****OFFER ENDS SOON**

You've got the week-by-week plan, the checklist, the study plan and the comparison. The only thing left is to begin. Join the GSDC Data Protection Officer program — this offer closes in 48 hours.

**FINAL CALL · OFFER VALID 48 HOURS****Enroll Now >**