



Project Management Certificates Compared

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In the world of project management education there are several different certificates issued by different organizations. Which one to choose?

A short time of research on the web shows that you can apply for certificates issued by the following organizations, the list is not exhaustive and it does not include experts certificates like PMI-RMP or PMI-SP:

AIPM (Australian Institute for Project Management)

- Level 4 (Project Team Member)
- Level 5 (Project Manager)
- Level 6 (Project Director)

AMA (American Management Association)

- Project Management Certificate

APM (Association for Project Management)

- Certified International Project Manager
- Senior Project Manager
- Certified Project Manager
- Associate Project Management Professional

APM Group Ltd

- Prince2 Practitioner
- Prince2 Foundation

ASAPM (American Society for the Advancement of Project Management)

- Senior Management (SP)
- Resource Managers (RM)
- Project Office Manager (PO)
- Project Director (aCPM3)
- Project Manager of large, complex projects (aCPM2)
- Project Manager of medium or less-complex projects (aCPM1)
- Project Team Members (TM)

IPMA (International Project Management Association)

- IPMA Level D – Certified Project Management Associate
- IPMA Level C – Certified Project Manager
- IPMA Level B – Certified Senior Project Manager
- IPMA Level A – Certified Projects Director

PMI (Project Management Institute)

- Program Management Professional (PgMP)
- Project Management Professional (PMP)
- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)

It's not directly clear how to choose the correct path of certification. Usually, you do not have to bother with such a wide choice, and you can narrow options to one of the three most popular certification tracks proposed by: PMI, APMG and IPMA.

PMI – Project Management Institute

Certificates issued by PMI:

- Program Management Professional (PgMP)
- Project Management Professional (PMP)
- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)

The most famous certificate issued by the PMI and the most wanted by project managers is PMP – Project Management Professional. PMP rules in rankings for the most sought certificates in IT, as well as it has the greatest impact on an income of its holders (source: Techrepublic).

To obtain the certificate you need to pass the 4-hour exam consisting of 200 test questions from: PMBoK Guide, general knowledge of management and the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. But to be able to take the exam you must first demonstrate experience in projects – 36 months within last six years (for people with higher education), and take at least 35 hours of project management education (I recommend to take it at an accredited by PMI training company, but the accreditation is not a condition). The exam is considered rather tough and questions are often very tricky. The cost of the exam should be considered moderate – 300 USD for CAPM, 555 USD for PMP and 1800 USD for PgMP (prices can be reduced by joining PMI, it is worth because for PMP the result is that you've been given a 'free' year of PMI membership – which means for example: PMBoK Guide, annual subscription of Project Management Journal, and many more benefits).

Even when we are happy holders of the three letters suffix, we still have to maintain our certificate. We can do this by gathering points called PDU – (60 PDU within three years for PMP and PgMP), or passing the recertification exam (only option for CAPM). Points can be given among others for: managing projects, sharing knowledge, publications, activities in the PMI, self-training, taking part in the relevant courses, giving presentations on conferences, and so on.

As the requirements for the experience or the difficulty of the exam was a barrier for many people wishing to obtain PMP certification. PMI has decided to create CAPM certificate – *Certified Associate in Project Management*. This is the 'lighter version of PMP,' it is mainly for new project coordinators and members of project teams.

PMP has become so popular therefore certified senior project and program managers with many years of experience wanted something more. There was a need to distinguish from several hundred thousand of other PMPs, so PMI decided to create PgMP certification – *Program Management Professional* with more difficult requirements to meet for experience

(four years of managing projects and four years of managing programs), test, 360 degrees evaluation by 12 people (PgMP certification is like IPMA certifications).

It is worth mention that to apply for higher level certificate it is not necessary to have a lower level certificate.

The undeniable advantages of PMI certification are a global recognition, requiring experience from candidates, certificate holders are required to renew, so that the certificate presents more value for potential employer. The shortcomings of PMP certification is a lack of practical skills assessment, candidates are judged only by their knowledge.

But despite everything, it seems that PMP keeps a good balance between the requirements and accessibility. PMP certification may not always be the most appropriate choice, but certainly it will be at least a good choice.

IPMA – International Project Management Association

There are four levels of certificates IPMA:

- IPMA Level D – Certified Project Management Associate
- IPMA Level C – Certified Project Manager
- IPMA Level B – Certified Senior Project Manager
- IPMA Level A – Certified Projects Director

Certificates issued by IPMA (from the C level) deserve special attention because they attest not only holders' knowledge or experience (compared to the PMP exam it is done more accurately) but also confirm managerial and interpersonal competencies.

The undeniable advantage of IPMA certification is the interview part (sometimes it is also the workshop part – it depends on country where you are getting your credentials) during which your skills and personal traits are assessed.

Disadvantages: The complicated process of evaluation caused the high price for the certificate (at C level – it's about three times more expensive than PMP – but it depends on mostly the country).

The certificate is not linked to any specific methodology – it can be considered an advantage (a versatile certificate) or a disadvantage (an extra training from the employer methodology may be needed).

IPMA certificates gain popularity, especially in Europe. They are considered new generation certificates for project managers because they guarantee that the holder has relevant: knowledge, experience and skills to manage a project. It is a pity that they are not as recognizable as PMP or PRINCE2. It is worth taking into consideration that IPMA certificates require to be renewed (Level D Certification is an exception) – at A and B level once in 5 years, and at C level once in 3 years.

APM Group Certificates

Certificates issued by APMG:

- Prince 2 Foundation
- Prince 2 Practitioner

PRINCE2 Foundation and Practitioner credentials certify knowledge of PRINCE2 methodology and its application in projects management. Certification can be obtained on two levels: basic (Foundation) and advanced (Practitioner). To obtain these two certificates you have to pass an appropriate exam (in addition to obtain the practitioner certificate one must be first certified on Foundation level – but the exams can be taken one after another). You can become happy PRINCE2 Practitioner credentials in one day (of course you must first well-prepared for these exams).

Foundation exam test consists of 75 questions, for a Practitioner exam there are nine test questions, where answers will be given basing on the accompanying case-study. For PRINCE2 Practitioner exam you can use the PRINCE2 manual.

PRINCE2 exams are the most popular in Great Britain. These certificates may be also very useful in working in public administration in most of European countries.

PRINCE2 Foundation certificate is granted for life (for PRINCE2 Practitioner you have to pass recertification exam after 5 years), so there is no requirement for recertification. Examinations fee is not excessive, and both can be passed for an amount equivalent to the cost of PMP exam (Foundation exam – 200 pounds, Practitioner exam – 370 pounds).

If your company applies PRINCE2 or executes projects for public administration those certificates are very useful (if you want to work in Great Britain it is “must have,” indeed), otherwise a PMP or IPMA certification is recommended. Undoubtedly, the weakest feature of PRINCE2 certification is that the only requirement is to pass the exam. Therefore, PRINCE2 certificates aren’t valued much by employers evaluating candidates for the project leaders.

Sources

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