

PMP Questions – getting a second opinion?

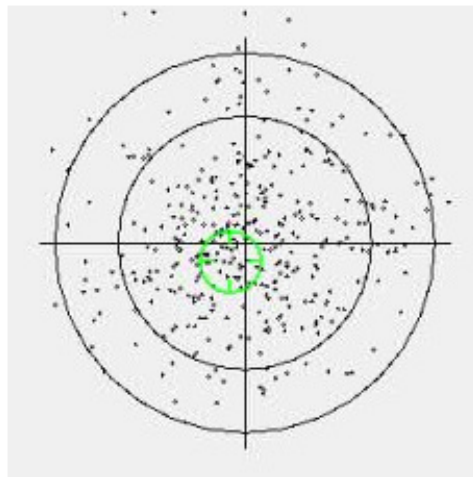


Most people when faced with a painful decision such as having a leg amputated seek a valid second opinion! Sitting for the PMP exam is no different – regardless of whose course you have completed testing your knowledge against a different set of reputable questions developed by another person is always a good idea.

Course developers tend to write questions that are answered by their course materials. It is very difficult to change your thinking between updating course materials and updating questions. PMI on the other hand have had hundreds of people (mainly volunteers) writing questions over the years from every region, industry and project management sub-discipline, there is no common train of thought in your PMP exam questions! Whilst the knowledge framework is defined, how different people think about setting questions can be quite different.

Added to this you can only pass a PMI examination by effectively answering the questions – it's not what you know that matters so much as how you interpret that knowledge into answers to questions you've never seen before. In short, answering multi-choice questions effectively is an acquired skill that is essential for passing the PMP, CAPM, PMI-SP¹ and many other similar exams, and you can only acquire this skill through practice.

But paradoxically, whilst answering good practise questions is an effective measure of how exam ready you are; you cannot get exam ready simply by practising answering questions; as the diagram below demonstrates.....



The grey area above represents the overall potential spread of knowledge questionable in the exam, the circles 'core knowledge' and 'important knowledge' – as you would expect most questions focus on the core, but a few wander off into less significant areas. Course developers know this and focus most of their materials on the areas of knowledge most likely to be tested and match this with the questions they include in their coursework.

¹ For more on the specific exams see:

- PMP: <http://www.mosaicproject.com.au/pmp-training-melbourne/>
- CAPM: <http://www.mosaicproject.com.au/capm-training-melbourne/>
- PMI-SP: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-Planning_One-on-One.html

The questions test how well you have absorbed the knowledge by firing an appropriate ‘scatter’ of questions, if you answer them well and there’s a reasonable probability your understanding of the overall ‘body of knowledge’ is adequate to answer these, and any other questions focused on slightly different aspects of the knowledge being tested².

However, the reverse is not true – if you simply focus on learning the answers to the questions you have been exposed to (the small black dots), you don’t have knowledge of all of the other ‘grey areas’ to allow you to deal with different questions on the same topics. With any set of questions the points of knowledge tested (the black dots) are only a small part of the overall knowledge framework. Another exam with a different set of questions will form a similar, but different pattern testing slightly different aspects of the knowledge framework and validate your overall understanding of the topics covered by the questions. For this reason, we deliberately use a third-party supplier for the on-line exam simulator used in all of our PMP and CAPM courses to start this process but most people still want a ‘third opinion’

The value of a good ‘second (or third) opinion’ comes in two parts; first, it will validate your exam readiness from a different thinking perspective (or confirm there’s more work to do) - the question author has not been involved in developing the course you have just finished (but neither have the PMI question setters), second it helps build confidence - if you’ve done well in the ‘second opinion’ you will probably do well in the exam..... Which opens up the question, where can you get a good second opinion?

One option is to invest in books published by reputable PMI R.E.P.s such as Rita Mulcahy’s *PMP Exam Prep* (and there are others) – find the books in the PMI ‘marketplace’ web-shop and then by locally from Amazon to save on the shipping. The trouble is the good books are expensive (most over \$100) and while there are cheaper ones, you tend to pay for what you get.

The other alternative is to go on-line and look for ‘free’ questions. The freely available question sets are almost exclusively PMP; this means they are around 80% compatible with CAPM (the CAPM knowledge test is a large sub-set of PMP) and also cover part of the knowledge needed for the PMI-SP exam. Unfortunately, whilst there are lots of ‘free questions’ available on the internet, their quality is all over the place!

To help you overcome the challenge of finding good questions from reputable sources, we have developed our recommended list of free questions (with descriptions of the various offerings) the full list can be found at: <http://www.mosaicproject.com.au/about/free-pmp-questions/>.

Self-study does not qualify you for the PMP exam, PMI mandate completing a minimum of 35 hours of approved training to be eligible to apply for the examination - but sitting in class (or looking at a screen) for 35 hour only goes part of the way towards being exam ready. The key test is not ‘what you know’ but ‘how well you answer the questions’. The free questions linked from the page above will help you to test that capability, and then to be successful in your examination.

This article is part of Mosaic’s *Project Knowledge Index* to view and download a wide range of published papers and articles see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PM-Knowledge_Index.html

² **Understanding your score** in multi choice examinations such as the PMP, CAPM and PMI-SP is not straightforward, there is always a 25% chance of guessing the right answer for the wrong reason! To understand your scores see: <https://mosaicprojects.wordpress.com/2014/02/02/understanding-your-pmp-score/>

