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Project Management Certification Options within Australia

Overview

Professional certifications fall into two general categories, competency based certifications that focus on what a person does in the workplace and knowledge based certifications based on examination. Within Australia, AIPM (now aligned with IPMA) offer a competency based assessment system; PMI and 'PRINCE2' offer knowledge based assessments.

This report will canvass four systems¹:

- The AIPM / IPMA qualifications. My expectation is that AIPM will align with IPMA within the next few years.
- The PMI framework
- The AXELOS PRINCE2 framework
- The Cert. IV and Diploma framework.

The Value of Certifications

There are essentially two ways to assess a person from a credentialing point of view. Testing what they know or assessing what they do. Competency based assessments (what they do) tend to assume knowledge based on performance. You cannot perform a complex task such as managing a project without knowledge. However, competency based assessments have two disadvantages:

- Competency is demonstrated in a specific a time and location². There is no guarantee the competent person will perform as well in a different setting with different people, cultures and relationships.
- The assessment of interpersonal competencies tends to be subjective and project management is very much focused on directing and leading people. Assessing behavioural competencies goes some way towards solving this dilemma but the assessment is still subjective.

Knowledge based assessments are empirical. The person had sufficient knowledge to pass a defined test at a defined point in time. However, the passing of a knowledge based assessment such as PMP or for that matter an MBA only shows the person has a predefined level of knowledge. The disadvantages of knowledge based assessments are:

- There is no indication the person can apply the knowledge effectively in the workplace.
- The knowledge tested in any exam is only a portion of the overall domain knowledge.

¹ The PMI and AIPM frameworks are further discusses on Mosaic's career planning page at http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-PMI_Framework.html

² For more on **competency** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1056_Compentency.pdf

Given the problems with either assessment process, assessing the value of a qualification is complex and is differs depending on who is making the value judgment, an employer or an individual. The value of a qualification to an individual can be measured in at least three areas:

- The advantage it offers in the job market;
- The recognition governments and other licensing authorities give to credential holders and
- Its recognition by other entities offering higher qualifications through credits or advanced standing.

The value of a qualification to an employer is in part a function of the credentials reputation and in part, what this tells the employer about the credential holder³.

Mapping Certifications to Industries

There is little empirical data on which sector favours what certification system. These comments are based on personal observations over an extended period linked to direct involvement with both AIPM and PMI in the credential development and training processes and significant exposure to the Axelos/PRINCE2 framework.

AIPM RegPM

The AIPM framework has in the past been heavily supported by the Defence Material Organisation (DMO) and consequently has wide acceptance in most defence industries. As a consequence of the DMO support RegPM has also achieved fairly wide coverage in Canberra based Government Departments and has seen a flow-through to State bureaucracies.

AIPM's roots in the engineering and construction industries has seen RegPM accepted as the normal qualification in these sectors, however, it must be noted the Australian construction industry in particular does not seem to place much emphasis on professional credentials.

A number of major organisations have obtained the AIPM PMO (Project Managed Organisation) accreditation; these organisations have a strong emphasis on accrediting staff under the RegPM system.

Cert. IV and Diplomas

These qualifications appear to be offered by organisations that are not primarily focused on project management; eg, AIM and TAFEs. The qualifications fall under the Australian National Competency framework and are administered by the National Training Information Service (NITS). Importantly Cert. IV is no longer acceptable by AIPM for its RegPM qualifications. Holders of Cert. IV seem to be generally lower level managers in general business. Certifications are based on **BSB41513 - Certificate IV in Project Management Practice**. Cert. IV is designed to be applicable within a range of project support roles and contexts. Diplomas tend to be at a lower level.

Given that Cert. IV certifications are aimed at relatively low level practitioners such as project administrators and coordinators, they will not be considered further in this report.

AXELOS / PRINCE2

The UK based Office for Government Commerce (OGC) developed a range of methodologies backed by certifications for the management of projects (PRINCE2), programs (MSP) and risk (MoR); plus the P3M3 maturity model; these qualifications are now managed by a joint venture company, AXELOS. The application of PRINCE2 to IT projects, particularly within government agencies had been gaining momentum for several years. The publication of the Gershon Report in 2008 has focused the whole of government on the use of PRINCE2 and the P3M3 maturity assessment tool – this is an expanding area of work and requires people certified in the methodologies.

³ For more on the unique value of the PMP credential see:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PDF_Papers/P115_Value_your_PMP_Qualification.pdf

PRINCE2 extends beyond government to organisation that work regularly with government and those with strong links to the UK and Europe. The basis of PRINCE2 and its primary use is in the IT sector within organisations that develop projects internally. There are three levels of PRINCE2 certification⁴:

- Foundation, achieved by passing a simple 75 question multi-choice exam (usually after one day's training) - 50% score required to pass.
- Practitioner, achieved by passing a 150 minute objective test consisting of eight questions - 10 question items per question, each worth one mark 44 marks or more required to pass (out of 80 available) - 55%. Open book exam (official PRINCE2 manual only)
- Professional, achieved by attending a 2 ½ day residential assessment. Group activities and exercises based on a fictional project case study. Assessment is against 19 individual performance criteria (there is no written examination).

PMI Certifications

The PMI certification structure has international recognition and consequently tends to be favoured by organisations operating on a global basis. The major concentration of credential holders is in the commercial IT sector (due to the dominance of American and Indian businesses) with flow through into other key sectors such as finance and banking and international engineering, mining, oil and aerospace businesses.

Summary

Some organisations have a particular preference for one of the AIPM / PMI / PRINCE2 frameworks based on the commitment of either an individual or the organisation's culture. Most others see little difference between these three. From a practical perspective, OGC certifications are important if the organisation is applying OGC methodologies such as PRINCE2 or P3M3. There seems to be very little interest in the Cert. IV and Diploma options in professional project management circles.

The AIPM Certification Framework

AIPM restructured its certification framework in 2008 based on a major review and update of the AIPM Project Management Competency Framework, and the framework has been continually updated since this time. The objective is to improve the rigour and depth of the assessment process and align AIPM certifications with professional project management practices. In particular, in each function the new standards clearly differentiate between:

- the overarching methodology, e.g. an agreed risk management methodology;
- the management plan for each function describing how each function is planned and managed during the project, e.g. a risk management plan; and
- the baseline action plans for each function, e.g. a risk register or risk action plans.

A general comment is the assessments now look at the actual behaviours of managers rather than just the artefacts they develop. Using the above example; by assessing the actual use of the risk register by the manager rather than just observing the presence of a risk register.

The fundamental aspect of the AIPM assessment process remains focused on competency, an applicant must be able to demonstrate to the assessor the practices in use in his/her work.

Application Processes

Unlike the other certification options, AIPM Credential holders must remain members of AIPM to retain the certification. The steps in the certification process are:

1. Become a member of AIPM: <http://www.aipm.com.au/>.
2. Complete the RegPM Online Application form and pay the Application fee.

⁴ For more on PRINCE2 certifications see: <https://www.axelos.com/qualifications/prince2-qualifications>

3. Contact and work with an Assessor of your choice. You pay the assessment fees directly to your assessor; these are separate to fees paid to AIPM.
4. Complete the assessment.
5. Your Assessor submits an assessment report. This is certified by our Assessment Manager and the process is checked for completion.
6. If approved (usually within 1 to 2 months), you will receive your certificate and your name is placed on our online register of Certified Project Managers.
7. Your certification will remain valid and your name will remain on the register, for three years. Maintaining your certification is subject to your continued financial membership of AIPM.
8. After three years you must renew your certification through the AIPM Continuous Professional Development program or CPD (fees apply).

AIPM Certification Structure

- **Members:** You must first be a fully paid AIPM member at Associate, Member or Fellow level to participate in the RegPM Program.
- **CPPP:** The Certified Practising Project Practitioner level is suitable for team members who are applying their project management knowledge to projects, contributing to projects plans and participating in team meetings.
- **CPPM:** The Certified Practising Project Manager will plan projects, manage teams and implement projects in consultation with higher authorities.
- **CPPD:** The Certified Practising Project Director will regularly direct projects, assess that the progress is in line with the organisational goals and analyse their effectiveness.
- **CPPE:** The Certified Practising Portfolio Executive will monitor a series of projects and evaluate what projects are most beneficial towards the whole organisations strategy.

AIPM and IPMA⁵

AIPM has joined the IPMA (International Project Management Association) as the Australian national association. Over the next few years, it is anticipated the AIPM certifications will be brought into alignment with the 4 level IPMA certification structure to make AIPM qualification more internationally transportable.

The AXELOS Certification Framework

These certifications are controlled by a UK company, Axelos Ltd in partnership with the UK Treasure Office. A number of local training organisations are accredited to deliver training and accreditation in Australia. Typically the same business conducts the training and administers the examination. Fees are set by the organisations offering the training within a framework approved by Axelos.

Each methodology is supported by a credential (or credentials). The primary offerings are:



⁵ For more on the AIPM see: <http://www.aipm.com.au>
For more on IPMA see: <http://www.ipma.ch>

ITIL® is the most widely accepted approach to IT service management in the world. ITIL provides a cohesive set of best practice, drawn from the public and private sectors internationally. There are four levels of certification within the V3 scheme:

- ITIL V3 Foundation in IT Service Management
- ITIL Intermediate Level - Service Lifecycle & Service Capability Streams
- ITIL V3 Expert Certificate
- ITIL V3 Master Qualification



The M_o_R (Management of Risk) guide is intended to help organisations put in place an effective framework for taking informed decisions about risks. The M_o_R scheme has two qualifications, the Foundation and the Practitioner:

Foundation: A multiple-choice paper containing 45 questions to be answered in 45 minutes. This is a closed-book examination.

Practitioner: Objective-Testing Format - An objectively marked assessment of 3 hours duration (including reading time). Each of the 9 questions is worth 20 marks, giving a maximum of 180 marks in the paper. You need to achieve a score of 50% to pass this paper.



The Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) methodology comprises a set of principles and processes for use when managing a program. It is founded on best practice although it is not prescriptive. The MSP qualifications consist of three levels:

Foundation: The examination is a simple multiple choice style, closed book examination consisting of 75 questions with a 50% pass mark.

Practitioner: The paper consists of 8 questions - 10 question items per question, each worth one mark 44 marks or more required to pass (out of 80 available - 55%) to be completed within 2 1/2 hours. Open book - may only take the MSP Guide into the exam room for reference during the exam.

Professional: Is a 2 1/2 day residential assessment including group activities and exercises based on a fictional project case study. Assessment is against 19 individual performance criteria (there is no written examination).



The Portfolio, Programme, and Project Management Maturity Model (P3M3) has become a key standard amongst maturity models, providing a framework with which organisations can assess their current performance and put in place improvement plans.

Individual qualifications are not available, Accredited Consulting Organisations (ACOs) are accredited by APMG and sponsor experienced consultants who undertake P3M3 Maturity Model Assessments.



Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O) guidance helps organisations establish, develop and maintain appropriate business support structures. The P3O Practitioner qualification was launched in January 2010.

Foundation Qualification: Focuses on the concepts, structures and duties of a P3O. The exam consists of 50 multiple choice questions to be answered in 40 minutes. It is a closed-book examination and has a pass mark of 60%.

Practitioner Qualification: Is an objective testing style paper. The paper consists of 7 questions with a total of 70 marks available to be completed within 2 1/4 hours. Candidates need to achieve a mark of 35 or more to pass the paper, and may only take the P3O Guide into the exam room for reference during the exam. A pre-requisite for this exam is a pass at Foundation level.



PRINCE2® (PProjects IN Controlled Environments), is a widely used project management methodology. The PRINCE2 Qualification Scheme is based on Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2.

Foundation Examination:

- Multiple choice format
- 75 questions per paper
- 5 questions to be trial and not counted in scores
- 35 marks required (out of 70 available) to pass - 50%
- Closed book.

Practitioner Examination:

- Objective testing format
- Eight questions - 10 question items per question, each worth one mark
- Two-and-a-half hours' (150 minutes) duration, no additional reading time
- Open book exam (manual only)
- 44 marks or more required to pass (out of 80 available) - 55%.

The PMI Credentials⁶

PMI offer a structured range of credentials and administer the credential examinations. Training is generally available and whilst PMI pre-approve their Registered Education Providers (R.E.P.) there is no obligation to have training from a R.E.P. The advantage of employing a R.E.P. is the coursework is approved by PMI a meeting the eligibility requirements. Candidates may need to provide a transcript of the training for courses delivered by other institutions (eg, as part of a degree course).

PMI use a standard multi-choice question format for all examinations, practice in dealing with the PMI form of questions helps significantly in the examination. Whilst removing any bias from the assessment process, the multi-choice format does require questions to be answered from the 'PMI perspective'.

⁶ For more on the PMI credential framework see: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-Home.html>

Examination centres operate in Sydney Melbourne and Perth, and are open most business days, these centres provide computer based testing (CBT) and candidates can select a date and time of their choosing subject to availability of a place in the exam centre (the centres are operated by Thompson Prometric and administer literally 100s of different examinations for different organisations). Paper based examinations (PBT) are run in other locations.

The membership fee to join PMI is US\$139 (local Chapter fees are extra). Membership of PMI provides access to the full range of PMI standards (as non-printing PDFs) and discounts on the examination fees. All examination fees are charged in US Dollars, cheques and money orders must be payable against an American bank. All major credit cards are accepted (on-line payment by credit card is strongly recommended). Importantly, membership of PMI is not a prerequisite to holding or maintaining a PMI credential.

The full range of PMI credentials⁷ are:

- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)®
- Project Management Professional (PMP)®
- Program Management Professional (PgMP)®
- Portfolio Management Professional (PfMP)SM
- PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP)®
- PMI Professional in Business Analysis (PMI-PBA)SM
- PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)®
- PMI Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP)®
- OPM3® Professional Certification

The courses we teach are:

	
Full Name	Project Management Professional
Project Role	Leads and directs project teams
Eligibility Requirements	High school diploma/global equivalent 5 years project management experience 35 hours project management education OR Bachelor's degree/global equivalent 3 years project management experience 35 hours project management education
Steps to Obtaining Credential	application process + multiple-choice exam
Exam Information	4 hours; 200 questions
Fees	US\$405 PMI member (US\$555 non-member)
Credential Maintenance Cycles and Requirements	3 years; 60 PDUs

Project Management Professional (PMP®)

The PMP credential is designed for practicing project managers (or team leaders) with a minimum of three years experience in a leadership role. You should perform your duties under general supervision; leading and directing cross-functional teams to deliver projects within the constraints of schedule, budget and scope. There are more than 500,000 PMP holders world-wide.

The examination involves answering 200 multiple choice questions in 4 hours. The pass mark is not disclosed.

Eligibility Requirements:

- You have a High School diploma, Associate's degree or a global equivalent (Year 12). **AND**
- You have a minimum of 36 months of professional project management experience (60 months if you do not hold a Bachelors Degree).
- You have completed at least 35 contact hours of formal project management education (e.g., courses or programs offered by PMI, universities or colleges, employer or company, distance-learning providers or training companies).
- Within the last 3 to 8 years can document 4500 Hrs (7500 Hrs if you do not hold a Bachelors Degree) directing and leading teams with responsibility for all aspects of a project for the life of the project.

PMI Certification Fees US\$:

- PMI Member Rate - US\$ 405.00
- Non Member Rate - US\$ 555.00

The PMP Certification is current for a period of 3 years then may be renewed on

⁷ For more on the credentials see: <http://www.pmi.org/Certification.aspx>

payment of a US\$60.00 fee (US\$150 for non members) and recording the completion of 60 hours of continuing professional development (PDUs)⁸.

For more on the PMP credential see:

<http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-PMP.html>

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM®)

CAPM is an examination based credential, designed for people planning to enter the project management profession. Typical candidates are either new to project management, eg having just completed a tertiary education, or having worked as a junior project management practitioner or a project team member are now seeking to progress their career. There are over 12,000 CAPM holders world-wide.

The examination involves answering 150 multiple choice questions in 3 hours. The pass mark is not disclosed.

Eligibility Requirements:

- You have a High School diploma, Associate's degree or a global equivalent (Year 12) **AND**
- You have 1,500 hours of work experience on a project team **OR**
- You have completed at least 23 contact hours of project management education

CAPM®	
Full Name	Certified Associate in Project Management
Project Role	Contributes to project team
Eligibility Requirements	High school diploma/ global equivalent AND 1,500 hours experience OR 23 hours pm education
Steps to Obtaining Credential	application process + multiple-choice exam
Exam Information	3 hours; 150 questions
Fees	US\$225 PMI member (US\$300 non-member)
Credential Maintenance Cycles and Requirements	5 years; re-exam

PMI Certification Fees US\$:

- PMI Member Rate - US\$ 225.00
- Non Member Rate - US\$ 300.00

The CAPM Certification is current for a period of 5 years then lapses.

For more on the CAPM credential see:

<http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-CAPM.html>

PMI Scheduling Professional - see below.

The PMI Path-Pro tool – Career Framework

The PathPro™ Career Framework is a free research-based self and peer assessment tool that enables individuals and organisations develop planned project management career paths. Via the web-based interface, individuals can plan and guide their career in project, program or portfolio management, see where they currently are, and decide how to move ahead.

PMI's Career Framework includes 5 job descriptions (3 in project management, 1 in program management, and 1 in portfolio management). Each description identifies a set of skills in management, leadership, communication and industry-specific knowledge required by project, program and portfolio managers. It leads individuals along a path to refine or acquire the needed knowledge and skills to advance their career.

Organisations who adopt the system can customise their private instance of the Career Framework to suit the specific needs of their business. PathPro can also aggregate data of all the skill assessments employees perform to help organizations identify areas that need improvement.

⁸ For more on the value of a PMP credential see:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PDF_Papers/P115_Value_your_PMP_Qualification.pdf

The following baseline components may be modified by an organisation:

- Job definitions
- Project/Program/Portfolio management skills
- Leadership skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Project typology including attributes of complexity
- Levels of proficiency
- Requirements for credentials (AIPM PMI, etc)
- Educational requirements (University degrees, etc.)

Developing an instance of PathPro for an organisation will require specific job definitions to be established with mapping to competencies, capabilities and credentials. If the organisation decides to adopt an approach embracing a range of credentials, equivalencies will need to be established and a 'gap analysis' used to ensure the required capabilities are covered either through the nominated certification or additional modules.

For more information on PathPro see http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-PMI_Framework.html#PMCF

Scheduling credentials

PMI Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP)

A project scheduling professional provides expertise in the specialised area of developing and maintaining the project schedule. The PMI Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP®) credential acknowledges an individual's role to provide unique expertise on the project team, while recognising the value this role provides to the field of project management. Credential holders will possess the skills, knowledge and experience to contribute directly to the successful execution of crucial projects and to impact their organisation's bottom line.

Eligibility Requirements:

- You have a High School diploma, Associate's degree or a global equivalent (Year 12). **AND**
- You have three to five years of project scheduling experience, plus
- With a bachelor's degree or global equivalent: 30 contact hours of formal education (must be in project scheduling) and minimum of 3,500 hours of unique, non-overlapping experience in project scheduling within the past five years **OR**
- If you do not hold a Bachelors Degree, 40 Hrs of education and 5000 Hrs of experience.

PMI Certification Fees US\$:

- PMI Member Rate - US\$520.00
- Non Member Rate - US\$670.00

The PMI-SP Certification is current for a period of 3 years then may be renewed on payment of a US\$60.00 fee (US\$150 for non members) and recording the completion of 30 hours of continuing professional development (PDUs) in the specialist area of project scheduling.

For more information on the PMI-SP credential see <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-Planning.html>

CIOB Time Management Credentials

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB – UK) has developed a credential framework for Time Managers starting with the Project Time Management Certificate.



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For more information on the CIOB credentials see:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-CIOB-TM_Credential.html

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http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PM-Knowledge_Index.html