

Project Management Qualifications

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INTRODUCTION

Arras People regularly receives phone calls and enquiries from candidates in relation to project management qualifications. Some of the most common questions we receive are:

Which course would you recommend for someone new to project management?

Are there any books I should be reading?

I've completed my PRINCE2 training now, how do I find a job?

In this guide we give some opinions, and share our own experiences within project management, and suggest qualifications which can be taken to underpin practical project management skills and experience.

This guide makes no recommendation on training course providers, and candidates undertaking qualifications should thoroughly research training providers before commencing any course.

WHY TAKE A COURSE?

There are three main project management qualifications in the project management marketplace today.

- APM Certification
- OGC Certification
- PMI® Certification

There are also MSc postgraduate degrees available, project management accreditations within a particular sector, like IT, are available through the British Computer Society and a large number of project management courses, which do not lead to a recognised “qualification”, but do cover topics within the project management skillset.

More about these courses and qualifications later.

Before booking on a course and spending £££ and time, you should really think about what outcome you're looking for. There are a lot of valid reasons:

- I've been working in the project management field for a while and now is the time to gain qualifications within my chosen profession.
- My line manager thinks I should gain a qualification in my profession to help me in my professional development

- I think I'll benefit from learning the theoretical side of project management and this will complement my practical knowledge and experience
- My organisation wants "professional project managers" and qualifications are one step to achieve that
- I need help in a specific area of project management—my skills gap/s needs addressing
- I'd like to learn more about how other project managers manage and other organisation's approaches to project management
- I've worked within many project management frameworks but I don't have a piece of paper that says I know what I'm doing
- I'd like to gain work within the public sector and need the PRINCE2 / MSP tick in the box
- I have "some" experience in project management and have enjoyed it, and now I want to stay within the project management field and take my career forward.

All valid reasons for undertaking a project management qualification.

For candidates with no formal previous experience in a project management role, project management training and qualifications can give a good insight to the key technical areas of project management and in some cases confirm what you already know or are doing on an informal basis.

Training alone won't guarantee a job

Many candidates looking for a career change into a project management job often look to training courses and qualifications as a first step. Don't!

Before spending money on a course, view our guide on **career changes**, you may find that now is not the right time to take a qualification and actually there are other options available to you which don't cost the earth.

Practical experience counts for a lot in the project management field—"been there and done it" can carry the weight of a hundred classroom based training courses!

Again, before booking on a course and spending £££ and time, you should really think about what outcome you're looking for. If it is solely about gaining employment in a field in which you have no previous experience you need to rethink your position to avoid frustrations further down the line when looking for a new role.

SO, WHICH COURSE?

ENTRY LEVEL

Entry level courses are aimed at people who have between 0 and 1 years experience within project management, there is one specific course (with qualifications), numerous courses provided by many training providers (no qualifications) and a specific course (with qualification) aimed at the IT market.

APM—Association for Project Management has the “Introductory Certificate” which takes 2 days with an exam included. Expect to pay approx £1000. Topics include:

- Planning and scheduling
- Communications
- Quality management
- Teamwork
- Resource management
- Risk management
- Handover
- Review

Further information available at APM:

> <http://www.apm.org.uk/IntroductoryCertificate.asp>

Website includes a sample paper.
To take the course, a list of training providers

are available on the website. For further advice on who to choose, see the section later in this guide “Choosing a Provider”.

Also available at entry level is the **PRINCE2 Overview** (part of the OGC certification) which provides a one day overview with no examinations. This course is ideally suited to people who are not project personnel but are working in a project environment for a short period. This course is not mentioned by OGC (official website for PRINCE2 <http://www.prince2.com>) therefore contact training providers direct to enquire about the course. Expect to pay approx £300 for 1 day

Courses available from training providers include titles such as “Introduction to Project Management”. Most of these courses are following the APM Introductory Certificate theme and further details can be obtained by requesting a course breakdown to see the topics included.

The “Foundation in Project Management” from the British Computer Society—examining board ISEB—gives a Foundation Certificate as the qualification. This course is aimed at people working with IT project management, [for further information on the qualification](#)

Expect to pay approx £700, depending on location, for 2 days.

ENTRY LEVEL

For people looking for a cheaper alternative to attending a training course, some of the courses are available as exam only options. Essentially you are self taught through the use of the textbook and then pay to sit the examination. The downside to this option is that you miss out on the interactive learning available through classroom sessions with other people (often you pick up useful advice from other delegates which are not taught through the course!)

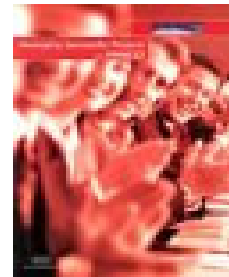
When reviewing training provider websites check to see if an exam only option is available to you.

A further option is distance learning—the APM Introductory Certificate in Project Management is available through distance learning—expect to pay approx £350 which does not include the exam fee. Fees include content on CD and access to a personal tutor.

Before booking on the APM, OGC or ISEB courses, it is advised that you check the course outline to see if this is the course for you. You can also buy the textbooks before committing to the course itself.



The APM Body of Knowledge can be purchased directly from the APM website itself at: <http://www.apm.org.uk/>



The Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 is available via Amazon at: [Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2](#)



The [Project Management for IT-Related Projects](#)—the text which accompanies the ISEB Foundation Certification is also available from Amazon

INTERMEDIATE

Before highlighting courses and qualifications aimed at practitioners of project management (generally people who have been working within the field for a number of years) there are courses available as the next step up from the Introductory level.

- **PRINCE2 Foundation (OGC)**
- **Introduction to Programme Management**
- **Programme and Project Support Essentials**

The [PRINCE2 Foundation level](#) is one of the most popular courses in the UK today, with many training providers catering for demand, there are courses being run every week around the country. A three day course which includes the examination at the end of the third day. The course covers the processes, components and techniques. Expect to pay between £750—£1000 for a three day course. Fees include course materials and the exam fee. Weekend training is also now available to fit in with work schedules (approx £1000)

For people looking for a cheaper alternative, distance learning (or e-learning) packages are available where you can study at your own pace and then book the exam at a public exam sitting. Price for exam only approx £195.

To book exam only (Open Centre Examinations) see the website—[PRINCE2](#)
The PRINCE2 Foundation course leads to a recognised qualification within the project management field.

Introduction to Programme Management

courses are also available for people who find themselves not only working within a project environment for the first time, but also a programme environment. Courses are available which cover the concepts of programme management and the differences between projects and programmes. Topics include; stakeholder management, benefits realisation and the planning and reporting at programme level. Expect to pay approx £350-400 for a 1 day course (no exam or qualification)

Programme and Project Support Essentials

The [Programme and Project Support Essentials course and accreditation from ISEB](#) is a must for anyone working within the field of programme and project support. The Essentials course looks at the role of the PSO (Project Support Office) and areas such as planning, reporting, risk management etc. The advantage of this course is the specific support focus (and also the opportunity to meet others working in the same field as you).

PRACTITIONER—PRINCE2

The PRINCE2 Practitioner Accreditation can also be taken as a self-study option. It's recommended that the following books are purchased and then an [open centre examination](#) booked to take the actual exam.

Recommended books for self study:



Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 available through [Amazon](#)



Passing the PRINCE2 Exams again available through [Amazon](#)



Finally the PRINCE2 Pocketbook [available here](#)

The cost for booking exam only is £360

PRACTITIONER—APM

Other courses available through training providers include PRINCE2 Practitioner at the weekend, PRINCE2 Conversion (2 days approx £600) aimed at people who have recently completed the Foundation level and want to gain the Practitioner level, Exam Workshops (good for people who have opted for the self taught route) expect to pay approx £600 which includes the exam on the 2nd day.

For further general information on [PRINCE2](#)

APM Certification

After completing the Introductory Certificate, the APM offers further courses and certification to continue your development. The APMP qualification is a five day course with a three hour examination on the final day. The course itself is centred on the APM Body of Knowledge—see the detailed syllabus and other documents related to the course including a sample paper on the [APM website](#) Expect to pay approx £1300-£1500 for the five days—exam included.

The APMP exam only is an option but delegates really need to attend the 5 day course to gain real benefits and the exam only option may only be available through the training provider with which you took the APMP course in the first place. The APMP is one of the best generic project management qualifications there is

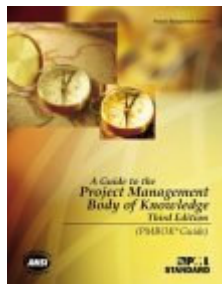
PRACTITIONER—PMI

in the UK today and is widely recognised in the project management marketplace. At Arras People we would recommend the APMP over the PRINCE2 Practitioner accreditation if you were limited by financial resources!

There are also two risk related certificates available from APM if this is a skills gap area you may have—[more information on this at APM](#)

PMI Certification

The PMI (Project Management Institute) has predominantly been viewed as an American institute in relation to project management but many organisations based in the UK deem the PMI as a preferred choice when certifying their project managers. More information on PMI at: www.pmi.org



Based on the [PMI Body of Knowledge](#) to enroll on the course delegates must satisfy some basic criteria—hence the PMI certifications are only open to people with practitioner level experience.

There are two levels to the Certification—CAPM and PMP

PRACTITIONER—PMI CAPM

PMI Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)

To complete the first level of the PMI Certification, delegates must be able to demonstrate:

- High school diploma or equivalent and
- Either 1,500 hours on a project team or 23 hours project management training (i.e. CAPM training course)

To complete the Certification based on the 1500 hours of working within a project team and not opting to complete the CAPM course, applicants need to complete an application form. Register to use the website at PMI and choose the Career Development and Certification & Credentials—follow the online application form instructions. Evidence of your 1500 hours needs completing which includes references from the organisation etc.

[View the Career Development pages for more information](#)

With this option an exam is still a requirement once PMI have accepted your 1500 hours

Further information on the CAPM certification can be found in the [Credentials Handbook](#) from the PMI website.

PRACTITIONER—PMI PMP

To complete the CAPM certification through course study with exam included, course duration is 4 days and includes a three hour 150 question examination, based on the PMI Body of Knowledge. Expect to pay approx £1400-1500 for this option.

Short courses are also available to accompany the 1500 work hours option. A Exam Prep Workshop over two days helps delegates to get prepared for the exam having not taken the full 4 day course—expect to pay approx £600 for the two day preparation.

The Project Management Professional (PMP®)

The next level to the CAPM, the PMP credential also has pre-requisites which you must have evidence of before enrolling:

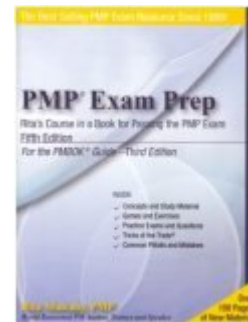
- Applicants must have 35 hours of specific project management education.
- **With a Bachelor's Degree** (or the global equivalent): Applicants must have a minimum three years' professional project management experience, during which 4,500 hours are spent leading and directing project tasks, up to eight years from the time of application
- **Without a Bachelor's Degree** (or the global equivalent): Applicants must have a minimum five years' professional project management experience, during which at least 7,500 hours are spent leading and directing project tasks, up to eight years from the time of application.

View the [PMP Professional Credential Handbook](#) to gain further information on the credential

The PMP course is conducted over five days and satisfies the 35 hours of project management education needed. It is advised that the examination is taken at a later date. Expect to pay approx £1600-1800 for the five day course. PMP Exam Preparation Workshops are also available—a two day course costs approx £600

Due to the thorough nature of the PMI Certification process and accompanying courses, it is easy to see why the PMI has been chosen by many organisations.

To assist in the examination process, the "PMP Exam Prep: Accelerated Learning To Pass PMI's PMP Exam- On Your First Try!" is a good place to start:



[Available through Amazon](#)

PRACTITIONER—ISEB

ISEB Accreditations for Practitioners

Following on from the Foundation in Project Management for IT environments, the **Certificate in IS Project Management** has had many favourable reviews from project managers working within IT. Costs are pretty high at around £4000 (including accommodation) and includes a written exam at the end of the course.

There are other options available—if you've already completed the PRINCE2 Practitioner level you don't need to attend the full five day Certificate in IS Project Management course. A two day "Module 2" course (approx £1500 5 days) The course includes a written examination and verbal interview.

Advanced Certificate in Programme and Project Support (ISEB)

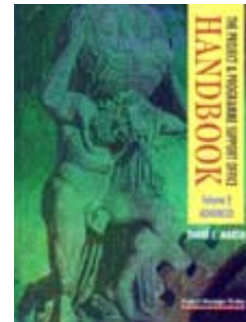
Following on from the **Programme and Project Support Essentials** accreditation, an advanced course and accreditation can be taken. Aimed at people working as PPSO Managers, see [more information](#), the course includes a written examination and an oral examination. A five day course costs approx £1500. The oral examination tends to be scheduled at a later date.

PRACTITIONER—PPSO

Topics covered include:

- The PPSO in context
- PPSO Techniques
- Programme & Project Life Cycles
- Programme Management Methods
- Products and Systems
- Development Methods
- Support Tools
- Dealing with non-programme and non-project work
- Dealing with difficult situations
- The business case (advanced-level)
- Marketing the PPSO
- Designing and installing the programme and project support office.
- Keeping the PPSO current

To view the accompanying textbook for the course:



[The Project and Programme Support Office Handbook: Advanced Vol 2](#)

ADVANCED—APM

Practitioner Qualification

Following on from the APMP, the Association for Project Management also has the Practitioner Qualification and Certificated Project Manager. The Practitioner Qualification is open for people who meet the following criteria:

either

have passed the APMP Qualification;

or

can demonstrate good familiarity with the [APM Body of Knowledge](#) and have passed an equivalent qualification such as PMP, ISEB Certificate in Project Management, Open University Project Management Module M865

or

can demonstrate they have a good foundation knowledge of project management, supported by evidence of relevant [CPD](#).

Assessments are run over a period of 2 and a half days and carried out by an APM approved assessment centre. Costs approx £1900 with dates intermittent throughout the year

For further information on the [Practitioner Qualification](#)

Courses are available from training providers which help to prepare delegates for the assessment. For a 2 day workshop expect to pay

approx £800.

Certificated Project Manager

An assessment, project report and panel interview constitute the **Certificated Project Manager** accreditation

For more information—[view the APM website](#)

Contact APM directly for the application form to kick start the process

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Managing Successful Programmes (OGC)

An accreditation available in two levels—Foundation and Practitioner. The Foundation level covers the principles of programme management according to the OGC “Managing Successful Programmes” method. A good introduction for people working within a programme structure.

The course—either 3 or 4 days—and includes an exam at the end and costs approx £1000. For more information on the MSP Foundation visit the [OGC website](#)

For books to accompany this and the Practitioner level course (both recommended by OGC):



Managing Successful Programmes is [available through Amazon](#)



And the Managing Successful Programmes Pocketbook [also available through Amazon](#)

The Practitioner level MSP accreditation, 2 or 3 days can be taken as an upgrade to the Foundation level (the Foundation level must be completed and passed before commencing the Practitioner level) and is aimed at programme managers, senior project managers and PMO Managers. Expect to pay approx £650-800 for the 2 day course.

There are also Foundation and Practitioner combined courses available (5 days approx £1500), this includes the Foundation exam on the 4th day and Practitioner on the next. A pretty intensive option but achievable especially if you are already working within a programme environment and have achieved other accreditations previously

OTHER COURSES

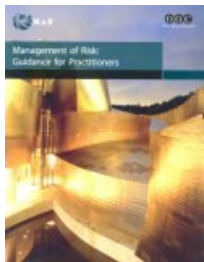
Recommendations for other courses

OGC's Management of Risk (MoR)

Two levels—Foundation and Practitioner—aimed at delegates interested in further developing their expertise in risk management or for professionals specialising as risk managers.

Foundation courses is 3 or 4 days approx £800-£1595 and the Practitioner is 5 days approx £1300—£1800

To see the textbook that accompanies the course:



For more [information from OGC](#)

The Management of Risk 2007
Guidance for Practitioners
[available from Amazon](#)

ITIL Foundation and Practitioner

The [ITIL approach to Service Management Best Practice](#) courses and accreditations are geared towards delegates working within IT service management projects.

The Qualification Scheme has four levels—see the [website for more information](#)

The Foundation—3 day course approx £ 750 leads to the individual modules i.e., Change Management, Configuration Management, Problem Management etc. Courses are 3 days approx £1000. The ITIL Expert (4 days approx £1300) will lead to the Advanced Service Management Professional Diploma when available. A lengthy accreditation system which covers all the main areas needed in service management.

BCS Professional Examinations

Certificate in IT, Diploma in IT and the Professional Graduate Diploma in IT are all available through the [British Computer Society](#)

TRAINING PROVIDERS

Recommendations for choosing your training provider

Whilst Arras makes no recommendations for specific training providers of project management related courses but does give advice on how to choose the best trainer for your own individual needs.

Things to consider:

- Is the training provider an accredited trainer? Courses like the APM, OGC and PMI accredit providers to deliver courses and provide examinations on their behalf. Courses provided by these trainers tend to be a premium (££) but tend to be rigorously controlled.
- Word of mouth recommendations—like most things in life, take on board friends' and colleagues' recommendations and experiences
- If cost is the main deciding factor, consider the adage "you get what you pay for", just because it's cheaper doesn't necessarily guarantee value
- Are the costs inclusive? Many courses require preparation work—does the course fee include materials? Does the course fee include the examination fee? Are accommodation costs included?
- Preferred supplier—if your employer is funding the training their choice may override your own. Be prepared to put your case forward to ensure you receive the training experience you want
- Locations—are there courses available near your home location? Consider the accommodation and travel costs involved.
- Pass rates—an obvious question to ask each training provider—how successful is their training with previous delegates?
- Public courses vs bespoke—if there are a number of people within your organisation looking for the same training need it can make sense to hold the course within your organisation. This can also mean that parts of the training modules could be tailored to include details in specific areas of project management which are important to your organisation.
- Finally, how quickly do you receive news on your examinations? Receive certifications etc?

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