

# Obtaining Your PMP® Certification

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Software Consortium, Inc ®.

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### Forward

The author is a Senior Project Manager who is employed at Software Consortium, Inc<sup>®</sup>, a Baltimore-based company that provides technology and management expertise to mid-level and large organizations in a wide range of markets, as well as US government agencies. Software Consortium's<sup>®</sup> services span virtually every need in the IT industry—from architectural oversight to project management, from application development to systems integration, from technology selection and solutions to knowledge sharing, from long-term strategy to evolving a Company's culture.

Technology – the lifeblood of an organization!

Technology can be a lifeblood, linking the various parts of an organization, increasing productivity, and enabling people to outshine the competition on a daily basis. To meet Software Consortium's<sup>®</sup> pledge to deliver a competitive advantage every time, Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> applies the Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> Way—a set of key values and practices—to everything that Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> does. Two practices—Partner to Win and Just the Right Technology, People, and Processes—ensure that each solution is matched precisely to each client's needs and provides a tangible return on investment. Software Consortium's<sup>®</sup> Best Practices are designed to keep management and development processes at top efficiency. And Software Consortium's<sup>®</sup> Knowledge Sharing practice ensures a structured transfer of expertise to client organizations. Together, these structured practices ensure operational and business advantages that other solution providers cannot match.

Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> is committed to technology leadership so that Client businesses can become industry leaders. Over 95 percent of Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> consultants have advanced certifications. Over a third are certified in multiple technologies. Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> is adept in dozens of advanced Microsoft<sup>®</sup>, IBM<sup>®</sup>, Java<sup>®</sup>, database, and Web technologies. Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> enjoys close relationships with both Microsoft<sup>®</sup> and IBM<sup>®</sup> and is premier partners with both.

All of us at Software Consortium<sup>®</sup> hope that you find this whitepaper useful, and assists you in your efforts at becoming a certified Project Management Professional<sup>®</sup>!

### Overview

The Project Management Professional® (PMP®) certification is offered by the Project Management Institute®. It is based on the Project Management Body of Knowledge® (PMBOK®), a project management methodology and guidebook developed and written by the Project Management Institute®. Worldwide it is considered the industry gold-standard credential for project managers. The PMP® certification is ISO recognized, and in many countries, including the United States, and including US federal agencies, certification is fastly becoming a requirement for consultants who wish to do business with these entities. Many private businesses, throughout the world, are now also requiring that candidates possess PMP® certification.

This guide will explain the process in obtaining the coveted PMP® certification in the United States.

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## Background Information

For starters, information regarding PMP® certification can be found at the Project Management Institute's® website – <http://www.pmi.org>. There one can find information about joining the PMI® organization as a member, exam information, and application information. The following links may also be helpful:

Membership: [http://www.pmi.org/info/GMC\\_IndividualMembership.asp](http://www.pmi.org/info/GMC_IndividualMembership.asp)

Application: <https://www.pmi.org/authentication/default.aspx?r=www.pmi.org/certapp/default.aspx&s=true>

To apply to become a certified PMP®, applicants who possess a bachelor's degree MUST possess 35 contact-hours of project management instruction and/or training that is directly related in some way to the knowledge areas of PMI's® project management methodology, as well as possess 4500 hours of project management experience. Applicants who do not possess a bachelor's degree must possess 7500 hours of project management experience and have 35 contact-hours of project management instruction. The knowledge areas of PMI's® project management methodology is the following:

- Integration
- Scope
- Time
- Cost
- Quality
- Human Resources
- Communications
- Risk
- Procurement
- Professional Responsibility

Specific instruction in the discipline of project management, such as the boot-camp approach outlined in this guide, is not the only way that a project manager can qualify for the PMP® certification. In the author's case, for example, several years ago the author attended a 6-hour class entitled "Human Resource Law for Managers". This class qualified towards the 35 contact-hour requirement as it directly related to the knowledge area of Human Resources.

Readers of this guide should think back over the last several years and determine whether they have attended a class that relates to any of the aforementioned knowledge areas. When the author of this paper recalled attendance of a Human Resources class, the author verified its relevance by contacting PMI®, and then

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contacted the company that taught the course, and subsequently obtained a copy of the certificate of attendance.

It should be carefully cautioned that applicants who wish to sit for the exam MUST not submit their application for PMP® certification prior to having obtained the required 35 contact-hours of instruction. To do so would invalidate the application and the Project Management Institute® may bar the submitter for life from obtaining the PMP® certification. The rationale for PMI's® strict policy is that submitting an application prior to actually attaining all contact-hours would be dishonest.

This guide will cover the PMP® certification process as the author underwent it.

The process is the following, and each step will be discussed in detail later in the paper:

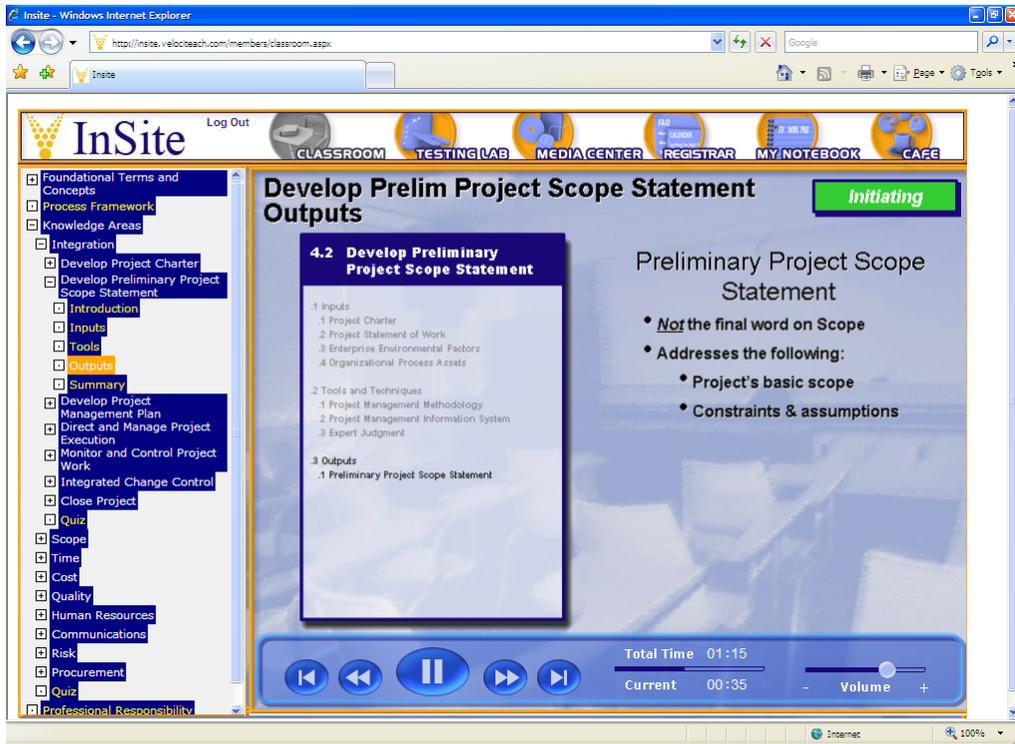
1. Sign-Up for a PMP® “Boot Camp” class two weeks in advance
2. Pay the class fee(s)
3. Fill out the PMP® application
4. Attend the class
5. Conduct additional online training to obtain the 35 required hours
6. Submit completed PMP® application
7. Continue daily online training
8. Receive PMI® Testing Approval
9. Schedule the Exam
10. Continue daily online training
11. Take the test

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## Sign-Up for a PMP® “Boot Camp”

There are many vendors in the United States that provide boot-camp style classes. Velociteach® is the vendor that the author chose. Their website is the following, and it should be noted that the website is extremely informative: <http://www.velociteach.com>. Classes are held over a period of 3 days, and generally begin at 8am. The classes progress until 5pm each day. The classes’ locations rotate, and are held in different cities throughout the country on a periodic basis. In the most populous cities, a boot-camp class is held at least once per month. In the author’s opinion, the instructors are very knowledgeable, entertaining, and keep the material interesting. Provided materials with class registration include a textbook and a workbook. The textbook is utilized as a secondary reference and summarizes the Project Management Institute’s® PMBOK® guide, while during each class day, the workbook is primarily used. Students should be prepared for lengthy reading of the textbook on the first and second evenings after each class. On the first evening, approximately 220 pages are assigned. On the second evening, the remainder of the book is assigned – approximately 180 pages.

The class provides only 27 contact-hours of instruction, and PMI® requires 35 contact hours, thus, Velociteach® provides an online e-classroom, known as InSite®, where students can obtain the additional 8 hours required. The InSite® classroom can be found at <http://insite.velociteach.com/lobby.aspx>. The author strongly recommends that students preview Velociteach’s® online classroom prior to the in-person classes after registration has been made, as well as utilize the InSite® classroom daily after the 3-day classes are attended. This recommendation remains, even after the required 8 contact-hours of instruction have been obtained, up until the day before the PMP® exam. It is absolutely critical that candidates who wish to sit for the exam maintain all of the material fresh in their minds. As readers will discover while reading this guide, there will be a span of time between actual testing reservation and the actual exam.

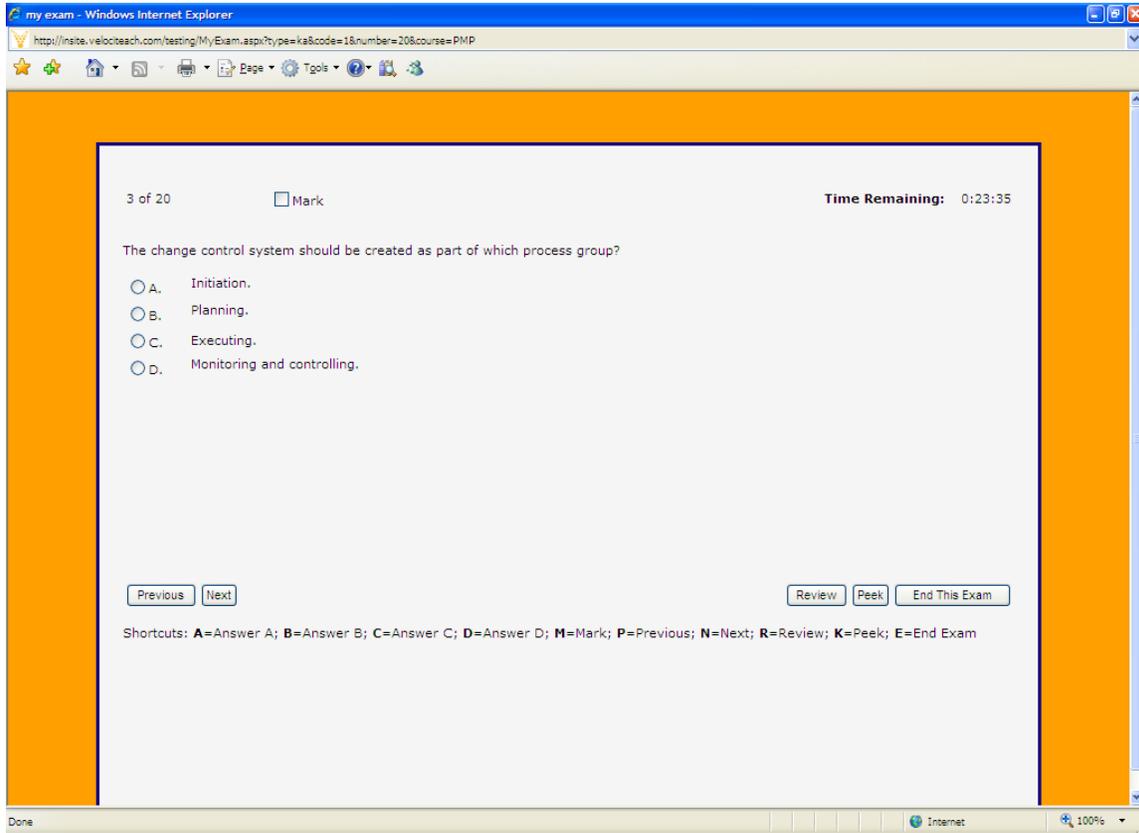


Another excellent resource that InSite® provides is sample exams; the user interface is a simulation of the interface of the actual PMP® exam. Students can choose the number of questions they wish take during each practice exam, and can either select a generalized exam that covers all of the knowledge areas, or can choose an exam based on a specific knowledge area. At the end of each exam, scores are provided, proficiency is rated, and results are ranked by knowledge and process area.

The author of this guide found both types of exams useful. The strategy that the author took, based on other's recommendations, was to take a generalized exam each day, identify those areas of weakness, brush up on the areas of weakness through review of the knowledge area material, and take an additional sample exam specific on that particular knowledge area. In the author's opinion, this approach was critical to successfully passing the exam.

As readers will see on the next page, a screenshot of InSite's® simulated exam is illustrated. Students should be prepared to learn this exam interface, as it closely emulates the actual exam interface. Proficiency and familiarity with the exam interface will assist and reduce the learning curve that is required while sitting for the exam.

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## Paying the Class Fees

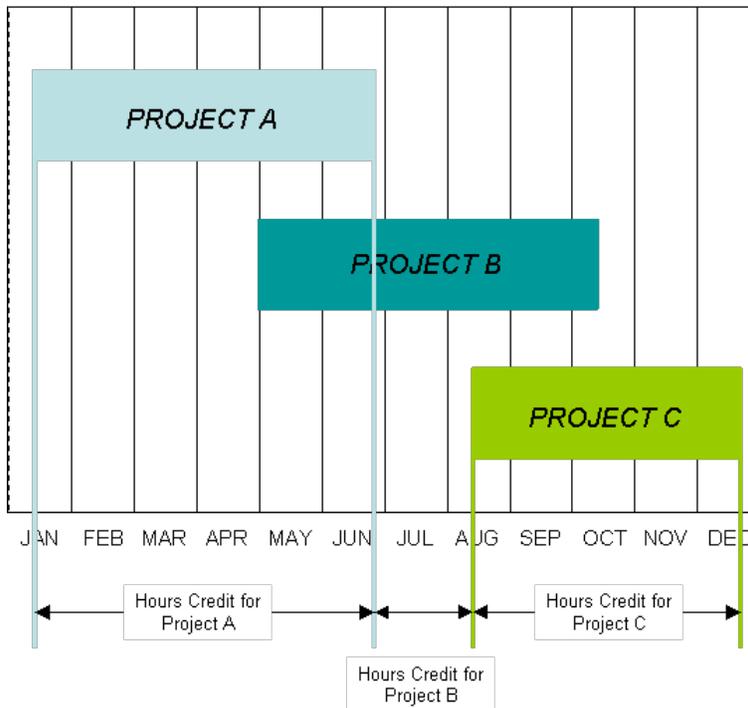
The full package class, including, online instruction, boot camp, textbook, and workbook is individually priced at \$1950 USD. In the author's case, Software Consortium, Inc® paid for the classes directly with a purchase order (instead of charging the cost of the exam the author's credit card) making it a "3-Win" situation:

1. The author sat for the exam and passed;
2. The second student sat for the exam and passed;
3. Software Consortium, Inc now possesses in its ranks two additional PMP professionals.

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## Fill out the PMP® Application

Completing the PMP® application is a tedious, arduous, and time-consuming process. The author made the mistake of completing the bulk of the application after taking the class. In the author's opinion, this was a bad decision – time spent completing the application and documenting project management hours could have been otherwise utilized for additional studying. Whether with a bachelor's degree or not, applicants must demonstrate project management work that consists of discrete, non-overlapping projects – or discrete time segments of project contained therein. That is to say, for instance, if Project A begins in January and ends in June, and Project B begins in May and ends in October, only the hours for Project B, during the month of July can be submitted. See graphic below that illustrates this requirement:



electronic means, such as application. The author utilized the author's opinion that by process was expedited once it

ation, submitters will need to Once registered, PMI® will rd.

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### Attend the Class

For obvious reasons, this is the next critical step towards preparing oneself for the PMP® certification test. The author recommends that applicants/students arrive at the class 10 minutes early on the first day. This is to ensure that the student can register with Velociteach® instructors. In most cases, classes are held at regionalized hotels that possess convention or meeting rooms. Generally, there is more than one meeting or convention room used. It is important to arrive early so that each student can determine which classroom and instructor they have been assigned to.

In Velociteach's® program, coffee, tea, carbonated beverages, water, fruit, and light snacks are provided. However, the author strongly recommends that students bring additional beverages and snacks – in the author's experience, the snacks are depleted within the first half-hour and healthy juices may better stimulate the mind.

Lunch is not provided by Velociteach®, so it is recommended that students either bring a lunch or obtain lunch at the hotel restaurant, if hosted at hotel. Otherwise, students should expect to obtain lunch elsewhere at a restaurant located off-site from the classroom location. The lunch break is generally 1 hour.

### Conduct Additional Online Training

As mentioned previously, in order to qualify for taking the PMP® certification test, candidates must have accrued at least 35 contact-hours of instruction relating to project management disciplines. Because Velociteach's® classroom training only provides 27 contact hours, it will be necessary to conduct online additional training. The online training is narrative and interactive. Each second of online training is logged by the Velociteach's® InSite® system. Time logged is officially recognized by the PMI® institute, and the instruction provides documented proof of the contact hours required. Online training is structured into several-minute segments, and at the completion of each segment, InSite® requires students to regularly click a "continue" button to progress the training session to its next step. This means, in other words, a person cannot go to the site, click a play button, walk away for 8 hours, and earn credits. InSite® requires constant personal interaction – as it should!

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### Submit the PMP® Application

Once a candidate prepares the PMP® application, and has obtained the required 35 contact hours of instruction, they can then submit the application to the Project Management Institute®. Using the aforementioned recommendations contained herein, applicants should utilize the electronic tools used in preparing the application. It is much easier, when submitting an application, to cut and paste the information from the electronic tool into PMI's® web-based application.

Generally, it takes approximately 5 business days upon submission to the Project Management Institute® for review and approval/disapproval of an applicant's application. Required in the application process is documentation of the applicant's hours of experience, description of each project, the objective of each project, the outcome of each project, and the contact-hours of instruction received.

#### Cost

At the time of writing, the cost for PMP® certification is \$555 USD for non-PMI® members, and \$405 USD for PMI® members. It should be noted that anyone can become a member. The cost for joining is \$119 USD, with an additional \$10 USD application fee for new members. Thus, if one calculates total costs,  $\$405 + \$119 + \$10$ , the total cost is \$534 USD. Note that it is actually cheaper to join PMI® first and then register for the test!

#### Auditing

It is extremely important to note that at least 10% of all applicants who submit applications are audited. Applicants must ensure that when submitting, they include contact names and current contact information for those contacts cited. The Project Management Institute® is committed to ensuring the legitimacy and forthrightness of its applicants, and strives vigorously to ensure nothing less than excellence, integrity, and honesty in each applicant's credibility.

### Continue Daily Online Training

This phase of daily online training for the PMP® certification cannot be stressed enough. Each day that passes, after the boot-camp class has been attended, is one more day that knowledge for obtaining the PMP® certification is slowly lost. In the author's opinion, applicants have less than 40 days post-boot-camp to take the test and expect a reasonable probability of passing the exam. Industry figures suggest that if an applicant/exam-taker exceeds 40 days post boot-camp, they possess a less than 60% probability of passing the PMP® certification exam.

Applicants should devote at least one hour of Velociteach's® InSite® classroom interactive instruction each day. At the end of each hour and each day, applicants should take a practice exam at the InSite® website, with no less than 25 questions chosen. Practice and instruction should not be limited to working weekdays, but should also include weekends. Each day that passes, serious applicants should remember that more and more knowledge learned at the 3-day class will be lost as a result of mental atrophy.

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### Receive PMI® Testing Approval

After approximately 5 business days following submission of the PMP® application to the Project Management Institute®, applicants will receive an email notifying them whether they received approval for the PMP® exam certification.

If an applicant is denied testing approval, the applicant may appeal the decision via a web link on the PMI® website.

It should be noted, however, that the only way that an applicant can be denied testing approval is if:

- The applicant was dishonest on their application (unacceptable);
- The Project Management Institute® could not verify information on the application (out of date contact information);
- The applicant did not possess the minimum number hours of project management experience (ensure that there is no project overlap);
- The applicant did not possess the minimum number of instructional contact-hours (as mentioned previously, you MUST already possess the required 35 contact hours of instruction PRIOR to submitting the application).

Thus, obviously, as previously stated, the way to avoid having an application denied is to ensure that all information on the application is true and correct, current contact information is provided on the application, the applicant possesses enough hours of project management experience, and indeed the applicant has received the minimum number of instructional contact hours.

### Schedule the Exam

The next step, after receiving approval from the Project Management Institute® is to schedule the exam. The PMI® institute exclusively uses the services provided by a contractor, Prometric®, to administer and proctor the exam.

To schedule the exam, applicants should return to the PMI® website and login using the applicant's login-id and password. Applicants will be guided through a series of wizards to schedule the exam.

It should be noted that demand for the PMP® certification has greatly increased over the last several years. Due to this increase in demand, most testing centers will be booked for at least a week in advance. Applicants should schedule for the next available exam time. Usually exam times are reserved for 8am and 1pm. If the applicant is a "morning-person", than the applicant should schedule the exam for 8am, as they would be the "sharpest" at that time of day. Conversely, if the applicant is not a "morning person", the applicant should schedule the exam for 1pm.

Applicants should note that they must not be late for testing. For any and all reasons, regardless of legitimacy, Prometric® and the Project Management Institute® have a policy to not admit a scheduled test taker if they are tardy. If an applicant is tardy, the applicant will be required to reschedule the exam and must pay an additional rescheduling fee. The fee paid for the initial exam is non-refundable. Tardy is defined as being 1 second late beyond the reserved test time. Traffic and inclement weather are not valid and excusable reasons to miss the exam or be late for the test. Applicants who have extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family, traffic accident, or a medical emergency must submit written proof and send to PMI's® Certification Program Department, Project Management Institute, Four Campus Blvd, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania 19073-3299 USA. This proof must be submitted to PMI® within 72 hours of the examination date. PMI® reviews all extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The re-examination fee for a non-PMI© member is \$375 USD and \$275 USD for a PMI® member.

Moreover, applicants should note that Prometric® requires 5 business days if rescheduling is required once a reservation has been made. This means, if an applicant has a reservation to take an exam on February 12<sup>th</sup>, and the applicant needs to reschedule, the applicant must contact Prometric® no later than 12 noon on February 4<sup>th</sup>. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule.

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### Take the Test

On the day of the exam, applicants **MUST** arrive at the testing center at least 30 minutes prior to exam time. This buffer will ensure that the proctors at the testing center can verify identity and test takers have time to stow their belongings in a locker.

No items may be brought into the testing area with the exception of a driver's license or a signed passport. However, test takers will be provided by the proctor with a 4-function calculator, 4 sheets of scratch paper, and 2 pencils. The test will be conducted using computer software. There are 200 questions on the exam. 106 questions will need to be correctly answered in order to pass the test, or a score of 61.5%. Twenty-five of the 200 exam questions do not quantify into the scoring of the exam. They are questions that are included in the exam for evaluating fitness for future possible use.

#### Brain Dumping

Immediately, after being escorted to a testing booth, the author recommends that test takers perform a brain-dump. All memorized equations, concepts, ideas, tid-bits of information, and facts should be immediately written down. There are approximately 10 equations that will be used during the exam. It is better to write these equations down than to try and remember them during the course of the exam.

#### The Test Itself

As mentioned earlier, the exam is administered using computer software. The exam is multiple-choice and consists of answers denoted by an A, B, C, or D. As part of the testing software, test takers have an option of "marking" a question. Marking allows test takers, if unsure of the correct answer to a question, to easily identify and return-back to the question at a later time. The author encourages test takers to utilize this functionality. In the author's experience, there were many questions in the exam that required the author to revisit the question to reconsider its correct answer.

#### What to Expect: Sample Questions

Many questions on the PMP® consisted of multiple correct answers or utilized reverse logic. Moreover, some questions on the exam include irrelevant information that does not apply to the actual question posed. They are designed to ensure that the test taker fully understands the concepts of project management. Below are three examples of these type questions:

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Sample question #1

Sally is a project manager for a construction company. She is running a project that has a CPI of 1.5 and SPI of .89. The superintendent on her project estimates that a certain task has been estimated at O = 4 days, P = 9 days, and M = 7, what is the standard deviation?

- A. 5/6 of a day.
- B. 6.83 days.
- C. 1/3 of a day.
- D. 1/2 of a day.

The correct answer is A. Note that CPI and SPI have no relevance to the root of this question. Remember that P = Pessimistic Estimate, and O = Optimistic Estimate. The formula for standard deviation is:

$$\frac{P - O}{6} = \delta$$

Sample Question #2

Which of the answers below is NOT part of the Project Management Plan?

- A. Communications Management Plan
- B. Quality Management Plan
- C. Team Management Plan
- D. Scope Management Plan

The correct answer is C. In the PMBOK® Guide, a Communications Management Plan, Quality Management Plan, and Scope Management Plan are discussed.

Sample Question #3

What is the MOST correct statement that describes the Project Planning Process?

- A. The Quality Management Plan is important because it ensures that quality of the deliverables are ensured.
- B. The Scope Management Plan is important because it ensures that scope creep is managed during the course of the project.

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- C. The Communications Management Plan is important because it ensures that project information is adequately communicated to senior management, stakeholders, sponsors, and the customer.
- D. The Risk Management Plan is important because it ensures that there is a methodology for mitigating all identified risks for the project.

The correct answer is C. Ninety-percent of responsibilities for a project manager consist of communicating.

### Test Results

At the end of the exam, applicants will receive the test results within approximately 1 minute after they hit the 'submit' button. Once the results have been obtained, a hard copy of the test results will be provided to the test taker by a Prometric® proctor.

Candidates who do not pass the exam on their first try may sign-up for a re-examination. However, it should be noted that candidates may only sit for the exam for a total of three times per year. The re-examination fee is \$275 USD for PMI® members and \$375 USD for non-members.

## **Additional Questions and Information**

Individuals with additional questions about the PMP® exam may contact the Project Management Institute® at:

PMI Global Operations Center  
Four Campus Boulevard  
Newtown Square, PA 19073-3299 USA  
Telephone: +1 610 356 4600 (Option 8 from the phone menu)  
Fax: +1 610 356 4647  
E-Mail: [customercare@pmi.org](mailto:customercare@pmi.org)

At the time of this writing, the author may be contacted at: [apackard@sciinfo.com](mailto:apackard@sciinfo.com).

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