IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Checking out the PMP exam blueprint
- » Delving into the exam domains
- » Understanding the application and scheduling process
- » Getting ready for and taking the exam

Chapter 1

Introducing the PMP Exam

So you decided to take the Project Management Professional Certification Exam. That's a big step in moving forward in your profession.

The Project Management Professional (PMP) certification is developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI), which has more than 500,000 members worldwide. Its credentialing program is designed to ensure competence and professionalism in the field of project management. PMI offers several credentials, and the PMP certification is the most well known by far. In fact, the PMP is the most widely recognized project management certification in the world, and there are approximately1 million certified PMPs around the globe.

REMEMBER

Adding this certification to your resume is important in the growing and competitive field of project management. A PMP certification gives employers confidence that existing employees have the level of knowledge to do their jobs well. It also gives employers a yardstick with which to measure new hires. And your project stakeholders can have confidence in your proven knowledge and experience when you have a PMP credential. Bottom line: With a PMP certification, you have more opportunities in your career path.

This chapter walks you through some information about the exam and the application process.

Going Over the PMP Exam Blueprint

The exam content is based on an exam blueprint that defines the domains that should be tested as well as the percentage of questions in each domain. The domains and percentages for the current exam are in the following table:

Initiating the project	13%
Planning the project	24%
Executing the project	31%
Monitoring and controlling the project	25%
Closing the project	7%
Total	**100%**

Knowledge and skills

Each domain has tasks associated with it as well as the knowledge and skills needed to carry out the task successfully. For example, you might see something like this:

- **Task:** Analyze stakeholders to identify expectations and gain support for the project.
- **Knowledge and skills of:** Stakeholder identification techniques

In addition to knowledge and skills specific to a domain, you need cross-cutting skills. A *cross-cutting skill* is one that goes across all domains (such as soft skills, problem solving tools and skills, and leadership tools and techniques). Always keep in mind that cross-cutting skills go across all domains.

Code of ethics and professional conduct

The PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct ("the Code") identifies four ethics standards — responsibility, respect, honesty, and fairness — and divides them into *aspirational* standards (those that project managers we strive to achieve) and *mandatory* standards (those that project managers must follow). Both standards use statements that describe behavior, such as "We negotiate in good faith" or "We listen to other's points of view, seeking to understand them."

TIP

The PMP exam does not test on the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct explicitly the standards are integrated into the test questions; therefore, you must know and understand the Code to do well on the exam. Chapter 3 of Book 7 addresses the Code specifically. By spending time with the Code, you will be familiar with the ethical context of the questions you encounter on the exam.

Exam scoring

The PMP exam has 200 questions, and you are allowed four hours to complete all 200 questions. Of the 200 test questions, only 175 are scored. The other 25 questions are "pre-test" questions, which is a bit of a misnomer because they don't come before the other questions but are sprinkled in with them. Those 25 unscored questions are a trial. PMI is looking at the performance of those questions to see whether they can eventually be integrated into the exam as scored questions. That's actually a good quality control process and good news for you because you can be assured that only questions that have been through a rigorous validation process are actually on the exam.

In addition to receiving a pass/fail for the exam overall you will attain one of three proficiency levels for each domain:

- **Proficient:** Your performance is above the average for the domain.
- **Moderately proficient:** Your performance is average for the domain.
- **Below proficient:** Your performance is below the average for the domain.

Digging into the Exam Domains

The five domains on the exam have specific topics that they test. The following sections summarize the topics by domain. Books 1 and 2 go into detail on these domains.

Initiating the project

The initiating domain is worth 13 percent of the exam score. This domain comprises the initial project definition, identifying stakeholders, and getting project approval. You will see information about

- Evaluating project feasibility
- Defining high-level scope and related success criteria

- Identifying and analyzing stakeholders (see Chapter 2 in Book 1)
- Proposing an implementation approach
- Completing a project charter
- Gaining project charter approval

Planning the project

The planning domain is worth 24 percent of the exam score. Topics in this domain include the knowledge areas that are listed below and cover all aspects of developing the project management plan.

- Developing the integration plan: Identify and coordinate all the processes and activities within the project management process groups.
- Developing the scope management plan: All work required — and only the work required — to complete the project successfully.
- Developing the schedule management plan: Manage the timely completion of the project.
- Developing the cost management plan: Manage and control cost so the project can be completed within the approved budget.
- Developing the quality management plan: Incorporate the organization's quality plan to meet product standards and stakeholders' requirements.
- Developing a communications management plan: Dispersion of project information/documentation to team and stakeholders.
- Developing a stakeholder management plan: Identify, manage, and engage stakeholders.
- Developing a resource management plan: Identify, acquire, and manage the resources necessary to complete the project.
- Developing a risk management plan: Identify and rank risks and then develop mitigations.
- Developing a procurement management plan: Purchase or acquire products/services outside of the project team.
- After the project management plan is developed,
  - Obtaining project management plan approval
  - Conducting a project kick-off meeting

Executing the project

The executing domain is worth 31 percent of the exam score. These questions deal with the day-to-day management of the project after the majority of the planning is done — in other words, executing the work defined in the project management plan to satisfy the project requirements.

- Managing internal and external resources and stakeholders to perform project activities
- Following the quality management plan
- Following the change management plan
- Executing the project management plan while managing risk
- Providing leadership, motivation, and other skills to maximize team performance to satisfy the project requirements

Monitoring and controlling the project

Monitoring and controlling questions make up 25 percent of the test. The questions are about managing activities required to track, review, and regulate the progress, performance, and any changes in the project.

- Measuring project performance
- Applying change management
- Controlling quality for project deliverables
- Conducting risk management
- Managing issues
- Communicating status
- Managing procurements

Closing the project

This domain makes up 7 percent of the questions. The questions deal with closing a phase, a procurement, contracts, or the overall project (see Chapter 4 in Book 2).

- Closing contracts
- Gaining final acceptance

- Transferring ownership and management
- Conducting a project review
- Documenting lessons learned
- Writing the final project report
- Archiving project records
- Measuring customer satisfaction

Applying for and Scheduling the Exam

The *PMP Certification Handbook* has all the information you need to apply for, pay for, and schedule the exam. It includes information on cancelling and rescheduling, the audit and appeals processes, and the continuing certification requirements. This section touches on a few highlights from the handbook, but it doesn't cover everything. For that, you need to download and review the handbook. Go to `www.pmi.org` and click the Certifications tab. In the Certification Types menu, click Project Management Professional (PMP). A link to the handbook is at the bottom of the page.

To take the exam, you need to meet the following qualifications:

- **A four-year college degree**

  TIP

  If you don't have a four-year degree, you can take the exam if you have 7,500 hours of project management experience over at least five years.
- **At least three years of experience managing projects**
- **At least 4,500 hours of experience managing projects**
- **35 contact hours of project management education**

WARNING

PMI audits a percent of the applications submitted for the exam. If your application is selected for audit, PMI may call your employer to validate your hours, or you may have to produce evidence to validate the information on the application. If you cannot validate the information, you cannot take the exam.

Surveying the application process

You can fill out your application online at the PMI website (`www.pmi.org`).

WARNING

Filling out the entire application is time consuming. The easy stuff is the demographics and contact information. Even the education and training sections are relatively quick to fill out. But then you need to document your 4,500 hours of experience. That's right: You have to answer questions about projects you've worked on and fill in the number of hours until you reach that 4,500-hour milestone. That can take a long time, so be prepared!

Then there is that not-so-small issue of payment. If you're a PMI member, your exam fees are currently $405 US. If you're not a PMI member, you pay $555 US.

TIP

To become a PMI member, just go the PMI website (`www.pmi.org`). Click the Membership tab to get all the information you need to join. The price for a one-year membership is currently $129.

After you start your application process, you have 90 days to submit the application. Then, PMI has five days to review your application for completeness. To make sure your application isn't returned to you, follow these steps:

1. **Write your name exactly as it appears on your government-issued identification that you will present when you take the examination.**

   Read more about the acceptable forms of ID in the upcoming section "Exam day."

2. **Ensure the application includes your valid email address.**

   This is PMI's primary way of communicating with you throughout the credential process.

3. **Document your attained education and provide all requested information.**

4. **Document 35 contact hours of formal project management education in the experience verification section of the application.**

   REMEMBER

   You must have completed the course(s) you're using for this eligibility option before you submit your application.

5. **Affirm that you have done the following:**

   - Read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in the certification handbook.
   - Read and accept the terms and responsibilities of the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. This is included in the *PMP Certification Handbook.*
   - Read and accept the terms and responsibilities of the PMI Certificate Application/Renewal Agreement.

6. **Affirm that you provided true and accurate information on the entire application, understanding that misrepresentations or incorrect information provided to PMI can result in disciplinary action(s), including suspension or revocation of your examination eligibility or credential.**

TIP

Make sure you fill out your application early enough to leave yourself time to go through the application and acceptance process and schedule your exam. It's recommended that you give yourself at least six weeks prior to when you want to take the exam.

Scheduling your exam

After your application is accepted and you submit payment for the exam, you can schedule your exam. You have one year from the date your application is approved to take your exam.

PMI will direct you to the Pearson Vue website (`https://home.pearsonvue.com/pmi`) to schedule your exam date. Pearson is the PMI preferred vendor.

Scheduling your exam is a simple process. On the Pearson Vue website, you will log in and follow the prompts. The scheduling process should take less than five minutes.

WARNING

Do not misplace the unique PMI identification code you receive when PMI notifies you that your application was approved. This code will be required to register for the examination. In addition, you should print and save all examination scheduling verifications and correspondence received from Prometric for your records.

Because PMI cannot guarantee seating at the testing centers, PMI recommends that you schedule your exam six weeks prior to when you want to take the test and at least three months before your eligibility expires.

TIP

If you're scheduling your exam around the time a new exam is coming out, you should give yourself at least four months prior to the exam cut-over date. Many people try to get in before the new exam comes out!

Taking the Exam

TIP

Taking the PMP exam can be stressful, to say the least. To help ease the stress a bit, here are five tips to keep in mind for the 24 hours before the exam.

- **Don't cram.** The night before the exam, you should know everything you need to know for the exam. Try to have a nice evening.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** "Have a nice evening" doesn't mean you should go out and stay up late. Your mind will be much clearer if you get a good rest.
- **Leave plenty of time to arrive at the exam site.** You cannot take the exam if you are late. Build in plenty of time for traffic snarls, getting lost, and so forth. Beforehand, perhaps take a practice test drive at the time of day you're scheduled to take the exam, just to see how long it takes.
- **Don't drink too much caffeine.** Or any kind of liquid for that matter.
- **Use the restroom before you start the exam.** After you start the exam, don't count on leaving the room until you finish.

Arriving on exam day

When you get to the exam site, you need to show a valid and current form of government-issued identification with your photograph and signature. The name on the ID must exactly match the name on your application. You also have to show them your unique PMI identification number. The following are acceptable forms of government-issued identification:

- Valid driver's license
- Valid military ID
- Valid passport
- Valid national ID card

WARNING

The following *are not* acceptable forms of identification:

- Social Security cards
- Library cards

There are serious restrictions on what you can bring into the testing areas. You *may not* bring anything into the testing area or to the desk where you take the exam, including

- Purses
- Food and beverages
- Book bags

- Coats or sweaters
- Luggage
- Calculators
- Eyeglass cases
- Watches
- Pagers
- Cellphones
- Tape recorders
- Dictionaries
- Any other personal items

Also, you may not bring anyone into the testing area, including

- Children
- Visitors

Calculators are built into the computer-based training (CBT) exam. The testing center administrator provides scrap paper and a pencil to all credential candidates on the day of the exam.

You take the exam on a computer. When you go into the exam testing area, you have the opportunity to take a tutorial and a survey. These are optional. You have 15 minutes to do this.

TIP

Use this time to do a memory dump on your scratch paper. Write down equations, tips, the process matrix, and any other memory joggers that will help you during the exam.

During the exam, you have the opportunity to flag questions to come back to them. Make sure to first go through and answer all the questions you're sure about and relatively sure about. For those questions that you're not sure about, flag them to return to later.

Looking at types of questions

The exam has several types of questions:

- **Situational:** The majority of questions are situational. In other words, you need the experience to know what they are talking about. These can be difficult. They start something like this:

  Assume you are the PM on a project to upgrade the physical security on a university campus.

  Then you review a situation:

  The Dean of Students wants to make sure that all campus housing can only be accessed by the student, faculty, or staff ID cards. The Security Director states that the only way to provide 100% security is to use a biometric scanner. The Finance Director doesn't care what you do as long as you reduce the current operating costs by 15%.

  Finally, the question:

  What document should you use to record the expectations of each of these stakeholders?

- **Only one possible correct answer:** Some questions appear to have two correct answers; however, the exam allows only one correct answer per question. For those questions, ask yourself, "What is the first thing I would do? What is the best thing to do?" Keep in mind that the *Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Guide* is the source for many exam questions, so think of the PMBOK-ish response. (Find out more about this guide in the later section "Preparing for the Exam.")
- **Distracters:** *Distracters* are a technique that test questions writers use to, well, distract you. In other words, they put in extra information that you don't need to answer the question.
- **MSU (made stuff up):** You might see some cool words slung together and think it makes sense. If you haven't heard of it before, it probably doesn't exist: for example, "charter initiation process." There are initiating processes, and one of the outputs of the initiating processes is a charter, but there is no charter initiation process.
- **Calculations:** There are a fair number of calculation questions. At least About 8 to 10 questions will have earned value (EV) information and equations, and about 8 to 10 questions will have other types of calculations. If you know your equations, these are some of the easiest questions on the test.
- **Identifications:** Expect about 20 to 25 questions where you have to know a specific process name, input, tool, technique, or output.

Some tests are *adaptive.* That is, the more questions you get right, the harder the questions become. If you miss questions, the easier the questions become. The PMP is not adaptive. The questions are not adjusted based on your answers.

Trying some exam-taking tips

TIP

These tips should help you when the going gets tough:

- **Keep moving.** Don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out one question. You could lose the opportunity to answer many others.
- **Skip to the end of a question.** If you get a lengthy question, read the end of the question first. That usually tells you the question you need to answer. The rest of the information is just background.
- **Go with your instincts.** Your first choice is usually correct, so don't second-guess yourself! Change your answer only if you're certain that it should be changed.
- **Think in broad terms.** The exam is global and across all industries. If you apply too much of what you do on a day-to-day basis, you could miss some of the questions. Think about the questions from a global cross-industry perspective.

Getting your results

When you're done with the exam, you submit your test at the computer. This is a scary moment! To make it worse, the computer will ask you whether you are sure. (And, no, the computer isn't hinting that you failed.) Select Yes, and *voilà!* You're informed whether you passed or failed. (Be confident; you will pass!) The exam administrator will hand you a printout of your exam results, indicating your pass/fail status. The printout will also give you an analysis of your results indicating by area whether you are proficient, moderately proficient, or below proficient.

About six to eight weeks after passing the exam, you will receive a congratulations letter, a certificate, and information on how to maintain your certification.

In the unlikely event that you do not pass the exam, you may take the test up to three times during your one-year eligibility period. If you do not pass within three attempts, you need to wait for a year to reapply. There is more information on this in the *PMP Certification Handbook.*

Preparing for the Exam

In addition to the PMP certification, PMI also puts out the *Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, or the *PMBOK Guide*. While information in the exam blueprint overlaps information in the *PMBOK Guide*, the exam blueprint identifies tasks, knowledge, and skills, and the *PMBOK Guide* identifies the *artifacts,* or the "what" of project management. Let me show you what I mean.

Earlier in this chapter, you see how the exam blueprint might address information about stakeholders:

- **Task:** *Analyze stakeholders to identify expectations and gain support for the project.*
- **Knowledge and skills of:** Stakeholder identification techniques

The *PMBOK Guide* doesn't discuss knowledge and skills the same way that the exam blueprint does. The *PMBOK Guide* identifies the outputs needed to fulfill the task, such as a stakeholder register and a stakeholder management strategy.

REMEMBER

Although the *PMBOK Guide* isn't the only source of information for the PMP exam, it is the primary source. The *PMBOK Guide* describes project management practices that, generally, are considered good for most projects. That means there is wide agreement that the outputs from the processes are appropriate and that the tools and techniques used to develop the outputs are the correct tools and techniques. It does not mean, though, that you should use every input, tool, technique, or output on your project. The *PMBOK Guide* is just a guide, not a methodology or a rulebook.

Additionally, the *PMBOK Guide* provides a common vocabulary for project management practitioners. For example, when you want to "decompose" your project into a set of deliverables, you use a "work breakdown structure" (WBS). You don't use a "scope management plan" or a "requirements traceability matrix." By having a common set of terms with an agreed-upon meaning, you can communicate better with your project stakeholders. By becoming familiar with the *PMBOK Guide* and using this book to help you study, you'll be in good shape to pass the exam.

It's time to get started. Good luck!