

# Your Journey to Professional Project Management

How to Pass the APMP

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# THE PARALLEL LEARNING SYSTEM

## With You All the Way

Our Parallel Learning System accompanies you in the achievement of your goals and those of your organisation. Our approach is integrated because the system combines a wide range of media, including this study guide, with e-learning, pod-casts and workshops. Each element uses the same structure so that they can be used in Parallel or as individual elements.

Our approach is flexible because it gives you the ability to learn in the way that most suits your learning style in the most time and cost effective way. You can study on the train, plane, tube, on the web or face to face — it's your choice.

It delivers real business benefits because our focus is on developing a practical and pragmatic approach to the delivery of projects. Our training is delivered by experienced project managers using practical and realistic templates, which you can use to accelerate the start up of your next project.

### Workshops

Our workshops use the latest active learning techniques to learn by doing. We will develop your practical project management skills and behaviours, whilst also preparing you for project management qualifications.

### e-Learning

Using the latest technology, our e-learning explains the concepts. Using lots of interactive quizzes and project simulations it brings the subject to life.

### Podcast

Study on the move with our podcasts. Using the same structure as this study guide and e-learning means you can access the material whenever and wherever you like.

### Study Guide

This detailed study guide provides the foundation of the learning system. It's a course in a book, covering all the main knowledge areas together with practical hints and tips you can apply in the real world.



# SECTION I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 About This Guide

This guide has been written by experienced project management professionals, for use by the reader when preparing for the APMP, and it is a fundamental part of the Parallel Learning System. It heavily references the content of the APM Body of Knowledge (BoK), as this is the definitive document used when the APM write questions for the exam papers. It has been written in a matter of fact way, trying where possible to cut through the jargon, providing examples and real hands on practical advice on how to better manage projects and pass the exam.

You should aim to undertake approximately 40 hours of study prior to undertaking the APMP exam. This study guide has seven main sections and numerous questions, tests and opportunities for reflection. You could consider going straight on and sitting the exam after spending 40 hours reading and digesting this guide. However, experience shows that you will be better prepared after a period of reflection and interaction with a tutor to help ensure that your own personal approach is correct. You may need feedback on whether you are tackling the questions in the right way, writing sufficient answers and writing the correct answers. Spend at least half an hour on each of the 37 topics in this guide and half an hour trying to answer the associated questions, and you will be as prepared as you can be; but we do recommend attendance at a tutor-led exam preparation event, such as the Parallel APMP Fast Track Workshop, where your exam technique can be honed in the company of an experienced tutor and other professionals.

### 1.2 Who's Who and What's What?

The world of project management is full of jargon (some would argue too much). There are also numerous organisations that have an involvement in the determination of standards and process for use by the project management profession. Briefly, in the UK, the following are the 'Key Players':

- **The Association for Project Management**, based in Princess Risborough in Buckinghamshire, has a significant role and presence in the definition of project management standards and is the primary project management association in the UK. It controls the syllabuses for a number of examinations; particularly relevant here, the Introductory Certificate in Project Management (ICPM) and the APMP, Practitioner Qualification and specialist risk courses.
- **The APM Group** (helpfully a very similar name to the APM, but a completely separate organisation) is a company that provides the infrastructure and oversight for a number of professional management disciplines. The ones pertinent to the project management profession are Projects in a Controlled Environment 2 (or PRINCE2™), and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP™). These two publications are the intellectual property of the UK

Government's Office for Government Commerce (or OGC). The APMG have the job of accrediting trainers to deliver the accredited material at events where delegates can become accredited in the use of these methods.

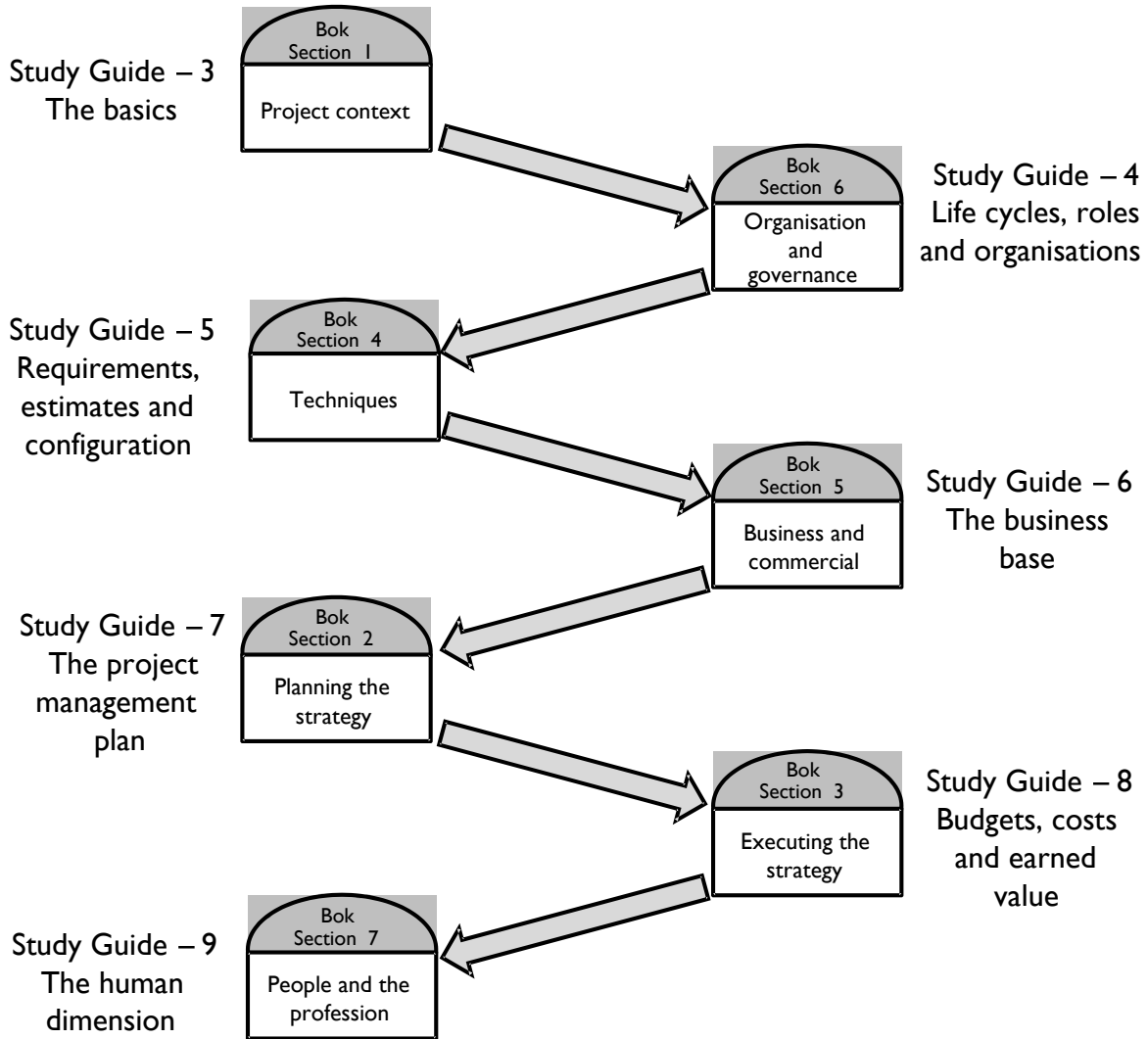
- **The British Standards Institute** is the national standards body for the United Kingdom and publishes the BS6079 (1–4) Project Management Guides standard. There are four of these guides; the first being the guide to project management. The others relate to a glossary, the management of risk and a guide to project management in the construction industry. The APM use these standards to help describe some of the main topics within their own Body of Knowledge.
- **The International Project Management Association (IPMA®)** actively promotes project management to businesses and organisations around the world. In order to increase the recognition of the profession, they certify project managers, award successful project teams and individuals, and provide a number of project management publications ([www.ipma.ch](http://www.ipma.ch)).
- **The Project Management Institute**, based in the United States, broadly do the same as the APM in the UK, but the user base is significantly larger than that of the APM. The PMI have a rigorous process for their 'Credential' programme and have similarly stringent experiential requirements for delegates wishing to attend one of their examinations to gain either the CAPM or PMP credential.

### 1.3 How This Guide is Organised

<b>Section 1</b>	Describes the exam structure and gives handy preparation tips (both official from the APM and from our own hard won experience).
<b>Section 2</b>	Details of the exam; how it is structured and how you should approach it. It contains numerous references and hints and tips borne out of our experience.
<b>Sections 3 to 9</b>	Follow the same basic systematic approach as the APM BoK and considers the 37 project management topics, arranged in seven sections, each split into the nine major headings. Please note that this guide does not follow the strict order of the Body of Knowledge (see Figure 1). We have done this so that we can propose a logical journey through a project using a case study. You will notice that the business and commercial sections are towards the end of the Body of Knowledge, whereas they are at the front of a project, therefore towards the front of this guide.
<b>Section 10</b>	Is an abridged glossary of terms taken directly from the APM Body of Knowledge, with only those terms needed for the exam. Throughout this guide we have tried to keep things as brief and concise as possible. We have also identified key words and phrases that have been indexed.
<b>Section 11</b>	The case study; designed to give you something to work with when contemplating the various topics and their practical ramifications. If you have your own project then this is even better. Along with the actual case study there are also sample templates for you to complete for your case study or this sample one, whichever you choose. These templates can be used for any project and you are free to copy them as you wish. Examples of the completed forms are available on the Parallel Project Training website in the registrant's area at <a href="http://www.parallelprojecttraining.com">www.parallelprojecttraining.com</a> . You can also download more blank forms to use in the future.

**Section 12**

Contains the APMP exam questions lifted straight off the APM website, which you can ‘have a go’ at. They have been organised into two mock exams of eight questions each. Each paper should take you 90 minutes. If you paste your answers onto the Parallel forum a tutor will mark them for you.



**FIGURE 1 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS GUIDE**

**1.4 Terminology**

There are numerous publications on project management. A quick web search will reveal hundreds of thousands of entries for project management and related topics. If you tried to read them all you would a) take an enormous amount of time and b) probably have so many competing views that you would become confused. So, which are important and which are not? A key benefit of this guide is to help you sort the good from the bad. We have been able to draw on multiple sources

and experience to do that for you. This guide uses a consistent form of words so that there is no confusion about terms.

## 1.5 So... Where to Start?

This guide is intended to be used alongside Version 5 of the **Association for Project Management's Body of Knowledge**, or APM BoK, which was published in October 2006. You must be familiar with it. Please be aware when you prepare using this guide that it is version 5 of the Body of Knowledge, as this will form the basis of the exam you wish to take. The APM also produce a number of supporting documents — **The Association for Project Management Guidance Notes for Candidates** and the **APMP Syllabus (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)**. Some of these guidance notes are reproduced in this guide along with other hints and tips to help you deal with revision and the exam itself. The syllabus is a much more specific and useful document as it describes in very clear detail all of those topics that you need to be familiar with and also includes the very important **learning objectives**. The learning objectives appear in this guide at the start of each section. Each section addresses those learning objectives.

You must obtain a copy of both of these documents just to make sure that you have the latest information. If you have subscribed to the Parallel Fast Track Workshops, then you will already have been provided with the guidance notes and the glossaries.

If you read the APM Body of Knowledge (as you will have to do before the exam), you will notice that at the end of each topic there is a selected reading list. For example, when considering the role of the project manager generally, the British Standards Institute (2000–2002) BS6079 is considered significant, and indeed it is. However, as mentioned above, there are also a number of other publications from respected authors and organisations that will give a different (sometimes radically so) interpretation of the same topic. Both are right, but for the purposes of the exam you will not be faced with a question that asks you to compare and contrast.

You are of course free to purchase or borrow any or all of these publications and of course they will help to provide a greater level of detail in particular areas than this document ever would be able to.

## SECTION 2

# ABOUT THE EXAM

### 2.1 What Is In the Syllabus?

The topics that you will be tested on appear in Sections 3 to 9 of this guide. They are the topics that the APM consider to be pertinent to the modern project management role. You may of course already practice some or all of these, but recognise them with a different name or terminology. One of the key things to do is to make sure you adopt a consistent approach to ensure that you are in line with the expectation of the APM in these respects.

There are 37 topic areas, broken up into seven main subject areas:

- project management in context
- organisation and governance
- techniques
- business and commercial
- planning the strategy
- executing the strategy
- people and profession.

Highlighted in these various sections are:

- **topic coverage**, which gives a guide to the discrete components of the topic; and
- **learning outcomes**, which are the areas that you must be able to satisfy in order to have a good chance of passing the APMP.

You should note that not all of the APM Body of Knowledge areas are examinable; these are included in this study guide merely as headers within this document.

### 2.2 What is the Format of the Exam?

The exam is a three hour, closed book, written paper, invigilated under exam conditions by an APM representative. When you arrive, you will usually be able to choose a desk (unless you arrive last and there only just enough); you are not permitted to take anything into the exam room with you apart from pens, rulers and calculators and may take nothing away that was given to you for the purposes of the exam. The qualification is highly regarded and as such valuable. You should be proud to obtain it, but by the same token respect the need to maintain its credibility and confidentiality.

Exams are not perfect and the APM seek only to test knowledge, not experience or 'competence'.

All you need to know to pass the exam can be found in the APM Body of Knowledge, syllabus, exam notes and this document. The APM seek to ascertain the level of your knowledge by setting a series of 16 questions on a selection of the various topics.

- You need to answer 10 of these questions.
- You need to score at least 55% across all of the questions.
- Each question carries a total of 50 marks.
- The mark you need to pass therefore is 275 out of a total 500 marks possible.

In theory you could just answer six questions and try to get at least 50 marks for each. This is not a recommended approach.

The APM exam guidance includes advice on the use of certain ‘keywords’ in the questions you will encounter. Note these well as they will be significant and have very different connotations in the context of the exam.

- **List:** A simple list of terms or phrases with no description or explanation of what each term or phrase is or means. Candidates are not required to give a structured sentence.
- **State:** A coherent single sentence that summarises, for each point, what something is or means.
- **Describe:** A clear description of what is understood by a term or phrase. Each point requires a short paragraph made up of more than one sentence.
- **Explain:** An explanation making clear the meaning and relevance of an idea or concept. Each point requires a paragraph made up of two or more sentences. It may be appropriate to provide examples or use diagrams to clarify your explanation. However, if there are specific marks for examples or diagrams, this will be explicitly stated in the question.
- Where a single question asks for ‘list and describe’, candidates should do exactly that — list the number of points required first and then describe them in a separate paragraph.
- There will be no marking schemes identified to you on the question papers in the exam.

## 2.3 Time Management

Given the need to answer ten questions in 180 minutes (3 hours), you will need a strategy. Try this:

- When told to do so, open the paper and skip through all of the questions, ticking (on the question paper) those you think you can do.
- For those ticked, put a scale against each to indicate how comfortable you are with your ability to answer the question (10 might mean you know the subject inside out while 0 might mean you should pick another).
- Once you have all the questions prioritised in this way, take a piece of the exam script paper and write down the questions you want to answer in order. Leave at least 5 lines between each. You will now have a list of questions in order.
- For each question, read the wording carefully and write down the key distinct points that you think will fully answer the question as asked; if you are unable to, it means you may not be as good at that topic as you thought.
- When complete, review the percentage scores and remark them in a new order.
- Build confidence by taking your highest scoring one first.

These steps may well take you 15 minutes of your 180. **DON'T PANIC.** You do not want to get half way through a question only to find your points are merging together, you don't really know any features/benefits/advantages etc. of the topic in question, or you have simply dried up.

**PLANNING IS CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS.**

**YOU WILL BE LEFT WITH ABOUT 15 MINUTES TO ANSWER EACH QUESTION.**

A lot of the questions will ask for four/five/six points in your answer. Do the maths. If it wants five points then this is three minutes per point. Three minutes equals about two long or three short sentences. To provide a proper answer for each question you are looking at about 1½ pages of standard A4 lined paper. This will equate to about 2 pages of exam script as the exam paper provided has margins either side and wide line spacing.

Some questions will have split marks (e.g. 20 marks for part i and 30 for part ii). These work the same as above with marks apportioned as necessary. It is not a numbers game but you will need to have a plan to answer the questions fully and within the time you have.

## 2.4 The Questions?

Only the examiners actually see the individual questions. However, there are sample questions on the APM website and these are used within this guide in Section 11. You will also find questions that have been prepared to mimic the style of the official ones, but tackle a wider range of topics and material, to give you more practice before facing the real ones.

A typical question could be:

*Explain the terms success criteria, success factors and key performance indicators and explain two ways in which they can be used in the successful management of a project, giving examples.*  
**(50 marks)**

Take a good look at this question, it is asking for **five uses...** during the **life cycle...**

### **NOTE WELL**

- For a start, you will need to be able to distinguish between KPIs, success factors and success criteria (see section 7.1).
- If you make six points the last will be ignored so remember to use the plan you have written.
- It wants three descriptions (10 marks each) and two uses (10 marks for each use).

Here is a sample answer for the question above. It is included here to give you a feel for the style and quantity that the examiners will be looking for. As with any model answer this will probably score highly, but individuals will all write things slightly differently.

*A success criteria describes the objectives that the project is seeking to achieve in order to be considered a success. The most obvious success criteria are the time, cost and quality objectives for the project but there may well be others, such as those that relate to the actual operational use of the finished product.*

*A key performance indicator is used systematically during the project to determine whether or not it will achieve its success criteria. It is too late to realise that the project will not achieve its*



*success criteria after it has finished. The KPI's will be closely linked to the success criteria and will represent 'way-points' on the way to achieving them.*

*A success factor is something in the project environment that will help underpin the project and its likelihood of success. They can, in some ways, be viewed as assumptions. An example of a success factor might be that the project needs swift decision making from the sponsor, or that there needs to be a contractor with the specialist skills required. Some success criteria are considered critical, in that their absence will cause the project to fail.*

*During the early phases of a project the project manager will seek to clarify and document the success criteria. The stakeholders are able to agree these criteria so that there is general agreement about what success looks like. At the end of the project, the stakeholders can be asked to confirm that the criteria have been achieved, thus evidencing the successful outcome. For example, if we are building a new stadium one of the success criteria might be that it costs less than £200m when completed.*

*The rate at which a project delivers its products may be a KPI, and therefore the rate at which these are being delivered will be recorded and tracked to help understand whether we will be able to deliver the remainder on time. These KPI's will be reviewed at regular intervals (probably during project evaluation reviews) to ensure that any corrective action can be identified and executed to keep the project on track. In the instance of the new stadium, we may wish to keep track of the number of seats installed to help us understand whether we are on track to finish on time or not.*

This answer includes references to other syllabus areas (project reviews, for example). This is not essential but it does demonstrate that you understand how some of the other Body of Knowledge areas are influenced and in turn influence each other.

If you have not sat a three hour paper recently, one of your major issues is going to be simply writing for that period of time. The only answer, regrettably, is practice. When you have a go at the sample questions in this guide, do not simply skip through, thinking to yourself what you might write. Get organised, sit down in private and actually answer the question by writing a long hand answer. You can answer with bullet points, but they still need to comprise complete sentences and you will NOT score 10 marks for just a few written words.

## 2.5 General Hints and Tips

The most important point about any exam is so obvious — make sure you read the question. If it is asking for benefits, give benefits; if it is asking you to describe a process then describe it. A lot of failures seem to stem from a poor relationship between the answer and the question as asked.

Start each question (or part) on a new page. You will feel like you are wasting paper with only a couple of sentences at the top of some of the pages, but it means you can go back and change things without making your paper look a mess.

The easier it is to mark, the better. You do not get more marks for neat handwriting, but if the marker cannot read it at all they are going to have difficulty marking it. Don't waste a lot of time dotting every 'i' and crossing every 't' though. You will waste time.

If you are answering any calculation question, make sure you show your workings, there may be marks awarded if the end result is wrong, but some of the logic and rationale made sense. It may not turn a fail into a pass, but all the marks go into the total.

Leave a big gap between bullet points so you can annotate and add things as you go. You can go back (remember you will have 15 minutes at the end to review what you have written). This way

your answer is not all crammed into the available space and you will have no trouble adding anything or making it clearer later.

Ensure your graphs and diagrams are clear, with a title and scales clearly identified and explained.

Try to avoid too many acronyms and jargon, especially if it is very specific to a workplace example. You might know what you are trying to say, the examiner will not be so informed.

You can make reference to your own company, experience, or things of which you are aware. If a real life example (or indeed a fabricated example) helps make a point or describe what you are trying to say, then it is perfectly allowable. Bear in mind the comment above about specific examples that may be too obscure for a general syllabus.

## 2.6 Make Sure You Are Properly Prepared

- In the run up to the exam, you might be nervous and stressed; it is easy to say but try not to let it get in the way;
- Avoid alcohol;
- Get a good night's sleep;
- Arrive early, select a decent seat near the window, out of the sun and not right under the air conditioning unit (noisy and cold);
- Read the exam guidance from the APM and make sure you have everything you need (coloured pens, writing pens, ruler, calculator and photo ID);
- Avoid last minute panics by arriving in plenty of time;
- There are concessions for previously advised medical conditions — check the latest guidance notes.

## 2.7 Revision Tips

- Make sure you have read the quick quizzes at the end of each topic section in this guide to be sure you know the basics (e.g. the difference between success criteria, critical success factors and key performance indicators).
- If you are not very good at remembering equations, try writing them on an index card, turning it over and writing them again. Check if you got them right. Keep doing it and eventually it will stick. Just before the exam do it a few times, and when you get into the exam, before writing any plans or answers, write them again on a blank sheet of script paper. You have practiced and your memory will be fresh. Remember — you cannot take anything into (or out of) the exam room.
- Try and set yourself a reasonable revision plan — little and often, set a timeframe for revising and stick to it.
- Try not to just keep revising the things you already know, try learning the things you don't know. Avoid the comfort of familiar territory. Push yourself to explore new areas that you may have considered too obscure or difficult. Some of the less popular topic areas can in fact be relatively straight forward with the right approach.
- If one topic is completely inaccessible to you, you can at a pinch leave it out of your revision schedule. Avoid leaving too many out though, there are only 37 topic areas and you answer 10

from 16 questions. You might end up with a paper full of questions you have consigned to the 'too hard' bin and spend three hours twiddling your thumbs.

## SECTION 3

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN CONTEXT

### 3.1 Project Management



#### Topic Coverage

- Compare and contrast projects versus business as usual activities within an organisation.
- The benefits of using project management.
- The challenges of using project management within an organisation.
- The difference between project management processes as used throughout the project (such as starting, defining, monitoring and learning) and the phases of the project life cycle.



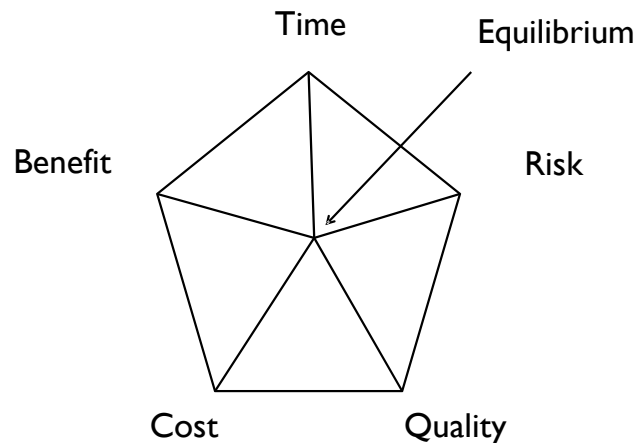
#### Learning Outcomes

- Distinguish between project management and business as usual.
- Explain the benefits of project management.
- Explain the challenges that organisations face when using project management.
- Distinguish between project management processes and the phases of the project life cycle.

#### Some Characteristics of Projects

- In order to derive benefit the project will be required to produce a planned set of deliverables.
- Projects are transient — they have a finite time in which they will deliver the deliverables.
- Various sizes — there are overheads associated with any project and are therefore normally a significant endeavour involving risk that must be managed.
- Directed at the achievement of benefits (i.e. we do not do projects merely because we can). We expect to derive some long-term benefit from them potentially way beyond the end of the project itself.
- Operating within a predetermined and planned budget (for the project).

## Projects are Normally Envisaged as a Diagram



**FIGURE 2 THE PROJECT BALANCE**

The project objectives are a balance of time, cost, quality, benefits and risk that define the 'project scope' (see section 8.1).

Each of the vertices of the pentagon has a definite quantified criteria associated with it. These are called 'success criteria'. It is relatively common to hear the term 'quality' used instead of 'deliverables'. The broad term quality is interpreted as 'fitness for purpose' or to put it crudely, the products 'do what it says on the tin' (the tin being the specification). You may also often hear the word 'product' used. Use of the term has advantages as it implies that it is not just any old deliverable but one that actually fulfils the stated requirement.

There is a point of equilibrium somewhere within the pentagon. The exact balance of the various components is what the project manager has to balance throughout the project (after they have been agreed and documented in the business case and the project management plan (PMP)).

The diagram is intended to demonstrate the balance that exists between the various and sometimes competing components of a project. For example there may be situations where a particular end date (a big sporting event opening ceremony, for example) is absolutely paramount. It must be achieved almost at any cost, although what usually happens is that the scope is scaled back to fit within the time and the budget constraints.

There are usually trade-offs to be made between the resultant benefit of a project (saving 20% on our inventory costs, for example) and the costs of implementing a computer system to allow us to do so. A cheaper system may allow us to save 19% and it may be that the extra 1% comes at a too high price. We will consider success or failure of projects later, but suffice to say here that it is often the misunderstanding of the nature of the relationship between these criteria that causes projects to be perceived as failures.

The project sponsor is responsible for making and agreeing these tradeoffs. They are the arbiter of the beneficial outcomes that may be achieved and the cost of achieving them. This is a fundamental aspect of a project sponsor's role and means they can create and own a viable business case.

## Projects Are Differentiated from Business as Usual

Projects are formulated and undertaken in order to introduce a change to an existing status quo (a new computer system, a bridge, a new product launch, for example). This distinguishes them from operational tasks. Consider the following examples:

- open heart surgery
- a factory manufacturing 300 washing machines a day
- building a new footbridge over a major river
- manufacturing vehicles
- implementing a prototype software system.

Which is the project? These are some of the things that differentiate a project from other types of undertaking:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Business as Usual (or Operations)</b>
Seeks to introduce change.	Seeking to maintain a stable platform for efficient production.
Limited by time.	Repetitive and continues indefinitely.
Key subject matter experts employed to prepare bespoke plans, specifications and manage risk.	Highly procedural working practices to enable effective continuity and oversight.
Specified scope so we understand what the 'job' is.	The first few prototypes of a mass-produced item may be a project, thereafter they are business as usual.
Produce specific deliverables once.	Produce specific deliverables, but repeatedly.
They have a discrete number of steps (delineated by the finite time), called a PROJECT life cycle.	Products go through a life cycle from build, through operations to disposal, called a PRODUCT life cycle.

**What are the Benefits of Project Management?**

Why do organisations want to go to the time and trouble of adopting a project management approach? Clearly there are significant problems with doing so: trained staff, methods, procedures, structure, defined roles, etc., are all required and inevitably cost money. In a nutshell, project management is mainly there to help with the management of risk.

Specifically though, organisations need to be able to understand the potential problems inherent in the undertaking, by adopting the rigour of a project management approach, including:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Understanding the resources and effort required.	Means the organisation can recruit, train, redeploy or otherwise ensure it has the appropriate people for the job, thus avoiding delays through lack of appropriate staff. It can also manage cash flow and investment funding far more effectively.
Consulting with relevant stakeholders (see later) to understand the nature of the requirements and then documenting them.	Everyone is clear about what will be delivered and when. Having signed up for the deliverables the users are obliged to accept them at some point during the project thus ensuring they are fit for purpose.
Preparing proper plans to clearly communicate who is doing what, when.	Everyone is clear on their role, there are no gaps in who does what and similarly there is no overlap or duplication.