



MANAGEMENT

The APM Project **Management** Qualification
Questions and Answer Guidelines
Hints, Tips and Exam Techniques
A Guide for Training Providers and Candidates

Version: 4.1

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Overview

This document is intended for use by Candidates, Training Providers, Markers and Quality Reviewers.

Introduction

This document is designed to assist with guidance for those training or sitting the following examinations:

- ◆ Project Management Qualification (PMQ) – 10 from 16 questions
- ◆ Project Management Qualification for PRINCE2 Practitioners – 6 from 10 questions

Whilst the foundation of the PMQ examination is the BoK 6th edition, the purpose of the qualification is to provide a wide ranging view of project management and its understanding.

Trainers and learners are therefore encouraged to look beyond the BoK to other relevant texts and their own experiences to develop a breadth of knowledge and understanding of project management.

The scope of the examination is to encourage candidates to show their understanding of project management. Questions are constructed and marked in such a way as to give maximum credit for solid learning – there are no trick questions.

This document is provided to highlight areas where common errors are noted which may be as a result of misunderstanding.

It also seeks to provide guidance on how marks are allocated to some sample answers.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- ◆ Candidates have a choice of which questions they answer
- ◆ Keywords denoting question types are:
 - **List & Describe, Explain, State and Determine**
- ◆ There is no negative marking. All candidates are marked on the answers given to the questions as posed. There are no marks deducted for lack of information or incorrect information
- ◆ Markers will give credit for answers that are relevant to the question posed even if language, alternative to that within BoK 6, is used
- ◆ Each question will only cover a single learning outcome
- ◆ Each question may cover one or more assessment criteria
- ◆ BoK 6 does not provide responses or answers to all PMQ syllabus assessment criteria or exam questions
- ◆ Candidates are encouraged to think beyond the BoK 6 and to draw upon their own experience aligned to the spirit of BoK 6 but not necessarily with rigid adherence
- ◆ Diagrams are not required; no marks are allocated for diagrams except where they are used in place of a list
- ◆ Apart from in Determine questions, calculations are not required; no marks are allocated for calculations unless they are specifically requested
- ◆ Don't write too much – once full marks are awarded no more content is read or marked
- ◆ Only give the number of answers required. For example, if a question asks for five explanations, the first five will be marked and anything further will be disregarded
- ◆ Examples from the workplace or elsewhere are not required and often add nothing to, or detract from, the answer provided

SUBJECT GUIDELINES – HINTS AND TIPS

Procurement Strategy vs Procurement Process

- ◆ Candidates appear to be confusing the two terms. One being the rules to follow, the other being the steps you take to achieve procurement
 - Strategy being the governance, boundaries and constraints around procurement. This may include aspects such as organisational policy, sourcing preferences and corporate relationship practices, using a purchasing department.
 - Procurement process being the steps taken in a procurement process for example, invitation to quote, invitation to bid, selection criteria and hurdles (or minimal boundaries such as number of employees, track record indicators, etc.).

Procurement Terminology

- ◆ There appears to be a common lack of understanding of procurement terms and contractual orientation. These are standard terms and we would expect candidates to have sufficient awareness of these expressions. They are outlined within the BoK 6, within resource management, procurement and provider selection areas.
- ◆ Candidates should also be aware of cost plus fixed fee. Fixed fee is not a percentage; a percentage is variable.
- ◆ Correct answers regarding selection via competitive tender do not include 'Make or buy decision', management of the contract, or closure of the contract.

Quality Management

- ◆ The components of Quality Management are specified in BoK 6 and we would expect candidates to be familiar with them.
 - Quality Control and Quality Assurance can relate to products and product development or the processes used to govern the project.
 - Continual Improvement is the iterative and immediate changes made as a result of Quality Assurance/Control activities, which ensure real time quality improvement. It may take input from lessons learned and feeds into post project lessons learned – it is not lessons learned on its own.

Benefits of Earned Value Management

- ◆ Candidates tend to reply with how variances are calculated, rather than answering the question posed.
 - Candidates need to be able to define the benefits of employing Earned Value Management.

Resource Types & Categories

- ◆ This type of question is looking for different categories of resource and not just different roles, skill sets, functions, departments or personality types. These all sit in the one category of Human Resource.
- ◆ However the different human resource categories that would be acceptable include:
 - External third parties (contractors, suppliers)
 - Project resource (delivery team, stakeholders, SME's, users)
- ◆ Other categories can include:
 - Money
 - Time
 - Space
 - Consumable equipment
 - Re-usable equipment

Risk Management

- ◆ Delphi technique
 - Candidates appear to be paraphrasing this technique into 'brainstorming for SMEs' within a group/team context. Candidates need to understand that this technique is typically a process where each of the experts are remote/external to the project team. This is available through RAND (who originally developed the technique) and also readily defined in multiple search engines. Candidates that refer to Delphi as 'the same as brainstorming' are submitting incorrect answers.

Teamwork

- ◆ Candidates who explain the term "teamwork" by citing the 'Tuckman' model being a process for team formation, development, management and dissolution are providing an incomplete answer. There may be reference to 'Tuckman' – but an explanation of the Tuckman model alone is not an explanation of the term "teamwork" in itself.

Leadership

- ◆ Candidates often confuse leadership qualities, which are attributed or characteristics, with leadership styles, which are behaviours. It is completely acceptable to cite 'flexibility' or 'adaptability' as a quality – but not to cite each of the situational leadership behaviours.

Peer Review

- ◆ A peer review may be approached from a number of perspectives however in each instance it is normally something that is not systemically 'required' but is required by the owner of a task or output.
- ◆ Alternatively it may be offered by the organisation in support of the owner of a task or output.
- ◆ BoK 6 does not have a detailed explanation in this area
- ◆ A peer review is typically:
 - informal
 - conducted by someone of appropriate skills/experience
 - a resource from another function to provide objective opinion
 - a critical friend
 - a second pair of eyes, or a fresh view
- ◆ Examples of a peer review may be:
 - a walkthrough by team members to support a colleague by providing feedback
 - a colleague reviewing or checking preparation work prior to a formal review
- ◆ A peer review is not:
 - a gate review
 - a post project
 - conducted by a more senior member of staff
 - an audit

Change Control

- ◆ Questions asking about the "purpose of change control" are seeking why it is done rather than what it is as a process. Answers may include elements such as: helps manage scope, supports cost control, manages stakeholders' expectations, reduces risk.
- ◆ The change control process should be articulated at high level steps and not a granular documentation level such as: "identify a change, get the template, document the change and submit it". These are not key steps in a change control process, but are parts of a sub process within the 'Identify the Change' or 'Capture the Change' steps in the change control process.

Legislation

- ◆ Questions regarding legislation do not require dates / exact names of Acts
- ◆ Legislation can relate to regulations, acts and / or laws
- ◆ Correct answers to this type of question will need to demonstrate a connection to the consideration taken when planning and / or managing a project
- ◆ Answers that just describe the legislation will score minimal marks

Matrix Management

- ◆ If a question asks for advantages or disadvantages of matrix management
 - Candidate citing 'single point of contact' as an advantage of matrix management are incorrect. Regardless of which project environment the team is in, there is a single point of contact being the Project Manager – this is true for weak, balanced and strong matrices as well as task force – therefore not specific to matrix management.
 - It is acceptable for candidates to use the same point for both advantages and disadvantages. For example:
 - **ADVANTAGE:** Having two bosses, means that a team member can seek counsel from two key sources. They have access to two views on the same issue. They have the benefit of more than one sounding board. They have exposure to different management styles to learn from.
 - **DISADVANTAGES:** Having two bosses may cause a conflict of priorities. There may be conflict between the bosses. The team member may become stressed by having two people to answer to. They may find it difficult to balance their workload. They may find it difficult to be exposed to different management styles.

EXAM TECHNIQUE GUIDELINES

Question Terms:

Focus on the wording of the question asked

- ◆ If a question asks for a list of benefits or activities the list item must include a verb – it can't be a thing. Relevant things listed would only attract one mark instead of two
- ◆ Where a question seeks 'advantages' – this is seeking positive perspectives / outcomes / understanding
- ◆ Where a question seeks 'disadvantages' – this is seeking negative perspectives / outcomes / understanding
- ◆ Where a question seeks 'benefits' – this is about the positive aspects of having something, not an interpretation of what the absence of a benefit may mean
- ◆ Where a question seeks 'importance' – this is about the gravity of having something and the different levels of importance which may be attributed to different stakeholders within a project
- ◆ Where a question seeks 'purpose' – this is seeking the 'why' within the answer

Provide positive affirmation of knowledge

Negative answers score no marks. What will happen if something is not present or used is not demonstration of knowledge. For example, the importance of having a robust set of requirements is not that without them the project team will not know what they are producing and stakeholders will not know what to expect.

Ensure the list items are clear

The list items are worth 2 marks each. If these are missing or unclear, this can result in up to 20 lost percentage points on a single question.

Do not repeat the list item

When writing the description, do not repeat the list item – this will attract no additional marks and wastes time.

Ensure the answer given stays on track

For example, if the questions asks for activities of the sponsor saying the sponsor writes the Business Case (would attract 2 marks), but then going on to describe the Business Case attracts no more marks. The answer must relate to the sponsor.

Ensure enough points are made

Descriptions earn up to 8 marks and explanations earn up to 10 marks; each well made, relevant point will attract 2 marks.

Avoid repeating the question

Repeating the question in every explanation is a waste of valuable time and scores no marks. E.g. if a question asks for five benefits of governance starting each explanation with "another benefit of governance is..." is wasted effort.

ANSWER GUIDELINES

Determine

Specific Principles

- ◆ 5 marks each
- ◆ The typical style for answering this type of question is a numeric value, calculation or formula
- ◆ Answers may appear as:
 - A numeric value, such as 35 days or
 - A formula, workings and numeric value, such as $CPI=EV/AC$ $CPI=75/50$ 1.5 or
 - Determination of a sequence of tasks forming the critical path and duration, such as G-E-S-M 14 days
- ◆ Specific rules of marking 'determine' questions are as follows:
 - Correct answer; without workings – 5 marks
 - Correct answer; with incorrect workings – 5 marks (workings are ignored for a correct answer)
 - Correct answer; with correct workings – 5 marks (workings are ignored for a correct answer)
 - Incorrect answer; with correct workings – 2.5 marks
 - Incorrect answer; without workings – 0 marks

Scheduling - worked examples of marking

Worked Example (these are purely guidelines and NOT model answers)

Question: From the diagram provided, determine the Critical Path in terms of showing the sequence of tasks and total duration (for the purpose of this question it would have been posed with days as the unit)

Answer Guidelines	Marks Allocated	Rationale
B-F-I and 35 days	5 marks 5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete Duration is cited correctly
B-F-I and 35	5 marks 5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete Duration is cited correctly even though no units are indicated (e.g. days/weeks)
B-F-I and 5 weeks	5 marks 5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete Duration is cited correctly even though units have been transferred from days to weeks
B-F-I and 7 weeks (assuming 5 day week)	5 marks 2.5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete Duration is cited correctly even though units have been transferred from days to weeks. Candidate has used a variable working week which has been accurately annotated
B-F-I and 7 weeks	5 marks 2.5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete Duration is correct for 5 day week but assumption not stated therefore only half marks
B-F-I and 35 weeks	0 marks 5 marks	Critical Path sequence incorrect Duration is cited correctly
B-F-I and 32 days	5 marks	Critical Path is correct sequence and complete

	0 marks	Duration is cited incorrectly
B-A-C and 26 days	0 marks	Critical Path sequence incorrect
	0 marks	Duration is cited incorrectly
WHERE CANDIDATES ADD START and/or FINISH milestones this does not affect the marking at all		
WHERE CANDIDATES SHOW or DO NOT SHOW WORKINGS – no marks are gained or lost		

Earned Value - worked example of marking

Worked Example (these are purely guidelines and **NOT** model answers)

Question: From the table provided, determine the following:

- Earned Value at month 8
- CPI
- SPI
- EAC (for the purpose of this question it would have been posed with £ sterling as the unit)

Answer Guidelines	Marks Allocated	Rationale
EV £800	5 marks	Correct value and unit
CPI 1.5	5 marks	Correct value
SPI 0.75	5 marks	Correct value
EAC £2500	5 marks	Correct value and unit
EAC 2500	5 marks	These are presented in a different order Correct value, no unit shown
CPI 1.5	5 marks	Correct value
SPI 0.75	5 marks	Correct value
EV 800	5 marks	Correct value, no unit shown
VARIATION in Mark Allocation (regardless of which formula the candidate may be responding to – example uses CPI)		
CPI 1.5	5 marks	Correct value
$CPI = EV/AC$ 1.4	2.5 marks	Correct formula, incorrect answer
$CPI = EV/SV$ 1.5	5 marks	Formula incorrect, correct value
B-A-C and 26 days	0 marks	Incorrect value, no workings shown
Where candidates have an incorrect answer, but correct workings – half marks are awarded		
Where candidates have a correct answer but incorrect workings are shown; full marks (the workings are ignored)		

State

Specific Principles

- 5 marks each
- The typical style for answering this type of question is a sentence or short paragraph
- 2 marks are awarded for something akin to a list item
- 2 marks are awarded for expansion
- 1 mark is awarded for further detail or a relevant example

State – worked examples of marking

Question: STATE FOUR PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF INITIAL ESTIMATES FOR A PROJECT WITH LONG TIMESCALES – Worked example of marking

- ◆ Price changes of materials (something akin to a list item, correct and relevant) 2 could lead to problems of initial estimates for long terms projects as well (irrelevant repeat of question) using correct market rates for estimating the project has no control over external factors effecting materials. (expansion) 2. An example is in the construction of a house; estimated a cost of bricks which could increase due to low production of them leading to miscalculated estimates. (relevant example) 1.
 - **Total Score 5**
- ◆ Price changes of materials, due to fluctuation exchange rates may positively/negatively affect estimates.
 - **Total Score 5**
- ◆ Price changes of materials (something akin to a list item, correct and relevant) 2 could lead to problems of initial estimates for long terms projects as well (irrelevant repeat of question) using correct market rates for estimating the project has no control over external factors effecting materials. (expansion) 2.
 - **Total Score 4**
- ◆ Changes to prices of materials (something akin to a list item, correct and relevant) 2 can fluctuate positively or negatively. (further detail) 1
 - **Total Score 3**
- ◆ Prince changes of materials (something akin to a list item, correct and relevant) 2 could lead to problems of initial estimates for long term projects (irrelevant repeat of question) 0
 - **Total Score 2**

List and Describe

Specific Principles

- ◆ For list and describe questions, there are up to 2 marks for the list item and up to 8 marks for the description provided.
- ◆ Candidates may display their list in a number of ways:
 - As a distinct list at the beginning of the page of their answer
 - As a keyword or phrase at the start of a paragraph as an initial statement (usually with a full stop)
 - As an underlined keyword or phrase at the start of a paragraph
 - As a highlighted keyword or phrase at the start of a paragraph
- ◆ Candidates who do not clearly provide list items are missing up to 2 marks per list item
- ◆ For list and describe questions, the list item cannot score twice. The words used in the list item are scored first. If the candidate then goes on to restate the same point in the description, they score zero marks.

List and describe – worked examples of marking

- ◆ Specific allocation of marks for “List and describe responsibilities of a sponsor”:
 - **List**
 - Risk (1 mark)
 - Risk owner or Owns risk (2 marks)
 - **Description**
 - The sponsor is the owner of the risk (0 marks) – *repeat of list item*
 - The sponsor owns the risk and decides the risk appetite (1 mark) – *additional to the first list item for later half of sentence*
 - The sponsor decides the risk appetite and ensure it aligns to the corporate strategy (2 marks)
 - The sponsor will identify initial risk in the Business Case (2 marks)
 - They will provide an escalation route for decision on mitigation or contingency for the risk (2 marks)
 - They will be responsible for ensuring that an adequate risk management plan is in place (2 marks)

- ◆ Specific allocation of marks for “List and describe disadvantages of using software for scheduling”:
 - **List**
 - Time (1 mark)
 - Time consuming (2 marks)
 - **Description**
 - It is time consuming to use software for scheduling (0 marks) – *repeat of list item*
 - Using software is time consuming and therefore expensive (1 mark) – *addition to the list item*
 - The time required is resource heavy which carries financial burden (2 marks)
 - Getting approval of the schedule may be time consuming if not all parties have access to the software (2 marks)
 - Resource capable of using the software may be limited and may cause a bottle neck leading to delays in schedule creation or update (2 marks)
 - It may take time for people to get up to speed with reading or utilising the software at the start of a project (2 marks)

- ◆ Specific allocation of marks for “List barriers to communication and describe ways to overcome them”:
 - **List**
 - Language (2 marks)
 - **Description**
 - Language may be a barrier of you are working across geographic boundaries (1 mark) – *provides context only*
 - If people don’t all speak the same language this can lead to misunderstanding and confusion (1 mark) – *provides context only*
 - To manage the use of different languages across a project team it may be necessary to specifically employ people who speak more than one language (2 marks)

- Interpreters can be utilised for important meetings to ensure full engagement and understanding (2 marks)
- The use of a translation service can be help with the written word, particularly for formal documentation (2 marks)
- Agreeing a common language for the project at the outset will clarify the project terms of reference (2 marks)

Explain

Specific Principles

- ◆ 2 marks per point well made – 10 marks maximum
- ◆ No marks are awarded for a list or headings
- ◆ If a list is provided, for the benefit of the candidate, ensure that the explanation is standalone as the list will be ignored
- ◆ If a context is provided prior to answering a question, for example on a question requiring steps in risk management, context may be a summary of what risk management is, this is not required by the question, and therefore doesn't attract marks.

Explain – worked examples of marking

- ◆ Specific allocation of marks for “Explain the benefits of an audit”:
 - Audits are beneficial as they provide an unbiased view of how well a project is being run (2 marks), giving confidence to the stakeholders that policies are being followed (2 marks)
 - They ensure compliance to the stakeholders that policies are being followed (2 marks)
 - They report on findings which provides an opportunity for corrections to be made within the project, aiding successful outcomes (2 marks)
 - They feed into continuous improvement which allows the company processes to be updated as necessary (2 marks)
 - They may be carried out by an external regulatory body, which enhances the reputation of the company and may provide a marketing opportunity (2 marks)

MARKING FEEDBACK

- **EXPLAIN**
 - Poor (0-3 marks) – providing little/no or incorrect answer content
 - Weak (4-5 marks) – limited relevant answer provided, insufficient content
 - Adequate (6 marks) – a borderline answer, appropriate to the question
 - Good (7 marks) – a reasonable answer, appropriate to the question
 - Very good (8-9 marks) – good points made which are both relevant and well explained
 - Excellent (10 marks) – answered fully, giving competent/coherent responses

- **LIST**
 - Incorrect (0 marks) – incorrect answer to the question posed
 - Partially correct (1 mark) – tentatively or loosely related to the question posed
 - Correct (2 marks) – fully related to the question posed

- **DESCRIBE**
 - Poor (0-1 marks) – providing little/no or incorrect answer content
 - Weak (2-3 marks) – limited relevant answer provided, insufficient content
 - Adequate (4 marks) – a borderline answer, appropriate to the question
 - Good (5 marks) – a reasonable answer, appropriate to the question
 - Very good (6-7 marks) – good points made which are both relevant and well described
 - Excellent (8 marks) – answered fully, giving competent/coherent responses

- **STATE**
 - Poor (0-1 marks) – incorrect or vague answer
 - Weak (2 marks) – something akin to a list item
 - Adequate (3 marks) – expanded list item
 - Good (4 marks) – further detail and / or example
 - Excellent (5 marks) – maximum marks for a comprehensive answer

- **DETERMINE**
 - Incorrect (0 marks) – incorrect answer without workings or with incorrect workings
 - Weak (2.5 marks) - incorrect answer with correct workings shown
 - Good (5 marks) – correct answer (with or without workings shown)

Change history

DATE	CHANGE	VERSION No.
05.10.2017	Content update	3.0
21.10.2017	Combine with GD004	4.0
18.10.2018	Feedback for State questions	4.1