



PM Challenge 2019/20

Competition Overview

APM Thames Valley Branch

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About the PM Challenge

The Thames Valley Branch (TVB) Project Management (PM) Challenge is an annual competition for developing project management professionals.

The challenge aims to improve the competitors' project management skills in a real-life environment with the support of a mentor from within their organisations. It is run over several months and culminates in a prestigious Finals Night. The objectives and benefits of the challenge are further detailed within this information pack.

APM Five Dimensions of Professionalism

The Association for Project Management (APM) supports professional values and the [FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism](#) provide a framework that helps people develop their career.

Project professionals make a direct contribution to the economy, environment and society by managing effective change. They are capable, accountable and committed to their profession working in all sectors and all types of projects and programmes. They experience unprecedented variety and a track-record of achievement; this provides project professionals with the benefits of exceptional job satisfaction, professional status and other rewards.

APM Body of Knowledge

The APM Body of Knowledge (BoK) defines the breadth of the project, programme and portfolio management profession. It makes up one of the FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism.

The APM Body of Knowledge definitions can be found on the [APM Knowledge site](#) broken down into the 69 topic areas which are contained in the full text. Topics are divided over four sections; context, people, delivery and interfaces.

APM Competence Framework

The [new APM Competence Framework 2nd edition](#), released in June 2015, sets out the competences required for effective project, programme, portfolio management and project management office (PMO). The framework consists of 27 competences based around outcomes that project professionals need to achieve. Each competence includes a series of criteria covering knowledge and the application.

During the TVB PM Challenge, the expectation of the Project Board (Judges) is that teams will demonstrate the appropriate use of project management techniques and methods, thus utilising elements of both the APM BoK and the APM Competence Framework.

PM Challenge Objectives & Benefits

The prime objectives of the PM Challenge are to deliver a range of professional learning benefits to individual team members as well as corporate participants. The competition is open to new entrants to the project management profession and students of project management and the key objectives of the competition are to provide participants with:

- The opportunity to gain early career recognition.
- An excellent opportunity to develop and practice project management in a practical, competitive, yet safe, environment.
- A benchmark of knowledge, understanding and capability against peers.
- The opportunity to be mentored.
- Attendance at an award ceremony in recognition of their project.

Benefits of the scheme include:

- A structure where entrants are challenged in a friendly yet competitive environment.
- Use of project management methods to plan, implement and deliver a successful project.
- Evidence project management theory and skills on a real project.
- Experience real life hard and soft project management skills.
- Develop an understanding of success criteria required to deliver a winning project.
- Develop the qualities needed to become an effective and successful Project Manager.
- To gain a unique addition to your CV.
- Networking opportunities.

Project Theme

The theme for this year's competition is **'Projects for Good'**. Teams are encouraged to consider how their projects will benefit others and/ or the world around us. Teams may wish to consider the principal of [sustainability as defined by APM](#), in the scoping of their projects:

Sustainability describes an environmental, social and economically integrated approach to development that meets present needs without compromising the environment for future generations.

Teams are reminded to follow guidance for the Project Proposal to ensure their projects objectives are SMART and the project is suitably challenging and deliverable.

The PM Challenge Rules

Terms of Reference

- The choice of project is up to each team; however, teams should ensure that their project aligns to the theme of the year. APM reserves the right to limit the number of entries to 12. This will be applied at the project proposal stage. If more than 12 teams enter the competition, entrants will be decided by a further review of project proposals. The PM Challenge consists of 4 Phases and teams should refer to the [schedule section](#).
- Teams will be required to submit the following:
 - An entry form;
 - Project Proposal;
 - Status Report; and
 - Final Report.
- Project Proposals will be reviewed by the Project Board and teams informed of their successful entry in to the competition.
- Teams should consider the format of any documents submitted to the Project Board, with specific consideration being given to content, layout and readability.
- The marks obtained for the Status Report and Final Report will be used by the Project Board to determine which teams are selected as Finalists.
- Up to five finalist teams will be selected to present on Finals Night.
- Each of the Finalist teams will be required to prepare and deliver a 10-minute presentation which will be followed by up to five minutes of questions from the Project Board and other guests.
- There will be prizes for:
 - The best presentation as judged by the audience on the night of the awards ceremony.
 - The best overall project – based on points awarded by the judges during the PM Challenge.
- All teams who are not presenting at the Finals Night will present a poster on the same night. This will be judged separately and attracts its own prize. The basis of the poster judging is detailed at [Annex A](#).
- Additionally, there may be a discretionary prize on the night for the Most Improved Team.
- Each team will be required to attend the Finals Night Phase of the competition. Even if a team does not progress to the presentation stage, there is benefit in watching the presentations, guest speaker and speaking to, and networking with, other teams. It is also a great way to celebrate all the hard work of the teams over the previous months.

- Project funding for project delivery will not be available from APM and should be provided by the organisation sponsoring the team. This should be a maximum of £500 per team, with funding provided by the sponsoring organisation. This money should be used by the teams for resources/ materials to undertake their projects.
- In addition to the project funding, each team will be required to submit a PM Challenge entry fee of £500 before or with their Status Report (second week in February) to cover administration and the cost of a table at the Finals Night awards ceremony.
- Teams can raise a Purchase Order and send it any time up to the submission of their Status Reports to allow APM to invoice for the entry fee. Please phone Isabella Schembri on 01844 276783 to organise
- Teams that do not submit the entry fee before or with their Status Report will not progress to the next stage of the challenge.
- Teams will require the support of a Mentor and they should be provided by the sponsoring organisation.

Teams

- Corporate entries should be limited to teams comprising apprentices, graduates or trainees with up to three years' full or part time employment, or employees with fewer than three years' experience in the project management profession.
- Student entries must be enrolled and attending a course at a University at the time of the challenge.
- Teams should comprise of a minimum four and maximum six members per team.

Time scales

- Each phase of the project must be submitted by the relevant date ([schedule section](#)).
- The project completion date will not be set by APM. Teams should adequately plan their project timescales to enable a completion date that allows enough time to create the final report.

Document Formats and Content

- Teams should carefully consider the [PM Challenge Competency Framework as applied to the PM Challenge](#) prior to completion of deliverables.
- Where **appendices** are provided with reports, these must be specific, distinct, relevant and not a continuation of the report. For example; a Risk Register would be acceptable as an annexe, but the description of the risk plan would not be. Negative scoring may be incurred if Judges feel the annexes are not in-line with this guidance.

The Project Proposal

- The project proposal must contain at least the following:
 - project objective (SMART);
 - project scope;
 - high level schedule;
 - budget; and
 - planned resources/ organisational chart.
- In addition to the above, the Project Proposal should:
 - not exceed 4 pages;
 - consider the full project lifecycle;
 - be compliant with the competition theme (proposals outside of the theme will not be considered further).
- The Project Proposal will be used to determine successful entry in to the competition.

The Status Report

- The Status Report must:
 - Consist of no more than 6 pages at font size 11.
 - If reports longer than 6 pages are submitted, they will only be reviewed up to the last complete sentence on page 8 and remaining pages over the page limit will be ignored.
 - Communicate the status of the project.
 - Include tasks completed and tasks planned.
 - Include details on scope changes, if applicable.
 - Include details on budget, spend to date and forecast spend.
 - Include Key Milestones (Planned v Actual) including text summary where applicable.
 - Include top five risks and corresponding mitigation action.

A cover page and content list are not required. The status report should concentrate on succinctly communicating the current status of the project and no appendices should be provided.

The Final Report

- The final Report must:
 - Consist of no more than 20 pages at font size 11.
 - If reports longer than 20 pages are submitted, they will only be reviewed up to the last complete sentence on page 20 and remaining pages over the page limit will be ignored.
 - The 20-page limit excludes title page, table of contents, management summary and [appendices](#).
 - Appendices should be limited to a maximum of 8 pages in total.

- The report must be based on a post project/ implementation review or lessons learnt meeting, therefore the project must be complete in time to undertake this review and write the report.
- The report will be a [comprehensive report addressing all the key factors](#) in the project.
- The report must demonstrate the level of achievement reached against the project objectives & plans.
- The report should include an overall management summary of the project with further sections on learnings for key project management competencies.

Budget

- All budget expenditure must be accounted for and be limited to a maximum of £500 per team.
- Project expenditure must be managed within the defined budget.
- A summary budget position should be submitted within the Final Report.
- Supporting resources from outside the core team should be proportionate, appropriately tailored and declared within the project reports (i.e. if using corporate support functions).

Finals Night - Presentations

The finalist teams selected to present on Finals Night will have at least three weeks to prepare and each team will be expected to make a 10-minute presentation on their project and to undertake a five minute question and answer session facilitated by the Project Board.

The format of the 10-minute Finals Night presentation is entirely up to the teams who reach that phase of the PM Challenge, but the presentation must be within the following constraints:

- Presentation media will be via MS PowerPoint.
- Animations are allowed but not videos.
- No new project materials should be created specifically for the Finals Night, Judges will not review new materials presented to them on the night. However, teams may wish to display relevant project documents or materials used in their project on their team table.
- A computer will be provided for the presentations. The PC will be standalone, so all files needed for the presentation will have to be held on a single portable storage device.

Teams presenting at the Finals Night are expected to:

- Focus their efforts on the content of the presentations, not on the 'packaging'.
- Include commentary on lessons learnt.
- Ensure their presentations are completed within the allocated time slot.

Finals Night - Poster Competition

Non-finalist teams will be asked to create posters as an opportunity to share project information and win a prize. Each team will have at least three weeks to prepare their poster and these will be judged on Finals Night in a separate competition.

Schedule & Phases

The 2019 -20 PM Challenge will consist of 4 key phases and 8 milestones:

1. Phase 1 Launch and entry form submission

APM TVB PM Challenge 2019/20 launched on the APM website and via email. Competition entries are to be submitted using the template provided.

2. Phase 2 Submission of proposals

Teams submit a robust Project Proposal using the guidance provided.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Project Board, and teams will be notified of their progression in to the competition.

Following notification, the qualifying teams will have approximately four months to complete their projects.

3. Phase 3 Project Delivery

Teams work with support from their mentor to successfully deliver their project.

A Status Report and Final Report are submitted by the milestone dates below for review and feedback by the TVB Project Board.

4. Phase 4 Finals Night

The finalist teams present their projects and the non-finalist display their posters. The winning team is selected, and prizes awarded.

TVB PM Challenge Schedule & Milestones (MS)	Dates
Phase 1 – Event Launch	21 October 2019
Phase 1 – Entries submitted - MS1	6 November 2019 10am
TVB PM Challenge Schedule & Milestones (MS)	Dates
Phase 2 – Submit Project proposals – MS2	29 November 2019 10am
Phase 2 – Review of Project Proposals <i>Project Board complete review and teams informed of results – MS3</i>	12 December 2019
Phase 3 – Delivery of Projects	
<i>Status Report submitted to Project Board – MS4</i>	12 February 2020 10am
<i>Feedback delivered by Project Board on Interim Reports – MS5</i>	10 March 2020
<i>Final Report submitted to Project Board – MS6</i>	15 April 2020
<i>Review of Final Reports completed, and teams informed of results – MS7</i>	8 May 2020
Phase 4 - Finals night and Awards Ceremony – MS8	Early June 2020

Questions

Questions can be emailed to the APM PM Challenge Project Team at pmchallenge@apm-thamesvalley.org.uk.

Assessment Criteria & Weighting

Teams should consider the format of any documents submitted to the Project Board, with specific consideration being given to content, layout, page limits and readability.

The weighting and of each document is as follows:

Phase	Weighting
Project Proposal	Pass / Fail
Status Report	25%
Final Report	55%
Finalist Presentation	20%

Evaluation of each stage will be against the competencies as outlined in [Annex B](#).

The marks obtained for the Status Report and Final Report will be used by the Project Board to determine which teams are selected to present at the Finals Night. Any report submitted after the due date will be judged as a non-submission, unless appropriately managed by the Teams (i.e. prior notice and suitable recovery plans). Feedback will be provided on each submission; however, scores are not shared with teams. The Project Board's decision is final.

Roles & Responsibilities

Mentor

Each team entering PM Challenge must have a Mentor.

The Mentor is to provide experienced professional Project Management advice and guidance to enable teams to execute the projects effectively.

Each team must interface regularly with their Mentor to ensure they are focused and gain maximum benefit from the competition.

Where there are concerns about the competition, teams should communicate with the Mentor in the first instance.

The role of the Mentor is to be a source of information/ knowledge, act as a sounding board and a facilitator. Project teams are not obliged to accept the advice provided. The Mentor should:

- Be an experienced Project Management Professional
- Be approachable, reliable and prepared.
- Strategically assess and monitor progress and give advice for effectiveness and efficiency.
- Mentors should not provide solutions (nor do the work) but facilitate the process to stimulate the project team's own thinking and develop their own solutions.

- Share their experience - Mentors are to enhance the project teams' academic learning with industry best practices.

It is recommended that an interface plan between the project team and mentor is established for the duration of the project. This should cover, for example how often to meet, format of meeting and communications channels etc.

A maximum would be a weekly face to face meeting. Mentors should be realistic as to how much face to face time they can continuously devote to the team.

Tutor or Corporate Sponsor

The role of the tutor or corporate Sponsor is to ensure that their teams get the most out of the PM Challenge evaluating everyone's skill development beyond that of the theoretical education.

If there are concerns about the PM Challenge or areas for enhanced benefit the first point of contact should be the Mentor. The Mentor and Sponsors should then work together to achieve the most benefit for each student and the project team.

Project Teams

Each Project team is to assign a Project Manager who will act as the primary contact for the duration of the competition. Communication with the APM, Mentor and Corporate Sponsor should be channelled through each team's Project Manager. Any changes to Project Managers are to be sent to pmchallenge@apm-thamesvalley.org.uk as soon as possible.

Where there are concerns about your Mentor the first point of contact should be with the Mentor to raise your concern and jointly come to a satisfactory resolution. If this is unsuccessful then the concerns should be raised to the project Sponsor.

The Project Board

The Project Board consists of APM Judges who will assess the deliverables submitted by each team, provide feedback and decide upon the overall PM Challenge Winner.

The Project Board will consist of at least four members incorporating Thames Valley Branch Committee members and experienced APM members.

PM Challenge Project Manager

TVB appoint a Project Manager to coordinate the PMC each year.

The Project Manager is assisted by support from APM Head Office, Ibis House and various Task Managers on the Committee.

Please email the PMC PM with any questions at: pmchallenge@apm-thamesvalley.org.uk

Please begin your subject header with "2019 - 20 PM Challenge – ".

Finalists Night & Presentation

The PM Challenge entry fee includes the cost of a table (10 seats) at the Finals Night and teams are expected to attend with their Mentors and Sponsors.

Additional tables will be available for other attendees such as staff from teams' companies and guests. Further detail will be available closer to the date.

There will be a guest speaker and the evening will end with the presentation of awards. This is planned to allow all presentations, judging and presentation of awards to take no longer than three hours

And finally, good luck with your entry.

Thames Valley Branch Committee
PM Challenge 2019-20

Annex A – APM TVB PM Challenge Poster Competition Requirements

Theme:	The poster shall:
Size	Fit on a single standard flip chart stand (A1 sized) that will be provided
Presentation/ Look	Be attractive and easy to review and understand
Content	The poster should describe/ show, as a minimum:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what was achieved (i.e. outputs against objectives)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how it was done (i.e. processes used, activities carried out)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risks assessed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lessons learned (i.e. how to improve project execution in the future)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what the team got out of the project (i.e. individual or team benefits)

Annex B – APM Competency Framework as applied to APM TVB PM Challenge

The Project Board (Judges) will consider the following competencies from the APM Competence Framework 2nd Edition when reviewing team submissions at the designated stages of the competition. The specific criteria for assessing each competency will not be published and it is the responsibility of each team to identify what they consider to be the appropriate criteria to demonstrate when delivering their projects. As a general guide and to help teams, the Project Board will only consider 2 or 3 criteria per competency. Where appropriate, teams may wish to consider other competencies when undertaking their projects and these may attract additional marks.

Competency	APM Ref	Application
<i>Theme/topic</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>The project theme/topic is robust and aligns with the parameters set by the Project Board.</i>
<i>Format/content</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Document content, layout and readability is of a good standard. Page count including annexes is not exceeded.</i>
<i>Aims & Objectives</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>The project has clear aims, SMART objectives and will provide tangible outputs.</i>
<i>Schedule Management</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>The ability to prepare and maintain schedules for activities and events for change initiatives, taking account of dependencies and resource requirements.</i>
<i>Budget & Cost Control</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Ability to develop and agree budgets, and to control forecast & actual costs. Consideration is given to project team time and costs/hours tracking.</i>
<i>Risk, Opportunity & Issue Management</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Identification and monitoring of risks (threats & opportunities). Planning and implementation of responses to risks and other project issues.</i>
<i>Consolidated Planning</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>The ability to consolidate and document the fundamental components of a change initiative: scope; schedule; resource requirements; budgets; risks, opportunities and issues; and quality requirements.</i>
<i>Governance Arrangements</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>The ability to establish and maintain governance structures that define clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for governance and delivery of change initiatives, and that align with organisational practice.</i>
<i>Stakeholder & Communications Management</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>The ability to manage and communicate with stakeholders, taking in to account the levels of influence and particular interests.</i>

Competency	APM Ref	Application
<i>Quality Management and Reviews</i>	<i>13 & 21</i>	<i>The ability to establish and manage reviews at appropriate points, during and after change initiatives and in accordance with agreed Quality Systems and Governance structure for your project, by providing evaluations of progress, methodologies and continuing relevance.</i>
<i>Change Control</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>The ability to establish protocols to alter the scope of change initiatives, implementing the protocols when necessary, and updating configuration documentation including contracts to develop, attain and apply quality management processes for change initiative activities and outputs.</i>
<i>Benefits Management</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>The ability to identify, define, evaluate, plan, track and realise the business benefits of change initiatives.</i>

Annex C – APM TVB PM Challenge – Final Report Format.

Product Title:	APM Thames Valley Branch - PM Challenge – Final Report
Purpose:	<i>The final report will be used by the judging panel to assess how each competing team has reflected on the execution and delivery of a successful project, taking into consideration how the individual members of each team have developed their overall project management experience and competence.</i>
Composition:	<p><i>The following headings may be included:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Management Summary (no more than two pages, providing key information to assess the outcome and overall success of the project).</i> 2. <i>Consolidated Planning (including how the Project Management Plan was developed and implemented).</i> 3. <i>Budgeting & Cost Control (including establishing a budget, securing funding, management of changes and final expenditure).</i> 4. <i>Project Governance (including organisation, how effectively the project team was managed, how the individuals in the team developed their knowledge and experience, individual accolades for good performance).</i> 5. <i>Project Quality Management (including preparation of a quality plan, use of quality criteria, effective quality control, quality assurance and continuous improvement, lessons learnt).</i> 6. <i>Risk, Opportunity & Issue Management (including how effectively risks, problems and issues were managed).</i> 7. <i>Reviews, Monitoring and Control (including maintenance of the schedule, monitoring of progress against the baseline, change control process).</i> 8. <i>Stakeholder Management & Communication (including stakeholder analysis, effectiveness of the communications plan).</i> 9. <i>Benefits and Success Management (including establishment of the benefits and success criteria, ongoing monitoring and eventual outcome).</i> 10. <i>Stakeholder Feedback (including evidence of stakeholder feedback throughout and as part of the post project review from each Sponsor and Mentor/ lessons learnt for the benefit of future projects).</i>
Format / Presentation:	<p><i>The report should be well structured, with a clear table of contents, concise sections and good use of graphics and appendices. Presented as a single A4 PDF document of no more than 20 pages at type face 11 point, excluding title page, table of contents, management summary and appendices.</i></p> <p><i>Appendices up to a maximum of 8 pages in total may be submitted.</i></p> <p><i>The report must be based on a post project/ implementation review or lessons learnt meeting.</i></p>
Quality Checking Method:	<p><i>Before submission to the APM board, it is recommended that the report undergoes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A formal Quality Review by the whole project team and Final sign-off and approval from the Project Sponsor.</i>