

MANAGEMENT

APM Project
Management
Qualification (*PMQ*)

Exam Techniques

APM Project Management Qualification Exam Technique

This document is designed to support candidates preparing to undertake the APM Project Management Qualification assessment by providing insight into what to look for and techniques they can apply, when undertaking the APM Project Management Assessment.

The APM Project Management Qualification assessment is made up of 16 short answer questions.

Short answer questions test the candidates' level of knowledge and understanding of a topic and will contain command verbs such as 'explain' and 'describe'.

Each PMQ question is worth 50 marks and will have two parts, part a) is worth 20 marks and part b) is worth 30 marks. Both part a) and part b) must be completed for maximum possible marks. A question will target one learning outcome from the syllabus and each part of the question will target different assessment criteria from the same learning outcome.

Each PMQ question paper will consist of short answer questions to which the candidate must produce their own response.

Confusing the Terms 'how' and 'why' Within a Question

When used in the context of an assessment question candidates may confuse the terms 'how' with 'why' and do not give an appropriate response for the term used.

'Why' refers to the cause of something, for example "Explain **why** a motivated project team performs effectively." In this example an appropriate response would focus on reasons such as to achieve key performance indicators or to deliver a quality service.

'How' refers to what makes something happen. Consider the question "Explain **how** a motivated project team performs effectively." In this instance, an appropriate response would focus on topics such as performing effectively through proactive collaborative working or by reducing the number of quality errors.

Identifying and Responding to a Question's Components

It is important for a candidate to understand the components of a question.

A candidate must recognise the **command verb** and its requirements (see the command verbs section of the syllabus).

A candidate must also recognise the **broad topic area or context** and the **specific aspect** of a question.

Consider the question "Describe how motivation is used to improve the performance of a project team." In this question the verb is 'describe', the broad topic area or context is 'improve the performance of a project team', with the specific aspect being 'motivation'.

A response that focuses on motivation as a general concept would receive very few marks, but a response that places the use of motivation in the context of improving the performance of a project team has a greater chance of being awarded high marks.

The Use of Command Verbs Within Short Answer Questions

All short answer questions will be formed using the relevant command verbs. Please note that some *differentiate* questions may be formed as 'explain the difference between...'

Clarity Within an Answer

The way in which a candidate responds to a question will influence the number of marks that are awarded. If the response is not clear and/or the content of a response is disjointed, it will be difficult for an assessor to be confident that the candidate has demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding.

The candidate must present a response in a logical and easy to understand structure that focuses on the exact requirements of the question. An assessor must be able to understand what it is the candidate is saying so that the assessor can determine if the candidate has provided a relevant response.

Exam Technique Suggestions

APM does not recommend one particular exam technique. Time management within the PMQ examination is very important if candidates are to provide responses to all the questions.

The PMQ examination:

- Is of three hours duration.
- Has been designed for candidates to answer 10 questions within 3 hours, which works out as 18 minutes per question, including reading time. This can be further broken down as 7 minutes for the part a) 20-mark questions and 11 minutes for the part b) 30-mark questions.
- Contains 16 equally weighted questions, from which candidates must select 10 questions.

The PMQ examination for PRINCE2:

- Is of two hours duration.
- Has been designed for candidates to answer 6 questions within two hours, which works out as 20 minutes per question, including reading time. This can be further broken down as 8 minutes for the part (a) 20-mark questions and 12 minutes for the part (b) 30-mark questions.
- Contains 10 equally weighted questions, from which candidates must select 6 questions.

One possible technique for candidates is to read through all the questions and make a note of those that they are more confident of answering effectively and those where they have less confidence. The RAG approach could be used here where:

- R for Red indicates low confidence
- A for Amber indicates medium confidence, and
- G for Green indicates high confidence.

Candidates could, after the initial review, begin with G, followed by A, followed by R. This would give them the greatest chance of achieving the highest marks possible.

Further Reading

Candidates are advised to read the PMQ Syllabus on APM's website, so they are aware of what areas of knowledge they are expected to demonstrate in the exam. Within the syllabus document is a list of the command verbs used in the syllabus and question paper, with a definition of what they mean.

For the PMQ, APM will also be publishing on our website indicative content for each assessment criteria. The indicative content is not a selection of sample or model answers but a guide to the type of responses a candidate could make for each assessment criteria. Exact responses should be tailored to fit the question asked.

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