

## CONTEXT FOR THIS DOCUMENT

APMP and APMP for Prince2 examinations aligned with the *APM Body of Knowledge 6<sup>th</sup> edition (BoK6)*:

- Candidates have a choice of which questions they answer
- Keywords are List & Describe, Explain and State
- There is definition of keywords for the examination in the candidate guidance
- There is definition of the keywords within the examination paper

As we have now completed almost 4 months of APMP examinations, it is a good time to provide additional notes and clarification to support learning for Candidates, Training Providers and Markers. This note is being circulated to all of these stakeholder groups to ensure that consistent information is shared with all key parties.

The structure of this document is as follows:

- In bold capitals: is the topic being commented upon
- In bullets: are the issues/observations made in moderation
- Where a bullet has been placed in bold text: it is to highlight a key message to the readers of this document
- Where a table is used: this is to illustrate some specific examples
- Against each specific topic, where a BoK6 page reference is available, this has been placed next to the subject title

For further clarification, please email your enquiries to [assessmentreview@apm.org.uk](mailto:assessmentreview@apm.org.uk)

## EXAM TECHNIQUE ISSUES

- We have occasions where the candidates are misreading the question and answering in a different context. For example:
  - A question may be about benefits of a process and the candidate responds with the steps in the process
  - Where the question seeks benefits of a role, process or technique, the candidates need to focus upon the benefits (upside/positives), not what would happen if that role wasn't present
- 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)
  - An underlined keyword or phrase at the start of a paragraph
  - 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, there are instances where the candidates are simply repeating their list item in the description. This 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 cannot score more marks. For example:

<i>The question may ask for 5 responsibilities of the project sponsor</i>		
List item	Owens the business case	Scores 2 marks
Description sample 1	The sponsor owns the business case.	Scores 0 marks as it's the same as the list item.
Description sample 2	The sponsor owns the business case and manages it throughout the project life cycle.	Scores 2 marks for the second half of the sentence, where the candidate has added value.

- Conversely on some explain questions we are seeing list items, which are not allocated marks. Whilst it is fine for candidates to list their answer content in order to structure their responses, there are no marks for doing so.
- Some candidates are providing a context prior to answering a question. So for example on a question requiring steps in risk management, some candidates are providing a summary of what risk management is. This is not required by the question, and therefore doesn't attract marks.
- Whilst the examination is based upon BoK6 content, we fully support use of alternate terms or phraseology as long as the content is applicable to the question posed. For example:

<i>Standard Reference</i>	<i>Alternatives which are equally acceptable (this is not an exhaustive list)</i>
Within conflict 'Avoid' (Kilman)	Ignore, dodge, walk away, evade
Within conflict 'Accommodate' (Kilman)	Acquiesce, submit, concede, comply
Within risk management 'Assess'	Evaluate, rank, score, consider, gauge
<b>There are numerous terms for phases, tools, process steps, components of models – variety of language is inherent in the range of corporate methodologies and writing on project management. The focus is upon testing knowledge and understanding rather than just terminology.</b>	

- Where the term 'purpose' is used in a question – this is seeking the 'why' within the answer
- 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
- **There is no negative marking anywhere in our examinations. All candidates are marked on the answers given, to the questions as posed.**

### CHANGE CONTROL (pg 128-129)

Generally candidates are answering well, however the following issues have occurred:

- Lack of understanding of the purpose of change control. **Candidates must focus on the purpose of change control (why do it) rather than what it is as a process. Their answer may include elements such as managing scope, costs, stakeholder expectations, risk (opportunity and threat)**
- Inability to articulate the key steps in the change control process
- Confusion between requirements management and change control
- Incorrect terminology used on process steps. For example a candidate may write 'identify the requirement'; where it ought to be 'identify the change'
- Some candidates are answering at a documentation level of process eg – identify a change, get the template and write down the change and submit it; these are not key steps in the change control process, but are parts of a sub process within 'Identify the Change' or 'Capture the Change' as a step in the change control process
- **Candidates need to ensure that their process steps are at a project level and not at a level of minutiae that doesn't answer the question posed**

**TEAM ROLES (Pg 76-77 and we suggest review of written articles in publications and web based information)**

- These questions have been developed to be inclusive across various team role models; such as Belbin, Margerison-McCann, Parker and Myers Briggs
- These are questions where the roles themselves are pre-defined and the candidate is required to select a subset to explain. This is a test of knowledge not a memory test, therefore the candidates are required to select and explain rather than recall specific role names.
- This is a knowledge based understanding, which requires some interaction with the theory of team roles
- Language has been used to ensure, if candidates are less aware of specific terminology from a model, they can follow the English interpretation and still gain some marks
- A good approach to answering this type of question is to look at the positive and negative attributes of each team role – what they may bring to and how they may detract from the project, the team and the outcomes

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT (pg 188-190 and we suggest review of written articles in publications and web based information)**

- There is a response relating to continual (continuous) improvement, where we are seeing candidates respond with improvement from a project perspective rather than quality perspective
  - Candidates typically respond incorrectly, citing post project review/lessons learned
  - The question is focused upon **quality**, therefore the answer must relate to the question posed e.g. process improvement, tools, techniques, testing, levels of knowledge etc. from a quality perspective
  - The BoK6 provides very limited information in this area
  - Candidates are encouraged to focus on quality being a significant part of the entire project life cycle and not solely as a concluding task or activity
  - **Within quality, we would expect to see content which includes – using test outcomes/results from quality control and/or assurance to take improvement actions such as feedback to quality assurance, adapting processes, updating quality plans and control points ... we would not expect the answer to focus solely on project review/lessons learned**
- There are instances where candidates are citing tools such as Pareto analysis, Ishikawa, control charts
  - There are blurred lines between quality control and assurance since many organisations use the terms interchangeably
  - There will be times where candidates use the terms (Pareto and Ishikawa for example) in control, management and assurance in the context of quality; these are entirely acceptable, however the descriptions associated with citing these terms must be appropriate to the question as posed
  - **Candidates must be careful where they cite these tools repeatedly in answering a multi-part question (e.g. against both assurance and control) unless the usage/application is clearly aligned to the context of the question**

**REQUIREMENTS MANAGEMENT (pg 140 -142)**

Where a question may ask about the steps in the requirements management process, there are a range of language approaches that may be used by candidates. **The variety of language used is all acceptable, providing it answers the question posed.**

- Within the BoK6, the first step is cited as 'Gather Requirements', candidates may use terms such as collect, collate, identify and recognise. **These are all equally acceptable**
- **Candidates may use 'gathering' rather than 'gather' – this is also entirely acceptable**

**MATRIX MANAGEMENT (pg 104-105)**

Where questions ask for advantages or disadvantages of matrix management, we are seeing a lack of understanding on the part of candidates in some cases.

- Citing 'single point of contact' as an advantage of matrix management. This is not acceptable. 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
- **Candidates may use the same point for both advantages and disadvantages. For Example:**

<i>ADVANTAGE</i>	<i>DISADVANTAGE</i>
Having at least two bosses, means that a team member can seek counsel from two key sources and have the right to do so without causing any embarrassment. Therefore if they're more comfortable with the functional manager rather than the project manager – they can go to them more readily.	Having two bosses may cause a conflict of priorities and personalities. Where each boss thinks that they are more important and pressure is brought upon the team member to balance their work, this causes stress and job dissatisfaction.

- Candidates must note that where an advantage is asked for – then a positive statement is sought rather than a statement about what the absence of something may mean
- Conversely where a disadvantage is required – a negative statement is sought

**REVIEWS (we suggest review of written articles in publications and web based information)**

Where questions seek explanations of different types of reviews, there are instances where the candidates are answering the terms with some confusion.

- A peer review, may be approached from a number of perspectives however **in each instance, a peer review is something that is not 'required' but is requested by the owner of the task or output. Alternatively it may be offered by the organisation in support of the owner**
- The BoK6 does not have detailed explanation in this area
- The peer review is typically:
  - formal/informal
  - conducted by someone of appropriate skills/experience
  - a resource from another function to provide objective opinion
- Examples of a peer review may be:
  - a walkthrough by team members to support a colleague by providing feedback
  - another project manager reviewing a project management plan on behalf of a colleague
  - a subject matter expert providing an opinion of the specification document
- A peer review is not a project progress review, gate review or post project review
- A peer review is not conducted by a more senior member of staff
- A peer review is not an audit
- An Audit is formal and has an agenda or list of points to comply with. Often these are tied to a mature governance process. Typically there is a sense of this being a hurdle where the outcome options are that the project can pass, fail or indeed have recommendations with which the project has to comply within a set time frame