

Background to the development of C-A qualifications in project, programme and portfolio management

Introduction

As part of [Strategy 2020](#), APM have undertaken Project Thermopylae. Project Thermopylae includes:

- the refresh and alignment of the APM Introductory Certificate, APMP and APMP for PRINCE2 Practitioners with the *APM Body of Knowledge 6th edition*
- the refresh of the *APM Competence Framework*
- the refresh of IPMA Level C and new qualifications at IPMA Levels B and A, with Level A focussing on programme and portfolio management.

With all these streams we have carried out initial research with customers and subject matter experts. Draft qualification and framework content has then been produced by experts in qualification production or writing competence frameworks. These drafts will be used for a final round of consultation and input before being finalised.

With regards to the Level C-A qualifications, APM investigated:

- the requirements for qualification from corporates and training providers
- what other professional bodies offer in the Executive training and development arena.

One of the main aims of the development is to ensure any new qualifications meet market need, customer requirements and IPMA Regulations.

The process

In-depth research has been undertaken which has involved issuing on-line surveys to assessors/facilitators, corporate clients and past candidates from a range of APM qualifications.

The purpose of the on-line and telephone surveys was to:

- propose a qualification structure and assessment method for levels C-A, based on the refreshed competency framework, that could be tested with accredited providers and corporates
- identify how to increase learner numbers at these levels.

Another strand of the research involved undertaking in-depth interviews with corporate customers to find out their:

- views on the current Practitioner Qualifications
- interest in qualifications at Levels C-A
- interest into an expansion into programme and portfolio management
- preferred assessment methodology for competence and knowledge based qualifications
- views on a number of operational changes currently being considered within the APM.

From this research, a proposed qualification structure and assessment method for Levels C-A have been developed ready to be tested with accredited providers and corporates.

Results from the research

There was a positive response to the research and the following returns were received:

- 16 x telephone interviews with corporate clients (10 with experience of offering PQ and 6 without)
- 15 x on-line surveys completed with assessors/facilitators offering the Practitioner Qualification (PQ)
- 37 x on-line surveys completed by corporate clients (14 with experience of using PQ and 23 without)
- 29 x on-line survey completed by past candidates of PQ
- 188 x on-line survey completed by past candidates of IC/APMP

There was interest in the development of qualifications at Levels C - A and corporates and training providers were generally very receptive to expanding into programme and portfolio management qualifications. This was also reinforced by the number of past candidates who also expressed an interest in taking additional qualifications.

One theme that came through the research was that as qualifications progressed through levels D-A the assessment should focus more on experience and the application of knowledge.

There was consistency in feedback from corporates regarding the need for there to be a balance between quality/robustness and commercial effectiveness in qualification delivery and assessment. They felt that in order to avoid duplication of assessment it would be beneficial if it could align to their internal processes and be work-based, e.g. accepting evidence from internal mapping of competencies and by using direct evidence gained in the workplace and/or by using cases study based assessment.

The qualification development process

In March a two-day workshop was held with a group of experts representing assessors, training providers and corporates to review the draft competency framework and to provide feedback on how it could form the basis of the following qualifications:

- Level C Project Practitioner – assessed by a portfolio of evidence, open book case study based examination and interview (it is an IPMA requirement for an examination at Level C)
- Level B Project Leadership - assessed by a portfolio of evidence and interview
- Level A Programme Strategy - assessed by a portfolio of evidence and interview
- Level A Portfolio Strategy - assessed by a portfolio of evidence and interview

Following the workshop draft qualifications have been developed which take into account the draft competency framework, the content of existing qualifications and the *APM Body of Knowledge, 6th edition*.

The technical advisory group have approved the draft qualifications and have confirmed that they should be made available for wider consultation.