



Program Management Professional (PgMP®) vs. Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®) Certifications – A comparative note

As project managers become senior project managers and program managers, the natural question towards knowledge enhancement and career progression is ‘what is next?’. Whereas we do not advocate acquisition of Certifications to be an end in itself, it certainly contributes to the individuals to be on the top of their profession and competency enhancement for the organizations.

In this context, we give an overview comparison of the two most popular program management certifications, Program Management Professional (PgMP®) from PMI, USA and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®), which is a Registered Trademark of AXELOS Limited.

We do not advocate that one Certification/ framework is superior to another. The purpose of this note is to bring out the similarities and differences in their approach and orientation. This content is based on our first hand experience of conducting multiple workshops for both these credentials for leading Corporate clients and in public events, and also interactions with senior managers and getting their feedbacks.

This overview comparison is presented in a tabular format for easier reading. Those who would like to get more in-depth information on acquiring these certifications are welcome to contact me in ramani@grt-consulting.com .

SL. No	Comparison factor	Program Management Professional (PgMP®)	Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®)
1	Propagated by whom?	PMI®, USA	AXELOS Limited (earlier by the OGC, UK)
2	Current Body of knowledge on which the Certification is based/ Primary references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Standard for Program Management v.3 (published in 2013) - Role Delineation Study for the Program Managers - Examination Content Outline (ECO), brought out by PMI 	Managing Successful Programmes –2011 edition (MSP® manual)

3	Certification experience prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four years / 6000 hours of Project Management experience AND - Four years / 6000 hours of Program Management experience (for those having graduate educational qualifications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None explicitly specified by AXELOS/ APMG - However, the difficulty level of Practitioner Certification exam would require prior hands-on Programme management experience.
4	Certification exam pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of the application form in depth by PMI panel of experts with reference to the candidate Program Management experience - Four hour online exam at Prometric Center – 170 questions . (Paper based testing option is also provided). –Different questions have varying complexities and marks allocated - Final result declaration by PMI 	<p>Three levels of examination are available.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundation examination: For delegates who are involved in the programme (not managing them). 75 questions (including 5 trial questions). One hour exam. Candidates need to score 35 or more marks to pass. Closed book objective type exam. 2 . Practitioner exam – Two and Half hours long objective type exam – 80 marks. Candidates need to score 40 or more marks to pass. Only MSP® Manual is allowed during this exam as a reference. - Aimed at practicing Programme managers 3. Advanced Practitioner exam – Three hours long exam. Long -hand writing for the scenario based questions. All useful reference material – as perceived by candidate will be allowed. Candidates need to score 38 or more out of 75 marks to pass.

5	Complexity of the examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quite complex – with long scenarios and intriguing multiple responses - The exam is quite different and more difficult as compared to PMP® examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practitioner exam is based on a single case study. Candidates need to read through the case study and give responses to questions within the allocated time of Two and half hours for the Practitioner examination.
6	Which is the target market for this Certification?	<p>Most of the USA based companies and practitioners are more conversant with PMI models. This certification is also popular in other countries, where PMI Certifications are well known.</p>	<p>Typically more popular in UK, rest of Europe, Australia, many of the Commonwealth countries and in Middle East.</p> <p>However, its popularity is picking up for US based clients.</p> <p>Many of the funding/ donor organizations, including few UN agencies follow PRINCE2®/ MSP® models for project/ program management.</p>
7	Which are the strong points of the Standards/ Certification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High level of qualifying experience- so an entry level barrier is maintained. - Complexities of exam and the Certification process - A higher fee – as PMI® possibly intended to position PgMP® couple of notches above the PMP® certification - More suited for programs involving fund mobilization , financial management and governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MSP® manual is more a substantive framework and offers a structured approach to managing programmes - More suited for Programmes involving transition management, benefits management, interactions with diverse stakeholders (as in public programmes), Donor programme management etc. - Examinations taken alongwith the course.

8	Which are the major distinctive coverage areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program Management performance domains- including Program Strategy alignment, Program Benefits Management, Program Stakeholder engagement, Program Governance and Program Lifecycle Management. - Multiple Knowledge Areas like Scope, Time, Resource, Financial Management, Integration, Risk, Quality, Communication and Procurement Management - Program Life cycle – including Program Definition, Program Benefits delivery and Program closure phases. - Many questions in the exam can relate to content outside the Standard for Program Management/ECO - so additional reading over and above these references is required, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of Seven Principles, Nine Governance Themes and Six Transformational flow processes - Governance Themes include Vision, Organisation, Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement, Benefits Realisation Management, Blueprint design and delivery, Planning and Control, Business Case, Risk / Issue Management and Quality Management for Programmes - Transformational flow processes include- Identifying a Programme, Defining a Programme, Managing the Tranches, Delivering the Capability, Realising the Benefits and Closing a Programme - All the questions relate to the contents of the MSP® Manual – as applicable to a real life case study scenario for the Practitioner examination.
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9	What are the Course / exam related costs? (Indicative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Program Management standard – about USD 80. Freely downloadable for current PMI members - PMI membership – USD 139 - PgMP exam Certification costs – USD 800 (for PMI members) - Three day training (fees additional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five day Foundation + Practitioner Course and the examinations + including original MSP® Manual + Approved courseware: Bundled course with extensive coverage of the topics alongwith the examinations
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For the calendar and fee details – pl. write to info@grt-consulting.com.

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