



Certification Regulations (IPMA Levels A, B, C and D)

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Administrative details

Author	Martha Muntwiler
Classification	VZPM, public
Date of issue	September 2011
Status	Version 6.3.0 Released
Electronic filing	H_SE03_RE_Zert_R630_EN

Change control

Issue	Status	Author	Date	Comments
Version 1.0	Draft	Karl Hutter		Working copy
Version 2.0	Released	Karl Hutter	15. 08.1996	
Version 3.1	Released	Karl Hutter	July 1998	
Version 4.00	Released	Hans Knöpfel	31.01.2001	
Version 4.01	Released	Hans Knöpfel	31.03.2001	New IPMA figure
Version 4.10	Released	Hans Knöpfel	30.06.2002	Corrections after internal audit
Version 5.1.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	15.01.2004	Changes re validity of certificates
Version 5.2.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	31.03.2004	Changes after internal audit
Version 5.3.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	30.05.2004	Changes re level D
Version 5.4.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	31.01.2005	Changes re admission to other rounds
Version 5.5.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	15.10.2005	Changes re new titles
Version 5.6.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	31.08.2006	New process for level C
Version 5.6.1	Released	D. Baumann	31.03.2007	Right of document inspection
Version 6.0.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	30.06.2008	Changes to NCB 4/ICRG 3
Version 6.1.0	Released	F. Dörig	01.02.2010	Changes in name
Version 6.2.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	17.09.2010	(Continuation of other levels)
Version 6.3.0	Released	M. Muntwiler	31.09.2011	Completion Kap. 9

Approval process

Released by	Name	Date	Signature
VZPM management	Dr. Markus A. Zoller	30 September 2011	Dr. Markus A. Zoller

Document maintenance

- The VZPM Executive Board is **responsible** for maintaining this document
- The document is revised and, if necessary, modified at the time of each **reaccreditation** at least.

This document is **released** by the Chairman.

1. General provisions

The VZPM (Association for the Certification of Persons in Management) is sponsored by the following institutions:

- Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement (SPM)
- Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Organisation und Management (SGO) and its subsidiaries:
 - Association Suisse d'Organisation et de Management ASO (ASO)
 - Associazione Svizzera Italiana d'Organizzazione e Management (ASIO)
- Société suisse de Management de Projet (SMP)

Based on

- accreditation by the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS)
- these Regulations [RE-Zert]
- the guidelines for certification [LF-Zert]
- European standard **ISO/IEC 17024** for the certification of individual persons
- the VZPM's Evaluation Structure [Swiss NCB]

the Association awards internationally recognized certification to project management personnel in Switzerland.

The VZPM certifies at levels A, B, C and D in accordance with the universal system of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). These levels are as follows:

Title	Capabilites	Certification Process			Validity	
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3		
Certified Projects Director (IPMA Level A)		A		Program-/ Portfolio-description	Projects director report	Interview 5 years
Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B)	Competence • Knowledge • experience	B	Application, curriculum vitae, self assessment, references, project list	Project description	Project report	
Certified Project Manager (IPMA Level C)		C		Written exam	Short project report	
Certified Project Management Associate (IPMA Level D)	Knowledge	D	Application, curriculum vitae, self assessment	Written exam		

Validity of certificates: From 2009 all certificates will have a validity of five years.

The IPMA certification system distinguishes between the following four roles, to which the same standards are applied:

- **Certified Projects Director (IPMA Level A®):** A **Certified Projects Director** is able to manage significant portfolios or programmes with the appropriate resources, methodologies and tools. Certification relates to this and not management of a single project. Considerable knowledge and experience are required to take on this responsibility.
- **Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B®):** A **Certified Senior Project Manager** is able to manage a complex project. This normally includes subprojects, i.e. the project manager leads the project with the assistance of subproject leaders and only to a lesser degree by directly managing the project team.
- **Certified Project Manager (IPMA Level C®):** A **Certified Project Manager** is able to manage a project of limited complexity. This means that he has the necessary project management knowledge and the relevant experience to successfully manage a project.
- **Certified Project Management Associate (IPMA Level D®):** A **Certified Project Management Associate** is able to apply project management knowledge when participating in a project. Comprehensive and in-depth specialist knowledge is required at project management level.

Project management complexity

A project may be a highly complex and challenging undertaking in terms of its content, but the management of the project may only be of limited complexity or the project may not really have been managed as a complex project. Project management complexity depends heavily on the context. Typical indicators of project management complexity are the order situation, the target system, stakeholders and how they are networked, the cultural and social environment, as well as the degree of innovation, public interest, the project structure and its dimensions, project organization, the management and team situation, the decision processes, resource volumes and availability, risk and opportunity aspects, and the results evaluation and project management requirements in general (the number of relevant competence elements in the project). All these factors are considered when estimating project management complexity.

In the certification process, the candidate must show proof of the requisite knowledge, skills and practical experience. Certificates must be renewed periodically (recertification).

The advantages of the certification programmes are:

- for project staff: the possibility of obtaining an internationally accredited certificate confirming their project management skills
- for providers of project management services: proof of their staff's professional competence

- for clients: greater assurance that the services provided by a project manager correspond to current professional standards.

Generally, at least one certification round is held annually for each level.

2. Certification organization and certification bodies

The Executive Board of the VZPM (Association for the Certification of Persons in Management) acts as the governing body and is responsible for certification.

- The manager of the certification office and the heads of the certification divisions are responsible for organizing and coordinating the certification process.
- The assessors and the VZPM office are responsible for carrying out the assessments.
- Assessors are appointed by management at the request of the head of the certification division. The IPMA level at which they will work is decided at the time of appointment. The original assessors may work at all IPMA levels.

3. Announcement and registration

Certification rounds are normally announced at least four months before they take place. The announcement includes the registration deadline, the registration office and the deadlines for each stage of the certification process.

Candidates apply for admission to the certification process in writing. The application form is available from the VZPM website at www.vzpm.ch.

4. Fees and costs to be borne by candidate

The fees for certification, recertification and additional services are set in the **Schedule of fees** by VZPM management in consultation with the Executive Board.

- The certification fees are published in the announcement.
- The fees for each certification stage are invoiced to the candidates.
- If a candidate withdraws before or during the certification process, the fees are refunded only in exceptional cases. The candidate must explain and document the reason for withdrawal to the office in writing.
- Any candidate who is not awarded a certificate, or who misses the deadlines without a valid excuse or is excluded from the certification process, loses all entitlement to a refund.
- The fees for candidates retaking certification are the same as those for certification.
- Candidates must pay their own expenses for travel, accommodation and meals during certification.

No additional fees are charged for the certificate (1 copy) and for registration/publication of accreditation. Additional certificates in other languages can be issued for a fee.

5. Areas of knowledge and experience

The technical, conduct-related and context-related PM competencies are described in the Swiss Competence Baseline (Swiss NCB). The Swiss NCB 4.1 Evaluation Structure is the National Competence Baseline for Switzerland. This is a direct translation of version 3.0 of the ICB and as such shares the same content, but has been adapted to the Swiss context in terms of language and relevance.

Candidates may be asked questions on all areas of the Evaluation Structure in the examination and interview.

6. Certification process

For their performance evaluation, each candidate is

- assigned two assessors for the Certified Projects Director (IPMA Level A[®]), Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B[®]) or Certified Project Manager (IPMA Level C[®]) certificates; generally at least one assessor must be from the same industry as the candidate;
- is assigned one assessor from the examination team for the Certified Project Management Associate (IPMA Level D[®]) certificate.

One of the assessors takes the role of lead assessor. The lead assessor must be certified at least to the same level at which he certifies candidates.

Assessors' required IPMA levels

Candidate level	Lead assessor level	Co-assessor level	Note
A	A	A or B	
B	B or A	B or A	at least 1 assessor with B certificate
C	B or C	B or C	
D	B or C	B or C	

No assessor may be linked to a candidate in any way that could influence the assessor's judgement (e.g. as supervisor or subordinate in a company or project organization or as the candidate's project management instructor). Candidates must immediately notify the head of the certification division through the VPZM office of any conflict of interest. They can also reject an assessor allocated to them provided they produce a written explanation.

Each stage of certification may be completed in German, French or English. The documents (guidelines and templates) are available in the respective languages. Certification at levels B and C is possible in Italian by arrangement (report and interview); however, the guidelines and templates are available only in German, French and English.

The assessors evaluate the candidate's performance and submit a decision proposal to the head of the certification unit after each certification stage.

Assessors may at any stage obtain information from the references provided or, with the candidate's permission, gather additional information about the project or inspect it on-site.

Only the candidate and VZPM staff may attend the interview. It is not open to the public.

Candidates not admitted to the next certification stage will be notified by the assessors, who will also provide a written explanation. The head of the certification division formally reviews the assessors' proposal and notifies the candidate of the decision, providing, as applicable, any reasons and information about the next stage.

The head of the certification division is responsible for any deadline postponements within the certification process. VZPM management may issue guidelines.

Candidates are notified of dates and deadlines for submissions, written examinations and interviews in good time. If a candidate fails without good reason to meet a deadline or to attend an examination or interview, or if he withdraws, he is deemed to have failed the certification.

The certification files, which include the examination results (IPMA Levels D and C), the summary project report (IPMA Level C), the project description and the project report (IPMA Level B), the programme or portfolio description and the project director's report (IPMA Level A), are stored at the VZPM office for 10 years.

6.1. Interruption of certification

Generally, there are no provisions for interruptions in the certification process. Any such breaks in the certification process must be authorized by the head of the certification division. The maximum duration of an interruption is **1 year**. If the certification process is interrupted for longer than this, it must be taken again, starting at stage 1.

7. Self-assessment

Self-assessment is used in the certification process so that the candidate can **assess** his knowledge and experience **himself** and knows the assessment basis used in the process. The self-assessment is based on the **Evaluation Structure (Swiss NCB)**. The competence areas and elements for project management knowledge and experience are listed in the Evaluation Structure. The registered taxonomies for the various IPMA levels are to be understood as typical profiles for project management staff and apply as average requirements for certification at these levels.

Knowledge and experience of each competence element are rated on a scale of 0 (no competence) to 10 (absolute maximum).

Mark	Knowledge	Experience
0	None	None
1-3	Basic	Minimal
4-6	Medium	Medium
7-9	Extensive	Considerable
10	Acknowledged expert	Acknowledged expert

8. Evaluation of candidate performance

The evaluation of the candidate's performance comprises the elements discussed in Sections 8.1-8.4 below.

8.1. Certified Projects Manager (IPMA Level A®)

Initial certification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for certification with proof that admission requirements are met (curriculum vitae and proof of experience), self-assessment	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Description of the portfolio and organizational unit or of the programme for the project director's report (description of portfolio or programme)	Two assessors
Stage 3a & 3b	Project director's report and interview	Two assessors
Recertification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for recertification with curriculum vitae, current self-assessment and programme/portfolio list	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Proof of practical experience and further training for the last valid period of the certificate to be renewed	Two assessors
Stage 3	Possibly review the situation, interview; possibly review complaints against the applicant	Two assessors

8.2. Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B®)

Initial certification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for certification with proof that admission requirements are met (curriculum vitae and proof of experience), self-assessment	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Description of complex project managed by the candidate for the project report (project description)	Two assessors
Stage 3a & 3b	Project report and interview	Two assessors
Recertification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for recertification with curriculum vitae, current self-assessment and project list	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Proof of practical experience and further training for the last valid period of the certificate to be renewed	Two assessors
Stage 3	Possibly review the situation, interview; possibly review complaints against the applicant	Two assessors

8.3. Certified Project Manager (IPMA Level C®)

Initial certification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for certification with proof that admission requirements are met (curriculum vitae and proof of experience), self-assessment	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Written examination	Examination team
Stage 3a & 3b	Summary project report on a project managed by the candidate and interview	Two assessors
Recertification	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for recertification with curriculum vitae, current self-assessment and project list	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Proof of practical experience and further training for the last valid period of the certificate to be renewed	Two assessors
Stage 3	Possibly review the situation, interview; possibly review complaints against the applicant	Two assessors

8.4. Certified Project Management Associate (IPMA Level D®)

Certification stage	Description	Evaluation by
Stage 1	Application for certification with self-assessment	Head of the certification division
Stage 2	Written examination	Examination team

9. Conditions for passing and repeating certification

9.1. Conditions for passing

Each certification stage must be passed.

9.2. Continuation of certification at a different level

After each certification stage the assessors may

- reject a candidate;
- recommend that the candidate continue certification at a lower level.

After each certification stage the candidates may

- abort the certification process;
- apply to continue certification at a lower level.

The following rules apply to continuation at another level:

Level	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3a	Stage 3b
A	Application for certification with self-assessment > Case A1	Programme/portfolio description > Case A2	Project director's report	Interview
B	Application for certification with self-assessment > Case B3	Project description > Case B4	Project report	Interview Case B5
C	Application for certification with self-assessment > Case C6	Written examination > Case C7	Summary project report	Interview > Case C8
D	Application for certification with self-assessment	Written examination		

Case	Description
A1	On application by the candidate, certification may continue at stage 2 of level B, provided that the candidate meets the requirements. Fees: no new charges for application.
A2	On application by the candidate, certification may continue at stage 2 of level B, provided that the candidate meets the requirements. The programme/portfolio description must be revised for level B (project description). It will be reassessed by two level B assessors. Fees: the fee for Stage 2 of level B is charged.
B3	On application by the candidate, certification may continue at stage 2 of level C, provided that the candidate meets the requirements. Fees: no new charges for application.
B4	On application by the candidate, certification may continue at stage 2 of level C, provided that the candidate meets the requirements. Fees: the fee for Stage 2 of level C is charged.
B5	In case of a definitive rejection the candidate may request to complete the written IPMA examination Level C. Should the candidate afterwards, successfully terminate the second step of the certification process IPMA Level C, the certificate IPMA Level C may consequently be granted. Fees: second certification step level C will be charged.
C6	On application by the candidate, certification may continue at stage 2 of level D, provided that the candidate meets the requirements. Fees: the fees for Level D are charged.
C7	Candidates are admitted to the written examination at level D upon application. Fees: the fees for Level D are charged.
C8	At their own request, candidates who are not awarded the IPMA Level C certificate will be awarded the IPMA Level D certificate provided that they achieved a score of at least 4 in the second stage. Fees: no additional fees are charged.

When a candidate continues the certification process at a different level, new assessors are assigned to him. The costs applicable as per the schedule of fees for continuing at a different level are to be borne by the candidate.

9.3. Retaking certification after failing

If a candidate at level A, B or C fails a certification stage, he can retake this stage within 12 months. Any certification stages successfully completed do not have to be retaken.

Costs: The candidate must bear the costs of all stages retaken.

10. Certificate and recertification

Certificate holders are entitled to use the title 'Certified Projects Director', 'Certified Senior Project Manager', 'Certified Project Manager' or 'Certified Project Management Associate' respectively for the period of the certificate's validity. Anyone using this IPMA/VZPM title without holding the certificate is liable to criminal prosecution.

Certificates are issued by the VZPM office. Certificate recipients are not informed of the evaluations and marks on which certification was based.

10.1. Inspection of files

Assessment documents can be inspected by appellants/candidates only in the case of an appeal, in the presence of the lead assessor and one member of VZPM management, usually the respective head of division. When the appeal is concluded, this right to inspect files lapses as well.

10.2. Validity of certificates

The Certified Projects Director (IPMA Level A[®]), Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B[®]) and Certified Project Manager (IPMA Level C[®]) certificates are valid for five years. Three months before expiry at the latest, these certificate holders are notified in writing by the VZPM office and informed of the recertification requirements. This is sent to the last address of which we have been notified.

The Certified Project Management Associate (IPMA Level D) certificate is valid for five years. Certified Project Management Associates wishing to renew their certificate have to repeat the entire process. Level D certificate holders are not contacted by the VZPM office.

11. Appeal procedure

Candidates can file an appeal with the appeals committee via VPZM management against a decision made by the certification office after each certification stage or against a withdrawal, cancellation or non-recertification within **30 days** after the decision is announced. The appeal must be in writing and include the appellant's motions and their reasons.

The appellant must pay a deposit fee as set out in the schedule of fees at the time of filing the appeal. If the appeal fee is not paid on time, the appeal is denied and not dealt with further.

If the appeal is denied by the appeals committee, the costs of the process (deposit fee) are charged to the appellant. The appellant has no financial claim of any kind against the certification office.

The appeals committee's decision is final.

File inspection periods

If the appellant demands to inspect the assessment documents in order to formulate the reason for appeal in greater detail, this must be granted within 30 days of receipt of the appeal fee. A maximum period of 30 days applies to both parties.

After the assessment documents have been inspected, the reason for appeal must be submitted within **30 days**.

Processing period of the appeals committee

Once the appeal fee has been received or once the reason for appeal has been submitted, the files are sent to the appeals committee for processing. The appeals committee will conclude the processing of the appeal within approx 45 days.

Time limit extensions

The time limits set by the VZPM can be extended in exceptional cases for special reasons. Requests for extensions must be submitted before the time limit expires and the exact reason for the request must be explained. This rule applies to all parties involved in an appeals process. The request for the extension of a time limit is reviewed and granted by the management of the VZPM office.

12. Complaints

Complaints against staff of the certification office and the assessors may be submitted in writing to the management of the certification office. Management will decide how to treat each case.

Complaints against certified persons relate to the performance of their obligations towards the VZPM. They may be made in writing to the certified person or to the management of the certification unit. Management will decide how to treat each case (see also applications for recertification).

The VZPM is in no way liable for the work or conduct of persons it has certified. All certification processes are carried out with due care.

13. Code of Ethics

A further significant element of professionalization lies in the appropriate conduct of project managers in relation to the task at hand. An example of such conduct is documented in the VZPM's Code of Ethics for the correct conduct of Certified Projects Directors, Certified Senior Project Managers, Certified Project Managers and Certified Project Management Associates. The object of promoting this professional conduct is to raise the quality of project management in Switzerland.

The Code of Ethics is published on the VZPM website.