

## **Certification Guidelines IPMA Level A**

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### OTHER VALID DOCUMENTS

You need the documents listed in the following table to prepare and settle the certification. For this reason, they constitute other valid documents. Together with these Guidelines, you have the information required for the certification at your disposal.

| No. | Document                                 | Designation   |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | ICB4                                     | Individual Competence Baseline                              |
| 2   | Certification Regulations                | Certification Regulations                                   |
| 3   | Fee schedule                             | Fee schedule  |
| 4   | Certification application IPMA Level A-C | Application for initial certification IPMA Level A, B and C |
| 5   | Executive Summary Report (template)      | Template for the Executive Summary Report                   |
| 6   | Report (template)                        | Template for report   |

### KEY ABBREVIATIONS

|      |   |
|------|---|
| IPMA | International Project Management Association                |
| PfM  | Portfolio management  |
| PgM  | Programme management  |
| PM   | Project management  |
| spm  | Swiss Project Management Association                        |
| ICB4 | Individual Competence Baseline                              |
| VZPM | Association for the Certification for Persons in Management |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the certification is ...

- to provide employees in the private or public sectors as well as self-employed entrepreneurs who have acquired practical as well as theoretical competencies in the fields of project management, programme management and portfolio management with documentary proof of these competencies.
- to help businesses and the public sector recruit successful, trustworthy individuals to manage projects, programmes and portfolios.

The present document explains the process of acquiring IPMA Level A certification, including the applicable context as well as the requirements. The below-listed certificates may be awarded:

- Certified Project Director (IPMA Level A)
- Certified Programme Director (IPMA Level A)
- Certified Portfolio Director (IPMA Level A)

In addition to the present document, you also require the following documents in order to obtain a full picture as well as the necessary understanding of the certification:

- Individual Competence Baseline (ICB4)
- Certification Regulations IPMA Level A, B, C and D

All of the documents you require for the certification may be downloaded free of charge from the VZPM website ([www.vzpm.ch](http://www.vzpm.ch)) or from the spm bookshop ([shop.spm.ch](http://shop.spm.ch)). The provided templates must be used.

The certification process requires you to demonstrate that you have the necessary competencies. Your certificate will be renewed at regular intervals within the context of a re-certification, insofar as you are able to demonstrate sufficient practical experience and further training in the fields of project management, programme management and portfolio management during the period since the initial certification or the last re-certification.

## 2. ADMISSION TO THE CERTIFICATION

### 2.1. ROLE DESCRIPTION AND ADMISSION CRITERIA

Holders of an IPMA Level A certificate act at a strategic level in a very complex environment and are responsible for the project, programme or portfolio within the organisation.

Together with the certification application, you demonstrate that you fulfil the respective admission criteria for the respective domains:

- Over the past 12 years, at least 5 years' experience as a project manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex projects, of which at least 3 years at a strategic level.
- Over the past 12 years, at least 5 years' experience as a programme manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex programmes at a strategic level or at least 4 years' experience as a programme manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex programmes and at least 3 years' experience as a project manager in a responsible leadership function managing very complex projects at a strategic level.
- Over the past 12 years, at least 5 years' experience as a portfolio manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex portfolios at a strategic level or at least 4 years' experience as a portfolio manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex portfolios and at least 3 years' experience as a project or programme manager in a responsible leadership function managing very complex projects or programmes at a strategic level.

## 2.2. AWARDING OF THE CERTIFICATE

The IPMA Level A certificate shall be awarded to you if you are able to demonstrate at least 80% of the competencies in a very complex environment and wholly or partially at a strategic level. This corresponds to 23 competencies in the domain of 'project management' and 24 competencies in the domains of 'programme management' and 'portfolio management'. An individual competence is deemed to have been demonstrated if 50% of the corresponding competence indicators are demonstrated. The competencies are demonstrated throughout the entire certification process: Report and interview. You must successfully pass each individual certification stage. The required assessment scores are set out in the certification stages described below in these guidelines.

## 3. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

### 3.1. OVERVIEW OF THE CERTIFICATION STAGES

As a rule, the certification process takes seven to nine months to complete. The following table shows the individual certification stages together with their approximate durations (*see internet for specific deadlines*):

| Stage    | Activity   | Execution by | Approximate duration  |
|----------|--|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Application to obtain the certificate</b>   |              |                       |
|          | Submit application including professional career, project, programme and/or portfolio list, references and self-assessment | Candidate    | Registration deadline |
|          | Check application and announce admission ruling, if positive then demand Executive Summary Report                          | VZPM         | 2-3 weeks             |
|          | Prepare and submit Executive Summary Report  | Candidate    | 1 month               |
|          | Assess Executive Summary Report and announce definitive admission to the certification                                     | VZPM         | 3-4 weeks             |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Report</b>  |              |                       |
|          | Prepare and submit report  | Candidate    | 6-8 weeks             |
|          | Assess report and announce result of assessment  | VZPM         | 1 month               |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Interview</b>   |              |                       |
|          | Complete interview   | Candidate    | Interview date        |
|          | Conduct definitive assessment of the certification and announced result  | VZPM         | 2-3 weeks             |

Table 1: Certification stages

Depending upon the particular certification stage, our decision will be reported to you in writing. The decision after the first two certification stages may be an admission or a rejection for the next certification stage. After the first two certification stages, conditions may be formulated, if necessary. Following the interview, the decision on the awarding of the certificate will be communicated to you.

The certification process must be completed within 18 months. The relevant date is the day on which you were admitted for certification.

## 3.2. APPLICATION TO OBTAIN THE CERTIFICATE

It is important to us to ensure that you do not have to complete any unnecessary work and are not obliged to bear any unnecessary costs. For this reason, the application stage involves two steps:

- 1) Submission of the certification application
- 2) Submission of the Executive Summary Report

### 3.2.1. SUBMISSION OF THE CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

By submitting the application, you officially register for the certification process. We use the information set out in the [certification application](#) to check the admission criteria. You submit the following documents:

- comprehensively completed application for initial certification, including your self-assessment
- separate file with any required supporting documents, including a copy of your ID card or passport

The necessary information about completing and submitting the certification application is set out in the certification application, in particular the tabular sheet 'Tips'.

Enclose only the requested [supporting documents](#) as well as a copy of your ID card or passport with the certification application. Describe your professional career as well as your training and further training comprehensively in the tabular sheets provided. Do not send us a CV that you have prepared yourself.

The self-assessment that you complete yourself will be referenced to judge your suitability for the certification, but will not flow into the assessment of your competencies.

Your consent gives us inter alia the right to contact the reference individuals listed in the application, without first being required to inform you. We shall make use of this right by taking random samples.

If you fulfil the admission criteria to this point, you will be asked to submit the Executive Summary Report.

### 3.2.2. SUBMISSION OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

During the course of the certification process you need to demonstrate your competencies by citing specific situations from your reference project (project, programme or portfolio). This is only possible, however, if the reference project as well as your role in this meets the criteria for IPMA Level A certification. On the basis of the Executive Summary Report, an assessor will check the suitability of the project you have proposed.

In the Executive Summary Report, you describe the reference project proposed for the certification. In the 'project management' domain you must also describe two further important projects from the list of the certification application. The goal is to describe the challenges of the respective starting situations as well as their complexity drivers in a verifiable manner. Please note that your competencies in the field of project, programme or portfolio management will be assessed in the certification. This consequently means that in the Executive Summary Report you need to address the challenges from the perspective of the management of your project, and not the complexity of the solutions that are to be realised. The manner in which you handle the relevant complexity is an aspect of the report and interview. The Executive Summary Report will be referenced by the assessors when preparing the interview.

Detailed information about the required content as well as the formal criteria of the Executive Summary Report are set out in the corresponding template, while relevant information about the indicators and the criteria used to assess the complexity of your project are set out in the certification application.

### 3.2.3. CRITERIA FOR THE REFERENCE PROJECT, PROGRAMME AND PORTFOLIO

In the following we describe the criteria imposed upon your reference project, programme or portfolio. You can check this on the basis of the certification application by completing the relevant tables for the reference project, the reference programme or the reference portfolio. The result will be shown to you in these. These criteria are essentially also applicable to proof of the experience of the management of the further projects, programmes and/or portfolios in accordance with the required level. To check the experience demonstrated by you, please complete the certification application. The result will be set out in the tabular sheet 'Summary' (sum).

You will have demonstrated sufficient experience in a calendar month if you have worked on at least 75 hours of management tasks in projects, programmes or portfolios that correspond to IPMA Level A. In respect of the 5 or 4 years of experience of very complex projects, programmes or portfolios demanded by the respective admission criteria, these 75 hours must be demonstrated within the corresponding domains. The further 3 years of demonstrable experience may be demonstrated in the form of interdisciplinary domains. If you submit a certification application in programme or portfolio management, you may also demonstrate experience of the management of the other two domains for these 3 years.

When meeting the requirement to demonstrate 75 monthly hours, you may undergo this certification if you manage projects, programmes and/or portfolios amounting to at least 50% of a full workload. With this rule, we also take account of the needs of persons who work part-time or who perform other tasks alongside their principal responsibilities.

#### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In the complexity assessment, your reference project should reach a figure of at least 32, and should meet the following minimum criteria:

- The project has been completed. If you are unable to present a completed project as your reference project, you may submit a request to us if you have headed an uncompleted project for at least two years that meets the required criteria by the date of the certification application. We need the following information from you: completed table from the application, project schedule and project's organisation chart.
- The project is of strategic importance for the project client.
- You exercised your role in the project for at least 18 months. A month will be credited if you can provide proof of at least 75 hours during this period.
- The final month in which you exercised your role in the project was a maximum of 4 years ago, calculated from the date of the application.

The three criteria set out below should not be seen as absolute, but may instead offset each other:

- Total of 3,000 man days for which you were responsible in your role, without including your own workload.
- Your own workload of 2,400 hours in the role of project manager
- Direct and indirect management of 30 persons

#### PROGRAMME AND PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

In the complexity assessment, your reference programme or portfolio should reach a figure of at least 32, and should meet the following minimum criteria:

- You exercised your role in the programme or portfolio for at least 24 months. A month will be credited if you can provide proof of at least 75 hours during this period.
- The final month in which you exercised your role in the programme or portfolio was a maximum of 4 years ago, calculated from the date of the application.

The criteria set out below should not be seen as absolute, but may instead offset each other:

- Annual investment volume of CHF 20 million for which you were responsible in your role.
- Your own workload of 2,400 hours in the role of programme or portfolio manager
- 7 direct as well as 150 indirectly managed persons
- 10 complex projects in the programme or portfolio
- 3 different project types in the programme or portfolio

#### **3.2.4. COMPLETION OF THE CERTIFICATION STAGE**

The certification application submitted by you will be checked by us to ensure that it is complete, meets the admission criteria and the complexity criteria of your reference project, programme or portfolio. If you successfully complete this certification stage, then you will be admitted to the second certification stage, the report. You will then receive written confirmation of the admission from us, and will be asked to submit your report by a specific date. The admission may be issued with or without conditions. You must fulfil any possible condition during the second certification stage, the report.

If you are not admitted to the next certification stage, we shall inform you about this in writing, together with grounds as well as information about legal remedies. Should it transpire that you have described the challenges of your reference project, programme or portfolio inadequately, or that another of your projects, programmes or portfolios is more suitable for the certification, then you will be given the opportunity to submit a second version of the Executive Summary Report.

### **3.3. REPORT**

In the report you must describe at least 23 competencies of your choice. There are no obligatory competencies, and also no definition of how many competencies you need to address from a specific area of competence - perspective, people and practice. There is also no definition of how many competence indicators you need to address. We recommend, however, that you describe the competencies in as much detail as possible, using the space provided, in accordance with the rules governing the manner in which the competencies are to be documented (see *Chapter 2.2 Awarding of the certificate*).

Detailed information about the required content as well as the formal report specifications are set out in the corresponding templates. You must describe the competencies on the basis of specific situations from your reference project, programme or portfolio. Further information is provided in the following section of these guidelines that describe the STAR methodology (see *STAR methodology in Chapter 3.4 Interview*).

#### **COMPLETION OF THE CERTIFICATION STAGE**

Following the evaluation, the assessors either issue the recommendation "Admission to the interview without conditions", "Admission to the interview with conditions" or "No admission to the interview". You must fulfil any possible condition during the third certification stage, the interview. The decision shall be taken by the responsible individual of the VZPM.

You have successfully completed this certification stage if at least 60% of the competencies selected by you are rated satisfactory by the two assessors – i.e. in the event of 23 competencies, if 14 are rated satisfactory.

If your report is rated unsatisfactory by the assessors, we shall inform you about this in writing, together with grounds as well as information about legal remedies. You then have the opportunity to prepare and submit a second version of your report. This version will be evaluated by the same assessors as the first.

### 3.4. INTERVIEW

Once it has been announced that you have been admitted to the interview, the assessors will arrange an interview appointment with you. The interview takes at most 2 hours, and leads to the definitive assessment of your competencies. The assessors will conduct an expert discussion with you, based on your results to date arising out of the certification process as well as on the STAR methodology (see below).

As with the report, the basis for the interview is your reference project, programme or portfolio. The situation described by you should derive from your reference project, programme or portfolio. If this shows insufficient substance or complexity in a competence, then you have the opportunity to cite situations from the two other projects, programmes or portfolios described in the Executive Summary Report.

In the interview about 24 competence indicators are addressed, of which at least 6 in each of the 3 competence areas 'perspective', 'people' and 'practices'. There are 4 obligatory competencies, and each of these must be addressed at least once in the report or interview. These are:

| <b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>                   | Chapter in ICB4 |
|---|-----------------|
| ▪ 2.05 Leadership                           | 4.4.5           |
| ▪ 3.02 Requirements and objectives          | 4.5.2           |
| ▪ 3.10 Plan and control                     | 4.5.10          |
| ▪ 3.12 Stakeholders                         | 4.5.12          |
| <br>  |                 |
| <b>PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT</b>                 |                 |
| ▪ 2.05 Leadership                           | 5.4.5           |
| ▪ 3.02 Benefits and objectives              | 5.5.2           |
| ▪ 3.10 Plan and control                     | 5.5.10          |
| ▪ 3.12 Stakeholders                         | 5.5.12          |
| <br>  |                 |
| <b>PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT</b>                 |                 |
| ▪ 1.01 Strategy                             | 6.3.1           |
| ▪ 1.02 Governance, structures and processes | 6.3.2           |
| ▪ 2.05 Leadership                           | 6.4.5           |
| ▪ 3.12 Stakeholders                         | 6.5.12          |

### STAR METHODOLOGY

Knowledge about your earlier response to a specific situation enables us to estimate your future behaviour in a later, comparable situation with a high degree of probability. For this purpose, it is necessary for us to have an understanding of the context of your actions at the time, as well as the results. Each example of your past behaviour or your past achievements therefore need to provide information about the three aspects set out below:

- situation as the starting point for your activities
- approach, i.e. your specific actions or measures
- results or changes achieved by this approach

Only information that contains these three elements constitute genuine and complete examples of behaviour:

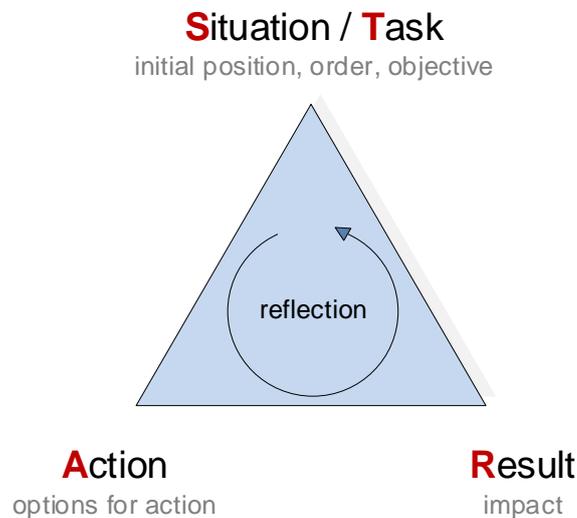


Fig. 1: Behavioural triangle

The questions are based on the specification criteria pursuant to ICB4. This methodology can be applied to all competencies of the three competence areas of perspective, people and practice.

#### COMPLETION OF THE CERTIFICATION STAGE

The assessors evaluate the performances you introduce into the interview, and issue the recommendation "Interview successfully passed" or "Interview not successfully passed". The decision shall be taken by the responsible individual of the VZPM.

You have successfully passed the interview if the assessors have rated at least 60% of the addressed competence indicators as satisfactory, i.e. 15 out of the 24 addressed competence indicators.

If you have not successfully passed the interview, we shall inform you about this in writing, together with grounds as well as information about legal remedies. You then have the opportunity to repeat the interview at most once. If you repeat the interview, we shall assign two new assessors to you.

### 3.5. COMPLETION OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

You can demonstrate the competence indicators at each certification stage. The evaluation of the competence indicators at the individual certification stages flow into the overall evaluation. In this conjunction it is important to note that the interview is weighted more heavily than the report. This means that an evaluation of a competence indicator in the interview overrides the evaluation arising out of the report.

You will be awarded the certificate if you ...

- have demonstrated at least 80% of the competencies, with at least 50% of the competence indicators in each case, throughout the entire certification process,
- have individually passed the two certification stages 'report' and 'interview', and
- have demonstrated at least 3 competencies in the area 'perspective', 6 of which from the area 'people' as well as 9 of which from the area 'practice'.

If these criteria have been comprehensively fulfilled, the assessors request the issue of the certificate. The decision shall be taken by the responsible individual of the VZPM.

If you have successfully completed the certification process and have paid all certification fees, you will be awarded the certificate. The certification process is completed by the handing over of the certificate.

If you have not successfully passed the certification process, we shall inform you about this in writing, together with grounds as well as information about legal remedies. You then have the opportunity to repeat the interview at most once. If you repeat the interview, we shall assign two new assessors to you.

If you are awarded the certificate, this is internationally recognised and is valid for five years. This will entitle you to use the acquired title throughout the period of validity of the certificate:

- Certified Project Director (IPMA Level A)
- Certified Programme Director (IPMA Level A)
- Certified Portfolio Director (IPMA Level A)

### **3.6. CHANGE OF DOMAIN OR CERTIFICATION LEVEL**

Changes of domain and/or certification level are an option, especially during the application phase and after negative decisions. The most likely situations are described below.

#### **3.6.1. IN THE APPLICATION PHASE PRIOR TO SUBMISSION OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

As a result of the examination of the certification application - before the submission of the Executive Summary Report - it may turn out that a change of domain and/or certification level is sensible. The following situations and the resulting consequences are conceivable.

##### **CHANGE OF DOMAIN WITHIN THE IPMA LEVEL A**

In this case, you would have to adjust the certificate selection, the application date and, if necessary, your experience in project, program and/or portfolio management in the certification application and resubmit the certification application. You will not incur any additional costs.

##### **CHANGE TO IPMA LEVEL B WITHOUT CHANGING DOMAIN**

In this case, you would have to adjust the certificate selection and the application date in the certification application and resubmit the certification application. You will not incur any additional costs.

##### **CHANGE TO IPMA LEVEL B WITH CHANGING DOMAIN**

In this case, you would have to adjust the certificate selection, the application date and, if necessary, your experience in project, program and/or portfolio management in the certification application and resubmit the certification application. You will not incur any additional costs.

#### **3.6.2. AFTER NEGATIVE DECISION**

After receiving a negative decision, you will have the option to continue your certification at IPMA Level B. In these phases of the certification process, a domain change makes little sense.

##### **AFTER UNPROVEN COMPLEXITY IN THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

If you were not able to demonstrate the complexity of your reference project, programme or portfolio for IPMA Level A, you can continue your certification at IPMA Level B. To do this, you would have to adjust the certificate selection and the application date in the certification application and resubmit the certification application. You would also have to resubmit the Executive Summary Report with an adjusted selection of the certification level and a new date. You will not incur any additional costs.

#### **AFTER INSUFFICIENTLY EVALUATED REPORT**

If your report has been insufficiently evaluated, you can continue your certification at IPMA Level B. To do this, you would have to adjust the certificate selection and the application date in the certification application and resubmit it. You would also have to resubmit the Executive Summary Report with an adjusted selection of the certification level and a new date. You would also have to pass the IPMA Level B written exam and submit your revised report after passing the exam.

You will have to pay for the IPMA Level B exam and the report according to the document 'Fee schedule'. For the report we invoice you the reduced price analogous to the submission of version 2.

#### **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

If you were unable to successfully complete your IPMA Level A certification process, you can continue your certification at IPMA Level B. To do this, you would have to adjust the certificate selection and the application date in the certification application and resubmit it. You would also have to resubmit the Executive Summary Report with a modified selection of the certification level and a new date. You would also have to pass the IPMA Level B written exam and resubmit your report with an adjusted level selection and an updated date. A revision of the report is not necessary. The interview will be repeated at the end.

You will have to pay for the exam and the interview IPMA Level B according to the document 'Fee schedule'.

### ADMINISTRATIVE METHODOLOGY

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
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### CHECKS AND APPROVALS

| Function | Date       | Role              | Surname             | Remarks |
|----------|------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------|
| checked  | 23/10/2018 | Q Head            | Dr Laurens de Bever |         |
| approved | 16/05/2019 | Managing Director | Jean-Pierre Widmann |         |

### CHANGE HISTORY

| Date       | Version | Author              | Changes performed   |
|------------|---------|---------------------|---|
| 16/05/2019 | 7.5     | Jean-Pierre Widmann | Adjustments due to online registration  |
| 19/12/2018 | 7.4     | Jean-Pierre Widmann | Integration of domain and/or certification level changes and adaptation of interview conditions |
| 07/06/2018 | 7.2     | Jean-Pierre Widmann | Behavioural triangle, completion  |
| 10/08/2017 | 7.1     | Jean-Pierre Widmann | Number of hours to be worked in the reference plan  |
| 16/07/2017 | 7.0     | Jean-Pierre Widmann | Bringing into line with ICR4 and ICB4   |