IPMA USA

international project management association

ipma-usa.org

Level B

Candidate Guidance



For Inquiries

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CANDIDATE GUIDANCE

IPMA LEVEL B:
CERTIFIED SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Individuals with a minimum of five years' experience as a project, program or portfolio manager of which at least three years were in a responsible leadership function in managing complex projects.

The experience must have been obtained within the last eight years, however the evidence timescale may be extended by four years with justification.

For project management you will be assessed on 28 competences via an oral exam, a report and an interview. To pass, you must evidence a minimum of 23 out of 28 competence elements.

For program and portfolio management you will be assessed on 29 competences via an oral exam, a report and an interview. To pass, you must evidence a minimum of 24 out of 29 competence elements.

The guide includes guidance for all elements in the Level B assessment including the application, the oral exam, the report and the interview. Candidates must understand the the syllabus and outcomes to be successful in the assessment

LEVEL DEFINITION:

Knowledge of the IPMA competence elements related to project management.

All syllabuses developed for IPMA qualifications are based on the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline, version 4.0 (ICB4).

This means that candidates are examined on the 28 project competence elements described in ICB 4, Section 4.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

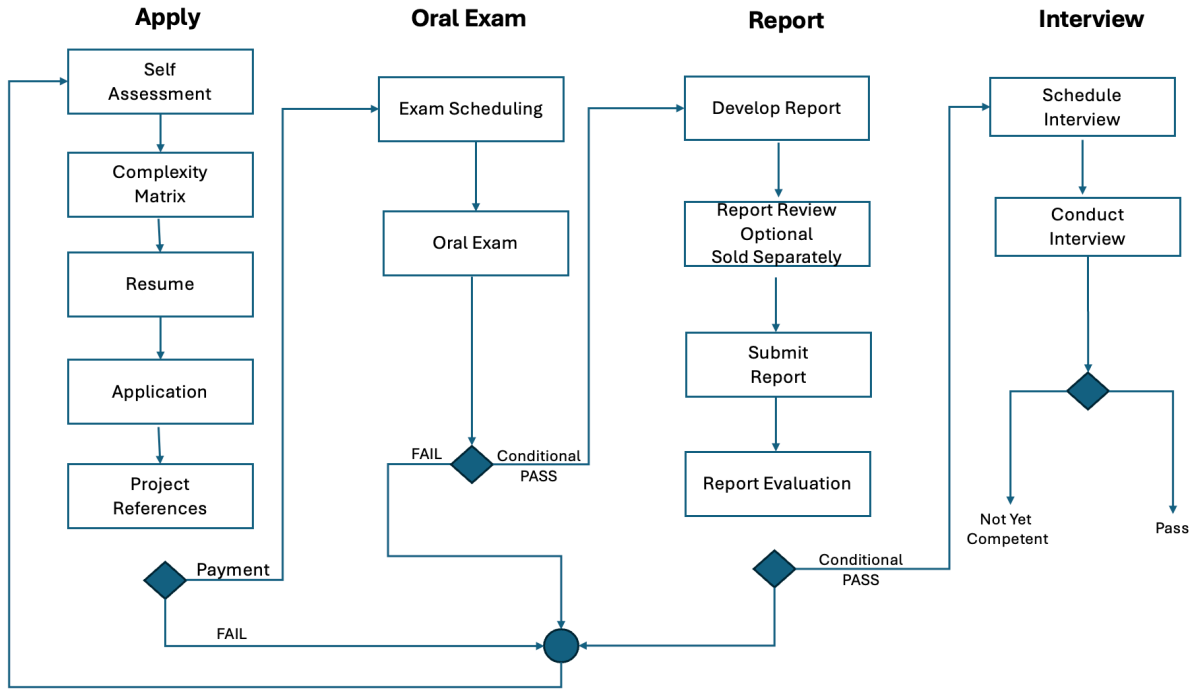
The certification is a four-stage process:



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LEVEL B ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The following process flow depicts the process at a high level.



The Level B Exam consists of four stages:

1. **Apply.** The candidate completes the initial documentation that helps the assessors understand if the candidate is qualified and ready to apply for the Level C certification.

2. **Oral Exam.** The candidate takes an oral exam to demonstrate basic knowledge of the competence elements.

3. **Report.** The candidate completes a report to demonstrate their expertise in the pre-selected competence elements.

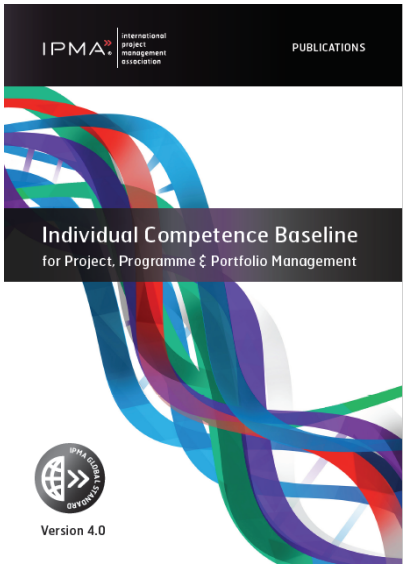
4. **Interview.** The candidate takes an interview with 1-2 assessors to provide their experience with pre-selected competence elements.

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IPMA COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

IPMA certifications are all based on the same competence framework but with increasing levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities assessed at each level from Level D to Level A

IPMA INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE VERSION 4



IPMA certifications are all based on the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (ICB 4), and candidates need to have a copy of the baseline to support the training and for revision.

Candidates can download the ICB 4 from our E-Learning or download free of charge from the IPMA site: https://www.ipma.world/

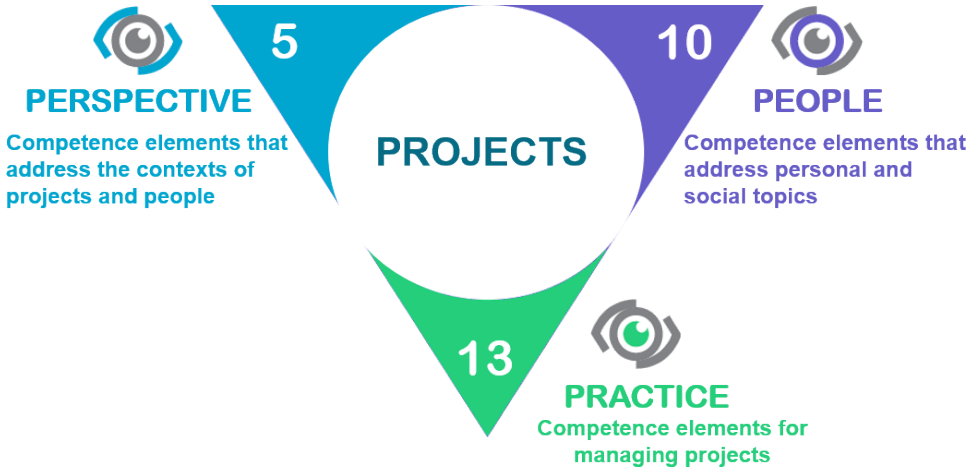
The IPMA Level C qualification is based on the Project Management Section of ICB 4.

ICB 4 COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

IPMA group the competence elements in the framework into 3 sections:

- Perspective competences, People competences and Practice competences.

The IPMA “Eye of Competence” shown below is taken from ICB4:



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ICB 4 COMPETENCE ELEMENTS

PERSPECTIVE (4.3)	PEOPLE (4.4)	PRACTICE (4.5)
STRATEGY (4.3.1)	SELF-REFLECTION AND SELF-MANAGEMENT (4.4.1)	PROJECT DESIGN (4.5.1)
GOVERNANCE, STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES (4.3.2)	PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND RELIABILITY (4.4.2)	REQUIREMENTS AND OBJECTIVES (4.5.2)
COMPLIANCE, STANDARDS AND REGULATION (4.3.3)	PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (4.4.3)	SCOPE (4.5.3)
POWER AND INTEREST (4.3.4)	RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT (4.4.4)	TIME (4.5.4)
CULTURE AND VALUES (4.3.5)	LEADERSHIP (4.4.5)	ORGANISATION AND INFORMATION (4.5.5)
	TEAMWORK (4.4.6)	QUALITY (4.5.6)
	CONFLICT AND CRISIS (4.4.7)	FINANCE (4.5.7)
	RESOURCEFULNESS (4.4.8)	RESOURCES (4.5.8)
	NEGOTIATION (4.4.9)	PROCUREMENT (4.5.9)
	RESULTS ORIENTATION (4.4.10)	PLAN AND CONTROL (4.5.10)
		RISK AND OPPORTUNITY (4.5.11)
		STAKEHOLDERS (4.5.12)
		CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION (4.5.13)



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IPMA LEVEL B SYLLABUS

LEVEL B APPLICATION

The application process is designed to help the candidate present their knowledge, skills and experience in a consolidated format for the initial review.

The application consists of the following documents:

1. **Self-Assessment.**

   The self-assessment is designed to help assessors understand the candidates experience and current competency level, as based on a self assessment.

2. **Executive Summary Report**

   Each candidate shall submit a report of a maximum 15 pages which shall include:

   - Information on their current organization to include company details, industry and project types, principle objectives of the organization and the business unit in which the candidate is employed.
   - A one-page summary for each of the projects which are being used to support the application.
   - The role of the candidate in their organization to include an organizational structure chart, which identifies their position, their area of responsibility, an overview of the project management procedures they use and their relationship with all stakeholders.
   - A description of how they have led each project and how they meet the complexity criteria for level B.

3. **Complexity Matrix.**

   This tool is designed to better understand the depth and breadth of complexity which will help ensure that the candidate is being assessed at the right level.

4. **Resume/CV.**

   Please provide your up-to-date and accurate resume / CV. Projects which are referenced in the Executive summary report should also be referenced in the CV.

5. **Application Form.**

   Please complete the Application Form.

6. **Personal References.**

   Please identify 1-2 individuals that can be used as personal references.

Once these items are accepted by IPMA, the candidate will need pay for the certification prior to advancing. Please refer to your accredited training organization or APMG for payment.

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LEVEL B ORAL EXAM

All level B candidates will take the Oral Exam, which consists of 90-minute short-answer questions.

LEVEL B EXAM COMPETENCES	
CE	**COMPETENCE ELEMENT NAME**
4.3.1	**Strategy**
4.3.2	**Governance, structures and processes**
4.3.3	**Compliance, standards and regulation**
4.5.5	**Organisation and information**
4.5.7	**Finance**
4.5.8	**Resources**
4.5.13	**Change and transformation**

Candidates with English as a second language qualify for 25% additional exam time, that is: 15 minutes for a 60-minute / 1-hour exam or 30 minutes for a 120-minute / 2-hour exam. Contact APMG or your Accredited training Organisation (ATO) to make arrangements for additional time.

We will require a copy of your passport to request this additional time.

Please contact your Accredited Training Organization or APMG if you have any problems or need to make special arrangements.

ORAL EXAM

A 90-minute essay-style exam with a passing score of 60%

KEY FACTS

- The syllabus covers 7 competence elements, 7 compulsory questions –
- Each question is worth five points.

EXAM FORMAT AND GRADING

- All IPMA Level B exams are managed by APMG.
- All IPMA exams are scored by IPMA-USA Accredited Assessors managed by APMG.
- Results are provided from APMG.
- APMG or your Accredited Training Organization releases results to candidates
- Candidates who do not meet the assessment criteria at this point will receive feedback on those questions that did not achieve a passing grade.

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EXAM TECHNIQUE

- Each question addresses one syllabus topic.
- Candidates must read the short question and provide a response.
- The exam assesses a candidate's level of comprehension of a topic and contains command verbs such as explain and describe, more detail provided later in the section.

TIMING

Time management in the oral exam is very important as the candidate must provide answers to 12 questions in 1.5 hours (90 minutes).

READING THE QUESTION

It is VERY important to hear the oral exam questions carefully and to build your answer on what is actually being asked.

COMMON ISSUES:

- Often candidates confuse 'how' with 'why' and do not give an appropriate response.
    - **'Why'** refers to the cause of something, for example "Explain why a motivated project team performs effectively." In this example an appropriate response would focus on reasons such as to achieve key performance indicators or to deliver a quality service.
    - **'How'** refers to what makes something happen. Consider the question "Explain how a motivated project team performs effectively." In this instance, an appropriate response would focus on topics such as performing effectively through proactive collaborative working or by reducing the number of quality errors.
- When reading a question, it is important for candidates to understand its components. Candidates must recognize the command verb and what it means (detailed later).
- A candidate must also recognize the broad topic area or context, and the specific aspect of a question.
    - Consider the question "Describe how motivation is used to improve the performance of a project team." In this question the verb is 'describe', the broad topic area or context is 'improve the performance of a project team', with the specific aspect being 'motivation'. A response which focuses on motivation as a general concept would receive very few marks, but a response which places the use of motivation in the context of improving the performance of a project team has a greater chance of being awarded high marks.
- The style of response influences the number of marks which are awarded. If the response is not clear and/or disjointed, it will be difficult for an assessor to be confident that candidates have demonstrated secure knowledge.
- Candidates must present a response through a logical and easy to understand structure which focuses on the exact requirement of the question. An assessor must be able to understand what it is they are saying so that the assessor can determine if the candidate has provided a relevant response.

INDICATIVE CONTENT

Each question has indicative content which assessors use to mark candidates' scripts.

Level B indicative content often starts with:

- Identify the 'how' in relation to the question (1 point)

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- Substantive points developed by the candidate relating to their initial statement (4 points)

These are not model answers but marking guidance. It is useful to know what assessors are looking for when marking the exams.

EXAM TIPS

- This is a 1 ½ hour (90 minute) exam.
- It is recommended candidates spend two minutes to read a question and eight minutes to answer the question.
- Leave sufficient time at the end of an exam to review each answer to see if there is any additional information that could be provided in the time.

COMMAND WORDS

- Candidates must become familiar with the definition of the command words used in the IPMA Level B assessments.
- A command verb itself is simply an instruction to do something.

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COMMAND WORDS

VERB	DEFINITION
Discuss	Write about a topic taking into account different concepts or ideas
Explain	Give an account of the purpose(s) or reason(s)
Describe	Give an account, including all the relevant characteristics, qualities and events

FINAL POINT – READ THE QUESTION

So many times, people answer the question they thought they had been asked rather than the actual exam question.

- Read the question at least twice and analyze its content.
- The questions should be clear, and it should be obvious what is required.
- Remember the difference between a why question and a how question.

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LEVEL B REPORT

The report is expected to cover all of the elements list below.

LEVEL B REPORT COMPETENCES	
CE	**COMPETENCE ELEMENT NAME**
4.4.1	**Self-reflection and self-management**
4.4.4	**Relationships and engagement**
4.4.5	**Leadership**
4.4.6	**Teamwork**
4.4.7	**Conflict and crisis**
4.4.8	**Resourcefulness**
4.4.9	**Negotiation**
4.4.10	**Results orientation**
4.5.1	**Project Design**
4.5.2	**Requirements and objectives**
4.5.3	**Scope**
4.5.4	**Time**
4.5.6	**Quality**
4.5.9	**Procurement**
4.5.10	**Plan and control**
4.5.11	**Risk and opportunity**
4.5.12	**Stakeholders**

Overview

The Level B Report is an opportunity for the candidate to describe your approach to managing projects. The report uses a Reference Project as the main focus to describe competences in a real world scenario.

A candidate will submit a 25-page report (font size 11) based on projects which have been referred to in the executive summary report. A maximum of 15 additional pages may be used in the form of supportive appendices. Please use the report template provided. The report will focus on the application of their leadership of others, using the competence elements for the level being assessed. The level of complexity described in this report must correspond to the level applied for. The report must contain, as a minimum, the following information;

- Background: a detailed description of the project, the candidate's role in context, key stakeholders and objectives, project organisation and the associated resources for which the candidate is responsible (maximum three sides of letter size paper).

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- Description of the management and leadership challenges: this should include how these were addressed, results achieved and a reflection on these results and lessons learned (maximum three sides of letter size paper).
- Competence assessment: one side of letter size paper per competence element explaining how the candidate has demonstrated the assessment criteria for level B. The report should include project(s) where their role has been sufficiently involved to enable them to cover all the CEs that are assessed in the report and interview. Candidates can not refer to project(s) in the interview that are not included in the report. The report will assess the specific CEs that are detailed in the relevant specification.
- Successful reports tend to have the following features:
  - The report must be written in English.
  - .5-1 page of text per competence element.
  - Each CE must address at least 3 key competence indicators.
  - Use illustrations as needed, however the report must include enough written content as to fully describe

LEVEL B INTERVIEW

The last stage of the process is the interview which gives the assessors an opportunity to question the candidate in a structured yet open discussion about the candidates experience.

LEVEL B INTERVIEW	
CE	**COMPETENCE ELEMENT NAME**
4.3.4	**Power and interests**
4.3.5	**Culture and values**
4.4.2	**Personal integrity and reliability**
4.4.3	**Personal communication**

It should be noted that all competence elements may be included into the interview as needed.

LEVEL B FINAL ASSESSMENT

At the conclusion of the interview the assessors will make a final decision based on the exam, report, and interview. The final determination will be PASS or NOT YET COMPETENT. The results will be communicated to the candidate and inputted into the Certification Information System(CIS) which will generate a certificate and badge from Credly.

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