Frequently Asked Questions regarding the new PMP Examination
Taken from Webinar 1 December 2005

PMP Devaluation Concerns

Q. Will the revised passing score devalue the Project Management Professional (PMP®) credential and detract from its credibility?
A. The PMP examination ensures that those receiving the credential are adequately qualified and proven to have met the entry requirements for the credential as well as applying the requisite knowledge that is tested in the examination.

As with other major industries and disciplines, a group of credentialed individuals estimate the passing score prior to the release of an examination. Once sufficient data is collected, the statistically-proven passing score can be calculated and applied. The estimate provided by the first group of PMP volunteers was simply set too high. A second group of PMPs evaluated the questions to ascertain the difficulty level and the recommendation from this group, combined with real-time information with testing data from more than 800 actual candidates, demonstrated statistically that PMI needed to revise the passing score or else qualified candidates would be prevented from passing the examination.

The first time passing rate of the previous exam was 80 percent meaning that 80 percent of individuals taking the test for the first time passed. PMI estimates that the passing rate of the new exam, with the revised passing score, will be in the low 70s – well within certification industry standards and lower than the passing rate of the previous exam. It is therefore critically important that it is understood that simply looking at the passing score (the pass-fail point) is inappropriate to adequately understand the impact of the examination as an assessment instrument. The fundamental gauge of the examination is the passing rate (the success rate), which with the new exam, set at 106 questions correct out of 175 scorable questions, is significantly lower than the previous exam and therefore more difficult to pass.

The other key factor to appreciate is that neither the exam nor the questions are changing. This is based on the analysis of the question performance by the 800 test takers, which was found to be within expected parameters. The one change that will be made is to simply reset the pass rate to the number of questions that will ensure that only qualified candidates pass the exam. Some other credentials have passing scores set lower than 61 percent as it's not the passing score that is the important factor in credentialing, it's the difficulty of the exam and the overall success rate of qualified candidates that should be the focus.

In summary, lowering the percentage of people passing the new PMP exam combined with the increased eligibility requirements has actually strengthened the PMP. Changing the candidate's eligibility requirements from managing project deliverables to leading and directing project tasks;

evaluating the applications more thoroughly; increasing the number of audits; requiring candidates to provide supervisor information; and continuing to increase the number of situational versus knowledge recall questions—all serve to increase the standards of the credential. The difficulty in the exam is evidence of the rigor in the new exam and the lower number of people passing the new exam; low 70s as compared to 80 percent with the previous. In the long run, the PMP credential will continue to be strengthened by the caliber of candidates who pass the new examination.

Q. How does PMI plan to address the project management community perception that the PMP credential has been devalued and restore confidence in the exam?
A. Through a series of communications with our key stakeholder groups, PMI will continue to dialogue about the process used and the rationale behind the changes made. PMI will also enhance the public relations component to our communications which will better position the changes so that individuals and organizations will appreciate that this effort will result in a stronger credential. The communication plan is extensive and includes all stakeholder groups as well as all PMI communication vehicles and addresses communications to be released in the next six months.

It is important to keep in focus that the exam is more difficult than the previous exam and fewer test takers, who were eligible to take the exam under enhanced requirements, are passing. PMI lowered the passing score to ensure qualified people pass the examination. The passing score is set at a level that will achieve this.

PMI's goal is the highest quality credential and we work with our PMI partners, Component Leaders and REPs, to ensure that they have adequate information to inform candidates and answer questions as it is the partners who play the critical role to prepare candidates for success.

The Revised Pass Rate

Q. How many people so far have taken the new exam?
A. 1,000 candidates have tested on the new exam as of 30 November 2005.

Q. What percentage of people passed when the passing score was 81 percent and what percentage now pass at 61 percent?
A. Over the past 6 years, first time exam takers had a passing rate of 80 percent. The new exam was anticipated to have a similar passing rate as estimated by the volunteer team who recommended the passing score be set at 81 percent or 141 questions correct out of the 175 scorable questions.

However, the new exam in the field found a significantly lower passing success than that anticipated by the volunteer group of PMPs, and qualified candidates were not passing the exam. Based on data we've collected thus far on the new exam, we anticipate having a first time pass rate in the low 70s, using the revised passing score of 106 questions correct out of 175 scorable questions. This is well within certification industry standards and is actually a more difficult exam to pass at a 61 percent passing score than the previous exam at a 69 percent passing score.

Q. Does the adjustment in the passing score allow more candidates to achieve a PMP credential?
A. Actually no, the passing score is a gauge of test difficulty – the number of candidates actually receiving the PMP credential with the new exam has been reduced. Previously, 80 percent of candidates earned the credential, now the passing or success rate will be in the low 70s.

Q. Some members feel the pass mark change was contrived to get more people to take the exam. Is this true?
A. Quite the opposite. If PMI maintained the 81 percent pass rate, the majority of individuals testing would have certainly needed to retest, which would have meant retest fees being paid to PMI. PMI's goal is to use the examination as an assessment technique that enables qualified candidates to pass and less than qualified candidates to not pass.

Q. How often is the pass mark going to change? Will the passing score remain in place until you make the next major exam change with an update of the *Role Delineation Study* (approximately 4-5 years)? What, if any, changes will be made to the exam moving forward?
A. We will be maintaining this passing score (106 correct questions out of 175 scorable questions) until the next major revision of the examination. PMI goes through the process of making major revisions to the exam every 4-5 years based on the scheduled update to the certification standard (*PMP Examination Specification*) against which the PMP examination is derived. As ongoing maintenance activity on PMI's exam, we routinely review, revise and add new questions from our extensive question bank, but they will be validated through the pretest question process to ensure they will not impact the passing score.

Qualifications of PMP Examination Test Takers

Q. Has the audit process changed as a result of the re-evaluation?
A. The audit process remains largely the same. If you fail the audit, the policy is based on:

- If PMI determines that the candidate misrepresented himself/herself on the application, he/she will be permanently banned from being allowed to test.

- If a candidate does not pass the audit due to lack of experience, information, etc., PMI works with the candidate to identify what is missing so that the candidate can provide the required information before reapplying and testing.

Q. Why does PMI ask for supervisory information on the application?
A. PMP candidates are asked to provide supervisor information as part of an enhanced review process so that PMI can ensure that the candidate meets the qualification requirements for taking the examination.

Q. If I currently have my PMP, can I retake the exam to better understand the difficulty of the questions?
A. As has been PMI's practice for several years, active status PMPs will not be permitted to take the exam again.

Q. Can a functional manager with 7-9 years of experience, who has not had a chance to "lead and direct" a project eligible to apply for the PMP exam or is leading or directing the single "phase" of a project enough?

A. All individuals must complete an application that is thoroughly reviewed in order to be eligible. The eligibility criteria are determined by the tasks that are identified in the *Role Delineation Study* as those that are performed by PMPs globally. These tasks cover all six domains; initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and professional and social responsibility. Candidates must also provide PMI with supervisory contact information for us to verify what is stated on the application. They must agree to abide by a code of professional conduct and agree to maintain their credential by participating in the Continuing Credential Requirement (CCR) program. They must finally demonstrate a passing score on the PMP Examination. Each candidate's eligibility is specific and unique and must be reviewed at the time the candidate submits their application and evaluated by the PMI Certification staff.

The Examination Design

Q. What was the process for writing and evaluating the questions on the exam?

A. PMI conducts global item writing sessions throughout the year in which it uses the *PMP Examination Specification* as guidance to determine the appropriate number of questions per performance domain. Each question is subsequently viewed by hundreds of PMPs through a number of different exam development activities including the reference validation, exam assembly, passing score determination, translation and validation. This is supplemented by reviews by staff and PMI's vendors. Subsequent to these evaluations, ongoing activities take place where the questions are scrutinized by groups of PMPs around the world to ensure that the questions are performing as they statistically should be.

Q. What is the *Role Delineation Study* and does it affect an individual candidate's score?

A. Every time PMI revises a test, an updated *Role Delineation Study* is performed and new test questions are developed. PMI's *Role Delineation Study* utilized in 2004 was a global study that included four separate regional focus groups designed to identify the knowledge and skills that a project manager must possess to execute the tasks that they are expected to regularly perform. It is with the information gained from the *Role Delineation Study* that the *PMP Examination Specification* was developed which outlines these tasks and the number of questions that will be asked on the examination and thus the blueprint for the examination. It is this standard that the exam is developed against and test questions are written to assess the candidate's ability to apply knowledge to test against the blueprint. The *Role Delineation Study* therefore affects the candidate's score in that they must have the requisite knowledge in project management leading and directing projects in order to adequately answer the questions defined by the blueprint.

Q. Will candidates need to pass all six areas or just get 106 questions correct overall? Is the break out of the domain questions remaining the same?

A. In order to pass the new exam, candidates must answer 106 questions correctly in total out of the 175 scorable questions. A candidate does not have to pass all of the six Performance Domains.

Q. Did you use all new questions or are some of the old questions used for the updated repository?

A. As part of the exam review process, the exam questions in the item bank are evaluated regularly. The exam contains brand new questions written against the *PMP Examination Specification* using groups of global PMPs. If a previous exam question was performing well and

could be remapped to a current reference source, we reused the question in this new exam but many of the questions are new questions.

Q. Will the 25 pretest questions continue to be included with the exam? If they are not used in the scoring, what is their purpose?
A. The 25 pretest items will continue to be part of the exam. PMI uses these questions to understand the performance of the questions prior to counting the questions towards a candidate's score. PMI needs to have a volume of candidate data (800-1000 candidates testing) prior to determining which pretest questions will be counted in a candidate's score or removed permanently due to poor performance. These items are not scored.

PMI's ongoing maintenance activities with the exam include making question changes as questions are moved from pretest questions (not counted in candidates' scores) into active questions (counted in candidates' scores) and replace the pretest questions with new questions written at one of the many item writing meetings held around the world. Exam questions are distributed randomly to exams that display at the Prometric test centers but will always have the appropriate number of questions to test the candidate's knowledge in each performance domain of the *PMP Exam Specification.*

Q. How large is the new question database?
A.   This information is confidential and is not released.

Q. Where does the examination blueprint come from?
A. The new exam is based on the *PMP Examination Specification*, indicating the number of questions per Performance Domain that are required to adequately assess the knowledge and skill in that area. The *PMP Examination Specification* is available online.

Q. Will the number of questions in each domain change as a result of the re-evaluation?
A. The number of questions in each Performance Domain or the overall examination has not changed.

Q. Do we still have the four-hour time limit to take the exam?
A. Yes. The four-hour time limit continues to be allotted to take the new exam.

Q. You mentioned a revised *Role Delineation Study* as the basis for the new Exam. Is this available?
A. PMI has published the *PMP Examination Specification* that resulted from the *Role Delineation Study* that was performed globally including four separate regional focus groups.

Q. Was there another timetable that could have been followed in this analysis and re-evaluation of the PMP examination?
A. PMI made a conscious decision to release the exam and allow candidates to take the test and, in the case of computer-based test centers, receive immediate results. The alternative would have been to release the exam on 30 September and not provide candidates any information regarding their pass/fail status until adequate data could be collected (800-1000 candidates) which was estimated to take 3 months. There was not only the difficulty that the candidate would not know

their results but candidates would be less willing to take the exam during this phase and therefore it would take longer to achieve the 800 candidate mark. We chose the former over the latter to allow those who passed regardless of the revised passing score to get their credential as soon as possible for candidate convenience.

Q. Is PMI the only credentialing body to use the Modified Angoff Technique?
A. This technique is a certification industry standard and many credentialing bodies use this approach to set the passing score.

Q. How does someone volunteer to evaluate questions?
A. PMI utilizes a variety of recruitment methods for volunteers to help the exam development process. PMI randomly queries the certification database looking for a representative sample of the PMP population. Randomly selected PMPs are requested to complete an application, which is reviewed based on project criteria. PMI encourages interested individuals to volunteer. Those who are interested in volunteering should apply online at PMI's volunteer opportunities Web site.

Q. Is there a screening process for those who participate in the exam development activities?
A. PMI takes great effort to screen candidates to participate in the exam development activities and training is provided to these candidates. We screen candidates for years of project management experience and ensure that we have a variety of industry representation. Individuals who are involved with companies who offer PMP examination preparation training are not permitted to participate.

Logistics

Q. When will I receive notification if I have or have not become a PMP with the revised passing score? When will I receive my certification packet and be listed on the PMP registry?
A. A communication is being sent to candidates advising them of their pass/fail status using the new passing score. There could be a delay of a few days from the time a candidate sat for the exam and PMI's notification due to the time necessary to transfer the data from Prometric to PMI with the necessary QA steps. Candidates who have been rescored and have received a communication from PMI advising them of a passing status will be added to the PMP online registry and their PMP certificate and related materials will be mailed out from PMI at the beginning of January.

Q. When will those with passing scores receive their PMP number?
A. PMI is in the process of creating an automated solution to correct candidate pass/fail results. Once the enhancements are made, the PMI system will generate the PMP number, create the certificate and add the candidate to the PMP registry. This is anticipated to take place in early January.

Q. For those taking the test before the new score is implemented by Prometric, what period of time after taking the test should they expect to find out if they passed or failed?
A. Prometric is in the process of updating the exam with the passing score which is expected to be completed in mid-December with global deployment to all Prometric centers by the end of December. PMI will be contacting candidates on a daily basis as results are received from the test centers until the end of December to ensure that each candidate is scored against the new passing score.

Q. Are individual candidate's pass/fail status revealed to anyone other than the candidate during the review process?
A. A candidate's pass-fail status is considered private information and will not be released to anyone other than the candidate.

Other

Q. What is the impact on the CAPM Examination?
A. There is no impact on the CAPM Examination or its passing score. The CAPM exam is a completely separate examination and is evaluated as such. The current passing score for the CAPM is 88 questions correct.

Q. Were CAPMs included in the evaluation of the PMP examination?
A. No CAPMs were used in the evaluation of the PMP examination. Only current holders of the PMP credential participate in evaluating the PMP examination.

Q. Will there be any change in the PDU requirements for PMPs?
A. No. For more information, please visit the Continuing Credential Requirements (CCR) section of the PMI Web site to find the PDU requirements for PMPs.

Q. Can you recommend study materials for those taking the 2005 exam? Why not give the title of books the questions were taken from other than the *PMBOK® Guide*? Any exams I have taken, clearly state the material that is expected to be studied from.
A. This is not just a knowledge recall exam but instead requires candidates to have project knowledge which can be applied to situational questions. Therefore, studying 'a text' does not solely prepare you for the exam. Recommended resources to review to prepare candidates for the new exam include two categories of material:
1. *PMBOK® Guide*, *PMP Handbook*, *PMP Code of Professional Conduct*, Books on the Knowledge Areas
2. *PMP Examination Specification*

Visit the Certification Program section of the PMI Web site for detailed information. PMI does not provide specific textbooks.

Q. What or who are Component Leaders? How can they help inform me about the revised scoring on the PMP Examination?
A. Please visit the Specific Interest Groups (SIGs) section, Colleges section and the Chapters section of the PMI Web site to search for a component group in your local area. PMI has a global

network of Chapters, Specific Interest Groups and Colleges that are communities that you can get involved in to keep you up to date with PMI. The PMI Web site is also constantly updated to keep you informed about issues in the project management profession.

Communications

Q. Who should I contact if I have additional questions?
A. Additional questions can be e-mailed to examquestions@pmi.org.