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# CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

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## Certification Guidelines

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PMI Cert is the national Certification Body for the administration of the IPMA® internationally recognised certification system in Ireland.

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# CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

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This document contains high level information on how Irish candidates can apply for IPMA® project management certification – a credential for professionals to demonstrate their knowledge, experience and competence to manage projects in the fast changing and complex environment that we live in today.

# Introduction

The objective of this document is to summarise the key features of the International Project Management Association International Certification Regulations.

The intended targeted audiences of this document include:

- IPMA® certification applicants and candidates;
- External bodies and organisations attracted by the IPMA® certification process.

The IPMA® Four Level Certification (IPMA® 4-L-C) System for project management personnel is managed by IPMA through the IPMA Certification and Validation Management Board (CVMB).

The 4-L-C System is applied within each participating nation by the corresponding IPMA® Certification Body (CB) and is based on ISO/IEC 17024:2012 (Conformity Assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons).

The Certification Body certification scheme:

- Defines the frame of reference for competences to be assessed using the IPMA® Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB);
- Conforms to a common IPMA® regulatory framework of the IPMA® International Certification Regulations.

Certification Bodies are validated every three years by IPMA under the terms of their IPMA® agreement as a means of checking compliance and to exchange good practice where possible.

There are several steps in the certification process in which the candidate needs to provide evidence of competence. The level of competence of a candidate is evaluated by assessors.

Re-certification is required after a five-year period for all IPMA® levels and is based on evidence of continuing involvement in project, programme or portfolio management at the appropriate level and evidence of continuing professional development.

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# 1. IPMA<sup>®</sup> 4 Level Certification

1.1. Introduction to IPMA<sup>®</sup> 4 Level Certification

1.2. Benefits of IPMA<sup>®</sup> Certification

1.3. Why you need the Certification Guidelines

1.4. Requirements for each IPMA<sup>®</sup> Certification Level

## 1.1. Introduction to IPMA® 4 level Certification

There are currently in excess of 5,000 IPMA® project professionals in Ireland. With the increasing recognition of project management as a profession, competence and certification have become key driving forces, both at the organisation and the individual level.

The IPMA® universal 4 level certification system operates in over 70 countries around the world and offers certification across three domains – Project, Programme and Portfolio Management.

### Domains

Level	Project	Programme	Portfolio
A	Certified Project Director	Certified Programme Director	Certified Portfolio Director
B	Certified Senior Project Manager	Certified Senior Programme Manager	Certified Senior Portfolio Manager
C	Certified Project Manager		
D	Certified Project Management Associate Certified Agile Project Associate		

Table 1 – IPMA® 4 Level Certification System Profiles

This document describes how a candidate can acquire certification in the Project Domain only. If a candidate is interested in pursuing certification in the programme or portfolio domain, please contact us at [info@projectmanagement.ie](mailto:info@projectmanagement.ie).

This multi-level certification system offers the opportunity to reflect developing competence. These levels provide a suitable framework for developing career paths as well as for creating development programmes for individuals and organisations.

## 1.2. Benefits of IPMA® Certification

The IPMA® certification provides international peer recognition of one's competence. It demonstrates that an individual is competent in the crucial ability to manage projects. It assists in the recognition of the transferability of an individual's skills from one organisation or industry to another. Also, through participation in the certification process, individuals enhance their confidence in their project management and general business competence.

The IPMA® certification system provides a benchmark for the organisation in the recruitment, training and development of project management staff; it provides a marketing tool by demonstrating the organisation's commitment to excellence in project management and demonstrates the competence of its staff at managing projects. It helps significantly, by showing that in addition to other relevant qualifications that staff may have,

their IPMA® certification can instil confidence in clients that the organisation can handle their business efficiently and cost effectively.

Achievement of one or several of these prestigious certifications acknowledges your abilities in project management and increases your visibility within your organisation and on an international level. In order to maintain the certification, you must show ongoing professional development in the field of project management by satisfying the Professional Development Requirements of the Re-Certification programme.

### 1.3. Why You Need the Certification Guidelines

All certification applicants are recommended to read this entire guidebook, because:

- It helps you determine which certification is most appropriate for you
- It contains important information about the certification process
- It outlines the eligibility requirements for each certification
- It discusses certification fees and refund policies
- It describes policies and procedures, such as the audit process, appeals and complaints procedure

## 1.4. Requirements for each IPMA® Certification Level

### IPMA Level A®

All experience for Level A must have been obtained within the last 12 years.

Role Description	Eligibility
<b>Certified Project Director</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting on a strategic level within a very complex project environment.</li> <li>Responsible for a very complex project which has a strategic impact on the organisation.</li> </ul>	A minimum of 5 years' experience as a project manager in a responsible leadership function in very complex projects of which at least 3 years were at a strategic level.

### IPMA Level B®

All experience for Level B must have been obtained within the last 8 years.  
The evidence timescale can be extended by 4 years with justification.

Role Description	Eligibility
<b>Certified Senior Project Manager</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting in a complex project environment.</li> <li>Responsible for a complex project programme within an organisation.</li> </ul>	A minimum of 5 years' experience as a project manager of which at least 3 years were in a responsible leadership function managing complex projects.

### IPMA Level C®

All experience for Level C must have been obtained within the last 6 years.  
The evidence timescale can be extended by 4 years with justification.

Role Description	Eligibility
<b>Certified Project Manager</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting in a moderate complex environment.</li> <li>Responsible in a project management role with moderate complexity within an organisation.</li> </ul>	Minimum of 3 years' experience as a project manager within projects of moderate complexity. OR Minimum of 3 years' experience in a responsible project management role assisting the project manager in complex projects.

### IPMA Level D®

Role Description	Eligibility
<b>Certified Project Management Associate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge in Competence Elements related to project management.</li> <li>Has broad project management knowledge and may work in a project team.</li> </ul>	No experience required.

# 2. Initial Certification & Upgrade Certification

This section provides detailed information for candidates seeking Initial Certification or candidates wishing to Upgrade to a Higher Level

2.1. Certification Process Flow for Initial Certification and Certification Upgrade

2.2. Key Certification Steps

## 2.1. Certification Process Flow for Initial Certification & Certification Upgrade

This section describes the steps required for candidates who are seeking certification for the first time or for those wishing to upgrade their certification credential (e.g. an existing Level C certificate holder wishes to advance to Level B).

### Assessment Path for all IPMA® Certification Levels

Stage	Step	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D
1	Application	R	R	R	R
	CV for initial certification	R	R	R	R
	Executive Summary Report	R	R	R	N/A
	Self-assessment	R	R	R	R
	Referees	R	R	R	N/A

### Eligibility Check

2	Exam	N/A	R	R	R
3	Report	R	R	N/A	N/A
4	Interview	R	R	R	N/A
5	Final evaluation	R	R	R	R
	Decision	R	R	R	R

### Pass

6	Certificate	R	R	R	R
	Feedback	R	R	R	R
	Archiving	R	R	R	R

Legend: R = Required, O = Optional - for CB to decide, C = On request of the candidate, N/A = Not applicable

Table 2 – Illustrates the requirements of the certification process.  
Each requirement is described in more detail in the succeeding subsections.

## 2.2. Key Certification Steps

### Application

The application form shall include all necessary personal details to identify and process the Candidate for suitability against the corresponding 4 Certification Levels being applied for. In the application the applicant shall confirm that they agree to and will comply with the conditions and obligations of the IPMA Certification process. There is no mandatory requirement for the candidate to undertake formal training in order to apply for certification.

### Curriculum Vitae (CV)

The Applicant shall provide a detailed summary of any projects, programmes or portfolios they have managed or been involved in to meet IPMA® Regulations. Sufficient detail needs to be provided by the applicant to enable the assessors to assess suitability of the IPMA level being applied for.

The CV, shall show a career history including relevant Project Management roles and positions held, formal education, professional certifications and qualifications, and project management training.

### Executive Summary Report (Levels A, B and C)

The report shall include:

- Organisation (company details, industry and project types, principal objectives of the organisation and business unit the applicant works in);
- One page summary for each of the project(s)/programme(s)/portfolio(s) with related time schedules and phases;
- Role of the Applicant (an organisation chart with their position identified, their area of responsibility, an overview of the Project Management procedures they use, their relationship with internal and external stakeholders).

In addition, for Levels A and B – candidates shall describe how they have led each project and how they met the complexity criteria for the level being applied for. For Level C – a description of how they have managed the project(s) is required.

### Self-assessment

The Applicant shall complete a self-assessment for all Competence Elements and Key Competence Indicators in the level applied for. The primary objective of the self- assessment is to assess applicant suitability at the application phase.

### Referees

The applicant will provide the names and contact details of at least two referees. The Certification Body shall contact the referees named by the Applicant wherever necessary.

The Certification Body shall use the information from the referees to confirm the declarations of the Applicant and to dispel any doubts regarding suitability for assessment. If necessary, the Certification Body shall request additional referees from the Applicant.

### Eligibility check

Where an Applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria, the Applicant shall be advised by the Certification Body if it is possible to re-apply for certification at a lower level or what additional evidence would be required to meet the original criteria in their application.

## Exams

Exam	Level B	Level C	Level D
Duration	3.0 hours	3.0 hours	3.0 hours
Types of questions	Open answer questions only. The questions asked shall allow candidates to demonstrate application of knowledge at the required level only.	Open answer questions only. The questions asked shall allow candidates to demonstrate application of knowledge at the required level only.	The exam shall be a mix of multiple-choice and open answer questions. Multiple-choice questions shall have a minimum of 4 options to select from with one right answer.

Table 3 – Duration of Exam at IPMA Level B, C and D

## Report (for Level A and B only)

The report shall describe the application of their leadership of others in applying the competence elements for the appropriate role and level being assessed. A maximum of 25 pages for the report with additional maximum of 15 pages for the Appendices shall be set.

The Candidate shall provide a detailed description of the project/programme or portfolio role in context, key stakeholders, scope and key objectives, project/programme/portfolio organisation and the associated resources that the Candidate is responsible for (max. 3 pages incl. graphics).

The Candidate shall provide an overview of management challenges throughout the period of the project/programme or portfolio role related to the chosen competence elements and level being applied for. The report shall address the candidates experience as follows:

- Their management and leadership challenges with respect to others;
- How these were acted upon and the results achieved;
- A reflection on the results and lessons learnt.

## Interview

The assessors shall identify which specific Competence Elements and Key Competences shall be assessed for each Candidate, and shall ask questions they have previously prepared related to the materials provided. The Assessors may conclude the interview early if the evidence sought has been achieved.

IPMA Level	A	B	C
Duration	120 mins	120 mins	90 mins

Table 4 – Duration of Interview at IPMA Levels A, B and C

## Evaluation, Decision and Certification

The Certification Body may recommend that a candidate should seek certification at an alternate level, or quit the certification process after defined steps of the certification process.

The assessors involved in an assessment are independent and do not respond to questions from the candidates. They can pass on information to the candidate about missing or insufficient information in his/her application that has been identified by the Certification Body and invite the applicant to add it during the next step in the process. The Certification Body provides the information about the certification process to the candidate and answers any questions he/she may have.

The Certification Management Board takes the decisions about awarding a pass or fail based mainly upon the recommendation of the assessors.

All certificates, full ownership of which are retained by the Certification Body, will be registered in the national and IPMA® databases and presented as public information on their respective websites unless the applicant has explicitly expressed a wish not to have his/her name published. The candidate should be aware that the misuse or making of false or misleading statements about their content validity or duration will result in immediate withdrawal of the certificate by the Certification Body.

Recertification of all successful candidates at each level shall be carried out at an interval of five years.

## Feedback from the Candidate

Candidates may complete a feedback questionnaire form about their experiences concerning the initial certification process. The feedback should be used by the Certification Body in its continuing improvement process. The completed questionnaire of the candidate shall not be used for the certification assessment of the candidate.

# 3. Re-certification

This section provides detailed information for candidates seeking to maintain qualification at existing level.

3.1. Why Re-certify?

3.2. Re-certification Overview

3.3. Re-certification Criteria for Levels A, B, C and D

3.4. Ways to meet Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements

3.5. Sample CPD Activities

3.6. Re-certification for all IPMA® Levels

### 3.1. Why Re-certify?

A career is a journey, and one has to stay relevant as the profession evolves and as the needs of employers grow and change. Maintaining your IPMA® certification is a significant competitive advantage. It keeps you relevant and helps you better position yourself as the answer to what companies demand.

Certification in your chosen field verifies the value that you provide to your organization. This is especially true of the advanced IPMA® certifications that we offer. Authentication of your professional qualifications tells your employer that you have been professionally evaluated and found competent. Perceptive businesses rely heavily on advanced certifications of individuals for hiring and placement.

### 3.2. Re-certification Overview

The re-certification programme supports the continuous professional development of IPMA® certified professionals to equip them to meet the demands of today’s complex business environment.

The purpose of the re-certification programme is to:

- Reinforce continuous learning and development among certification holders
- Provide direction in development areas to ensure relevancy of certified practitioners
- Encourage and recognise individualised learning opportunities
- Furnish a mechanism for attaining and recording professional development activities
- Preserve the global recognition and value of IPMA® credentials

### 3.3 Re-certification Criteria for Levels A, B, C and D

Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D
Minimum evidence of 30 months of practical experience over 5 year period			Not applicable
Complexity			Not applicable
Leadership of others	Management of others		Not applicable
Minimum of 35 hours’ evidence of CPD per annum (175 hours total) since the last (re-)certification			

Table 5 – Re-certification

Please refer back to requirements for each IPMA Certification Level shown on page 9.

### 3.4. Ways to meet Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements

To stay certified, you will need to participate in CPD activities. In order to satisfy the CPD activities and maintain an active certification status, one must accrue and report a minimum of 35 hours evidence of CPD per annum (175 hours over five-years).

### 3.5. Sample CPD Activities

Please note that for each activity the following information is required: name of the development activity; dates undertaken and hours claimed; Competence Element (CE) covered by the activity; and a summary statement reflecting on the learning from the CPD gained over the period and how it benefited you.

Activity		Audit (info only required if requested by assessor)
1	<b>Course or Training</b> Instructor led formal education courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Educational events</li> <li>• e-Learning on demand courses</li> </ul>	Registration form, certificate and/or letter of attendance
2	<b>Organisation Meetings</b> Meetings, activities and local events related to the profession  Professional meetings that include an educational component provide an opportunity to learn and also to network.	Registration form, letter of attendance or other form of documentation confirming participation in event.
3	<b>Online or Digital media</b> Self-paced learning conducted online or through varied forms of digital media  Many educational webinars, videos and other types of digital content are available online and on demand.	Evidence supporting your reported learning, including notes from and dates of activities conducted.
4	<b>Reading</b> Self-directed reading that is relevant to your certification  You can read books, articles, whitepapers, or blogs to stay informed and support your ongoing professional development.	Evidence supporting your reported learning, including notes from and dates of reading.
5	<b>Informal Learning</b> Educational opportunities focused on structured discussions  Engage in structured professional discussions with others, for example while you're being mentored or participating in a "lunch and learn" session with your organisation.	Evidence supporting your reported learning, including notes from and dates of activities recorded.
6	<b>Work as a Practitioner</b> Working in your certified role	Proof of employment (job description)
7	<b>Create Content</b> Creating new knowledge resources for use by practitioners and the public at large  There are many ways to create new content, such as authoring books, blogs or articles, or creating presentations.	Copies of publications, sample educational materials or course agendas

Table 6 - Recertification

### 3.6. Re-certification for all IPMA® Levels

Stage	Step	All Levels
1	Application	R
	CV for re-certification	R
	Self-assessment	R
	Structured Evidence	R
	Referees	R
<b>Eligibility Check</b>		
2	Interview	O
3	Final evaluation	R
	Decision	R
<b>Pass</b>		
4	Certificate	R
	Feedback	R
	Archiving	R

Legend: R = Required, O = Optional, in case of doubt

Table 7 – Assessment paths for re-certification for Levels A, B, C and D

# 4. Certification Scheme Administration

- 4.1. Certification / Re-certification Steps
- 4.2. Fee Structure
- 4.3. Cancellations, Re-scheduling, No Shows
- 4.4. Audit Process
- 4.5. Complaints, Appeals and Code of Ethics

## 4.1. Certification / Re-certification Steps

This section describes the steps required for candidates to acquire initial or upgrade certification and to re-certify after the period of certification validity has expired (5 years).

Step 1	Complete the Booking Form at <a href="http://projectmanagement.ie/booking/certify">projectmanagement.ie/booking/certify</a>
Step 2	The candidate is invoiced and receives Detailed Instruction Forms when payment is received
Step 3	The candidate submits the completed documentation for the level requested
Step 4	The application is reviewed and evaluated by assessors for confirmation of acceptance at requested level of certification
Step 5	The candidate is notified of assessors' decision and date and time of the interview where applicable
Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final evaluation recommendation</li> <li>• Certification decision and issue of the certificate</li> <li>• Feedback from the candidate</li> <li>• Appeal</li> </ul>

Table 8 – Certification / Re-certification steps

### Check Eligibility Criteria

All IPMA certifications require you to meet domain experience level. To find out the eligibility requirements, consult the guidelines for the certification that interests you. Each one has unique eligibility criteria.

### Complete Registration

When the applicant has determined that he meets the eligibility criteria, it is time to register. Use the online certification system to register.

### Payment

Upon receipt of payment, the candidate will be emailed with all the instructional documents for the level of certification requested.

### Application Review

Once we receive your application, we will verify that you meet the eligibility criteria and that your experience is valid and consistent with the guidelines stated in the Certification Guidelines. If we have any questions or issues with your application, we will endeavour to email you further instructions and direction.

## Schedule Exam and Interview

The candidate will be emailed with exam/interview locations, dates and time with every effort made to accommodate the optimum arrangements for both parties.

### 4.2. Fee Structure

The fee structure, as at time of print, is set out below (check website for most up to date pricing).

Fee Structure	IPMA® Certification Level			
	A	B	C	D
New Candidates	€1,950	€1,850	€1,300	€800
Re-Certification: IPMA	€350	€350	€350	€300

Table 9 – Fee Structure

### 4.3. Cancellations, Rescheduling, No Shows

If you need to cancel or reschedule an interview or an examination, you must do so no later than 48 hours before your scheduled appointment.

If you fail to notify the appropriate party within the specified time period and/or fail to meet a scheduled examination appointment, you forfeit the full certification fee and will have to pay the full certification fee in order to schedule another interview or examination.

There are times when extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical emergency, death in immediate family, illness in immediate family) may prevent you from meeting a scheduled interview or examination appointment, resulting in a no show. Should a situation like this occur, you will be asked to provide an explanation along with supporting documentation (e.g. accident report, medical documentation, death certificate). If you do not make contact within 72 hours following a missed appointment, fees will apply in order to schedule a new appointment. All claims will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed a maximum of one year from the date you application is approved to apply for re-examination.

### 4.4. Audit Process

The submission of an application indicates your agreement to comply with the terms of the audit process. All applications are subject to audit, although only a percentage of applications are selected for audit. The selection of an application for audit is random. During an audit, you may be asked to submit supporting documentation or direct contact may be made by one of the assessors with your nominated referees.

### 4.5 Complaints, Appeals and Code of Ethics

PMI Cert process to deal with complaints and appeals ensures that they are dealt with in a fair, impartial, confidential and constructive manner.

**Complaints:** Complaints are handled in all instances, in so far as is possible, in a co-operative rather than an adversarial way. Towards this end every effort will be made in each instance to arrive at a solution by consensus among the relevant parties. Complaints are at all times handled in a sensitive and confidential manner, with due recognition of the personal implications of those involved. Applicants for certification will not be disadvantaged because they make a complaint. The Certification Manager will decide how to treat complaints on a case-by-case basis.

A copy of the complaints form can be obtained from IPMA Cert by contacting the Certification Manager.

**Appeals: An appeal is a formal request for reconsiderations or review of a decision made by PMI Cert.** Appeals shall come from certification Applicants and Candidates (appellant) only. Contact the PMI Cert Certification Manager for information and fees in relation to appeals for IPMA Levels A, B, C and D. There is a time line for submitting and dealing with appeals.

Each applicant receives an information pack outlining the process to deal with complaints and appeals in a fair, impartial, confidential and constructive manner. A copy of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is also provided to each applicant.

PMI Cert has also adopted the IPMA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct®. Signing the IPMA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct® demonstrates adherence to fundamental principles that must guide all our professional conduct and practice.



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