PM | ISO 21500

Best of Project Management

ISO 21500 Foundation

Examination regulations

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1 Introduction

1.1 Objective

Project management is a core competence for all people who want to move things forward and take responsibility in today's working world. Companies, organizations and people shape their future through projects.

This examination and examination regulations for project management according to ISO21500 certify the competence of individuals according to internationally recognized standards.

1.2 Target group

The certificate of competence is aimed at people who need sound theoretical and practical knowledge to get started in projects and project management and who want to document this through an independent examination.

These are primarily people

- who need certification of their project management competence
- who are assigned to a project and need to demonstrate their skills
- who are committed to working professionally
- who need proof for job applications or promotions
- who would like to complete their previous PM training with an ISO certificate

1.3 Certificate content

The ISO 21500 project, programme and portfolio management guidelines are internationally recognized, "vendor-independent" and are regarded as the common denominator of well-known standards such as PMI, IPMA or Prince2.

The ISO 21500 series currently exists internationally with the following individual parts
- ISO 21500:2021 Project, program and portfolio management as an overview
- ISO 21502:2020 Guidance on project management   for projects
- ISO 21503:2022 Guidance on program management   for programs
- ISO 21504:2022 Guidance on portfolio management   for project portfolios
- ISO 21505:2017 Guidance on governance   for governance
- ISO 21506:2024 Vocabulary   as glossary

The certification examines the fundamentals and competencies in project management as described in ISO 21502:2020. ISO 21502 represents a detailing and extension of the original ISO DIN 21500:2016. The project management content formulated there is sufficient for the upcoming audit and certification.

In addition to the overarching project management guidelines of ISO 21500, the different approaches in classic, agile and hybrid project management should be known. These are represented by the waterfall model, Scrum, Kanban and hybrid forms.

The exam questions and categorization are based on the structure of ISO21502.

1.4 Exam

The exam is very straightforward for people who are already familiar with projects. For people who are new to project management, it is an efficient way to familiarize themselves with the basics of project management and then obtain a recognized certificate.

The basics of project management as described in the ISO 21500 guidelines are tested and certified

- Knowledge of the terms, structures, roles and documents in project management
- Knowledge of project management processes
- Knowledge of the practices and topics to be considered in project management
- Knowledge of project framework conditions

2 Procedure

As preparation

- order and study the ISO 21500:2012 or ISO 21502:2020 standard from ISO or DIN MEDIA
- work through a book on project management in accordance with ISO21500 or ISO21502
- attend a seminar on project management in accordance with ISO21500
- run a test examination with a minimized scope - free of charge

For experienced project managers, certification is also possible without explicit preparation. In any case, however, it is recommended to read the ISO 21502 standard, which is only about 50 pages long, or a corresponding book.

The examination can be taken independently or as part of a seminar, takes place on the ISO21500.de platform and comprises the following steps:

- Exam registration
- Conducting the examination
- Completion of the exam and issue of certificate

The testing and certification is accessed from ISO21500.de/certificates. You first create an account there under your e-mail address with your own password.

When you register for the exam, you will be asked for your first name and surname, which are required for the certificate to be issued.

The examination fee must then be paid. The fee is to be paid via the Paypal payment system, whereby no own Paypal account is necessary. Payment is made to FusePro, which handles the administration on behalf of AUDITISO.

A maximum of 90 days may elapse between payment and the test being carried out. The test itself must be carried out in one go within 90 minutes.

For the exam itself runs on the software platform Classmaker, which is used in many similar certification exams.

In the exam, questions from the various subject areas of project management must be answered using the multiple choice method. A total of 75 questions have to be answered in 90 minutes.

The result of the exam is announced immediately at the end. If 65% of the answers are correct, the exam is passed and the certificate can be downloaded directly online.

3   Exam contents

3.1   Overview and weighting

The following overview of the exam content refers directly to the structure of the ISO 21502:2020 standard

Chapter / areas	Weighting in the exam
4 PM concepts	20%
5 Requirements for the formalization of PM	0%
6 PM organization	20%
7 PM practices	60%

Note: This certification exam does not include questions on chapter 5 of ISO 21502:2020 "Require-ments for formalizing PM". Justification: This basic certificate is aimed at people who want to apply PM concepts and PM practices within individual projects. The introduction of formalized PM systems should be accompanied and operated by people who have already gained relevant experience in project management.

The following diagram from the ISO 21500:2020 standard provides an overview of the topics in chapters 6 and 7, which together form the main part of this examination with a weighting of 80%:
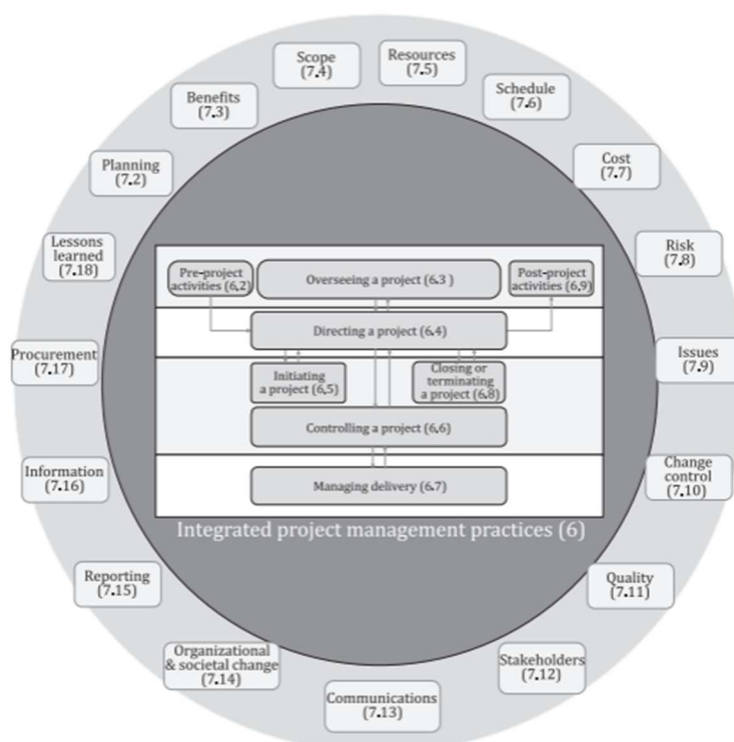

Figure 8 — Management practices for a project in relation to integrated project management practices

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The following table provides an overview of the objectives and non-objectives of the certification audit

Objective of the examination	Non-objective of the exam
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of project management concepts and practices	Demonstrate project management experience
Demonstrate the ability to accurately answer questions related to the ISO 21502:2020 standard in a limited time and without outside help (at least 65% correct answers must be achieved)	Proof of the transfer of the exam content into practice
Proof of basic knowledge of embedding projects in a larger context (strategy and objective, business requirements, framework conditions, opportunities and risks)	Proof of transfer into practice or even expert knowledge of the aspects listed on the left

Passing the exam proves that you have demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the basics of project management in accordance with ISO21502.

What exactly does this mean? The exam questions are formulated in such a way that mere memorization is not enough. The questions are aimed at determining whether you have a basic understanding of project work and project management and can apply this in practice.

3.2 PM concepts

This examination area deals with the basic terms and concepts of project work. These include the project context, project governance, various project lifecycle models (from classic to agile), the central roles and their interaction as well as the expectations of the competencies of project personnel.

The following overview of the exam content is structured according to the ISO 21502:2020 standard:

Topic	Sub-topic
4.1 Overview	- Basic terms - Project vs. operational business - Project management
4.2 Project context	- Factors influencing the project - Relationship between strategy and project - Customer and supplier perspectives - Project as part of a program or portfolio
4.3 Project governance	- Corporate guidelines and specifications for projects - Business case or cost/benefit analysis
4.4 Project lifecycles *Note: The ISO21502:2020 standard does not address the various development approaches / process models in detail. However, a basic understanding of the different approaches is expected.*	- Classic/plan-driven - Agile - Hybrid

4.5 Project organization and roles	• Project organization forms • Project management • Project support • Work package manager • Project team member • Stakeholder
4.6 Expectations regarding the competencies of project personnel	• Methodological and technical skills • Behavioral skills (soft skills)

3.3 PM organization

The questions in this examination area revolve around the practices that are aimed at the "big picture" of a project in a company. This includes the creation of a project, presentation of the business case, the overall monitoring and control of the project and its completion. The questions are structured according to the chapters of the ISO 21502 standard

Chapter / Topics	Contents
6.1 Overview	• Basic terms
6.2 Activities before the start of the project	• Deriving the strategic relevance, the need for action and the core requirements for the project • Creation of the business case or a benefit analysis • Clarification of staffing and the roles of *client /* sponsor and project manager • Basic assurance that the organization has resources (personnel, budget, ...) available
6.3 Monitoring the project from the company's perspective	• Involvement of the company in central evaluations and decisions • Regular reporting on the progress of the project, including forecasts on further progress • Monitoring reviews and audits • Ad hoc escalations and, if necessary, control measures
6.4 Control of the project by the client / sponsor	• Continuous review of the relevance of the project objectives and benefits • Achievability of the objectives by the project team • Adjustment of the business case if necessary • Ensuring that the project requirements are met and quality is achieved • Ensure appropriate use of resources • If necessary, continuation of the project under changed framework conditions or termination of project execution
6.5 Project initiation	• Clarification of the project charter • Team mobilization • Choice of project approach (classic, agile, hybrid) • Initial project planning • Project approval
6.6 Project controlling	• Project planning, steering and controlling • Management of project performance • Management of phase transitions • Management of work packages

6.7 Management of deliveries	• Definition of the required outputs (deliverables and services) and outcomes (results, changes) • Planning and monitoring the scheduled delivery • Enabling the expected improvements to be realized
6.8 Completing or canceling the project	• Confirmation of service delivery • Cancellation in case of emergency • Release of resources • Securing and transferring the knowledge and experience gained (lessons learned)
6.9 Activities after project completion	• Ensuring the anchoring and sustainability of the project results and changes • Ensuring the realization of benefits • Post-calculation of the project benefits

3.4 PM practices

This examination domain deals with project practices at an operational level, i.e. within the project. In the certification exam, these aspects make up 60% of the overall exam. These are the practices in the outer ring of the already familiar diagram.

The following overview of the exam content directly references the structure of the ISO 21502:2020 standard

Chapter / Topics	Contents
7.1 Overview	• Project practices as a checklist for the key topics in project management
7.2 Planning	• Basic processes within the topics such as planning, steering, controlling and reflection • Basic plan and updates • Monitoring project progress against the plan
7. 3 Benefits management	• Analysis of the business case or project benefits • Observing the project environment • *Monitoring whether the expected project benefits can still be realized* • If necessary, adjustment of the project specifications and realignment
7.4 Content management (scope)	• Definition of the content and scope of the project as part of the project assignment • Detailing and breakdown of the project content • Handling of content changes (change requests) • Handling acceptance of the delivered results
7.5 Resource management	• Identification and provision of required resources • Clarification of roles and responsibilities • Creating a project organization chart • Team formation and development • Handling physical resources
7.6 Schedule management	• Identification of activities and dependencies • Estimating the processing time • Developing a schedule • Dealing with buffers • Monitoring the schedule

7.7 Cost management	• Cost estimation • Budget planning • Monitoring cost compliance
7.8 Risk management	• Identification of risks • Estimating the probability of occurrence and impact • Treatment of risks • Monitoring the effectiveness of risk management and making adjustments if necessary
7.9 Issue management	• Recognition and classification of issues • Identification of causes • Solving the problems
7.10 Change management (change requests)	• Process for project order changes • Collection, evaluation and approval
7.11 Quality management	• Planning the procedure for quality assurance • Implementation of quality assurance (constructive and analytical)
7.12 Stakeholder management	• Identification of stakeholders • Analysis of stakeholder interests and influences • Stakeholder involvement and management
7.13 Communication management	• Identification of communication needs • Agreements on the type, scope and frequency of communication • Monitoring of effectiveness and adjustment if necessary
7.14 Dealing with organizational or social changes	• Identifying the need for change in the organization / social system in order to realize the benefits of the project • Development of measures to support the change and reduce resistance • Monitoring and supporting the change
7.15 Reporting	• Planning of project reporting • Regular summary of the project status
7.16 Information management	• Planning project documentation and information • Monitoring the creation of documents and information
7.17 Dealing with procurements	• Analyzing which products and services are to be procured or purchased • Determining suitable procurement processes • Selecting suitable providers • Obtaining offers • Evaluation of offers and selection of providers • Contract negotiation and conclusion • Monitoring the contractually owed services • Formal conclusion
7.18 Lessons learned	• Reflection on teamwork and its efficiency • Analysis and improvement of cooperation • Systematic acquisition and reuse of new knowledge • Documentation of findings for third parties

4   Examples of exam questions

You will be asked the following types of questions in the certification exam:

What is project management most like?
1. Handling the most important issues
2. Leading the project team to achieve the project objective
3. Working on project content that requires management know-how
4. Managing and administering a project

Stakeholders include a total of ......
1. Project managers with responsibility for achieving the project objectives
2. People in an organization who are responsible for guidelines and tools for projects.
3. Persons or groups of persons involved in a project or affected by the project results.
4. Individuals or groups who formulate and commission a project

Which PM approach is usually the quickest way to achieve the first usable results?
1. with agile methods
2. with classic plan-driven methods
3. without a methodical approach
4. with a hybrid approach and project phases

What is a project steering committee?
1. Group of selected key players who manage a project together.
2. Group of selected stakeholders who monitor, steer and support the project.
3. Group of selected project employees who see themselves as a core team.
4. Group of top managers who manage the projects in a project portfolio.

A project is behind schedule, what is a sensible course of action?
1. Review where time can be saved and draw up a new plan
2. Integrate additional employees into the project
3. Ask the client to postpone the deadline
4. Arrange weekend work

The correct solutions are 2, 3, 1, 2 and 1

5 Hints

5.1 Certification of companies and organizations

Companies and organizations that want to establish a professional PM system for their projects or align it with an international standard can also be certified according to ISO21500. Please contact AUDITISO directly for further information.

5.2 AUDITISO - Auditing and certifying organization

AUDITISO, is a cooperation of companies with the aim of bringing project management closer to a broad target group, promoting it in companies and in personal life and putting it on a simple, understandable basis with the guidelines of ISO 21500.

We promote, advise, coach, train and certify project management according to ISO 21500.

Our reputation is based on our own certifications according to PMI, ISO, SCRUM and ITIL, on decades of project management experience in a wide range of industries, topics and sizes as well as on our entrepreneurial thinking and actions. AUDITISO is currently not yet accredited by the DAkkS or similar organisations.

The founding companies are the online marketing company fusePRO and the project management consultancy TRAVISION GmbH.

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