

P3O® PRACTITIONER EXAM CANDIDATE GUIDANCE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The objectives of the examination are to enable a candidate to demonstrate an understanding of Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O) and an ability to apply the method in an appropriate way in a given set of circumstances described in a scenario. The Practitioner exam uses objective test questions which require a candidate to choose a response to a question from a set of choices, only one of which is correct.
- 1.2 The following paragraphs explain the format of the question papers, and the different types of question asked. There are also some suggestions on how to approach answering the various types of question.
- 1.3 The P3O Registered Practitioner qualification is valid for 5 years. Practitioners should be re-registered within 3-5 years of their original certification in order to demonstrate their commitment to professional development. Details of the Practitioner Re-Registration examination can be found at section 9.

2 STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

The examination paper consists of three booklets.

- 2.1 The Scenario Booklet will contain one scenario providing a description of the organization, its portfolio of programmes and projects and their support structures, and an indication of the P3M3 maturity and proposed P3O model. The Scenario Booklet may also provide additional information for one or more of the four questions. Where additional information is to be used, this is clearly stated in bold within the part-question. **Additional information is only to be used for the part-question to which it relates.**

If there is no reference to additional information or the Scenario within a question, then candidates should answer the question using only the information contained within the question. **In this case the Scenario provides the background and context to the overall P3O implementation but not the facts required to answer the question.**

- 2.2 The Question Booklet will contain four questions, each covering a different syllabus area or combination of syllabus areas which will be clearly identified at the beginning of each question. Each of the four questions contains 20 question lines, each of which attracts 1 mark, giving a total of 80 marks. The pass mark is 40 (50%). Each of the four questions will be sub-divided into parts. Each of the part-questions will identify the portion of the 20 marks allocated to it. Candidates are expected to answer all questions and part-questions.
- 2.3 The Answer Booklet will contain the answer sheets on which the answers must be given. There will only ever be **one answer** to each question unless it is clearly stated otherwise within the question. If more than one answer is given in the answer booklet, but not required by the question, the response line will be void.

3 P3O SYLLABUS AREAS ADDRESSED

3.1 The P3O Syllabus contains six defined syllabus areas, as shown in the following table.

Syllabus Area
Overview
Why have a P3O?
Models and tailoring
Implement and re-energize
How to operate a P3O (including tools and techniques)
Roles

The Overview syllabus area will not be examined separately but details from this syllabus section may be included in the questions on each of the other syllabus areas. The full P3O syllabus is available from the APM Group or from an Accredited Training Organization.

Note that Appendix D of the P3O Guide includes a reference to the online repository on the Best Management Practice website at:

<http://www.best-management-practice.com/P3-Offices-P3O/>

Questions will not be based on the repository as this information is not accessible during the open book Practitioner examination.

3.2 As well as covering a syllabus area each part-question will be written from the viewpoint of a Portfolio, Programme or Project Office. The majority of the questions are examined from the Portfolio Office perspective. For questions being examined from a Programme/Project Office perspective, this will be clearly indicated at the start of the part-question.

Note that Programme and Project Offices also need to understand and deploy Portfolio concepts e.g. optimization and prioritization of resources.

4 TYPES OF QUESTION

There are five different types of question used within the paper.

4.1 **Classic Multiple Choice Questions** – ‘choose **one** from a list of possible options’. The correct response is to be selected from a list of 3 or 4 options.

Using the Scenario, answer the following questions about the P3O.	
1	<p>The Chief Executive Officer is to act as SRO for the programme being initiated to set up the P3O. Is this an appropriate application of P3O for this portfolio?</p> <p>A No, because the P3O Sponsor should not be a member of the Corporate Board.</p> <p>B No, because senior managers will want to see some personal incentive for making the required change.</p> <p>C Yes, because a critical success factor is having a proactive senior manager as P3O Sponsor.</p> <p>D Yes, because P3O sponsors should be members of the Corporate Board for all</p>

	model types.
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4.2 **Multiple Response** – ‘choose two correct options from a list of 5 options’. This question follows exactly the same format as the ‘Classic style’, but more than one answer is required. It is the **only question type that requires more than one response to gain a mark**. Both responses must be correct to gain a mark. If more or fewer than 2 responses are given, then the answer will be void.

Using the Scenario, answer the following questions.

Remember to select 2 answers to each question.

1	Which 2 costs should be included in the Business Case for the P3O?
	<p>A Training staff in use of new software after the roll out of the IT Refresh Programme.</p> <p>B Planned staff redundancies as a result of shop closures.</p> <p>C Updating the current staff training catalogue.</p> <p>D Salaries for the P3O roles in future years after the P3O has been implemented and is in operation.</p> <p>E Training members of staff working in the Training Programme Office in knowledge management techniques.</p>

4.3 **Matching** – ‘link items in one list to items in a second list’. There is **only one correct response** to each question, but options from the second list may be used once, more than once or not at all.

Using the Scenario, answer the following question about the Business Case for the P3O.

Column 1 is a list of statements to be included in the Business Case. Column 2 is a selection of headings from the Business Case. For each statement in Column 1, select from Column 2 the Business Case heading under which it should be recorded. Each selection from Column 2 can be used once, more than once or not at all.

	Column 1	Column 2
1	The establishment of the P3O will enable Buyitall to focus its investment in the Rescue Package on the elements which offer the highest strategic value.	<p>A Aims/Objectives</p> <p>B Background/Reasons</p>
2	Use of facilitated workshops at the start of each programme or project in the Rescue Package will reduce start-up timeframes by 10%.	<p>C Cost-benefit analysis</p> <p>D High risks</p>
3	Within 24 months of implementing the P3O, Buyitall will improve its portfolio maturity level.	

- 4.4 **Assertion/Reason** – ‘evaluate two statements (an assertion and a reason), to determine if either, both or neither is true and, if both are true, whether the reason explains why the assertion is true’. If either statement is false, the answer is selected from options C, D or E. If both statements are true, a third step is required. If the reason explains why the assertion is true, the answer is A. If it does not, the answer is B.

Using the Scenario and the additional information provided for this question in the *Scenario Booklet*, answer the following question.

Each line in the table below consist of an assertion statement and a reason statement. Each line relates to one of the items in the Extract from the Further P3M3 Capability Assessment Report in the additional information. For each line identify the appropriate option, from options A to E, that applies. Each option can be used once, more than once or not at all.

Option	Assertion	Reason	
A	True	True	AND the reason explains the assertion
B	True	True	BUT the reason does not explain the assertion
C	True	False	
D	False	True	
E	False	False	

	Assertion		Reason
1	Entry 1 indicates that the Portfolio Office has set up correct processes regarding decision escalation.	BECAUSE	The Portfolio Office should decide which projects each programme should initiate.
2	Entry 2 indicates that the Portfolio Office is preparing for the process of prioritizing investment.	BECAUSE	Understanding all of the change initiatives is a key input to portfolio prioritization.
3	Entry 3 indicates that the Portfolio Office is adding value to the management of the change initiatives at Buyitall.	BECAUSE	An office within a P3O model can monitor benefits on behalf of the business owners.
4	Entry 4 indicates that the Portfolio Office is NOT operating effectively.	BECAUSE	A Portfolio Office should manage all the risks to an organization’s change objectives.

The relevant additional information for this example is:

Extract from the Further P3M3 Assessment Report	
1.	A report by the Portfolio Office analyzing the dependencies between projects in the Training Programme has been submitted and considered by the Corporate Portfolio Board.
2.	The Portfolio Office has now obtained information on all of the projects and programmes that are currently being carried out within the organization.
3.	The Portfolio Office has reviewed all of the benefits listed for the Rescue Package and has identified where there is overlap between improvements being claimed by the Online Programme and the Retail Rationalization Programme.
4.	The Training and Retail Rationalization programme offices are assisting with the management of individual programme risks that do not require escalation to portfolio level.

For example, in question 2 and 3 of the example provided on the previous page, the assertion statement is true but the answer to question 2 is an A and question 3 a B.

In question 2 the reason statement is true and provides an explanation for the assertion. The assertion is also true and is a consequence of the additional information statement. The answer is A.

In question 3 both the assertion and reason statements are true but there is no direct cause and effect relationship between them. The answer is therefore B.

There is **only one correct response** to each question, but options can be used once, more than once or not at all.

5 **LEARNING LEVELS**

Part-questions will vary in their level of difficulty depending on the learning objective of the test. The learning levels are shown below.

P3O Learning Outcomes Assessment Model				
	1. Knowledge	2. Comprehension	3. Application	4. Analysis
Generic Definition from APMG Learning Outcomes Assessment Model	Know key facts, terms and concepts from the manual/guidance	Understand key concepts from the manual/guidance	Be able to apply key concepts relating to the syllabus area for a given scenario	Be able to analyse and distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use of the method/guidance for a given scenario situation

P3O Learning Outcome Assessment Model	Know facts, including terms, concepts, principles, model types and components, tools, techniques, roles and responsibilities from the guidance.	Understand the key concepts, principles, processes, themes, organizational factors and roles and explain their application.	Be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Justify a case to develop a P3O model; (ii) Use appropriate information and techniques to identify and implement the correct P3O model for an organization; (iii) Use tools and techniques appropriately; (iv) Identify the functions and services to be provided by a P3O model and the correct roles to implement them for a given scenario. 	Be able to analyse and distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use of the guidance through appraisal of the justification, planning, design, implementation and running of a P3O model for a given scenario.
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Within a question, the part-questions will typically be assembled in order of ascending learning level. However, due to the logical flow of the paper, this may not always be the case.

The focus of the exam is on the application and evaluation learning objectives. A whole paper will contain a maximum of 8 marks in total for level 2 questions and no level 1 questions.

6 TIME MANAGEMENT

The exam is 150 minutes in duration. Candidates must manage their time in order to complete all questions. As a general guide, candidates may wish to spend the first 15 minutes reading the scenario information and getting familiar with the layout of the paper. If 30 minutes is then allocated for each of the four questions, this will allow 15 minutes tolerance for additional reading required for some questions. This suggested timing is for **guidance only**. It is expected that some questions may take longer to answer than others due to the question styles and use of additional information.

Reference to the candidates own annotated P3O guide is permitted during the exam. **No additional support material** is permitted; this includes post it notes (other than tabulation of the sections of the manual) and stapled sheets. Candidates should be aware of the time constraint upon them. Whilst the manual is there for support, as in real life, the time pressure of the exam means that the questions **have not been designed** on the basis that candidates are required or even expected to use the manual to answer questions. Its use is optional. As a guide, a candidate might check the manual once or twice in an exam for a specific point but any more than that is likely to be counter-productive and is not advised.

7 EDITORIAL NOTES

7.1 Throughout the Scenario Booklet and Question Booklet, title case has been used for all references to P3O processes, roles, offices within a P3O model, documentation and proper nouns.

The following standard abbreviations used in the guide are not expanded in the paper:

P3O Portfolio, Programme and Project Office

P3M3 Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model

COE Centre of Excellence

PPM Portfolio, Programme and Project and Risk Management

7.2 **Uses of “should”, “will” and “must”.**¹

“should” - is used to express “obligation”: something that is good or important or recommended. It is less strong than must and is used to test whether something should be done in a scenario situation because it is consistent with the principles and recommended practices of P3O.

Consider the following statement, “*The Business Planning Director **should** be appointed as Head of the Portfolio Office*”

Given the scenario information provided, the Business Planning Director may or may not be the appropriate candidate for the Head of Portfolio Office, in terms of his ability to perform the P3O responsibilities for that role. Use of “should” requires the reader to evaluate this.

“must” is used when talking about something that is “necessary” or “has” to occur, i.e. something that is mandatory.

“will” and “is” however are used to express something definite or indisputable facts about P3O, e.g. to describe generic facts about the P3O content.

¹ *Definitions are derived from Michael Swan's 'Practical English Usage'*

7.3 Use of 'true statements'

Using the Scenario, answer the following questions about the implementation of the P3O.

Each question provides a list of only **true statements** about activities undertaken within the P3O Implementation Programme, but only 2 statements are appropriate for that part of the implementation.

Remember to select 2 answers to each question.

1	<p>Which 2 activities should be undertaken as part of the 'Identify' process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Analyse the P3M3 assessment results showing a maturity level of 1 to identify an appropriate tranche-based plan. B Involve the Head of COE in initial problem identification workshops. C Produce new Business Case approval procedures based on processes followed by contractors in the past. D Identify the members of the COE as part of the team to implement the P3O. E Involve the Purchasing Director in identifying the enabling and restraining governance that the P3O model should deliver.
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When the expression '**true statements**' is used in a question, **no evaluation of whether the statements are consistent with the scenario or additional information is required.**

In example 7.3 there is no need to check the scenario to see if the statements are true. The assessment required is whether, according to the recommended P3O sections of the Blueprint, the Processes section is the correct place for recording this information.

8 USING THE ANSWER BOOKLET


The Answer Booklets will be read electronically and the results generated by computer. It is therefore essential that candidates follow the instructions given and mark their answers accordingly. Failure to do so may lead to delay and, in some cases, answers being void.

All answers are given by the candidate filling in 'ovals' that relate to their chosen response, e.g.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The oval must be filled in **IN PENCIL, NOT PEN**. If a pen is used, the answers will not be marked.

Acceptable ways to complete the answer sheets are either:

 completely filling in the oval or  drawing a line through the centre of the oval, ensuring that between 80-100% is filled.

Any other method, including ticks or crosses, is not acceptable and may not be marked.

If a candidate wishes to change their answer during the exam, the incorrect answer should be erased completely and the correct answer indicated. If more than one answer is given by the candidate, and the question only requires one answer, the question will score zero.

9. RE-REGISTRATION EXAM

The Re-registration exam will follow the same format as the Practitioner exam but the Question Booklet will contain two questions, giving a total of 40 marks, to be answered within 1.5 hours. The pass mark is 20 (50%). Each question will test one or more of the syllabus areas.

All other guidance is applicable to both the P3O Practitioner and Re-registration examinations.