

# PMI Certification Career Map

A complete reference guide to every PMI credential — what it covers, who it's for, and where it fits in your career.

**TYPE KEY:** ■ Flagship ■ Foundational ■ Agile / Hybrid ■ Specialized ■ AI / Emerging

## CERTIFICATION PROFILES

<b>CAPM</b> Certified Associate in Project Management	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Entry Level (0–2 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	High school diploma + 23 hrs PM education. No experience required.
<b>Exam</b>	150 questions · 3 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	None (retake every 5 yrs)
<b>Ideal For</b>	Students, recent graduates, coordinators, and career changers building a foundation in project management.

<b>PMP</b> Project Management Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior PM (2–10 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 36 months leading projects + 35 hrs education. OR high school + 60 months + 35 hrs.
<b>Exam</b>	180 questions · 230 minutes
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	60 PDUs every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	Practicing PMs with 3–5+ years of experience leading projects end-to-end. Highest-ROI certification for most PM careers.

<b>PMI-ACP</b> PMI Agile Certified Practitioner	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior PM (2–10 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	2,000 hrs general project exp + 1,500 hrs agile project exp + 21 hrs agile training.
<b>Exam</b>	120 questions · 3 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	30 PDUs every 3 years (in agile)
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMs in agile or hybrid environments who want multi-framework fluency across Scrum, Kanban, SAFe, Lean, and XP.

<b>PMI-CPMAI</b> PMI Certified Professional in Managing AI	
<b>Career Stage</b>	All Career Stages
<b>Experience Req</b>	No prior PM or AI experience required. Must complete PMI's CPMAI Exam Prep Course (~21 hrs) before scheduling the exam.
<b>Exam</b>	120 questions · 120 minutes · Pearson VUE
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	30 PDUs every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMs, product managers, and digital transformation professionals who manage AI initiatives. A strong differentiator for any PM working where AI adoption is accelerating.

<b>PgMP</b> Program Management Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Senior PM · Executive (5+ yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 4 yrs project exp + 4 yrs program mgmt. OR high school + 4 yrs project + 7 yrs program mgmt.
<b>Exam</b>	170 questions · 4 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	60 PDUs every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	Senior PMs managing multiple related projects, or those transitioning to Director/VP of PM roles.

<b>PfMP</b> Portfolio Management Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Executive (10+ yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 8 yrs business exp + 5 yrs portfolio mgmt. Fewer than 5,000 holders worldwide.
<b>Exam</b>	170 questions · 4 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	60 PDUs every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMO Directors, VPs of PM, and executives aligning project investments to organizational strategy.

<b>PMI-RMP</b> Risk Management Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior PM (2–10 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 3,000 hrs risk mgmt exp + 30 hrs risk training. OR high school + 4,500 hrs + 40 hrs.
<b>Exam</b>	115 questions · 2.5 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	30 PDUs in risk every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMs in high-stakes industries (defense, pharma, infrastructure, finance) where risk management is a core function.

<b>PMI-SP</b> Scheduling Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior PM (2–10 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 3,500 hrs scheduling exp + 30 hrs scheduling training.
<b>Exam</b>	115 questions · 2.5 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	30 PDUs in scheduling every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	Project schedulers and PMs in large capital projects where schedule management is a dedicated function.

<b>PMI-PBA</b> Professional in Business Analysis	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior PM (2–10 yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr degree + 4,500 hrs BA experience + 35 hrs BA education.
<b>Exam</b>	200 questions · 4 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	60 PDUs (at least 35 in BA) every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMs who lead requirements definition, product discovery, or stakeholder needs analysis in technology or process improvement contexts.

<b>PMI-CP</b> PMI Construction Professional	
<b>Career Stage</b>	Mid-Level · Senior · Executive (5+ yrs)
<b>Experience Req</b>	4-yr construction degree + 48 months PM exp. OR 8-yr degree equivalent + 60 months exp.
<b>Exam</b>	120 questions · 4 hours
<b>PDU Maintenance</b>	60 PDUs every 3 years
<b>Ideal For</b>	PMs in construction, civil engineering, real estate development, and infrastructure.

## RECOMMENDED CAREER PATHWAY

Most PMs follow a core track, then layer specializations based on industry and role.

<p><b>Entry Level</b> 0–2 years</p>	<p><b>Certifications: CAPM</b></p> <p>Focus on gaining PM experience. Support projects, earn your 23 education hours, study PMBOK. CAPM validates foundational knowledge before you accumulate the hours for PMP.</p>
<p><b>Mid-Level</b> 2–5 years</p>	<p><b>Certifications: PMP · PMI-ACP · PMI-CPMAI</b></p> <p>Critical investment window. PMP is the single highest-ROI certification. Layer PMI-ACP if your org runs Agile. Add PMI-CPMAI if you're managing or moving into AI initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Senior PM</b> 5–10 years</p>	<p><b>Certifications: PgMP · PMI-RMP · PMI-SP · PMI-PBA · PMI-CP</b></p> <p>Layer specializations based on industry and role. PgMP for program leadership. Specialized certs (RMP, SP, PBA, CP) for domain-specific roles. Choose 1–2 max — don't collect.</p>
<p><b>Executive</b> 10+ years</p>	<p><b>Certifications: PfMP · PgMP</b></p> <p>PfMP is rare and selective — fewer than 5,000 holders globally. Signals executive portfolio leadership. Earn PgMP first if not already held.</p>

## AT-A-GLANCE COMPARISON

Side-by-side summary of all PMI certifications. Use this table to compare requirements before committing to a study path.

Cert	Category	Experience Required	Exam	PDUs	Best For
<b>CAPM</b>	Foundational	High school diploma + 23 hrs PM education. No experience required.	150 questions · 3 hours	None (retake every 5 yrs)	Students, recent graduates, coordinators, and career changers building a foundation in project management.
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<b>PMI-ACP</b>	Agile / Hybrid	2,000 hrs general project exp + 1,500 hrs agile project exp + 21 hrs agile training.	120 questions · 3 hours	30 PDUs every 3 years (in agile)	PMs in agile or hybrid environments who want multi-framework fluency across Scrum, Kanban, SAFe, Lean, and XP.
<b>PMI-CPMAI</b>	AI / Emerging	No prior PM or AI experience required. Must complete PMI's CPMAI Exam Prep Course (~21 hrs) before scheduling the exam.	120 questions · 120 minutes · Pearson VUE	30 PDUs every 3 years	PMs, product managers, and digital transformation professionals who manage AI initiatives. A strong differentiator for any PM working where AI adoption is accelerating.
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<b>PfMP</b>	Flagship	4-yr degree + 8 yrs business exp + 5 yrs portfolio mgmt. Fewer than 5,000 holders worldwide.	170 questions · 4 hours	60 PDUs every 3 years	PMO Directors, VPs of PM, and executives aligning project investments to organizational strategy.
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<b>PMI-SP</b>	Specialized	4-yr degree + 3,500 hrs scheduling exp + 30 hrs scheduling training.	115 questions · 2.5 hours	30 PDUs in scheduling every 3 years	Project schedulers and PMs in large capital projects where schedule management is a dedicated function.
<b>PMI-PBA</b>	Specialized	4-yr degree + 4,500 hrs BA experience + 35 hrs BA education.	200 questions · 4 hours	60 PDUs (at least 35 in BA) every 3 years	PMs who lead requirements definition, product discovery, or stakeholder needs analysis in technology or process improvement contexts.
<b>PMI-CP</b>	Specialized	4-yr construction degree + 48 months PM exp. OR 8-yr degree equivalent + 60 months exp.	120 questions · 4 hours	60 PDUs every 3 years	PMs in construction, civil engineering, real estate development, and infrastructure.

## STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

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Key considerations for choosing the right certification at the right time.

### **Start with CAPM or PMP**

These are the market's most recognized credentials. CAPM for those still building experience; PMP for practicing PMs. Everything else builds on this foundation.

### **PMP is Hybrid Now**

Since 2021, the PMP exam covers Agile, hybrid, and predictive approaches equally. You don't need a separate Agile cert if PMP is your goal.

### **PMI-CPMAI: No Experience Required**

Unique among PMI certs — no prior PM or AI experience needed. Complete the ~21-hr PMI prep course and sit the exam. Relevant at every career stage as AI adoption accelerates.

### **Layer Specializations Strategically**

Add PMI-ACP if your org runs Agile. Add PgMP if you manage programs of projects. Add PfMP for executive-level roles. Earn certs that match your actual work — don't collect.

### **PDU Keep You Active**

Most PMI certs require 60 PDUs every 3 years to maintain. Plan this into your professional development budget — conferences, courses, and volunteer work all qualify.

### **PfMP Signals Executive Readiness**

Fewer than 5,000 people hold the PfMP globally. It carries significant weight in VP, Director, and PMO leadership conversations.