

BCS Programme and Project Support Office Essentials and Advanced Certificates Syllabus

**Version 5.5
December 2016**

This professional certification is not regulated by the following United Kingdom Regulators - Ofqual, Qualification in Wales, CCEA or SQA

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Change History

Any changes made to the syllabus shall be clearly documented with a change history log. This shall include the latest version number, date of the amendment and changes made. The purpose is to identify quickly what changes have been made.

Version Number and Date	Changes Made
Version 5.5 December 2016	Strapline regarding regulated statement has been added
Version 5.4 December 2015	Removed reference to on-line delivery organisations
Version 5.3 April 2015	Removal of the oral exam element from the Advanced PPSO Certificate.
Version 5.2 March 2015	Updated language requirements for additional time and use of dictionaries. Updated requirements for calculators. Standardised the trainer requirements
Version 5.1 October 2013	Updated trainer requirements with minimum pass rate.
Version 5.0 September 2012	Update to Training Criteria section – 80% pass mark removed. Added a section that states that candidates are allowed the use of (BCS supplied) calculators in paper based Essentials examinations. Prometric candidates can take their own calculator which must not be scientific or programmable. BCS on-line examinations will have in-built calculators. Added Section regarding additional time.
Version 4.0 May 2012	Learning hours added to the format of the examination. No change to the content of the syllabus
Version 3.1 August 2011	Added in Reading List and updated logos and standardised syllabus format. Added in Levels of Knowledge and Skills, trainer criteria and classroom size.
Version 3.0	Re-branded and re-formatted. Added in the examination format on final page.

Essentials Certificate Objectives

Holders of the BCS Certificate in Programme and Project Support Office Essentials should be able to demonstrate good understanding of the following:

- Programme and Project Organisation Structures
- Programme and Project Planning
- Programme and Project Documentation
- Programme and Project Monitoring and Reporting
- Exception Situations
- Risk Management
- Business Case Techniques
- Configuration Management
- Quality Management
- Supporting the Use of the Techniques

Advanced Certificate Objectives

Holders of the BCS Advanced Certificate in Programme and Project Support should be able to:

- Produce Terms of Reference for the Programme/Project Support Office
- Produce the Business Case for the Programme/Project Support Office
- Design the Programme/Project Support Office
- Set up and staff the Programme/Project Support Office
- Set and maintain service level agreements for business level and project level services
- Demonstrate the ability to tailor/apply PSO Advanced techniques to a given scenario:
 - Programme and Project Lifecycles
 - Programme, Project, Product and System Development Methods
 - Support Tools
 - Dealing with non-programme or non-project work
 - Dealing with difficult situations
 - The Business Case(advanced)
 - Marketing the PSO
- Keeping the PSO current

Entry Criteria for the Essentials Certificate in PPSO Exam

This qualification is aimed at those new to PPSO work who will be operating at a relatively junior level. Candidates should have a basic working knowledge of IT, and it is recommended that all candidates attend a BCS approved training course run by an [Accredited Training Organisation](#).

Entry Criteria for the Advanced Certificate in PPSO Exam

Candidates should have a basic working knowledge of IT, and it is recommended that all candidates attend a BCS approved training course run by an [Accredited Training Organisation](#). Candidates must hold the BCS Essentials Certificate in PPSO.

The Essentials Certificate in PPSO Examination

The examination is a one hour closed book examination and will consist of 40 multiple choice questions. The pass mark is 26/40.

The Advanced Certificate in PPSO Examination

The examination is a 2 hour written examination preceded by 15 minutes reading time. It consists of one mandatory question and any other two questions from the remaining three. Candidates need to pass Question 1 with 30 marks or more and an overall of 50% or more to pass.

Terminology Used

Terms available in the public domain and accepted as part of an approved methodology can be used in training and the examination. For examination purposes, where the candidate has any doubts about the acceptability of a term or uses other terminology, the meaning must be explained by the candidate in the exam script. Failure to do so may mean that fewer marks are awarded.

Both examinations may use PRINCE and MSP terminology in addition to generic terms.

Guidelines for Accredited Training Organisations

Each major subject heading in the syllabus is assigned an allocated time. The purpose of this is to give both guidance on the relative proportion of time to be allocated to each section of an accredited course and an approximate minimum time for the teaching of each section. Training Providers may spend more time than is indicated and candidates may spend more time again in reading and research.

The total time specified in this syllabus is 18 hours of lecture and practical work for the Essentials course and 32 hours for the Advanced course. The course may be delivered as a series of modules with gaps between them, as long as it meets all other constraints. Courses do not have to follow the same order as the syllabus.

Additional time for candidates requiring Reasonable Adjustments due to a disability

Candidates may request additional time if they require reasonable adjustments. Please refer to the [reasonable adjustments policy](#) for detailed information on how and when to apply.

Additional time for candidates whose language is not the language of the examination

If the examination is taken in a language that is not the candidate's native / official language then they are entitled to 25% extra time.

This will equate to 15 minutes for the Essentials examination and 30 minutes for the Advanced examination.

If the examination is taken in a language that is not the candidate's native / official language then they are entitled to use their own **paper** language dictionary (whose purpose is translation between the examination language and another national language) during the examination. Electronic versions of dictionaries will **not** be allowed into the examination room.

Use of Calculators (Essentials Examination Only)

Candidates taking paper based Essentials examination are allowed to use their own simple non-programmable calculator during this examination. No other calculators or mobile technology are acceptable.

Candidates taking the examination through Prometric or Pearson will be allowed to take their own calculators. These must be non-scientific and non-programmable calculators. Other devices with calculators such as phones are not permitted.

Candidates taking the BCS on-line examinations will have an application embedded into the examination which will allow candidate's access to a calculator on screen.

Essentials Certificate Syllabus

The PSO in Context

1. Role and types of Programme and Project Support Office
2. Programme/Project Support Services
3. Roles of and within the Programme and Project Management function

Content:

- Definitions of projects and programmes
- Names of the roles involved Programme Board, Project Board, etc
- What is a PSO
 - Examples of PSO business management to administration
 - The range of service – strategic planning to administration
 - Examples of different support roles
 - What should the PSO do

PSO Techniques

Part One: Programme and Project Organisation Structures

1. Examples of organisation structures
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Tailoring the standard structures

Content:

- Why Programme and Project Management need an organisation structure
- The benefits they provide
- Example of roles and responsibilities
- Programme Management organisation structure
- Project Management organisation structure
- Tuning to the requirements of a specific programme or project

Part Two: Programme and Project Planning

1. Principles of Planning
2. Product Based Planning
3. PBS
4. PFD
5. Product Descriptions
6. Activity Based Planning
7. Networks
8. Network Analysis
9. Resource Planning and Task and Resource Categories
10. Estimating Techniques
11. Levels of Plans
12. Tolerance and Contingency

Content:

- The reasons for planning
- The benefits from planning
- The methods and techniques
- Work and Product Breakdown Structures
- Work and Product Flow Diagrams
- Project Network Technique
- Forward Pass
- Backward Pass
- CPA
- Resource smoothing
- Duration and work effort

Part Three: Programme and Project Documentation

1. Feasibility studies
2. Programme briefs
3. Project mandates and briefs
4. Programme Definition Statements
5. Project Initiation Documents
6. Monitoring and control documents
7. End of Project Stage Reports
8. End of Programme – Tranche or Stage Report
9. Programme and Project closure reports
10. Post Project and Programme Review Reports

Content:

- The reason for Programme and Project Control Documents
- Where in the lifecycle are these documents used?
- What are Programme Control Documents?
- Who develops and uses Programme Control Documents?
- What are Project Control Documents?
- Who develops and uses Project Control Documents?
- Tuning the Control Documents for a Specific Programme or Project

Part Four: Programme and Project Monitoring and Reporting

1. Progress Reports: content and format
2. Gathering data
3. Ensuring accuracy
4. Timesheet systems

Content:

- Why are they required?
- The various types of programme and project Progress Reports
- What should be contained in programme and project Progress Reports?
- The measures of progress
- Designing an effective reporting system
- Timesheet systems
- Applying these systems to business-as-usual and non-project work

Part Five: Exception Situations

1. Issues and Exceptions
2. Change Control Processes and Management

Content:

- What are Issues?
- What are Changes?
- Why do they need to be managed?
- How do they need to be managed?
- The need for Configuration Management
- What infrastructure and processes are required?

Part Six: Risk Management

1. Risk Analysis
2. Risk Management

Content:

- What are risks?
- Why do they need to be managed?
- How do they need to be managed?
- An example of the Risk Management Process
- Examples of Risk Assessment
- What Infrastructure and processes are required?

Part Seven: Business Case Techniques

1. Defining Costs
2. Defining Benefits
3. Cost Benefit Analysis
4. Calculating Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) and Net Present Value (NPV)

Content:

- What is a Business Case
- Why do we need a Business Case
- Identifying the Options
- The Costs
- The Benefits

Part Eight: Configuration Management

1. Identification of Configuration Items
2. Configuration Control
3. Auditing and Status Accounting

Content:

- Why this technique/process is needed
- The process and steps
- The types of formats of the documents and the supporting techniques involved

Part Nine: Quality Management

1. Product Quality Reviews and Project Health Checks
2. Formal and informal reviews
3. Steps and processes
4. Quality documentation

Content:

- What is a Quality Review?
- What is a Quality Review designed to achieve?
- Programme and Project Quality Reviews
- Deliverable or Product Quality Review
- The roles and responsibilities in Deliverable or Product Quality Reviews
- The supporting infrastructure required

Part Ten: Supporting the use of the Techniques

1. Planning
2. Progress Monitoring and Control
3. Risk Management
4. Issue and Change Control
5. Quality Reviews

Content:

The methods used to support the use of these techniques:

- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Training
- Standards
- Workshops

Advanced Certificate Syllabus

PSO in Context

1. Role and types of Programme and Project Support Office
2. Programme/Project Support Services
3. Programme and Project Lifecycles
4. Programme and Project Management methods

Content:

- Definitions of projects and programmes
- Names of the roles involved in Programme Board, Project Board, etc
- What is a PSO
- Examples of PSO business management to administration
- The range of service – strategic planning to administration
- Examples of different support roles
- How can a PSO add value
- Introduction to Programme and Project lifecycle methods

PSO Techniques

Part One: Programme and Project Lifecycles

1. Why they are needed and what they consist of
2. How they are developed
3. How the PSO support their use
4. Added Value Reporting, Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Metrics, Assurance, Health Checks
5. The infrastructure needed to support their use
6. How to tailor the lifecycle

Content:

- Definition of what the lifecycles and methods are
- Why they are needed
- The role of the Programme or Project Commissioning Committee or its equivalent
- Supporting the programme and project lifecycle
- The infrastructure needed to support them

Part Two: Programme Management Methods

1. Why they are needed and what they consist of
2. How they are developed
3. How the PSO support their use
4. Added Value Reporting, Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Metrics, Assurance, Health Checks
5. The infrastructure needed to support their use
6. How to tailor the methods

Content:

- Definitions of what the methods are
- Why they are needed
- The role of the Programme Board
- Supporting the Programme and Programme Manager
- The infrastructure needed to support them

Part Three: Project Management Methods

1. Why they are needed and what they consist of
2. How they are developed
3. How the PSO support their use
4. Added Value Reporting, Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Metrics, Assurance, Health Checks.
5. The infrastructure need to support their use
6. How to tailor the methods

Content:

- Definitions of what the methods are
- Why they are needed
- The role of the Project Board
- Supporting the Project and the Project Manager
- The infrastructure needed to support them

Part Four: Product and System Development Methods

1. Why they are needed and what they consist of
2. How they are developed
3. How the PSO support their use
4. Added Value Reporting, Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Metrics, Assurance, Health Checks

Content:

- Definitions of what the methods are
- Why they are needed
- The role of the Project Manager
- Supporting the methods
- The infrastructure needed to support them.
- How to tailor the methods

Part Five: Support Tools

1. Programme/Project Support Tools
2. Planning Tools
3. Timesheets and other Progress Monitoring Tools
4. Risk Management Tools
5. Configuration Management Tools
6. Other useful tools

Content:

- What these are
- Why they are needed for the PSO, Programme and Project Managers
- How to identify what tools are needed
- Types of tools available

Part Six: Dealing with non-programme and non-project work

1. Business as usual planning and monitoring
2. On-going work: planning and monitoring
3. Sickness, holidays and authorised absence
4. Planning the unplannable

Content:

- Why non-programme and non-project work must be dealt with
- What is business as usual?
- What is non-project work?
- What is non-programme work?
- Where do we need to take them into account?
- How are they allowed for?

Part Seven: Dealing with difficult situations

1. Non-conformance issues

Content:

- What these situations are
- Why they may arise
- How they should be dealt with

Part Eight: The Business Case (Advanced Level Techniques)

2. Identifying, defining and evaluating options
3. Risk and sensitivity analysis

Content:

- Why these techniques are needed
- The contents and steps in techniques

Part Nine: Marketing the PSO

1. Designing the Marketing Strategy and contents
2. Maintaining credibility and value of the Programme/Project Support Office

Content:

- Who are you selling to?
- What are you selling?
- What to sell
- What NOT to sell

Part Ten: Designing and installing the Programme and Project Support Office

1. The terms of reference for the Programme/Project Support Office
2. The Business Case for the Programme/Project Support Office
3. Designing the Programme/Project Support Office
4. Setting up and staffing the Programme/Project Support Office
5. Setting and maintaining service level agreements for business level and project level services

Content:

- Why should the PSO be designed
- How to decide what it should provide
- The recommended method of approach
- What interfaces with other processes will be needed?
- Identifying the sequence of implementation

Part Eleven: Keeping the PSO Current

1. Auditing the PSO
2. Updating the PSO for tomorrow's programme and projects

Content:

- Auditing principles
- Why and how to keep up-to-date

Format of the Essentials Examination

Type	40 Question Multiple Choice
Duration	1 hour If the examination is taken in a language that is not the candidate's native / official language then they are entitled to 25% extra time. If the examination is taken in a language that is not the candidate's native / official language then they are entitled to use their own paper language dictionary (whose purpose is translation between the examination language and another national language) during the examination. Electronic versions of dictionaries will not be allowed into the examination room. Candidates can use their own simple non-programmable calculator during this examination. No other calculators or mobile technology are acceptable.
Pre-Requisites	Accredited training is strongly recommended but not mandatory
Supervised/Invigilated	Yes
Open Book	No
Pass Mark	26/40
Distinction Mark	N/A
Calculators	Calculators are allowed in this examination
Delivery	Paper based examination or computer based examination
Learning Hours	18 hours

Format of the Advanced Examination

Type	Scenario based written examination consisting of 4 questions. 1 question is compulsory and the candidate can then select 2 or the remaining 3 questions to answer
Duration	2 hours If the examination is taken in a language that is not the candidate's native / official language then they are entitled to 25% extra time and use their own paper language dictionary (whose purpose is translation between the examination language and another national language) during the examination. Electronic versions of dictionaries will not be allowed into the examination room.
Pre-Requisites	Candidates must hold the PPSO Essentials Certificate and attendance at a course is strongly recommended although not mandated.
Supervised/Invigilated	Yes
Open Book	No
Pass Mark	50% (plus compulsory pass of 50% on mandatory question)
Distinction Mark	N/A
Calculators	Calculators cannot be used during this examination
Delivery	Paper based examination only
Learning Hours	32 hours

Trainer Criteria: PPSO Essentials

Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold the BCS Essentials Certificate in PPSO• Have 10 days training experience or hold a train the trainer qualification• Have a minimum of three years practical programme and project support office experience
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Trainer Criteria: PPSO Advanced

Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold the BCS Advanced Certificate in PPSO• Have 10 days training experience or hold a train the trainer qualification• Have a minimum of three years practical programme and project support office experience
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Classroom Size

Trainer to candidate ratio:	1:16
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Invigilator to Candidate Ratio during examination

Maximum	1:25
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Recommended Reading List

The following titles may provide useful background reading for candidates pursuing the Essentials or Advanced qualification. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Title [Managing Successful Projects](#)
Author AXELOS
Publisher The Stationery Office
Publication Date June 2009
ISBN 9780113310593

Title [Managing Successful Programmes](#)
Author AXELOS
Publisher The Stationery Office
Publication Date September 2011
ISBN 9780113313273

Title [An Introduction to Programme Management](#)
Author CCTA
Publisher HMSO
Publication Date December 1993
ISBN 9780113306114

Title [50 Checklists for Project and Programme Managers](#)
Author Rudy Kor & Gert Wijnen
Publisher Gower Publishing
Publication Date March 2000
ISBN 0566082780

Title [Programme Management Demystified](#)
Author Geoff Reiss
Publisher Routledge
Publication Date December 2002
ISBN 0419213503

Title [Project and Programme Support Office Handbook: Volume 1](#)
Author David Marsh
Publisher Project Manager Today Publications
Publication Date January 2000
ISBN 1900391058

Title [Project and Programme Support Office: Volume 2](#)
Author David Marsh
Publisher Project Manager Today Publications
Publication Date April 2000
ISBN 1900391066