

PMP Exam Performance – Winter 2009 Classes

This report presents and analyzes the performance of three classes who wrote the PMP exam in the Spring of 2009.

Exam Performance

The data on exam performance presented here comes principally from the PMI website. The PMP status of any individual can be checked at <https://www.pmi.org/CertApp/Registry.aspx>. I know who was registered in each class and which candidates wrote the paper based test, and thus I can determine who passed the exam.

On April 18, 2009, 29 class members wrote the paper-based PMP exam in Regina. The candidates wrote either version 5600 or 5700 of the exam. These were the same version numbers as the exams written in both Vancouver and Regina in December 2008. It is common practice for PMI to administer two versions of the paper exam in a single examination room. The two versions apparently contain virtually the same set of questions, but in different order. There may be some differences between the two versions, but they are apparently small.

Between April 6 and July 15 2009, another three Regina class members and fifteen Vancouver class members wrote a computer based PMP exam.

The table below displays the pass-fail performance of 47 candidates from three PMP Exam Preparation classes.

Paper and Computer Based Exams – Winter 2009 Classes

Class and Exam	Number Passed	Number Failed	Apparent Percent Passed
Sask Power - Paper	16	3	84%
Regina – Paper	8	2	80%
Regina – Computer	3	0	100%
Vancouver – Computer	15	0	100%
Aggregate	42	5	89%

When the results for the three groups are aggregated, the apparent over-all pass rate is just under 90%. I say ‘apparent’ because there may be other class members who attempted computer based tests and failed. I have no way of knowing about such attempts. However, none of the 17 other class members had booked an exam date by the end of March, and many may not have even submitted an application to write. Hence,

there is justification for assuming that these folks never did attempt the exam, and that the apparent pass rate is a realistic reflection of the actual pass rate.

The 89% aggregate pass rate marks a return to the historical norm for performance on the PMP exam by alumni of the Certification Preparation Seminar. The four classes that wrote the exam in December 2008 displayed a substantially lower aggregate pass rates: 66% on the paper based test and about the same for the small number who wrote the computer based test at the time. The Fall 2008 pass rates were substantially below the historical norms of roughly 95% for Vancouver and roughly 80% for Regina. The factors which appeared to contribute to the disappointing over-all performance were describe in a separate report [Fall 2008 Exam Performance.pdf]. The factors included:

- a greater proportion of junior people, with less project work experience and without university education
- more people having English as a second language
- versions of the PMP exam containing unusually high numbers of questions about the processes in the *PMBOK Guide*

For the Winter 2009 exams, there were no reports of an inordinate number of questions about the contents of the *Guide*. In the Fourth Edition of the *Guide*, the descriptions of process inputs, outputs, and tools have been simplified and rationalized. Consequently, one should be able to answer exam questions which are drawn from the *Guide* based on one's knowledge of project management practice, rather than on memorization.

Changes to the Exam in 2009

The Winter 2009 classes were the last to use the *Guide to the PMBOK*, Third Edition as a reference for exam preparation. Starting July 1, 2009, the Fourth Edition will become a basic reference for the exam. No sudden change in the exam is anticipated. It is expected that only a small percentage of the questions will be updated to reflect changes in actual knowledge as PMI rotates in new exam questions over time to reflect the terminology of the Fourth edition.

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