



Certified Project Director (CPD)
Assessment Guide





A **Certified Project Director (CPD)** has the proven ability to lead multiple, complex projects, programs and portfolios of work. They make high-level autonomous decisions and use initiative and judgement to navigate a diverse range of activities that span functions, organisations, regions and cultures.

In order to demonstrate your competence as a Project Director, you are required to evidence the following:

Knowledge: Evidence at least 30 hours of dedicated professional self-development over the last 12 months






Experience: Demonstrate the full-time equivalent of three (3) years' leading complex programs and/or portfolios of work, and

Skills: Critically reflect upon one or more programs and/or portfolios of work you recently led.

A1: 30 hours' professional self-development



In order to demonstrate your **knowledge** as a Project Director, you are required to submit evidence with your application that you have successfully completed at least 30 hours of dedicated professional self-development over the last 12 months.

Professional self-development refers to acquiring, sharing or creating project, program or portfolio management knowledge across a minimum of two (2) of the following domains:

-  Design, deliver or participate in relevant education / training
-  Mentor project / program managers
-  Contribute to a project management community of practice
-  Volunteer project / program management services, or
-  Lead an organizational redesign / process improvement

Alternate forms of professional self-development may be considered if they are relevant and otherwise meet the definitional criteria.

You are **not required** to submit evidence of 30 hours' professional self-development if you have:

-  Been admitted to the Institute of Project Management as a Certified Project Officer (CPO);
OR
-  Successfully completed in your own name all the online quizzes in [OPEN](#), the Institute of Project Management's open project education network

If you have changed your name since completing this requirement and wish to be admitted under your new name, you must provide legal evidence of your name change (for example: a marriage certificate).

A2: Three (3) years' program/portfolio leadership

In order to demonstrate your **experience** as a Project Director, you are required to submit evidence with your application that you have at least three (3) years' full-time experience leading projects, programs and/or portfolios of work.

In order to meet the minimum threshold of complexity, the projects, programs or portfolios of work you have led must have included a minimum of three (3) projects, concurrently performed, that each involve:

- ☰ a full-time equivalent delivery team of three (3) or more people (including a dedicated and independent project manager)
- ☰ detailed project documentation at all stages
- ☰ formal governance structure (for example: a sponsor and/or governance group), and
- ☰ multiple, complex and dynamic stakeholder relationships.

Years of experience may be accumulated non-consecutively (for example, over six calendar years).

For each program/portfolio you list, you must nominate a **reference**.

A reference is an appropriately qualified person not related to you who is willing to testify to your competence. References are typically past or present executives or directors with line authority over you and your program/portfolio.

You must nominate a minimum three different (3) references. If you only list one program/portfolio that lasted three years, or if the same reference oversaw all your work, you must still nominate three references.

We will contact and receive a report from at least one of the three references you nominate with your application.

A3: Critical reflection

In order to demonstrate your **skill** as a Project Director, you are required to critically reflect upon the following, in the context of one or more projects, programs or portfolios of work you have recently led:

- ☰ program or portfolio assets, including (but not limited to):
 - ☰ processes and procedures
 - ☰ systems (for example: templates and software)
 - ☰ initiation, planning, delivery and close documentation and assets, and
- ☰ program or portfolio performance, including (but not limited to):
 - ☰ planned versus actual performance to scope, schedule and budget
 - ☰ stakeholder identification and engagement
 - ☰ business case development
 - ☰ scope definition and management
 - ☰ schedule development and control
 - ☰ cost estimating and control
 - ☰ procurement and contract management
 - ☰ risk identification, prioritisation and treatment
 - ☰ program/portfolio team management and performance
 - ☰ program/portfolio governance and change control, and
 - ☰ other lessons learned.

In order to meet the requisite standard, you must:

- ☰ demonstrate the application of situationally appropriate best-practices in leading people, processes and change in complex and dynamic environments, and
- ☰ identify opportunities and contribute to personal, professional and organisational improvement.

Interview guide

Your oral assessment will be conducted as a **45-60 minute interview** via videoconference and recorded to provide evidence of your competence. You may refer to notes; however, you cannot read from a script. We retain the audio records of these assessments as per our regulatory obligations and privacy policy.

To successfully complete this interview, you are encouraged to read widely to develop critical, practical responses to each question posed. You will need to be familiar with larger issues, such as program/portfolio management frameworks, theories and best practice; more importantly, you need to have a deep understanding of the program/portfolios you are reflecting upon and the major issues encountered.

It may also help to have important materials for easy reference in the course of your interview; these may include key documents, stakeholder interview notes, and the like.

Typical questions that may be asked include (but are not limited to):

- 🌀 In no more than five (5) minutes, tell us a little about your background – what have been your career highlights?
- 🌀 In your opinion, what are the key differences between leading programs and/or portfolios of work and managing projects?
- 🌀 What is your personal leadership style and how has it evolved over your career?
- 🌀 How do you identify, prioritise and realise opportunities in a defined and on-going program or portfolio of work?
- 🌀 How do you motivate project managers who may be hostile to having program/portfolio frameworks and governance structures imposed on them?
- 🌀 How do you keep your portfolio or program of work aligned to the sometimes shifting strategic priorities of your organisation?
- 🌀 How do you identify and respond to projects in your portfolio that are underperforming?
- 🌀 In your experience, what are the main reasons programs or portfolios underperform or fail?
- 🌀 What are you looking for when hiring experienced project managers?
- 🌀 What has been your greatest achievement in the program/portfolio management?
- 🌀 Where did you misstep? What would you do differently if you had your time again and how has that knowledge made you the program/portfolio manager you are today?
- 🌀 How do you create and sustain a culture of project excellence in diverse and complex organisations?
- 🌀 If someone was stepping into program or portfolio leadership for the first time, what are the three (3) key pieces of advice you would give them?
- 🌀 What are your three (3) biggest strengths / gaps? How will you continue your professional development?
- 🌀 Where do you want to go next in your career?

You should always use examples in your responses where possible.

As you will see from the assessment rubric (below), your interview is evaluated in terms of content and clarity, as well as style. Don't speak too fast and don't overly rely on notes. Be prepared to clarify or elaborate on your assumptions, theoretical positions, methods, and conclusions. Often an examiner plays the devil's advocate to see how well you can think on your feet and justify yourself.

During the interview, don't rush your answers. It is perfectly acceptable to think for a couple of seconds or ask if you are on the right track. If you are not clear about the question you are entitled to ask for clarification.

Try to be concise and to the point, but at the same time demonstrate that you have a good grasp of the complex issues involved. In other words, do not give superficial answers, but at the same time, do not try and present an entire PhD-level theory of project management in each response.

Importantly, you should put up a good defence of your findings without being defensive. A good defence means that you can provide strong logical arguments and empirically support or defend your position or recommendations.

However, don't become hostile if the examiner is critical of your viewpoint. If they are able to constructively establish some real flaws or weaknesses in your reflection, accept their criticisms with humility, and indicate how you might learn from this for the future.

This is an essential real-world skill and may be directly assessed!

What if I 'fail' my assessment interview?

If you have the requisite knowledge, experience and references, and are adequately prepared for your assessment interview, the process should be fairly straight forward.

That said, nerves or just the fact you are not at your best on the day may result in you not interviewing to the standard you know you are capable of.

If you are unsuccessful in your first interview attempt, we will make some recommendations as to how you might do better next time and give you an opportunity to be reassessed at no cost.

If you are not yet proficient after a second interview, your assessor (at their discretion) may elect to assess you at a different level and admit you to the Institute of Project Management as a Certified Project Master.

Assessment Rubric

A rubric for assessment, usually in the form of a matrix or grid, is a tool used to interpret and grade candidates' work against criteria and standards. Rubrics are sometimes called "criteria sheets", "grading schemes", or "scoring guides".

A rubric makes explicit a range of assessment criteria and expected performance standards. Assessors evaluate a candidate's performance against all of these, rather than assigning a single subjective score. A rubric is intended to:

- 🌀 make candidates aware of all expectations related to the assessment task, and helps them evaluate their own work as it progresses, and
- 🌀 help assessors apply consistent standards when assessing qualitative tasks and promote consistency in shared marking.

The rubric shown on the following page is applied in assessing your interview.

In order to achieve this Certification, you need to be assessed as proficient (at a minimum) in **ALL** the listed criteria. Note that proficiency is generally considered to be a higher standard than a 50% passing grade.

Interview	Mastered	Advanced	Proficient	Developing	Basic
Communication	Enthusiastically speaks to their program / portfolio and beyond by providing clear and insightful answers to questions; discussion was superior, accurate, and engaging.	Competently speaks to their program / portfolio and beyond by providing clear and insightful answers to questions.	Adequately expands upon findings by providing appropriate answers to questions.	Answers questions, but often with little insight; frequently shows a need for deeper reflection on certain points.	Does not adequately address findings; does not answer key questions; displayed poor grasp of material.
Application of program/portfolio management knowledge	Connects complex concepts, theory and evidence from practice to the issues under examination.	Applies the critical elements of a program / portfolio methodology or framework to inform discussion.	Demonstrates understanding of key program / portfolio management concepts and principles.	Misapplies program / portfolio management principles and good practice in a way that noticeably detracts from the discussion.	Limited understanding of the relevant issues.
Lessons learned	Uses experience and information to generate a variety of high-quality lessons for him/herself and the performing organisation.	Views and reframes problems or issues from multiple perspectives to better identify lessons learned.	Identifies a range of lessons accurately using standard processes, techniques and tools.	Supports diagnosis and opinions with few reasons and little evidence; argument is one-sided and not objective.	Fails to adequately identify and/or respond to potential lessons.
Recommendations and action plan	Frames solutions and recommendations that are both nuanced and actionable, while remaining sensitive to a variety of contextual factors.	Decisively chooses the most effective, actionable solutions after evaluating available responses to the issues.	Makes actionable recommendations that are clearly linked to a critical analysis of the findings.	Investigates and identifies a limited range of possible solutions for effectively addressing issues.	Insufficient, invalid or irrelevant recommendations.
Professionalism	Thoroughly professional and engaging in all correspondence throughout the application process, including the interview itself, demonstrating initiative when appropriate.	Thoroughly professional and engaging in all correspondence throughout the application process, including the interview itself.	Professional in manner and appearance throughout the interview.	Occasionally casual in manner and appearance and/or overfamiliar during the interview process.	Failed to meet the standards of professionalism expected of a Certified Project Director.