Agile & Scrum Qualifications Explained

Understand how to apply Agile techniques to your projects – and gain internationally recognised qualifications

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Agile Project Management & Scrum Training & Qualifications Explained

Agile Project Management introduces iterative rather than sequential project processes. A range of approaches has been tested and refined over the past 20 years.

These techniques were first developed for software development projects – but in today’s climate they will resonate with those working in many other sectors.

Where requirements are fast changing, and not necessarily fully evident at day one, then more flexible approaches are necessary. Scrum and DSDM are two of the more widely known methodologies. They offer tools and techniques which can be fast, effective and fun.

Training and certification is straightforward – and provides knowledge which can be applied quickly on return to the office.

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[www.focus-on-training.co.uk](http://www.focus-on-training.co.uk)
[www.agile-training-courses.com](http://www.agile-training-courses.com)

**About:**

**Focus on Training** offers the largest UK schedule of accredited project and programme management courses – including ScrumMaster and DSDM. Explore them on the Focus website at:

[http://www.focus-on-training.co.uk/agile-scrum-and-is-project-management-training/courses/skillarea/13/](http://www.focus-on-training.co.uk/agile-scrum-and-is-project-management-training/courses/skillarea/13/)

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**Version 1.06 September 2012**
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1. Why Agile Project Management?

1.1 Traditional Approaches to Project Management

Traditional project management involves:

- very disciplined and deliberate planning and control methods
- distinct project life cycle phases
- project tasks completed one after another in an orderly sequence

Traditional project management methods succeed where the project requirements can be tightly defined upfront and where there is little change during the project. This is often called the “Waterfall” model.

For example, in a construction project it is necessary to design and plan for the entire building in great detail in order to understand the full scope of the project. Once started, changes to the specification can have a radical impact on budget and timescales.

Systems development methodologies such as SSADM and general project management methodologies such as PRINCE2® are built around a sequential model.

Traditional methodologies have many strengths:

- emphasis on tightly defined objectives
- rigorous and controllable process
- clear documentation and accountability
But they are less good when it comes to coping with fast changing external environments which impact objectives and potential solutions. Traditional methods can be seen by those working within projects as unnecessarily slow and bureaucratic. There is often heavy reliance on written communication. Conflict can arise between those responsible for different aspects of a project.

1.2 What’s Different about Agile?

“Agile” is the generic term for project methodologies which allow iterative approaches to project implementation.

A distinguishing feature is the different priority given to the three central aspects of any project - “Features”, “Time” and “Cost”. Traditional approaches tend to treat “Features” as totally fixed by the time the project is initiated. Agile approaches apply very tight discipline to “Time and “Cost” but will accept review and prioritisation of the “Features” to be delivered.
The first formal Agile methodologies arose from best practice within the systems development community. Examples from the 1990s include Extreme Programming (XP) and Rapid Application Development (RAD). Since then we have seen consolidation of these approaches into software development tools such as Rational (now owned by IBM) and more generic agile approaches such as DSDM and Scrum.

1.3 Scrum

Scrum has become the most widely recognised and most international agile project management methodology. Use of it remains biased towards software development – but many of the tools and techniques can be applied to aspects of other projects.

The following headlines will hopefully provide a flavour:

1. The name “Scrum” emerged as a rugby analogy where a self organising team moves down the field – together

2. Many projects involve learning, innovation and surprises, so a major recurring theme of Scrum is to “inspect and adapt”

3. “Sprints” of intense activity are launched with a planning meeting and close with a Sprint Review and Sprint Retrospective. The review questions “what we should start, stop and continue doing”

4. “Daily Scrum” meetings are held during Sprints when each member briefly states what’s completed, what they will do next, and what’s in their way

5. The “Product Owner” identifies product features in the form of a prioritised list and is responsible for ROI

6. The “Scrum Development Team” is typically a dedicated group of 5-10 people with the different skill sets needed to deliver the product

7. The “Scrum Master” is a facilitator rather than a manager – guiding the Team, resolving issues and promoting collaboration with the Product Owner

8. The “Product Backlog” is a definitive and prioritised list of remaining features and tasks – so becomes a form of product road map

9. The “Sprint Burndown” tracks estimated hours work outstanding against the “time-boxed” Sprint hours available

10. Scrum is not just about processes – it’s a different style of working which is energetic, collaborative, and flexible.
An information, training and certification infrastructure is building around Scrum – coordinated by the US based Scrum Alliance.

### 1.4 DSDM

DSDM (relaunched as DSDM Atern in 2007) is an agile method which retains the role of project manager. Compared to Scrum it puts more emphasis on project structure and less on specific agile project techniques.

1. There are a number of underlying principles which include:
   - Focus on the business need
   - Collaboration
   - Iterative development

2. Project lifecycles should be tailored to suit project requirements

3. Project phase “Exploration” involves iterative and incremental investigation of detailed requirements

4. Project phase “Engineering” involves iterative and incremental translation of the specification into a solution which is operationally ready
5. The degree of “rigour” applied to a project is proportionate to risks assessed.

6. “Timeboxing” is a universal tool for managing project team activities by an immovable end date.

7. Work is prioritised by “MoSCoW rules”: Must have; Should have; Could have; Won’t have this time.

8. Facilitated workshops are used to encourage collaborative working.

9. Prototyping and Modelling are emphasised to allow early testing and evaluation of component or complete solutions.

10. There is flexibility to use DSDM Atern in conjunction with other project management methodologies such as PRINCE²® and PMI®.

The method is developed and maintained by the DSDM Consortium.
2. Scrum Training and Certification

2.1 Certification Structure

The Scrum Alliance identifies several Scrum credentials according to project role. Training is provided by Registered Education Providers for each of these. To become a Certified ScrumMaster it is necessary to attend a course delivered by a Certified Scrum Trainer – then successfully complete an online post course assessment.

Certified ScrumMaster (CSM)

An introduction to Scrum fundamentals for those in the role of ScrumMaster or Scrum team member.

Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO)

The practices, and principles that will enable the delegate to fulfil the role of Scrum product owner.

Certified Scrum Developer (CSD)

Advanced agile engineering practices and other skills, along with the Scrum fundamentals to create working software.

Certified Scrum Professional (CSP)

Requires demonstration of Scrum experience and knowledge. As a pre-requisite it is required that you hold the CSM, CSPO or CSD certificate. Professional status is not associated with a separate training course. Applications and $250 fee need to be submitted direct to Scrum Alliance.

A breakaway organisation, Scrum.org, is offering similar Scrum training options under the titles of Professional Scrum Master and Professional Scrum Developer.

2.2 Certified ScrumMaster

Target Audience

Anyone who seeks to achieve the role of ScrumMaster to support a Scrum project.

Equally it is suitable for those who work within Scrum teams or who are looking to introduce Scrum techniques into their organisation.
You will typically have existing project management experience - and may be looking to enhance previous qualifications such as APM or PRINCE2®.

**Learning Objectives**

This 2 day course employs practical exercises, case studies and discussions to provide everything that a ScrumMaster needs to know to be able to drive a successful Scrum Project. The course will typically cover the following topics:

- The Case for Scrum
- The Scrum Process
- Mastering Scrum Roles
  - ScrumMaster
  - Product Owner
  - Team
- Mastering Scrum Ceremonies
  - Sprint Planning
  - Sprint Review
  - Daily Scrum Meetings
- Mastering Scrum Artifacts
  - Product Backlog
  - Sprint Backlog
  - Burndown Chart
- Advanced Scrum
  - Scaling Scrum
  - Scrum and Distributed Development
- Agile Development and Testing practices within Scrum
- Transitioning to Scrum – Transition strategies and people issues

**Certification**

The CSM certificate is awarded to those who have taken a CSM course with a Certified Scrum Trainer and who have achieved a score of at least 24 out of 35 in the online post course evaluation exam. A link to this evaluation will be available following the course.

Membership of the Scrum Alliance for 2 years is included within the course and evaluation fee.
2.3 Certified Scrum Product Owner

**Target Audience**

This course will benefit Product Managers, Marketing and Sales people, Business Analysts, Project Managers or ScrumMasters who want to deepen their understanding of the Product Owner role.

**Learning Objectives**

This 2 day course employs practical exercises, case studies and discussions to provide everything that a Scrum Product Owner needs to know to be able to guide a successful Scrum project team.

The Product Owner is responsible for a project’s Return on Investment (ROI), guiding the Scrum team, and representing Customers as well as Business and Development staff.

Participants can expect to learn how to establish and maintain a backlog and write stories with clear acceptance criteria. Real-world organisational challenges such as managing distributed teams, managing large or multiple projects, release planning, and metrics are also covered.

**Certification**

The CSPO certificate is awarded to those who have taken a CSPO course from a Certified Scrum Trainer.

2.4 Certified Scrum Developer

**A New Addition**

A Certified Scrum Developer is someone who has demonstrated through a combination of formal training and a technical skills assessment that he or she has a working understanding of Scrum principles and has learned specialised agile engineering skills.

The training required is a 3 day technical skills course plus 2 days more general Scrum tuition. This latter element can be obtained through attendance at a CSM or CSPO course.
3. DSDM Atern

3.1 Certification Structure

The DSDM Consortium operates a certification structure with a variety of levels and specialisms:

For the Foundation/Practitioner level there is an associated training course and exam. Other levels of certification are subject to satisfying relevant experience criteria.

3.2 Foundation/Practitioner

Target Audience

The course is aimed at anyone who will be involved in a DSDM Atern project. Typical roles would include Project Manager, Team Leader, Business Analyst, Solution Developer and Solution Tester.

It would also benefit any business stakeholders who would be part of a DSDM Atern Development Team.

You will typically have existing project management experience - and may be looking to enhance previous qualifications such as APM or PRINCE2®.
Learning Objectives

The 3 day course gives a practical understanding of DSDM Atern that should enable you to become immediately productive in an agile project environment.

- Understand the concepts and benefits of Agile methods and DSDM Atern
- Understand the fundamental principles around which DSDM Atern is constructed
- Set up project teams with appropriate skills and organisation
- Develop the products from each stage in the lifecycle
- Understand the different ways in which DSDM Atern can be used on projects
- Understand and experience the key techniques and practices within DSDM Atern

Certification

Delegates will be suitably prepared to take the DSDM Atern Foundation exam on the final day of the course.

Duration: 1 Hour

Format: 60 Multiple Choice Questions (Closed Book)

Pass Mark: 50%

Examination Body: APM Group

Successful candidates are able to apply to the DSDM Consortium for registration as a DSDM Practitioner. This requires at least two years practical project experience in a system development role (eg analyst/programmer, analyst, designer, consultant, project manager) or as an IT aware user with practical experience of systems development. This should include a minimum of 6 months practical experience on DSDM/agile projects.
4. Certified Agile Project Management Practitioner

4.1 Certification Structure

A popular Agile project management certification launched in 2010 by the APM Group in partnership with the DSDM Consortium. The APM Group is the accreditation body responsible for PRINCE2®, MSP®, ITIL® and other best practice qualifications.

This course provides the first independent certification in Agile Project Management – and draws on the various agile techniques which have evolved over the past 20 years. It is not biased towards IT systems development projects and provides understanding of how a variety of agile approaches can be reconciled with more traditional project frameworks.

As with other APMG qualifications there is a knowledge based Foundation which leads to a Practitioner level which is concerned with application to real life scenarios.

4.2 Training and Exams

Training is in the form of a 4 or 5 day intensive workshop which spans both Foundation and Practitioner elements.

The course will enable delegates to:
- Understand the concepts, benefits and risks of Agile development
- Understand the philosophy, approach and principles of Agile project management
- Understand the DSDM Atern lifecycle and products
- Set up appropriate project teams
- Plan and run a facilitated workshop
- Model and prototype aspects of the solution
- Elicit, analyse, prioritise and manage requirements
- Create a time boxed plan for a project
- Understand the importance of negotiation and collaboration
- Use their skills to set up and manage an Agile project

The Foundation exam is a one hour multiple choice paper.

The Practitioner exam is two hour scenario based objective test (multiple choice questions with graduated marking).
5. More Information

5.1 Agile Manifesto

Agile project management and Agile software development are still guided by the basic philosophy and priorities laid out by a group of prominent practitioners in 2001 – The Manifesto for Agile Software Development.

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

- **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
- **Working software** over comprehensive documentation
- **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
- **Responding to change** over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

We follow these principles:

- Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.
- Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
- Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
- Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
- Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
- The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
- Working software is the primary measure of progress.
- Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
- Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
- Simplicity—the art of maximizing the amount of work not done—is essential.
- The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
- At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

[http://agilemanifesto.org/](http://agilemanifesto.org/)
5.2 Scrum Alliance

The US based Scrum Alliance is a not-for-profit professional membership organisation created to share the Scrum framework. The Scrum Alliance’s mission is to increase awareness and understanding of Scrum, provide resources to individuals and organisations using Scrum, and promote the iterative improvement necessary to succeed with Scrum.

http://www.scrumalliance.org

An excellent introduction to Scrum (the Scrum Primer) is available for download from the Scrum Alliance website.

http://www.scrumalliance.org/resources/339

5.3 DSDM Consortium

Founded in 1994, the UK based DSDM Consortium is a not-for-profit professional membership organisation which continuously develops the DSDM framework in response to industry requirements. It aims to be a leading enabler of knowledge and learning for successful Agile project delivery.

http://www.dsdm.org

5.4 Agile Alliance

Not aligned to a specific Agile methodology, this membership organisation supports those who explore and apply Agile principles and practices to make the software industry “productive, humane, and sustainable”. There are member initiated programs, and regular conferences and user groups.

http://www.agilealliance.org/

5.5 Scrum Books and Resources

Find Agile Project Management books at the Focus book store:

http://books.focus-on-training.co.uk/catalog/search.asp?Search=agile+project+management

Using DSDM with PRINCE2® and ITIL®:

http://books.focus-on-training.co.uk/catalog/search.asp?Search=dsdm
6. FAQs

- **Does my ScrumMaster course include the exam?**
  
  Yes. Following your course you will receive a log-in to the Scrum Alliance website which will enable you to take the exam online. The fee for this (and membership of the Scrum Alliance for 2 years) is included in the Focus course price.

- **Is Scrum only for Software Development projects?**
  
  No. This is where it started and remains very relevant. However many of the techniques are applicable to other projects which involve multifunctional teams working in a dynamic environment.

- **Scrum or DSDM – How do I choose?**
  
  There is no simple answer. Scrum and DSDM share much underlying philosophy and techniques such as “time boxing” appear in both. DSDM is perhaps less specific to software development situations – and provides a broader project framework. Accreditation of the Foundation certificate is by APMG – the body behind PRINCE2®, MSP® and ITIL®.

- **Why does the DSDM Practitioner Course lead to the “Foundation” Exam?**
  
  The terminology used is confusing. There is only one DSDM certification exam – the Foundation Certificate. This demonstrates a basic level of knowledge and understanding. Practitioner certification requires proven practical experience and cannot be obtained simply through a knowledge based exam. The Practitioner Course will give you the understanding to start using the DSDM methodology.

- **Why has DSDM developed a new course with APMG?**
  
  The Agile Project Management Professional certification has been introduced to provide a more wide ranging qualification than DSDM alone. It has relevance outside the IT sector and looks set to be adopted internationally. It recognises that whilst there is a role for agile techniques they often need to be deployed within a structured project framework.
7. Finding & Booking Your Course

7.1 Why Focus on Training?

Focus is a project management specialist. We offer the widest range of accredited agile courses across the UK helping you find the dates and locations which are most convenient.

Our Certified ScrumMaster and DSDM courses are delivered by accredited trainers and offer you the opportunity to obtain valuable qualifications. You will find that the courses are delivered by “agile enthusiasts“ with hands on experience.

In addition to the certification there are introductory courses which help build awareness of Agile techniques – and other specialist courses which apply agile to other areas such as business analysis.

If you have any questions about project management courses our team of specialist training advisors will be delighted to assist.

Email enquiries@focus-on-training.co.uk

Call 0845 450 6120

7.2 Book and Pay Online

You can explore our range of Agile courses on the Focus website.

http://www.focus-on-training.co.uk/agile-scrum-and-is-project-management-training/courses/skillarea/13/

Once you have chosen the course you require you can book and pay online by credit card – or reserve a place and the Focus bookings team will be in touch.

If you have a group of 5 or more to train then it could be more cost effective to arrange an onsite course. As well as lower price, this can give scope to steer content to your specific requirements and assist in team building.