## GUIDE TO INTERPRETING A PMA REPORT

About PMA

PMA is the UK leading online assessment tool for project management and it provides a benchmarked profile of experience, knowledge, decision making ability and behavioural indicators.

There are five sections to the online assessment:

- general details about the participant
- self-assessed experience in 16 competence areas
- tested decision making ability based on short project scenarios
- tested knowledge based on 50 multiple choice questions based on the APM Body of Knowledge
- self-assessed behaviour indicators or personality.

Each participant receives a five page personalised report which is shown in the thumbnails below.
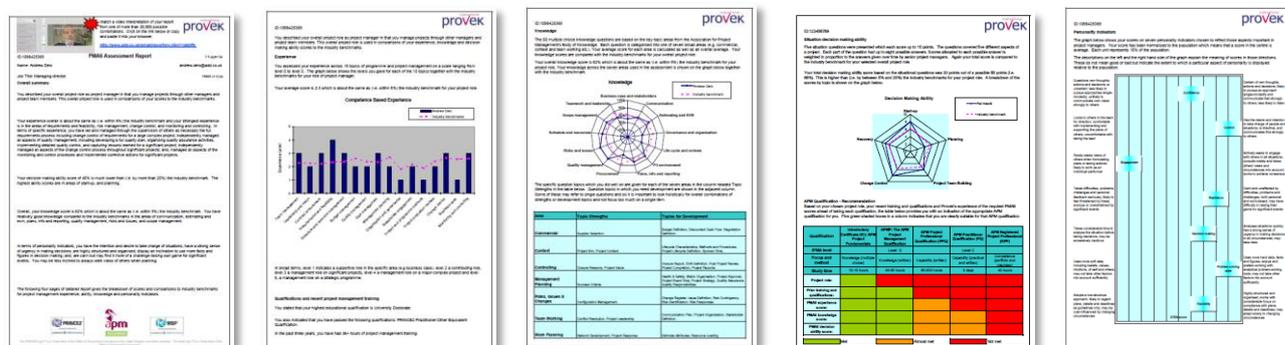
Purpose for taking the PMA

Staff working in projects take the PMA to help identify strengths and areas for development in project management. The results from the PMA are used individually as an input into a development planning discussion between the participant and either their line manager or a development consultant. Also, the results for a number of participants from the same organisation are often aggregated to identify the collective strengths and areas for development of a group of project staff.

How to interpret a PMA report

The best way to assimilate and interpret a PMA report is to scan the first page to get a quick overall impression, and then to concentrate of pages 2, 3 & 4, with a final look at page 5.

Results on an individual report are compared to the industry benchmark for the particular project role selected by the participant at the start of their assessment. There are eleven possible project roles to choose from which range from a project team member, to a project manager through to a project sponsor. This choice does not change any of the questions asked during the assessment, but it does adjust the position of the line depicting the industry benchmark on three graphs and statements made in the report.

Page 1 – Overall summary

The first sentence states the role chosen by the participant and gives a brief summary of its description. The overall average scores for experience, decision making and knowledge are given in terms of how they compare with the industry benchmark. Also, the strengths of the participant within each of these three skills are presented. Finally, the significant aspects of the individual's personality profile is stated.

It is often better to spend time on the following detail pages than to dwell for too long on this summary.

Page 2 – Competence based experience
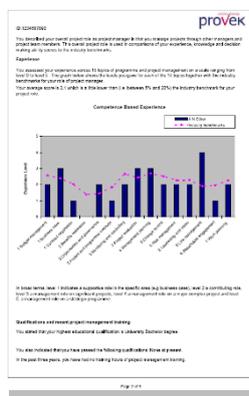
The focus of this page is the graph showing the participant's self assessed levels of experience across 16 areas of project management based on Provek's competence framework. A six point scale is used from level 0 to level 5. The average score is stated and compared with the industry benchmark for the chosen project role.

Level 0 means a participant has no experience of that area while a level 5 means a participant has experience of the topic on a major strategic programme. For example, the level 2 statement in risk management says "Has contributed to aspects of a formal risk management process and seen all the risk documentation on a significant project." and level 4 says "Has planned, implemented and managed a comprehensive formal risk management process throughout the entire lifecycle of a large complex project."

Experience: points to consider

What is the overall average – above, the same, or below the industry benchmark?

What is the pattern of experience? Is it relatively similar across all fifteen areas, or does it vary significantly from one competence area to another?

Are some competence areas significantly above or below the industry norm?

A summary of the individual's education and project management training is presented at the bottom of the page 2. The final two statements are used later in creating the APM Qualification Recommendation on page 4.

Page 3 – Knowledge
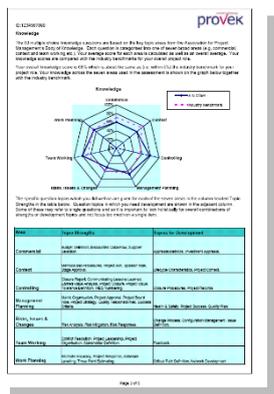
This section of PMA is tested knowledge and comprises 50 multiple-choice questions on the key topic areas for project management which were scoped from the Association for Project Management (APM) Body of Knowledge (BoK). An average percentage score is calculated based on the answers from all 50 questions and this is benchmarked to the results from similar project roles in other organisations. The results are also broken down into seven broad areas of knowledge.

In addition, the table at the bottom half of the page shows at the individual question topic level those questions answered correctly (topic strengths) and answered incorrectly (topics for development).

Knowledge: points to consider

What is the overall average – above, the same, or below the industry benchmark?

What is the pattern of scores? Is it relatively similar across the seven areas, or does it vary significantly from one area to another?

If the pattern of scores is mixed, are there any wider trends for a particular area across experience and decision making as well?

Are there any topics for development which are key, for example the three risk topics?

Are there any topics for development which may not be that important, for example earned value, because it is never used on projects within the organisation?

Page 4 (top) – Situation decision making ability

The situational decision making ability section comprises five questions on a project situation covering 5 different aspects of project management such as start-up, planning and change control. The scoring of the answers is based on the actual answers given to the same questions by hundreds of senior project managers.

In the participant's individual report, the overall points score, which has a maximum of 50 points, is benchmarked to those in the same project role from other organisations. Because there are only 5 questions in this section, sensitivity may need to be given to the interpretation of the results.
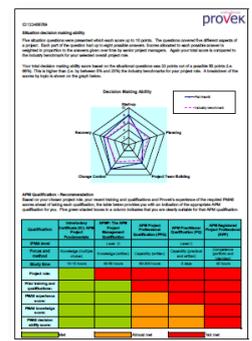
However, any score of 25 (50%) or below for the role of a project manager or a more senior role, is significant. Conversely, any score of 40 (80%) or above is significant.

Also, the spread of results is important. If a participant has scored close to or below the industry benchmark in all five areas then a consistent pattern is being presented. Whereas, if a participant has scored maximum marks in one or two, and very low in one or two, a mixed pattern is presented.

In the case of a mixed pattern, it can be important to look for any wider patterns taking into experience and knowledge results. For example, if a participant has a low score for change control, what is their experience in change control, or their knowledge of changes? Is there a consistent development need across the different skills in a particular area?

Decision making: points to consider

What is the overall average – above, the same, or below the industry benchmark?

What is the pattern of scores? Is it relatively similar across the five areas, or does it vary significantly from one area to another?

If the pattern of scores is mixed, are there any wider trends for a particular area across experience and knowledge as well?

Page 4 (bottom) – APM Qualification Recommendation

The coloured RAG table gives an indication of the participant's suitability to go forward for one of the four levels of project management qualification available from the APM. These are:

- APM Project Fundamentals Qualification (formerly known as Introductory Certificate - requiring approximately 2 days of study) is a knowledge based qualification.
- APM Project Management Qualification (formerly known as APMP - requiring approximately 5 days of study) is a knowledge based qualification. This is roughly equivalent to the level, effort and examination approach of the PRINCE2 Foundation & Practitioner qualification but has a different scope.
- APM Project Professional Qualification (PPQ) is an applied knowledge capability qualification comprising 4 module.
- APM Registered Project Professional (RPP) and now Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) is a competence based designation.
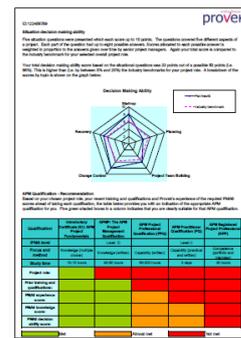
Five aspects of an individual's PMA results are used by the reporting system to give an indication of the most suitable level of qualification.

Project role: Each qualification has been aligned to a range of suitable project roles. For example, a project team member would not be suitable for the APM Project Professional Qualification.

Prior training/qualifications: The APM PMQ requires some hours of prior training and the APM PPQ requires the individual ideally to have the APM PMQ or equivalent (e.g. PRINCE2).

Experience guide: Provek has determined minimum levels of average experience score which an individual should have for each qualification.

Knowledge guide: Provek has determined minimum levels of average knowledge score which an individual should have for each qualification.

Decision ability guide: Provek has determined minimum levels of average decision ability score which an individual should have for each qualification.

Accordingly, reading from the left to the right columns (i.e. from Project Fundamentals to Registered Project Professional) the colour of the cells in any row should go from green through maybe orange to red.

The most suitable qualification is shown by the right hand most column, with a majority of green cells and no more than one red cell. Often, the Project Fundamentals Qualification will be shown as having five green cells but will not be suitable because other higher qualifications are much more suitable.
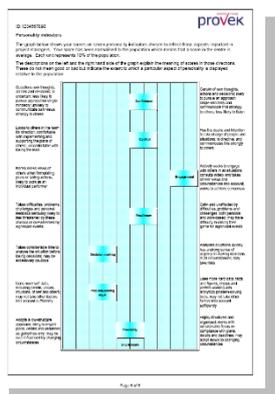

APM Qualification Recommendation: points to consider

Is an actual APM Qualification relevant to the individual or is this section being used just to indicate an overall level of the individual?

Does the individual already have the qualification being recommended?

Page 5 - Personality indicators

The fifth and final section comprises 42 statements of behaviour to which the candidate states their level of agreement or disagreement. These are analysed into seven dimensions of behaviour and the scores compared to the results from thousands of project management staff.

A STEN score (i.e. 10 percentiles) is used to position each candidate's score in terms of how it compares with the wide population. For example, a STEN score of 5 means 50% of the population scored to the right and 50% scored to the left. A STEN of 3 means that 30% of the population scored to the left and 70% to the right, and so on.

In a nutshell, this section presents how an individual sees him or herself in relative terms to how other project managers see themselves.

Also, the only results that are clearly to the right or left should be regarded as different from the industry benchmark. Any personality indicators which are anywhere towards the middle third of the graph should be regarded as similar to the industry benchmark.

These results are for the individual's personal reflection.

Personality indicators: points to consider

What are the indicators strongly to the left or right? And how many are there?

Does the participant recognise themselves in the pattern?