



Comparing US & UK PPM standards



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“ Two nations, divided by a common language

Introduction

This white paper provides a short guide to the US standards for Portfolio, Programme and Project Management issued by the Project Management Institute, and compares them with their UK equivalents.

The paper starts by looking at the approach to standards creation, examines the contents of US standards in more detail and then provides a comparison of US and UK standards.

Project level standards developed and matured first in both countries so these are described first, followed by programme and then portfolio standards. The US spelling 'program' is used when quoting directly, otherwise the UK spelling is used; the meaning is the same.

The US approach



To create a unified approach to project management, professionals from different industries began writing down the body of project management knowledge (PMBOK) they felt was common. Realising this was an almost limitless task they instead created a guide to that body of knowledge. So the PMBOK contains the whole of general project management knowledge, which is :

- ✓ Written down in a structured, organised way
- ✓ In sufficient detail to introduce and scope each topic, but without making the guide impossibly large (it is about 500 pages)

The PMBOK contains generally agreed good practice i.e. what most projects should do most of the time. It is a guide to knowledge, focussing on cataloguing and describing it rather than how to apply it in a specific project situation. It does not attempt to suggest the extent/depth to which good practice should be applied on a particular project or give step-by-step instructions on how to manage a project. A separate annex contains 'the standard for project management' a summary of how the body of knowledge elements fit together and might be applied. There are also some industry-specific extensions.

The standards for programme and portfolio management were developed later. They have a consistent view of how portfolios, programmes and projects fit together. Whilst they were revised alongside the PMBOK and reference it they do not follow exactly the same structure. Programme and portfolio standards are titled 'The standard for ...' rather than being 'A body of knowledge'. The standards are written by a diverse group of volunteers working under the direction of an editorial body.



The UK approach

The first standard was for project management, now called PRINCE2. It was created for a government department by a small team of consultants. The objective was to make government projects more successful and share that knowledge with industry so they could work effectively with government and use the standard for their own benefit. It was created from good practice and subject to broad review to capture a wide range of experience. Learning from previous pitfalls and project mistakes was probably a significant influence.

PRINCE2 calls itself a method i.e. it tells you how to manage a project through a structured series of steps and processes, in a way which is sufficiently general to apply to a wide range of projects.

PRINCE2 does not attempt to capture all (or even most) project management knowledge; it recognises that other knowledge exists, particularly more detailed techniques, and can be brought in as needed.

Programme and portfolio standards (Managing Successful Programmes and Management of Portfolios) describe themselves as guides, i.e. they are less prescriptive than PRINCE2 but still tell you how to manage their respective subjects. Programme and portfolio management standards were developed with a similar approach but by different authors so whilst they work together, they have minor differences in style/approach and are designed to be loosely coupled so use of one does not require the other.



US Project Management standard – PMBOK

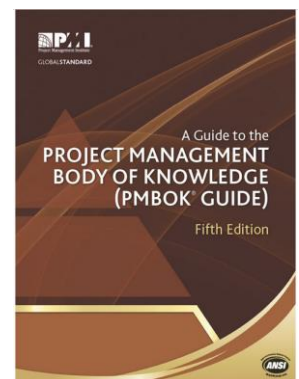
General

The current standard is the Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), Fifth Edition, 2013.

There is no prescribed project management lifecycle. A project is considered to be divided into phases influenced by the technical nature of the work with sequential and overlapping stages as options. Guidance on how to map project management processes to the selected lifecycle is provided.

Processes

Project management processes are structured into 5 process groups organised around a start > plan/do/act > close model. Within the groups a total of 47 processes are described so these are comprehensive in coverage. There is a description of how processes interact but no rigid relationship. Processes may be iterative, interactive and overlapping. Each process description consists of an objective and a list of inputs and outputs - effectively describing *what* to do, at a reasonably fine level of granularity.





Process Group	# Processes	Scope
Initiation	2	Development of Project Charter and identification/analysis of stakeholders
Planning	20	Development of the Project Management Plan, including requirements collection, defining scope, creating the WBS, defining sequencing, estimating activities to create a schedule, estimating costs and setting a budget, planning the approach to quality, resources, communications, identifying and analysing risks and planning procurements
Executing	8	Direct and manage the project including acquiring, developing and managing the team, conducting procurements, distributing information, managing stakeholders and performing quality assurance
Monitoring and Control	10	Monitoring and controlling the work including verifying and controlling scope and change, administering procurements, monitoring/controlling risks, costs and quality and reporting performance
Closing	2	Phase or project closure and procurement closure

Knowledge/Techniques

Information on how to perform the processes is collected into orthogonal groupings called Knowledge Areas. Knowledge areas cross process groups, so for example, the knowledge area of Time Management includes both scheduling (in the Planning process group) and tracking (in the Monitoring & Controlling process group).

Within a knowledge area each process is described under 3 headings: Inputs, Techniques and Outputs. The outputs heading includes a description of the documents/information produced by the process.

Ten knowledge areas are described :

1. Project Integration Management (supporting 6 processes)
2. Project Scope Management (supporting 6 processes)
3. Project Time Management (supporting 7 processes)
4. Project Cost Management (supporting 4 processes)
5. Project Quality Management (supporting 3 processes)
6. Project Human Resources Management (supporting 4 processes)
7. Project Communications Management (supporting 3 processes)
8. Project Risk Management (supporting 6 processes)
9. Project Procurement Management (supporting 4 processes)
10. Project Stakeholder Management (supporting 4 processes)

Individual tools/techniques may be relevant to several processes. They are described just once and referenced in subsequent descriptions. The Project Integration knowledge area is about integrating areas/processes of project management.

The knowledge areas include human resource management and procurement which are not included within UK standards.



There is no consolidated listing of project documents/information created or used by processes and their contents are described at a fairly high level. In total 40-50 documents are described, the most important being:

- ✓ The Project Charter which formally authorises the project
- ✓ The Project Scope Statement which describes what is to be accomplished and what deliverables are to be produced
- ✓ The Project Management Plan which describes how the work will be performed

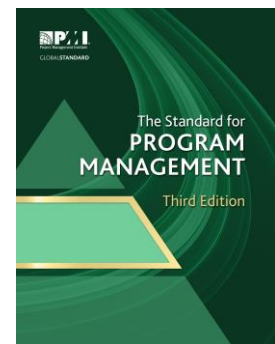
Documents can be combined so the Project Management Plan may include subsidiary plans for: scope management, schedule management, cost management, quality management etc. or these may be separate. Information on project status is described as Performance Reports

US Programme Management standard

General

The standard is the 'Standard for Program Management' Third Edition, 2013. This has been completely restructured and is half the length of the previous 2nd edition.

The standard describes programmes as being about the integration of projects with the idea of components (the pieces from which programmes are made up) assembled according to some architecture. Compared with UK standards there is less emphasis on organisational/cultural change programmes.



The standard describes a simple programme lifecycle model comprising three phases:

1. **Definition** - covering identification, evaluation, scoping, funding and planning, creation of a program charter and governance setup
2. **Delivery of benefits** - an iterative phase covering all aspects of delivery including starting and running projects, receiving outputs and achieving benefits
3. **Closure** - lessons, supporting transition and project closedown

Performance Domains

Programme management is described as involving work in 5 key Performance Domains which are unique to programme management and run concurrently throughout a programme. These are:

1. Strategic Alignment
2. Governance
3. Lifecycle Management
4. Benefits Management
5. Stakeholder Engagement

The concepts behind each domain and its constituent activities are described.

Support Processes

Programme management also requires 9 supporting processes similar to those involved in project management. These are:

1. Integration Management
2. Scope Management



3. Schedule Management
4. Communications Management
5. Risk Management
6. Procurement Management
7. Financial Management
8. Resource Management
9. Quality Management

The concepts behind each supporting process and its constituent activities are described.

There is recognition that programme and project management processes may be similar with programme processes being higher level and more integrative. The reader is referred to the PMBOK for details on the inputs, outputs and techniques associated with these.

The standard describes ~55 artefacts or documents e.g. Business Case, Benefits Register, including their purpose and high-level content. A consolidated list is provided in an appendix.

US Portfolio Management standard

General

The standard is the 'Standard for Portfolio Management', Third Edition, 2013. The contents have been developed substantially from the previous version.

The approach is top-down i.e. developing a portfolio strategic plan charter and roadmap and then executing it through a series of aligned components that may be projects or programmes. This approach has many similarities to management of a programme.

Lifecycle Model

Portfolio management is an ongoing process so there is no single-pass lifecycle model merely iteration around the constituent processes as required.

Processes

The standard is organised into 3 process groups of Defining, Aligning and Authorising & Controlling which are summarised in the table. The UK equivalents are Definition (a lighter touch approach to Defining + Aligning) and Delivery (a more detailed approach to Authorising & Controlling).

Process Group	# Processes	Scope
Defining	8	The development of a portfolio strategic plan, charter, roadmap, management plan, performance communications and risk management plans and the portfolio.
Aligning	6	Strategic change, optimisation, supply/demand, value, information and data
Authorising and Controlling	2	Authorisation and oversight

The standard identifies and describes 6 key 'deliverables' (documents) to support portfolio management.



Knowledge Areas

Five knowledge areas are described :

1. Strategic Management
2. Governance Management
3. Performance Management
4. Communications Management
5. Risk Management

With each knowledge area, processes are described using the Inputs, Tools & Techniques, Outputs format used in the PMBOK.

US – UK Comparison

Comparing the Content

One way of comparing the content of the standards is to use the following seven key views or models:

1. The core concepts/principles which underpin the method
2. The lifecycle view which describes when to do things through a structure of activities over time
3. The process view which describes what to do in a repeatable way
4. The knowledge/techniques view which describes how to do things
5. The responsibility view which describes who should do things
6. The information view which describes the information needed to do things
7. The tailoring view which describes how to adapt the method to different situations

View	US standards	UK standards
Principles	Does not use a core list of key principles	Each standard is founded on a set of principles
Lifecycle	Very high-level models with no specific links to processes	A detailed lifecycle model with processes structured and sequenced around it
Processes	An extensive list of processes described to moderate levels of detail	Some processes are considered core and are described, others less so and are not described
Knowledge	Comprehensive range of topics covered at a moderate level of detail	Variable coverage with no attempt to cover every topic, detailed coverage of selected areas
Responsibility	Some responsibilities described but no structured model linked to other elements	Structured responsibility model linked consistently to processes and knowledge/techniques
Information	Documents introduced and defined in moderate detail, some consolidated lists	Listed and structured definitions with detailed descriptions fully linked to processes and knowledge
Tailoring	Good context descriptions but no guidance on how to apply the standards to specific situations	There is specific guidance on how to tailor or apply the standards in different situations



Comparing the Styles

Key features of the US standards are :

- ✓ A very structured and logical style of presentation
- ✓ Each topic covered in a similar style and level of detail
- ✓ Broad in scope so highly comprehensive
- ✓ Good summaries of technique in almost every area
- ✓ Portfolio, programme and project standards have a similar presentation (but varying structures)
- ✓ Includes coverage of procurement and people management
- ✓ Presented as a technical reference standard, wholly black/white, concise text with few real-life examples or experiences
- ✓ Doesn't tell you how to get started managing a portfolio, programme or projects
- ✓ Doesn't provide a strong basis for standardisation within an organisation

Key features of the UK standards are :

- ✓ A structured approach with some variability to address those areas the authors consider most important
- ✓ A more readable style with the use of colour and with practical observations, examples and tips
- ✓ Variable coverage so knowledge areas covered to varying depth and with many detailed techniques not described
- ✓ Describes how to get started, without being limiting or over-prescriptive
- ✓ Portfolio, programme and project standards aligned on core concepts but intentionally less tightly coupled
- ✓ Provides a basis for standardisation of terminology, information and roles within an organisation
- ✓ More focus on project/programmes as an investment and a business change

A simple summary would be that UK standards are more practical for using directly to manage a project, programme or portfolio whilst the US standards are more comprehensive and consistent as a study and reference source.

Conclusion

There are many areas of value in both sets of standards. We do not believe in re-inventing the wheel so encourage practitioners to draw on both sources.

For more information on the practical application of these standards in portfolio, programme and project management please contact us

About Effective Projects Ltd

Effective Projects are a Bestoutcome partner and niche consultancy specialising in business change and capability improvement for portfolio, programme and project management.

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