silicon beach training
01273 622272
www.siliconbeachtraining.co.uk
facebook.com/siliconbeach
twitter.com/sbttraining

MSP® Practitioner Exam Tips

A free MSP Practitioner exam tips guide provided by Silicon Beach Training

Silicon Beach Training offers the following APMG accredited MSP training courses:

- MSP Foundation
- MSP Practitioner
- MSP Practitioner Conversion

Other accredited courses offered include:

- PRINCE2 training
- Agile Project Management training
- ITIL training

Contents

Introduction

This hints and tips booklet has been produced to assist delegates who will be taking the MSP® Practitioner examination.

In this booklet you will find some helpful hints on how to manage the booklets and read the information you are provided with as well as how to manage your time and some techniques you can use for answering certain styles of questions.

We hope that this will be a helpful guide for completing the sample practitioner papers you will be provided with, and if you have any tips you would like to add, we would welcome your feedback.

The Manual

As you will no doubt be aware, the practitioner exam is an open book exam. You may bring only your OGC MSP® manual with you.
You **are** allowed to tab your book to make navigation a little easier, but you **cannot** under any circumstances paste or insert any additional material into the book. You **may** however write as much additional information into the manual that you wish.

When it comes to using the manual during the exam, you will find that your time is quite tight, so there will not be much time for you to refer to the book for every question. Here are some tips to help you use your manual in the most efficient way.

- Ensure your manual is tabbed clearly so that you can navigate easily
- Too many tabs or over tabbing your manual may result in confusion
- Only use the manual when you don't know the answer but know exactly where to find it.
- **DO NOT** use the manual to double check answers you think you already know.
- If you have no idea of the answer to a question and no idea where to find it in the manual – don't bother looking – guess – you will only waste valuable time.

The Syllabus

There are 11 areas that are questioned in this exam. Although in the table it shows the transformational flow as one entry, each of the transformational flow processes may constitute a single question in the paper.

Syllabus Area Acronym	Syllabus Area
PT	Overview, principles and governance themes overview
OP	Organization and programme office
VS	Vision
LS	Leadership and stakeholder engagement
BM	Benefits management
BL	Blueprint design and delivery
PL	Planning and control
BC	The business case
RM	Risk and issue management
QA	Quality and assurance management
TF	Transformational flow (FA – FF)

The Booklets

You will receive a sealed plastic bag in which you will find three booklets:

- **The scenario booklet** – this will be stapled and will comprise of a project scenario and additional information for some of the questions.
- **The question booklet** – this contains the 8 questions for the project, each question could comprise of up to 3 parts (A, B and C for example) and will total 10 marks per question.
- **The answer sheets** – No – these are not the answers, but the sheets onto which you will fill in your answers in pencil only.

The scenario booklet

First of all, the whole scenario is valid for every question you answer, but finding the information is important. It is suggested that you bring along a highlighter with you so you can highlight relevant information in the scenario as you read it.

Secondly, our next tip is to ensure that as you are reading through the programme scenario, underline or highlight relevant information and write next to the paragraph what your think that information is.

If you see a statement that you think is explaining the vision of the programme, underline or highlight and annotate in the column next to it "VISION". This will help tremendously when you are answering a question and remember reading something about the vision but cannot remember which page or where.

Another very important thing to note about the additional information provided in the scenario booklet is that you **DO NOT** read any of it until you have been directed to do so by a particular question. You will note that the additional information is clearly indicated to be relevant to only one particular question, so it will not be relevant at all until you reach that question. Please **DO NOT** make the mistake of reading all the additional information and thinking it is relevant for all questions as it is not.

The Question booklet

You may answer the questions in any order you like – there is no build up of a story or information – each question is completely stand alone.

However, if you do choose to start with question 5 for example, it is recommended that you complete all parts associated with Question 5 (for example Part A, Part B and Part C). If you do not complete all parts of the question, you may find that you forget which parts you have not completed and overlook these when you are going back over the paper.

Please pay very careful attention to any words that are in **bold.** These are there for a reason – some examples may be as follows:

- Column 1 contains a list of **true statements** that might be found in the Benefit Profile for the benefit described. For each statement in Column 1, decide if it is an appropriate entry, and select from Column 2 the section in which it is **MOST LIKELY** to be recorded.
- **True Statements -** this means that any information provided must be considered to be true – you do not need to verify this with the scenario, just take the information as additional information as read.
- **2 –** normally all questions only have one answer, except in the case of multiple response questions, in these questions, it will clearly have a number 2 in bold indicating how many selections you should make.

Whenever you see anything in TITLE CASE – this is where a reference has been made to the MSP® guide (including programme information documents, roles and a small number of glossary terms).

The Answer booklet

Please note: this booklet must be completed in **pencil ONLY.** It is best not to write notes or highlight in this booklet, reserve it only for your answers.

You will notice that the answer booklet clearly states which question and part of the question you are completing. It would help to be very aware of where you are completing the answers as some delegates have found themselves completing the incorrect question or part – so be alert to this.

When you begin answering your questions, it is **strongly advised** that you fill the answers directly into the answer booklet. Some delegates have tried filling the answers in on the question booklet and then transposing the answers to the answer sheets, only to make errors in transposing. You will receive **NO MARKS** for incorrect transposing as it is only the answer sheets that are marked!

At the end of the exam, **all three** booklets must be returned to the invigilator, with just the answer sheets sealed in the plastic bags provided. Your candidate number, which will be provided to you for the examination MUST appear on all three booklets in the allocated place. If you do not return any parts of the booklets, you exam may not be marked by the APM group.

Types of questions

There are four different types of questions. These are as follows with some examples and tips on how to answer them.

1. Classic multiple choice questions

This question style is very similar to the foundation style questions with only **one** answer. The answer you select may be from 3 or 4 different options:

Example:

Who should give the authority for the required change to the Programme Business Case?
A The Sponsoring Group B The Chief Financial Officer C The Project Manager for the pilot project D The Senior Responsible Owner

Although the style of these multiple choice questions vary, the above example is one style you may get.

2. Multiple Response

This is the only style of question where you will select **two** answers in your answer booklet. Typically your answers would be selected from 5 options. Worse still, you have to get both answers correct to score your 1 mark.

The best approach to this style of question is to read the question and then select the first most obvious answer. There is usually one answer which does stand out more than the others. Once you have selected your first answer, re-read the question and then look for the next most likely answer.

Another possible approach is to read each answer and put a tick, question mark or cross next to each selection and then see what you have. You might find that you only have to select between three possible answers. Make sure when this is the case, you re-read the question in case any key words jump out which make one option more likely than another.

Example:

In the context of the scenario, answer the following question about communications relating to the programme. Remember to limit your answers to the number of selections requested in each question.	
1	Which **2** messages are **MOST** likely to be communicated to shareholders? A. *Impact of the programme on pre-tax profit of Buyitall* B. *Effect of the programme on Buyitall's property assets.* C. Amendments to job descriptions for Northtown staff following the establishment of the new training centres. D. Details of contractual discussions about outsourcing some of the training courses. E. Updates to the training prospectus for Buyitall staff.

3. Matching

These questions are great for catching up on time. They typically involve matching a statement in column 1 with a selection from column 2.

Please note that there is only ever **one** answer to these questions although the options in column 2 can sometimes be used only once, more than once or some not used at all.

Example:

In the context of the Scenario, answer the following question. Column 1 contains a list of **true statements** about the programme. For each statement in Column 1, select from Column 2 the document where that information should be recorded. Each selection from Column 2 can be used once, more than once or not at all.	
Column 1	Column 2
1. Guidance on the criteria to be used for review of the new training prospectus. 2. The capacity of, and facilities to be offered by, each new training centre. 3. A proposed change to the training prospectus being prepared by project 3 (Training Design), identified during the preparation of the new working practices in Project 5 (New Working Practices). 4. How the revised training prospectus will contribute to delivering market-leading customer service. 5. General processes to follow for managing any legal difficulties that may arise during the execution of Project 2 (Outsource specialized Training).	A. Blueprint B. Information Management Strategy C. Programme Issue Register D. Quality and Assurance Strategy E. Risk Management Strategy F. Programme Risk Register G. Projects Dossier

4. Assertion/Reason

Each item consists of two statements, an assertion and a reason that are linked by the word 'because'.

These questions are sometimes the hardest level of question and can take up a lot of your time in answering. There is however a very good technique you can use which should make it much easier to answer these questions.

The first tip we advise is for you to read each assertion statement and each reason statement as a completely standalone question. To ensure that you do this, it is strongly recommended that you read the questions on a column by column basis. All of the assertion statements will relate in some way to the scenario. All of the reason statements are generally MSP® statements. You will need to read each statement and determine if they are TRUE or FALSE first. As you read down each column, use a pencil to indicate T or F for each statement.

Once you have completed each column look at the combinations you have of True and False for each line and then determine your answer.
If you have any combinations with a False, your answer will either be C, D or E from the indicated table within the question.

Things get a little trickier when you have two answers which are both True. You will now need to apply an additional test to determine if the statements are A or B.
The best way to do this is to read the Reason statement first placing the word therefore in the middle and then reading the Assertion statement.

If the Reason statement explains why the Assertion statement is TRUE then the answer will be A.

If the Reason statement does not explain why the Assertion statement is true, then the answer will be B.

See the example below to try out this technique:

Example:

Using the Scenario, answer the following question.

Each line in the table below consists of an assertion statement and a reason statement. For each line identify the appropriate option, from options A to E, that applies.

Each option can be used once, more than once or not at all.

Option	Assertion	Reason	
A	True	True	AND the reason explains the assertion
B	True	True	BUT the reason does not explain the assertion
C	True	False	
D	False	True	
E	False	False	

Assertion		Reason
1. The Monitoring and Control Strategy should specify who must authorize the contracts to acquire each training centre.	**Because**	The Monitoring and Control Strategy should set out when audits and health checks should take place.
2. It would be appropriate for a new project to be planned, for delivery in an early tranche of the programme, to confirm if retail staff will use the distance learning methods effectively.	**Because**	Early tranches may be designed as pilots or proof of concept.
3. The specifications and design of the IT network for the training centres should form part of the Programme Plan.	**Because**	The Programme Plan should include specifications for critical project outputs.
4. The Resource Management Strategy should identify how Projects 7 and 8 delivering the regional training centres will use external resources in the delivery of the training centres.	**Because**	The Resource Management Strategy should include the timing of activities to monitor resource usage by projects will take place.
5. The Project Manager for Project 7 (Lease or Buy Four Centres) should be given clear guidelines as to when the first four new training centres must be delivered.	**Because**	The boundary of the programme will set out the programme scope.

For example, in question line 1 above, both the assertion is true and the reason statement is false, therefore the answer is C. In question line 2 both the assertion and the reason statements are true and the fact that the early tranches may be designed as pilots or proof of concept explains why it would be appropriate for a new project to be planned, for delivery in an early tranche of the programme, to confirm if retails staff will use the distance learning methods effectively. Therefore, the answer is A.

In question-line 5 both the assertion and the reason statements are true but the reason statement does not provide an explanation for the assertion. The assertion is describing project tolerances relating to the timing of the opening of training centres, whereas the reason is about the scope or boundary of the programme, not when it is needed. Therefore, the answer is B.

6. Classic Assertion/Reason

Each question-line consists of a list of items, each of which is composed of two statements, an assertion and a reason that are linked by the word 'because'.

Each item claims that Statement A is true BECAUSE of Statement B. Candidates must determine whether the 'assertion' part of the statement is true or false and then, independently of the assertion, whether the 'reason' statement is true or false. Candidates have to select the ONE statement where Statement A actually is true BECAUSE Statement B is true.

Often a good approach to answering this style of question is to start by reading just the second part of the sentence after the word because so that you can eliminate the False items. As you can see from the example given, both statement A and statement B are both False after the word Because, leaving you with only C and D to consider.

Example:

Using the Scenario and the additional information provided in the *Scenario Booklet,* answer the following question.
1. The Programme Manager's early warning indicators now show that the probability of **Risk 3** materialising is high and its proximity is imminent. As a result, a key benefit of the Training Programme is under threat. A Treat the risk as an issue **BECAUSE** risks with imminent proximity should be treated as if they have occurred. B Treat the risk as an issue **BECAUSE** risks with high probability should be treated as if they have occurred. C Escalate the risk to the SRO if it exceeds risk tolerance **BECAUSE** the SRO is responsible for approving the Risk Management Strategy. D Escalate the risk to the SRO if it exceeds risk tolerance **BECAUSE** the SRO owns the overall set of benefits.

For example, in options C and D in the question above, both the assertion and the reason statements are true. However, the fact that the SRO is responsible for approving the Risk Management Strategy does not explain why the risk should be escalated to the SRO. It is because the SRO owns the overall set of benefits (and the risk threatens a key benefit) that the risk should be escalated to the SRO. Therefore, the answer is D.

Timings

As most of you will probably gather, time is going to be your enemy during the exam. You cannot afford a leisurely pace as the suggested timings are as follows:

- 15 Minutes to read the scenario
- 15 Minutes for each of the 8 questions
- 15 Minutes tolerance for additional reading

These are really tight and most delegates finish with little time to spare. It is strongly recommended that you fill in your answer book as you go along and try to keep up a steady methodical pace.

Good luck with your sample papers and of course with the Practitioner exam – we hope that this guide goes some way to helping you with your success.

Document History

Date	Version Number	Changes	Approved by
09/03/2011	MSP Pract exam tips v1.0	First Approval	CMW
5/10/11	MSP Pract exam tips v2.0	Names of syllabus areas	
		Updated question types in line with current exam guidelines.	