

Global Competency Standards for Project Management

Background

Since the early 1990s performance based competency standards have been developed as part of national qualifications frameworks in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and more recently, South Africa. These nationally endorsed standards share a similar format.

Performance based competency standards for project management have been developed in the United Kingdom for both Project Controls (OSCEng 1996¹, OSCEng 1999²) and Project Management (OSCEng 1997³; CISC 1997⁴; MCI 1997⁵) and in Australia (AIPM (Sponsor) 1996)⁶ for Project Management. Competency standards for Project Management and Project Controls are currently being developed in South Africa (South African Qualifications Authority). The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has expressed interest in project management standards and there is interest in development of European Vocational Qualifications (EVQs). Although Japan does not have a performance based competency standards qualifications framework, the project management community has expressed considerable interest in the competency standards approach as have those in other countries, including India and China. The Project Management Institute has recently produced an exposure draft of a Project Manager Competency Development Framework that includes performance competencies similar in format to the performance based competency standards of Australia, UK, New Zealand and South Africa.

Both the Australian standards and the most widely used UK standards for both project management and project controls (OSCEng 1996, OSCEng 1997) are currently due for review.

The concurrent need for review of the UK and Australian Competency Standards for Project Management, current development of South African standards, interest in development of New Zealand and European standards and emergent initiatives of the Project Management Institute provide an ideal opportunity for a global review and development process that would ensure compatibility between nationally endorsed standards. ***This would provide a basis for transferability of qualifications, global recognition and a rational framework for use in an increasingly global workplace. It would meet the expressed needs of industry and practitioners.***

Support by industry, the profession and practitioners

In May 2000, representatives of

- industry (including NASA, CISCO, Raytheon, ABB, World Bank, Rolls Royce),
- project management and cost engineering professional associations (IPMA, APM, AIPM, Danish PM Association, PMA India, PMI South Africa, ICEC, ACostE, PM Research Committee of China, Japan PM Forum)
- educational institutions (Lille Business School, Cranfield School of Management, UTS)
- qualifications organisations (ECITB, PM Standards Generating Body of South Africa)

attended a meeting in London at which the importance of global standards was confirmed and it was agreed to proceed with development of global competency standards for project management.

¹ OSCEng (1996) OSCEng Level 4. NVQ/SVQ in Project Controls. Occupational Standards Council for Engineering

² OSCEng (1999) OSCEng Level 3. NVQ/SVQ in Project Controls. Occupational Standards Council for Engineering

³ OSCEng (1997) OSCEng Levels 4 and 5: NVQ/SVQ in (generic) Project Management. Occupational Standards Council for Engineering.

⁴ CISC (1997) Raising standards: Construction Project Management: NVQ/SVQ Level 5. London: CISC (The Construction Industry Standing Conference).

⁵ MCI (1997) *Manage Projects: Management Standards - Key Role G*, London: Management Charter Initiative.

⁶ AIPM (Sponsor) (1996) National Competency Standards for Project Management. Australian Institute of Project Management.

Further meetings were held in September, November, and December 2000 and in January, March and June 2001. Considerable support for the project has been expressed by the United Nations which has a particular interest in development of project management competence within a global framework.

In Australia, AIPM was instrumental in gaining Government and industry support for development of the Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management. The AIPM professional registration process is aligned to the three levels of these standards (Level 4 (QPP); Level 5 (RegPM) and Level 6 (MPD)). The AIPM is committed to support for review of the Australian National Standards for Project Management as part of a globally agreed competency standards framework.

Experience in Australia demonstrates that alignment of professional project management registration / certification with Government endorsed qualification frameworks enhances the take-up of the standards.

There is a clear need, emanating from industry, for a globally applicable, work based PM assessment and recognition process. Development of global competency standards for project management, through the joint initiative of governments and project management professional associations provides an opportunity to respond directly to the expressed needs of industry, to enhance the profile and effectiveness of project management throughout the community, both global and local, to increase support for national PM associations and to enhance the value and recognition of the competency standards approach.

The outcome will be a globally accepted framework of competency standards for project management and project controls that will form the basis for a transferable, work-based project management certification / registration process, aligned directly to the standards and qualification frameworks of UK, Australia and other governments.

The proposed process and timeline is as follows.

Plan of Action

The aim of this initiative is development of globally aligned, nationally supported performance based competency standards for project management that are of real benefit to both national and global practitioners and industry. To achieve this, the following process is proposed:

- Formal engagement of Australian, UK, South African and New Zealand competency standards / qualifications bodies (MOU)
- Formal engagement of project management and associated professional associations (MOU)
- Cooperation between national standards review and generation initiatives to ensure global alignment
- Global participation by PM practitioners and industry in an inclusive consultation process to ensure genuine global agreement and support for outcomes (Global Steering Committee)

Funding for review of standards in both the UK (from QCA through ECITB) and Australia (from ANTA through BSTA) is imminent. Funding for ECITB was approved in May 2001. BSTA is currently scoping the project and expects to have funding for commencement in late 2001 / early 2002. Both organisations are aiming to release draft standards in late 2002. Funding for the review process will essentially provide for engagement of standards writers, and the funding bodies (QCA (UK) and ANTA (Australia)) are strongly focused on providing value at a national level. However, given the nature of the project management profession and the wider imperatives of globalisation, provision of value to local industry is heavily dependent upon providing global relevance and alignment.

The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that funding for local standards development is utilised to produce globally aligned performance based competency standards for project management. It is proposed to do this through an agreement (MOU) between national standards / qualifications bodies (UK, Australia, RSA, NZ) to conduct their standards review and generation processes cooperatively. This would be supported by a similar agreement (MOU) between project management and related professional associations. These MOUs have already been signed by a number of parties and are in circulation with signing expected to be complete by late 2001.

Local / national standards review and generation processes would be conducted according to the specific national requirements. Coordination and cooperation, to ensure relevance to industry, globally, would be facilitated through a Global Steering Committee, comprising representatives of

- national standards / qualifications bodies (UK, Australia, RSA, NZ)
- related national project management professional associations (APM, AIPM, PMISA, PMINZ),
- international project management (PMI, IPMA) and cost engineering (ICEC) professional associations plus
- a small number of industry representatives (3 to 4) to ensure alignment of the process with global industry needs.

The initial proposal is for UK, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand to be represented on the Global Steering Committee as these are the only countries that currently have performance based competency standards / qualifications frameworks. However, other countries interested in aligning their local standards to a global framework, either through government or professional bodies, would be encouraged to participate by instituting similar local processes and contributing through the Global Steering Committee and Reference Groups. The PMIs Project Manager Competency Development Framework provides a good basis for PMI participation. The representatives of national standards / qualifications bodies and PM professional associations on the Global Steering Committee will be expected to be members and therefore representatives of local standards review and generation Steering / Technical Committees. This is intended to provide the mechanism for coordination between local and global initiatives.

Global Reference Groups would have the same function as Local Reference Groups. They provide a wider forum for participation in the standards review and generation process by industry representatives and other interested parties than is possible through the Steering Committees.

Lynn Crawford
8 November 2001

Attachments

Appendix 1: Draft Programme

Appendix 2: Draft organisation chart

APPENDIX 1: DRAFT PROGRAMME

Proposed date	Activity	
December 2001	<p>Secure MOU between Governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circulate MOU - Initiate discussions with ECITB, BSTA and counterparts in RSA and NZ 	<i>Currently in circulation</i>
November 2001	<p>Secure MOU between PM and related professional associations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circulate MOU - Initiate discussions with PM and related professional associations 	<i>In circulation</i>
December 2001	<p>Background research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare background material on existing standards, resources, etc. - Prepare matrix of existing standards - Compare Australian, UK, SA and NZ standards / qualifications frameworks 	<p>Funding through ECITB and BSTA (together and / or separately) As no funding had been approved, the PM Research Unit at UTS has commenced work on this.</p>
December 2001	<p>Establish Reference Groups Recommend and secure support for membership of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Steering Committee - Global Reference Group - Local Steering / Technical Committees - Local Reference Groups <p>(See proposed organisation structure attached as Appendix 2)</p>	
June ? (UK) / December (Australia) 2001 to mid 2002	<p>Writing of standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultants engaged to write standards, working cooperatively with one another and interactively with Steering Committees and Reference Groups; preparing material; incorporating feedback etc; circulating papers. - Ideally, in accordance with the proposed MOU, standards writers funded through both ECITB (UK) and BSTA (Australia) will work cooperatively. There is potential for advantages to be achieved through sharing of workload. 	<p>Standards writers funded (separately) by ECITB (UK) and BST (Australia) plus any additional contributions</p>
January / February 2002	<p>First Meeting of Global Steering Committee Meeting to be held in London.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review matrix of standards - Review process for global alignment - Agree program 	<p>Venue offered by OSCEng. London (ref Tim Feest)</p>

Proposed date	Activity	
January / February 2002	<p><i>First Reference Group Meetings</i> Review matrix of standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Reference Group - Local Reference Groups (Australia, NZ, SA, UK, Other) 	
May 2002	<p><i>Second Meeting of Global Steering Committee</i> Meeting to be held in London possibly supported by video conference facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review draft standards - Review process 	
May 2002	<p><i>Second Reference Group Meetings</i> Review draft standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Reference Group - Local Reference Groups (Australia, NZ, SA, UK, Other) 	
Late 2001 to July 2002	<p><i>Ongoing review process</i> Ongoing consultation between Steering Committees, Reference Groups and Standards Writers in the development of the standards.</p>	
July 2002	<p><i>Third Meeting of Global Steering Committee</i> Meeting to be held London possibly supported by video conference facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and finalise draft standards - Release draft standards for wider input (web) 	
July 2002	<p><i>Third Reference Group Meetings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Reference Group - Local Reference Groups (Australia, NZ, SA, UK, Other) 	
July 2002 to October 2002	<p><i>Feedback from wider audience on standards (Exposure Draft)</i></p>	
October / November 2002	<p><i>Final Meeting of Global Steering Committee</i> Meeting to be held London possibly supported by video conference facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review feedback and finalise standards / global framework - Release final standards / global framework and publish (web) - Agree process for ongoing global review 	
October/ November 2002	<p><i>Final Reference Group Meetings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Reference Group - Local Reference Groups (Australia, NZ, SA, UK, Other) 	
December 2002	<p><i>Release of standards / global framework (web)</i></p>	

APPENDIX 2: DRAFT ORGANISATION CHART

