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## Introducing the AACEi Competency-based Portfolio, Program and Project Management Credential - The C3PM

*By Paul Giammalvo*

Over the past several years, ad hoc discussions have been held about the possibility of moving the Association for the Advancement of Cost Engineering International (AACEi) [www.aacei.org](http://www.aacei.org) into the world of portfolio, program and project management. With a well established base of project controls and project management office experts, AACEi now has a targeted constituency of any organization that requires a capital budgeting process through which to fund programs and projects.

With the publication of John Hollmann's "Total Cost Management Methodology", <https://www.aacei.org/bookstore/cgi-bin/shopR.cgi?page=4060-20.htm> supported by such publications as Gary Heerken's "The Business Savvy Project Manager", [http://www.amazon.com/Business-Savvy-Project-Manager/dp/007144307X/sr=8-3/qid=1161833606/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_3/102-0017888-9263345?ie=UTF8&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/Business-Savvy-Project-Manager/dp/007144307X/sr=8-3/qid=1161833606/ref=pd_bbs_sr_3/102-0017888-9263345?ie=UTF8&s=books) the door was opened to creating a new, high level credential which would build upon the highly regarded existing credentials that AACE already offers. AACEi's new credential incorporates a considerable element of COMPETENCY, modeled along the lines of the globally respected Professional Engineer (PE) license and credentialing process adopted by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

As the "TCM Methodology" is the first successful attempt by any professional organization to fully integrate Portfolio, Program and Project Management into a single, comprehensive methodology, this forms the basis of the new credential.

The credential, known as the "Certified Portfolio, Program and Project Manager©" or "C3PM©", builds upon AACE's credible and globally recognized Interim Cost Consultant (ICC) and Certified Cost Consultant/Cost Engineer (CCC/E) knowledge based exams. The ICC serves as the rough equivalent of the "Engineer In Training" (EIT) and provides the initial screen in selecting potential candidates. In order to build the professional image of the credential, all new incoming applicants will be required to hold a 4 year degree from an appropriately accredited college or university. Consistent with the popularity of program and project management across a broad range of applications, the underlying 4 year degree is not limited to engineering or technical undergraduate degree. Applicants will be accepted from any specialty which normally and customarily uses Portfolio, Program or Project Management as a core element in their delivery system. This would include not only the traditional applications of Cost Engineering, but expand our potential sphere of influence to include Pharmaceutical, Aerospace, International Development, Governments or any other organization which relies on a capital budgeting process to allocate money to fund programs or projects.

The process is outlined in [http://www.pmforum.org/viewpoints/2006/PDFs/Figure1\\_Viewpoints11-06.pdf](http://www.pmforum.org/viewpoints/2006/PDFs/Figure1_Viewpoints11-06.pdf), but consists of a flexible, 3 step processes comparable to the North American

Professional Engineer (PE) or Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyor (RICS) credentialing process.

The highlights of the credential are that it offers:

- 1) Two modes of Entry-
  - a. One for Fresh Graduates- requires a 4 year degree minimum
  - b. Another for existing practitioners- 4 year degree waived for 3 years
- 2) 6 Different Career Path "Tracks" enabling entry into the program-
  - a. Non-Masters degree track
  - b. Technical Masters Degree track
  - c. MBA track
  - d. PhD track
  - e. Acceptance of other credentials
  - f. Recognition for earning other AACE credentials
- 3) A balanced requirement of-
  - a. Documented and Validated Work Experience
  - b. Continuing (Lifelong) Formal Learning/Training
  - c. Traditional Written Exams
  - d. Behavioral/Conflict Resolution Assessments
  - e. Demonstrated ability to communicate verbally and in writing
- 4) Designed to evaluate COMPETENCY (*"the quality or state of being functionally adequate, characterized by marked or sufficient aptitude + attitude + skills + strength + knowledge"*)

## **DETAILED PROCESS EXPLAINED-**

**STEP 1-** A fresh graduate from any discipline which uses program or project management identifies program or project management as a career path objective. Why? Because this program has been designed to attract only those for whom program/project management represents a career objective. We are not seeking or targeting "accidental" project managers. The candidate then takes a behavioral test such as Myers Briggs AND the ICC Exam, and using the results from both, charts a career path for themselves for the coming 3-8 years. During this 3 – 8 year period, participants must "log" 8,000 hours of portfolio, program or project management experience, by maintaining a log book, very similar to that of aircraft pilots or SCUBA divers. This logbook will be signed off using 360 degree or "Balanced Scorecard" evaluation techniques, attesting to the individual's competency in performing their job responsibilities.

Integral to this process will be the requirement that each participant identify one or more mentors, who will also be responsible to sign off on the log book during that period. Also during this 3 – 8 year period, each individual will be required to take a minimum of 520 hours of additional courses related to portfolio, program or project management. At the end of this period, each participant will have not only 8,000 hours of DOCUMENTED and EVALUATED work experience, but a Masters Degree or Masters Degree Equivalent. To further test for the individual's ability to communicate verbally and in writing, during the 3 – 8 year period, each participant is expected to write/present a minimum of 4 papers, two of which must be in peer

reviewed journals or peer reviewed symposia and the remaining two can be in any forum, including electronic communications (e-zines)

**STEP 2-** Once the individual has completed the 520 hours of classroom training AND has amassed 8,000 hours of documented and verified work experience, AND published/presented 4 papers, THEN he/she qualifies to sit for the Certified Cost Consultant/Cost Engineer credential, modified to include questions on Program and Portfolio Management. Assuming he/she passes the modified CCC/E Exam, each participant will go before a peer review board with their portfolio of projects (evidenced by a signed logbook) the results proving they have met the education requirements and proof of having presented 4 papers before a peer review committee. The peer review committee, consisting of three suitably qualified practitioners, will determine whether or not a person qualifies, and assuming they do, will earn professional accreditation.

For those who are currently practicing in the field of project, program or portfolio management, you will NOT be entering at Step 1, but will come in through Step 2. (The 4 year degree, taking the ICC and behavioral test and creating a career path development plan will be waived.) All you will need to do is DOCUMENT 8,000 hours of experience, taking of 520 hours of coursework in not less than 3 nor more than 8 years AND passing your CCE Exam, including the preparation of a 2,500 word paper, and you too can apply to present before the peer review committee.

**STEP 3-** Once you are certified as a Portfolio, Program and Project Management Professional© (C3PM©) you will be subject to a three year renewal cycle, during which time you will be required to maintain a log book of your work, signed off using 360 degree or balanced scorecard approach. During each 3 year renewal period, you will also need to accumulate CEU's just as you do now with the CCC/E.

The objective in taking this approach is to attract people to program/project management who see this as a career path. The program has been designed by a team of leading practitioners, academics and young professionals, to result in a credential which meets legal requirements typical of true professions. A credential which does not rely on knowledge based exams alone, but combines knowledge + skills + behaviors + validated work experience = a highly respected and trusted credential, recognized around the world on the same level with the PE and/or RICS certifications.

## **GLOBAL ACCEPTANCE, RECOGNITION & TRANSPORTABILITY**

To ensure portability and acceptance of our new credential around the world, AACE is developing it to meet or exceed the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards (GAPPS). GAPPS [www.globalpmstandards.org](http://www.globalpmstandards.org) is an independent organization, comprised of academic, practitioners, social scientists and industry employers who have been establishing competency standards in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa for 15 years. For the past three years, GAPPS, in response to a demand, have been creating competency based performance standards specifically for Portfolio, Program and Project Management.

To comply with various international requirements for transportability, transparency and impartiality, the GAPPS standard is NOT tied to any single methodology, body of knowledge or organization, but is truly independent. To ensure compliance by AACE's new credential to the GAPPS standards, a diverse team of global practitioners from the USA, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia have collaborated, using the latest in collaborative software and through a "virtual team" approach has been working to develop and implement the AACE credential meeting or exceeding the GAPPS standard.

The key milestone dates to roll out this new credential are:

Credential Requirements Finalized-	December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2006
First Pilot Exams-	NLT March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2007
First Intake of New Applicants-	June, 2007
First Modified CCC/E Exam-	July 15-18, 2007

If anyone has any questions or would like to learn more about this credential, please contact Charles Bolyard, Steve Warhoe or Jim Zack through the AACEi Website- [www.aacei.org](http://www.aacei.org).



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