HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

Mini MBA Project Management and AI: PMP, PRINCE2, Agile and PMD Pro applied to humanitarian work

Course handout · Week 2 : PMBOK and PMP: principles, performance domains and exam preparation

A programme of exactly 3 months (12 weeks, 144 hours) to manage humanitarian projects with the main methodologies and artificial intelligence: project cycle, PMBOK and PMP, PRINCE2, Agile (Scrum, Kanban) and hybrid approaches, Project DPro (PMD Pro), logical framework, theory of change and results-based management, planning and critical path, donor budget and earned value, risks and stakeholders, MEAL, donor reporting, change management, leadership and closure. At every step, AI (Claude, Gemini, Copilot and project management tools) is used methodically, protecting the data of the people we serve. Corrected numerical exercises, three monthly exams with case studies, and a verifiable diploma from the Humanitarian Academy. Independent preparation programme: it does not award the PMP, PRINCE2 or PMD Pro certifications, which are obtained through the official exams.

https://humanitairejobs.org/en/academy/mini-mba-gestion-projet-ia/semaine-2/

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Week 2 : PMBOK and PMP: principles, performance domains and exam preparation

Objectives

- Explain the structure of the PMBOK Guide (7th and 8th editions): principles, performance domains, processes and process groups.
- Apply the key PMBOK tools to a humanitarian project: charter, project management plan, baselines, integrated change control.
- Prepare a path towards the PMP or CAPM: requirements, exam content and revision method, with AI as a practice partner.

PMI, the PMBOK and the certifications

The **Project Management Institute (PMI)** is a professional association founded in 1969 in the United States. It publishes the **PMBOK Guide** (*A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*) and the associated standard, and runs several certifications, including:

- **CAPM** (*Certified Associate in Project Management*): entry level, no experience required, with 23 hours of project management education;
- **PMP** (*Project Management Professional*): the reference certification, requiring experience leading projects and 35 hours of education;
- **PMI-ACP** (agile), **PgMP** (programmes), **PMI-RMP** (risk), among others.

Requirements, fees and rules change: in 2026, PMI introduced a new PMP exam (July 2026) and announced additional requirements on where training comes from. **Always check the current requirements on pmi.org** before registering. The hours of this Mini MBA are not automatically recognised by PMI: the Academy is not an Authorized Training Partner (ATP).

From PMBOK 6 to PMBOK 8: what changed

For a long time (up to the 6th edition, 2017), the PMBOK was organised into **5 process groups** (initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, closing), **10 knowledge areas** (integration, scope, schedule, cost, quality, resources, communications, risk, procurement, stakeholders) and **49 processes**. Many textbooks and organisations still use this vocabulary.

The **7th edition** (2021) replaced processes with **12 principles** and **8 performance domains** (stakeholders, team, development approach and life cycle, planning, project work, delivery, measurement, uncertainty), to cover agile and hybrid work too.

The **8th edition** (late 2025) brings the two together: **6 principles** (adopt a holistic view, focus on value, embed quality, lead accountably, integrate sustainability, build an empowered culture), **7 performance domains** (governance, scope, schedule, finance, stakeholders, resources, risk), and the return of about **40 non-prescriptive processes** organised into five

groups (initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, closing). It adds guidance on AI, project management offices (PMOs) and procurement.

> For the exam, revise with the current official documentation: the Examination Content Outline takes precedence over any edition of the guide.

The founding tools: charter, plan, baselines

Whatever the vocabulary, three tools structure a PMBOK-style project:

- **The project charter**: a short document that authorises the project and names the project manager. It contains the objective, justification, main deliverables, milestones, overall budget, major risks, key stakeholders and success criteria. In humanitarian work, the approved concept note or the donor contract often plays this role, but a one-page internal charter clarifies responsibilities.
- **The project management plan**: it describes how the project will be planned, executed, monitored and closed (scope, schedule, cost, quality, resource, communications, risk, procurement and stakeholder engagement plans).
- **The baselines**: approved scope, schedule and cost, used as the reference to measure variances. A baseline is changed only after a formal change decision.

Integrated change control links everything: every change request (new site, new activity, delay) is analysed for its impact on scope, time, cost, quality and risk, then approved or rejected by the competent body, and finally logged.

The PMP exam: content and strategy

The PMP exam has about **180 questions in 230 to 240 minutes**, with multiple-choice, multiple-response, matching and graphic questions. It covers three domains: **People** (leadership, team, conflict, stakeholders), **Process** (planning, budget, schedule, risk, quality, procurement, change) and **Business Environment** (compliance, value, organisational change, governance). Since July 2026, this last domain weighs much more than before, and around half of the questions or more concern agile or hybrid approaches. AI, automation and sustainability feature in it.

An effective preparation strategy (8 to 12 weeks):

1. Read the official exam content and the current guide;
2. Complete 35 hours of training that meet PMI's rules;
3. Take full mock exams in real conditions, regularly aiming for 75% or more before sitting the exam;
4. Analyse every mistake: why the right answer best fits the "PMI mindset" (serve the team, analyse before acting, follow the change process, address the root cause).

AI as a revision partner

An AI assistant is a good **tutor**, provided you frame it:

- "Explain the difference between a contingency reserve and a management reserve, with a humanitarian project example."
- "Ask me 10 PMP-style questions on stakeholder management, one at a time, wait for my answer, then correct and explain."
- "Here is my answer and the official answer key: explain why mine is weaker according to PMI."

Limits: AI may confuse PMBOK editions, invent process numbers or get eligibility rules wrong. Never consult it for registration requirements or fees: go to the PMI website. Never buy "real exam questions": this breaches the PMI code of ethics and can lead to the certification being revoked.

Applying the PMBOK to a humanitarian project

Example. Project to rehabilitate 8 health centres, 18 months, EUR 1.2 million. The project manager writes a one-page charter validated by the country director; builds the work breakdown structure (week 6), a schedule with donor milestones and a budget by activity; sets the baselines; keeps a risk register (week 8) and a change log.

Six months later, the ministry asks for a ninth centre to be added. The project manager says neither yes nor no: they assess the impact (estimated cost EUR 140,000, three more months), propose options (reallocate savings, request an extension, or decline), submit the request to the steering committee and then to the donor, and update the baselines only after written approval. This is exactly the behaviour expected in the PMP exam.

Exercise: charter and change request

Situation. WASH project of the fictitious NGO Tawasul: base budget USD 800,000, 15 months, 20 villages. In month 7, the cluster asks to add 4 villages. The observed average cost is USD 38,000 per village. The project has a contingency reserve of 5% of the base budget, already 40% used.

Task. 1) Estimated cost of the 4 villages? 2) Amount remaining in the contingency reserve? 3) Can the extension be funded from the reserve? 4) What process should be followed?

Answer. 1) 4 × 38,000 = USD 152,000. 2) Reserve = 5% × 800,000 = USD 40,000; 40% used = 16,000; USD 24,000 remains. 3) No: the contingency reserve covers identified risks within the approved scope, not new scope, and it is insufficient anyway. 4) Write a costed change request (cost, time, resources, risks), submit it to the steering committee, propose to the donor a contract amendment or additional funding, and update the baselines only after written agreement.

Key takeaways

- PMI publishes the PMBOK Guide and runs the PMP and CAPM certifications; always check the rules on pmi.org.
- The 8th edition of the PMBOK combines 6 principles, 7 performance domains and about 40 non-prescriptive processes.
- Charter, management plan and baselines structure a project; any change goes through a formal decision.
- The PMP exam covers people, process and business environment, with a lot of agile and hybrid content.
- AI is a good tutor, never a source for eligibility rules; no purchased "real questions".

Quiz

1. The document that formally authorises a project and names the project manager is:
   A. The risk register
   B. The communications plan
   C. The project charter
   D. The final report

2. A baseline can be changed:
   A. After a formal change decision
   B. Every week by the project manager
   C. Never
   D. By any team member

3. The 6th edition of the PMBOK Guide had:
   A. 7 principles and 7 practices
   B. 3 accountabilities and 5 events
   C. 12 principles and 8 domains
   D. 5 process groups and 10 knowledge areas

4. A contingency reserve is used to fund:
   A. New scope requested by the cluster
   B. Responses to identified risks within the approved scope
   C. Team bonuses
   D. Headquarters costs

5. To find out the PMP registration requirements, the right source is:
   A. An AI assistant
   B. A forum
   C. The official PMI website
   D. A certified colleague

Quiz answers : 1. C · 2. A · 3. D · 4. B · 5. C