

## How to Pass Scrum.org's PSM I, PSM II, and PSM III Certificates


Generally, there are three different Scrum Master certificates from Scrum.org available, independent of whether the candidate attended a Professional Scrum Master class or not: PSM I, PSM II, and PSM III. While the PSM I is an entry-level Scrum certificate, heavily focused on the theory of the Scrum Guide, the PSM II certificate addresses the advanced practitioner's knowledge on how to deal with different scenarios. Both of these Scrum Master certificates are entirely based on multiple-choice assessments. This is only partly true for the PSM III certificate. The majority of the PSM III questions require a written answer in English. Also, the PSM III assessment is mainly graded by a human.

### How to Pass Scrum.org's PSM I Scrum Master Certification

The [PSM I Scrum Master certificate](#) requires a solid knowledge of the theory of agile product development in general and the Scrum framework in particular. While I would not suggest it, you can pass this Scrum Master certificate without any practical knowledge of Scrum if you are willing to put in the time to get familiar with the fundamentals. To pass the PSM I Scrum Master assessment, I recommend the following preparation:

- Read the Scrum Guide in advance several times. The answers to many questions will be in there.
- Diligently practice with [Scrum.org's Open Assessments](#); you will need to understand the mental model behind creating the assessment question and what kind of answers candidates shall provide. Please keep in mind: Passing Scrum Master certificates by Scrum.org is about the pure application of Scrum as it is supposed to be. (Not one of the botched derivatives of Scrum you may have encountered somewhere.)
- When I mention Scrum.org's Open Assessments, I am not only referring to the Scrum Open. You also need to get familiar with the Nexus Open and the Product Owner Open. I would even suggest looking at the Agile Leadership Open and the Developer Open.
- To pass the Scrum Master certifications, it is essential that you pass the Open Assessments routinely with 100 % in significantly less time than advertised. For example, aim for 5 minutes for the Scrum Open. Also, please note that the actual PSM I to PSM III assessments will likely comprise more difficult questions.
- Also, read the explanation the Open Assessment tests provide to you when you answer a question incorrectly. But, again, it is about understanding the mental model behind the questions in the first place. (Some students deliberately answer all questions wrong to learn the correct answers.)
- You will have to answer 80 questions in 60 minutes. While the PSM I assessment is an open book assessment, there will be little to no time to start googling anything.
- Do not spend too much time on answering a single question. First, aim to answer all 80 questions in about 45 minutes while bookmarking those you want to revisit.
- Test the bookmarking function of the Open Assessments. Its software is identical to the one used in the PSM I, PSM II, and PSM III certification tests. (You do not want to be stressed during the "real" PSM certification.)

- Read the questions carefully. There are no trick questions; however, swapping 'Product Backlog' for 'Sprint Backlog' changes the game. (Don't fall victim to pattern matching instead of reading.)
- Make yourself familiar with the [Standard of Conduct for Assessments](#).
- Do you feel well prepared to pass a Scrum Master certification? Excellent! Now, pick a quiet hour where you will not be disturbed. Maybe, ready a sheet of paper and a pencil and check your mobile to provide an alternative to your normal ISP if needed. (I once encountered a crashing WiFi router during an PSM II assessment, and switching to the mobile hotspot worked well. I like backup solutions.)


 The **PSM I Certification Results** from my Professional Scrum Master classes in 2021 are as follows:

- 94% of course participants took the included PSM I certification.
- 89% of exam takers passed PSM I certification with an average score of 93%. (Required: 85%.)

## How to Pass Scrum.org's PSM II Scrum Master Certification

Compared to the PSM I Scrum Master certificate, the [PSM II assessment](#) provides a lot of time for completion: 90 minutes for 30 questions. The challenge is that all questions address real-life scenarios, and many suggested choices will sound familiar to you. But, unfortunately, sounding familiar to you won't necessarily make them acceptable from Scrum's perspective:

- To prepare yourself for passing this Scrum Master certification, go back to the suggestions for the PSM I assessment; those apply here, too.
- Then continue your preparation by studying the [Scrum Guide 2020 Reordered](#). I based the Scrum Guide 2020 Reordered on about 95 percent of the text of the Scrum Guide 2020, extending its original structure by adding additional categories, for example, on self-management, commitments, or accountability. It allows you to get a first understanding of Scrum-related questions quickly. For example, it is good at relating specific topics—say "stakeholders"—with Scrum's first principles, such as Scrum Values or empiricism. This kind of Scrum pattern recognition helps to sort out scenarios that are not compliant with Scrum's basic ideas.
- Another recommended reading is the Scrum Anti-Patterns Guide. It is a collection of articles I have been writing and refining for years. They detail the necessary steps to identify and overcome Scrum anti-patterns, from Scrum events to Scrum artifacts to Scrum roles.
- Finally, you may want to consider [Scrum.org's Scrum Master Learning Path](#). While it is not a pre-requisite for passing the PSM II Scrum Master certification, the Scrum Master Learning Path offers a structured approach to learning for Scrum Masters.

 The **PSM II Certification Results** from my Advanced Professional Scrum Master classes in 2021 are as follows:

- 99% of course participants took the included PSM II certification.

- 91% of exam takers passed PSM II certification with an average score of 94%. (Required: 85%.)

## How to Pass Scrum.org's PSM III Scrum Master Certification

Passing the [PSM III Scrum Master certification](#) is tricky and requires probably a months-long preparation. (I spent more than four months preparing myself.) Many candidates face two significant challenges: Firstly, you need to be able to type fast, and secondly, you need to do this in English. And at the same time, you need to provide precise and concise answers. While you may consider using a translation plug-in for the PSM I and PSM II, this won't help with the PSM III. Also, writing answers in your native language and then translating them won't work, as pasting any text into the answer boxes is impossible. So instead, you will have to type manually:

- To prepare yourself for passing this Scrum Master certification, go back to the suggestions for the PSM I and PSM II assessments; those apply here, too.
- Practice typing fast. During my PSM III assessment, I had 25 questions that required a written answer and eight multiple-choice questions. I had to answer all of those questions within 120 minutes. So, I set a count-down of three minutes per question, and I forced myself to move on to the next question at the end of that period. (You will lose more points by not answering a question at the end of the assessment because you run out of time than moving a 90 % answer to a 95 % answer by adding two minutes to the original interval. Please note that nowadays, you have 150 minutes to pass the PSM III.)
- Create questions yourself, for example, based on the Scrum Guide, and try answering them with the time-box. (The Scrum Anti-Patterns Guide and the Scrum Guide Reordered support this effort; I created the first Scrum Guide Reordered as a tool to support my attempt to pass the PSM III assessment.)
- Revisit the [Standard of Conduct for Assessments](#), particularly the "Additional expectations for essay-based assessments – PSM III and PSPO III" paragraph.
- Start reading many books on Scrum, Scrum mastery, leadership in general, and servant leadership.
- Track your preparation progress by engaging with the Scrum Master Learning Path, see above.
- Join Scrum.org's forum or the Hands-on Agile Slack community—see the sign-up form below—and engage in discussions with fellow Scrum Masters on topics unclear to you. (I know some people in the Hands-on Agile Slack community who are considering taking the PSM III or preparing for it.)

There is a reason why there are only 1,035 certificate holders worldwide as of today: The PSM III assessment is a difficult and expensive Scrum Master certification. You need to prepare yourself properly. Just showing up and hoping for the best is a futile approach. (By the way, attending an Advanced Scrum Master class will reduce the \$500 price tag of the PSM III by \$200.)

## Conclusion

If passing a Scrum Master certificate is a good career choice and sound signaling for prospective employers, customers, or peers, which PSM certificate shall you consider? Personally, in most cases, I would consider a PSM I to be the minimum and a PSM II to be the standard. However, on the other side, someone holding a PSM III certainly has my full attention as they accomplished quite a feat.

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule that proves it. For example, some excellent agile practitioners do not believe in any form of Scrum certificates, and it works fine for them. However, they also put in a lot of work for the agile community and have corresponding visibility. Just ask yourself: Do you belong to this group?

## Scrum Certification Resources

[Scrum Certification: Is It a Sound Investment for Your Career?](#)

[How to Pass the Product Owner Certification — PSPO I, PSPO II, and PSPO III](#)

[The Scrum Master Salary Report 2022](#)

[Hiring: 60 Scrum Master Interview Questions To Avoid Agile Imposters](#)

[Hiring: 82 Scrum Product Owner Interview Questions to Avoid Agile Imposters](#)

[Download the 'Scrum Anti-Patterns Guide' for Free](#)

[The Scrum Guide Reordered — understand the Scrum Guide's patterns and concepts quickly](#)