PMP® EXAM PREP

2026 - 2027

The Complete Study Guide for the New July 2026 Exam

Master the Updated ECO with AI & Sustainability Questions,
PMBOK® 7 vs PMBOK® 8 Explained, Full Study Plans,
and Practice Questions with Detailed Answers

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Auckland, New Zealand

PMP Exam Prep 2026–2027: The Complete Study Guide for the New July 2026 Exam

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To Hanan,
and to Yosif, Yehya, Jasmine and Shadia -
the finest project I will ever be part of.

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CHAPTER -

How to Use This Book

I have sat on both sides of the certification table. I have prepared for exams while running live construction programmes with immovable deadlines, and I have coached planners, engineers, and project managers through their own certifications while we were delivering infrastructure projects together. The single biggest lesson from all of that is this: **passing the PMP is not about how much you study. It is about studying the right things, in the right order, for the exam you will actually sit.**

That last part matters more in 2026 than it ever has. On 9 July 2026, PMI retired the exam that thousands of prep books were written for and replaced it with a substantially different one. If you walk into a Pearson VUE centre having studied the 2021 domain weightings, the old question mix, and none of the new AI and sustainability content, you are preparing for a test that no longer exists.

This book is organized in five parts:

- **Part I - The New Exam.** What changed on 9 July 2026, the new Examination Content Outline (ECO), PMBOK 7 vs PMBOK 8, and how AI actually appears in questions.
- **Part II - Preparation.** Eligibility and application step by step, three study plans (4, 8, and 12 weeks) with Gantt charts, and the PMI mindset that unlocks scenario questions.
- **Part III - Domain Deep Dives.** The People, Process, and Business Environment domains, taught through real construction and infrastructure examples.
- **Part IV - Practice Questions.** Exam-style questions in the new formats, with the reasoning behind every correct *and* incorrect option.
- **Part V - Reference.** Formulas, terminology, exam-day strategy, statistics, and a curated list of official sources.

The icons you will see

Icon	Meaning
💡 Expert Tip	Practical advice from real project delivery - the things I wish someone had told me.
⚠ Common Mistake	Where candidates predictably lose marks, and how to avoid it.
🏗 Real-World Example	A construction or infrastructure scenario that makes the concept concrete.
★ Key Takeaways	The three to five points to retain from each section.
✎ Note	Clarifications, exceptions, and items to verify on pmi.org.

> 💡 **EXPERT TIP - FROM THE FIELD**
>
> Do not read this book cover to cover like a novel. Read Part I once, choose your study plan in Part II, then loop through Part III and Part IV together - study a domain, then immediately test yourself on it. Retention comes from retrieval, not from re-reading.

PART I

The New Exam

What changed on 9 July 2026 - and how to think about it

CHAPTER 1

The 2026 PMP Exam - What Changed and Why It Matters

The most significant revision to the PMP exam since 2021, explained in plain language.

Every four years or so, PMI conducts what it calls a role delineation study - essentially, a large structured survey of what project managers actually do at work. The exam is then rebuilt to match. The 2026 update is the product of the latest study, and it reflects a profession that has changed dramatically: project leaders are now expected to connect their work to business outcomes, navigate genuinely complex stakeholder environments, make defensible judgments in ambiguous situations, and operate in workplaces where AI tools are part of the daily toolkit.

On **9 July 2026**, the new exam launched globally at all Pearson VUE testing centres and via online proctoring. There was no overlap period: candidates who tested on 8 July sat the old exam; candidates testing from 9 July onward sit the new one. The old format is permanently retired.

The five changes that matter

1. The domains were rebalanced

The three exam domains - People, Process, and Business Environment - survived, but their weightings shifted substantially. Business Environment, previously a minor 8% of the exam, now carries roughly a quarter of your questions.

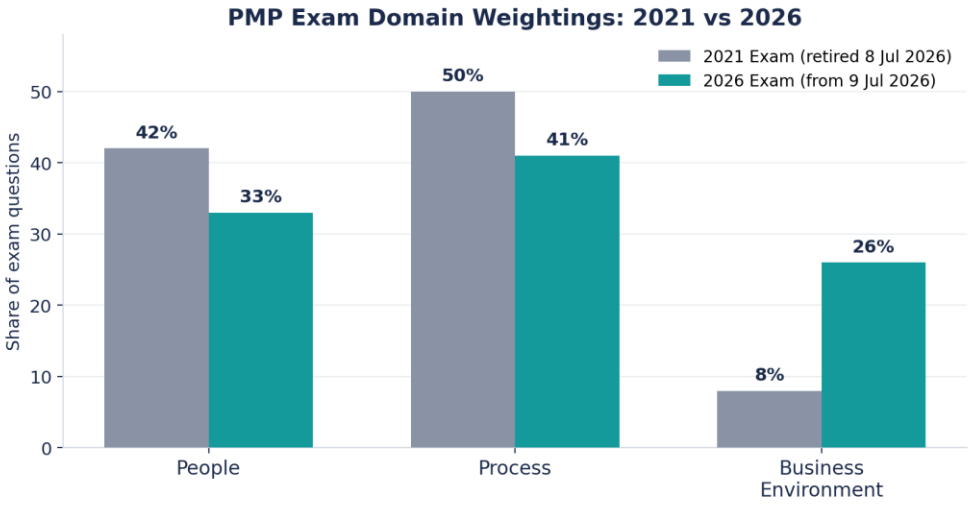


Figure 1.1 - Domain weightings, 2021 exam vs 2026 exam.

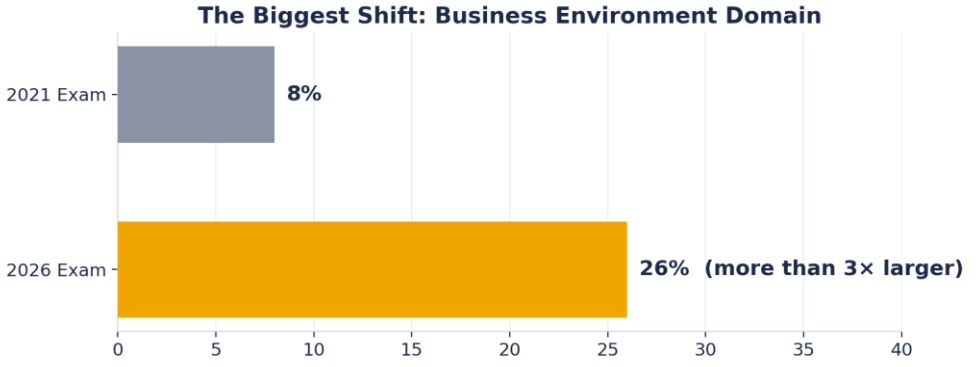


Figure 1.2 - Business Environment grew from a footnote to a full quarter of the exam.

Read that chart carefully, because it should change how you allocate study time. Under the old exam, many candidates rationally skimmed Business Environment - at 8%, you could pass while being weak in it. At roughly 26%, you cannot. Strategic alignment, governance, value realization, compliance, and external influences are now core examinable territory, not background reading.

2. The exam aligns to PMBOK 8 and a new ECO

The controlling document for the exam is not the PMBOK Guide - it is the **Examination Content Outline (ECO)**, published by PMI in November

2025. The ECO defines the domains, tasks, and enablers the exam tests. The PMBOK Guide Eighth Edition is the primary reference PMI points candidates toward, and its terminology now flows through exam questions. Chapter 3 gives you the full PMBOK 7 vs PMBOK 8 comparison.

3. AI and sustainability are now examinable

For the first time, AI appears in PMP exam scenarios - alongside sustainability and ESG considerations. Here is the critical nuance that most candidates miss: **AI is not a standalone topic, and you are not tested on how AI works.** Scenario questions describe projects where AI tools are in use - a schedule risk model, a document analysis assistant, a forecasting tool - and test *your judgment as the project manager* in that environment. Chapter 4 is devoted entirely to this.

4. New question formats

The total stays at 180 questions, but the formats diversify. Alongside traditional multiple choice, the 2026 exam introduces case-study question sets (several questions hanging off one scenario), drag-and-drop, matching, point-and-click, and graphic interpretation items.

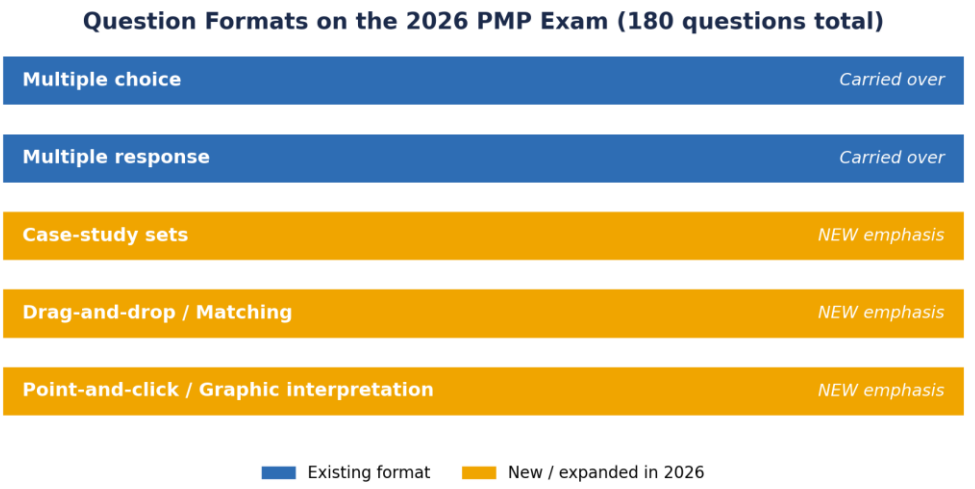


Figure 1.3 - Question formats on the 2026 exam.

5. The commercial and administrative details

Two housekeeping items worth knowing. First, exam fees for non-members increased from 6 August 2026 - one more reason PMI membership (which discounts the exam and includes PMBOK access) usually pays for itself. Second, from late 2026, live training hours only count toward eligibility if delivered by a PMI Authorized Training Partner (ATP), an accredited academic program, or an approved provider. If you are counting old training certificates toward your 35 hours, verify they still qualify.

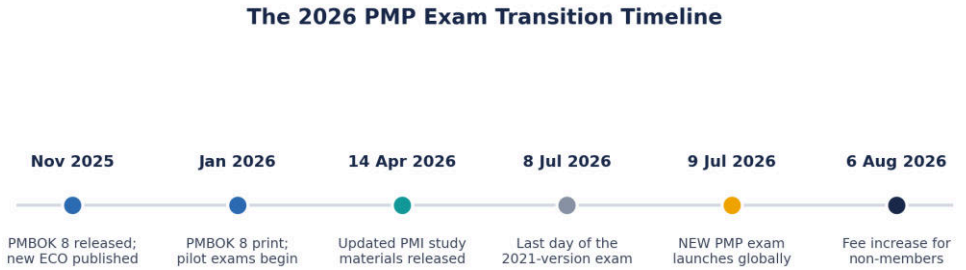


Figure 1.4 - The transition timeline at a glance.

Is the new exam harder?

This is the question I am asked most, and the honest answer is: it is *different*, not necessarily harder. The 2026 exam leans further into real-world judgment, scenario analysis, and critical thinking, and away from memorization. In my experience coaching candidates, practitioners with genuine project experience often find applied questions *easier* than trivia-style questions - the scenario feels like a Tuesday at work. Where people struggle is when they prepare with outdated material and get ambushed by content that was never in their study plan.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE - CONSTRUCTION

A senior site engineer I worked with on a water infrastructure programme failed a certification exam years ago - not because she lacked knowledge, but because she studied from a colleague's old notes aligned to a retired syllabus. She resat three months later with current material and passed comfortably. The knowledge gap was never the problem; the *alignment* gap was. The 2026 PMP transition creates exactly this trap for unprepared candidates.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKE

Studying from pre-2026 prep books and question banks. They over-weight Process, barely touch Business Environment, contain zero AI or sustainability content, and none of the new question formats. Supplement or replace them.

Assuming the PMBOK Guide is the exam syllabus. The ECO is the blueprint. Download it free from pmi.org and check your study material against it, task by task.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

The new exam launched 9 July 2026; the old exam is permanently retired.

Business Environment jumped from 8% to about 26% of the exam - reallocate your study time accordingly.

AI and sustainability are examinable through scenarios that test judgment, not technology.

180 questions remain, but expect case-study sets, drag-and-drop, matching, point-and-click, and graphic interpretation.

The ECO (published November 2025) is the controlling document - validate every study resource against it.

CHAPTER 2

The New Examination Content Outline, Decoded

The ECO is the exam blueprint. This chapter turns it into a practical study map.

If you take one action from this chapter, make it this: go to pmi.org, download the *PMP Examination Content Outline - July 2026*, print it, and keep it beside you for your entire preparation. Every hour of study should trace back to a line in that document. When I build a project schedule, I start from the scope baseline - the ECO is your scope baseline for this exam.

How the ECO is structured

The ECO organizes the exam into three **domains**. Each domain contains **tasks** - the things a project manager is responsible for doing - and each task lists **enablers**, which are illustrative examples of the work associated with that task. Exam questions are written against tasks and enablers, which is why two candidates can study 'the same topics' and have very different exam readiness: one studied topics, the other studied tasks.

Domain	Approx. weight	What it covers
People	≈ 33%	Leading teams, managing conflict, supporting performance, empowering stakeholders, emotional intelligence, servant leadership across predictive, agile, and hybrid settings.
Process	≈ 41%	The technical machinery of delivery: scope, schedule, cost, quality, resources, risk, procurement, integration, communications, and tailoring the approach to context.
Business Environment	≈ 26%	Strategic alignment, benefits and value realization, governance, compliance,

Domain	Approx. weight	What it covers
		organizational change, external influences - now including AI-enabled environments and sustainability.

Notice what the weightings imply. Process remains the largest single domain - the craft of delivery still matters most. But the combined People + Business Environment share is now well over half the exam. The 2026 PMP is an exam about *leading projects inside organizations*, not just administering processes.

What is genuinely new inside the domains

- **AI-enabled ways of working.** Using data and AI tools to support decisions, understanding their limits, and governing their use responsibly (Chapter 4).
- **Sustainability and ESG.** Environmental and social considerations as project constraints and value dimensions - not an appendix, but woven into planning and benefits questions.
- **Value delivery over task completion.** Expect questions that penalize the answer that 'completes the task' but destroys value, and reward the answer that protects outcomes.
- **Expanded stakeholder complexity.** More scenarios with conflicting stakeholder interests, ambiguous authority, and organizational politics.
- **Deeper hybrid fluency.** Not 'agile vs waterfall' trivia, but choosing and blending approaches based on context.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE - CONSTRUCTION

Think about a motorway upgrade delivered under a public alliance contract. The physical works are predictive - you cannot iterate a bridge deck. But the digital systems (tolling integration, traffic modelling, stakeholder communications) run in short adaptive cycles. The 2026 exam loves precisely this kind of context: it will describe a hybrid environment and ask which approach fits *which part* of the work. If you delivered infrastructure, you have lived this - trust that experience.

Turning the ECO into a study checklist

Here is the method I recommend, step by step:

1. Print the ECO and read it once, end to end, without studying anything. You are mapping the territory.
2. Against every task, mark yourself honestly: **Green** (I could answer scenario questions on this today), **Amber** (I know it but could not explain it), **Red** (new or weak).
3. Count your marks per domain. Multiply your Red count by the domain weighting - that product tells you where your exam risk actually sits.
4. Build your study plan (Chapter 6) so Red items in high-weight domains get the earliest and largest time blocks.
5. Re-score yourself every two weeks. Your plan is a living document - reforecast it like a schedule.

EXPERT TIP - FROM THE FIELD

This is earned value thinking applied to studying. Your ECO checklist is the baseline; your fortnightly re-score is progress measurement; the gap is your variance. Candidates who measure their preparation pass at visibly higher rates than candidates who simply 'put in hours' - effort without measurement is how projects *and* exam attempts fail.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKE

Spending week after week polishing Green topics because they feel comfortable. Comfort is not progress. Your marks come from converting Red to Amber and Amber to Green in the heaviest-weighted domains - everything else is procrastination with a study guide open.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

The ECO - not the PMBOK Guide - defines what the exam tests. Download it from pmi.org and audit your materials against it.

Domains break into tasks and enablers; questions are written against tasks.

Weight your study effort by (personal weakness × domain weighting), not by chapter order in any book.

Re-score your readiness fortnightly and reforecast your plan.

CHAPTER 3

PMBOK 7 vs PMBOK 8 - What Changed, What Stayed, What It Means on Exam Day

You do not need to memorize the PMBOK Guide. You do need to think in its language.

The PMBOK Guide Seventh Edition (2021) was a radical departure: it abandoned the process-group-and-knowledge-area structure of earlier editions in favour of twelve principles and eight performance domains. It was praised for flexibility and criticized for abstraction - many practitioners told me it read beautifully and helped them very little on a wet Tuesday on site.

The **Eighth Edition**, released ahead of the 2026 exam, is best understood as a course correction that keeps the principles-based philosophy while restoring more practical, process-oriented guidance and adding the topics reshaping the profession: AI-augmented delivery, sustainability, and sharper focus on value. It is the edition the 2026 exam speaks the language of.

Side-by-side comparison

Aspect	PMBOK 7 (2021)	PMBOK 8 (2025)
Core structure	12 principles + 8 performance domains	Principles retained; reorganized with restored practical process guidance
Orientation	Highly conceptual; 'what good looks like'	Concept + practice; 'what good looks like *and how to do it*'
Delivery approaches	Predictive, agile, hybrid treated even-handedly	Deeper hybrid integration; approach selection driven by context

Aspect	PMBOK 7 (2021)	PMBOK 8 (2025)
AI	Not addressed	AI-enabled work environments addressed as part of modern practice
Sustainability / ESG	Value described broadly (economic, social, environmental)	Sustainability treated as an explicit consideration in delivery and value
Value focus	System for Value Delivery introduced	Value realization sharpened and tied to measurable business outcomes
Terminology	Performance-domain vocabulary	Refreshed terminology - the vocabulary the 2026 exam uses
Exam relevance	Governed the 2021–Jul 2026 exam era	Primary reference for the exam from 9 July 2026

What this means for your preparation

First, the reassuring part: the exam is written against the ECO, and PMI has been explicit that you are not tested on your ability to recite any edition of the PMBOK Guide. Nobody will ask you which page a concept appears on.

What *does* transfer to exam day is vocabulary and worldview. When a question offers four plausible actions, the credited answer is the one consistent with PMBOK 8's way of thinking: tailor to context, protect value, engage stakeholders early, make decisions with data (including AI-assisted data, used critically), and treat sustainability as a genuine constraint rather than a public-relations garnish.

END OF FREE SAMPLE

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