

**Certified Professional Technical Communicator
Practitioner Exam
Candidate Guidance**
September 2024



CPTC™ PRACTITIONER EXAM CANDIDATE GUIDANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The objectives of the examination are to enable you to demonstrate your understanding of technical communication and how to apply the technical communication guidance in an appropriate way in a given set of circumstances as described in a scenario. The Practitioner examination uses objective test questions, which require you to choose a response to a question from a set of choices for which the correct answer is pre-determined.
- 1.2 The following paragraphs explain the format of the question papers, and the different types of question asked. Some suggestions on how to approach answering the various types of question are also included.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

The examination paper consists of three booklets.

- 2.1 The **Scenario Booklet** contains a scenario providing a summary description of the organization, an overview of a proposed technical communications project and its key objectives/tasks, and a brief explanation of your role in the project. The Scenario Booklet also includes additional information for one or more of the four questions. Where additional information is to be used for a question, this is clearly stated in bold within the question header. **Additional information is only to be used for the question to which it relates.**
- 2.2 The **Question Booklet** contains four questions, each covering a combination of syllabus areas. The syllabus areas covered are identified at the beginning of each question. Each of the four questions contains 20 question-lines, each of which attracts 1 mark, giving a total of 80 marks. The pass mark is 56 (70%). Each of the four questions will be sub-divided into part-questions that examine different syllabus topics. The portion of the 20 marks allocated to a part-question is clearly identified at the start of the part-question.
- 2.3 The **Answer Booklet** contains the answer sheets on which the answers must be given. **Unless it is clearly stated otherwise**, there is only **one answer** to each question-line. If more than one answer is given in the answer booklet, the response line will be void.
- 2.4 For certain subject areas, questions are asked using the format 'Which of the following is the **MOST**', "Which if the following is the **BEST** ...". Whilst more than one option could be an answer, for these questions you are required to select the answer that is the best fit, given the scenario and the QUAL guidance. If you select more than one answer, the response line will be void and no mark is awarded for the question-line.

3. CPTC SYLLABUS AREAS ADDRESSED

- 3.1 The CPTC Syllabus contains 9 defined syllabus areas covering the theories, concepts, models, genres, and approaches to technical communication.

Syllabus Area
Project Planning and Technical Communication
Project Analysis and Developing a Reader Profile
Content Development
Organizational Design
Written Communication
Visual Communication
Reviewing and Editing
Content Management
Production and Delivery

- 3.2 For the purpose of the Practitioner examination, the syllabus areas will be combined/split into the following examination question areas that will each be covered by a 20-mark question.

Practitioner Question Area	Syllabus Topics
Project Planning and Analysis	Project Planning + Project Analysis
Visual Communication	Visual Communication
Content Development and Organization	Content Development + Organization Design
Writing and Editing Strategies	Written Communication + Reviewing and Editing

Each question will test a minimum of 4 syllabus topics.

These question areas can be presented in any order in the examination paper.

- 3.3 The full CPTC syllabus is available from APMG or from an Accredited Training Organization.

4. TYPES OF QUESTION

There are five different test types used within the paper.

- 4.1 **Classic Multiple Choice Questions** – ‘choose one from a list of four options’.

Answer the following questions about the contexts, which will influence users’ experiences of the website.

Members typically access the website using a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer at home or work. Which of the following contexts does this inform?

- A Physical and economic
- B Physical and mobile
- C Ethical and mobile
- D Ethical and economic

- 4.2 **Classic No-Yes** – ‘choose one from a list of possible answers, correct answer has correct explanation’

Answer the following questions about research the project team is proposing for some of the website updates.

- 1 One of the key update areas will be the member-only web pages. These will provide information about specialist aspects of technical communication. To help identify the new content required, the team will first produce a concept map of their research methodology. Using this, they will then identify a proposed angle for their research.
- Is this an appropriate approach for planning this research?
- A No, because the team should develop a different research methodology for gathering suitable content for each membership category.
 - B No, because the research question should be formulated before choosing an angle and the research methodology.
 - C Yes, because choosing an angle will help identify a suitable research question for gathering the content to meet members’ needs.
 - D Yes, because concept mapping is a good way of visually mapping the sequential steps of the research process.

- 4.3 **Multiple Response** – ‘choose two correct options from a list of five options’. This question follows exactly the same format as the ‘Classic style’, but more than one answer is required. It is the **only question type that requires more than one response to gain a mark**. Both responses must be correct to gain a mark. If more or fewer than two responses are given, then the answer will be void.

Answer the following questions about research methods.

Each of the following statements describes potential research topics for improving the content of the website, which uses WordPress. The team responsible for researching content will be composed of 2-3 individuals and will have limited time and funding. Given these constraints, the team needs to decide which two research methods or sources are the best fit for each research topic.

Remember to select **2** answers to each question.

Research Topic: Member feedback about the features and general preferences of the website they most like and dislike.

Which **two** research methods or sources would be the **BEST** fit for this topic, based on time and limited resources?

- A Existing case studies about individuals’ experiences as members of TSO
- B Phone interviews with each member about their general preferences
- C Field observations of members using the website in an actual working environment
- D Questionnaires to collect members specific comments and queries on features and preferences
- E Surveys collected from the members feedback session at the annual members conference

- 4.4 **Matching** – ‘link items in one list to items in a second list’. There is **only one correct response** to each question, but options from the second list may be used once, more than once or not at all.

Answer the following question about the use of document genres on the project.

As part of the project planning phase, you are tasked with identifying the document genres to be used when creating specific project deliverables for the website redesign.

Column 1 is a list of some of the project deliverables. For each deliverable in Column 1, select from Column 2 the **MOST** suitable document genre for this deliverable.

Each selection from Column 2 can be used once, more than once, or not at all.

	Column 1	Column 2
1	Summary of terms and conditions of membership.	A Progress report
2	Request for additional funding and computing resources.	B Formal report
3	Weekly summaries of usability testing results of prototype site.	C Instructions
4	Research results identifying new and legacy content sources.	D Technical description
5	Monthly analysis of site analytic trends and user errors.	E Proposal
		F White paper

4.5 **Assertion/Reason** – ‘evaluate two statements (an assertion and a reason), to determine if either, both or neither is true and, if both are true, whether the reason explains why the assertion is true’.

If either statement is false, select the answer from options C, D or E. If both statements are true, a third step is required. You must then determine whether or not the reason is a correct explanation for the assertion. If the reason explains why the assertion is true, the answer is A. If it does not, the answer is B.

There is **only one correct response** to each question-line but options can be used once, more than once or not at all.

Answer the following question about visual design for global audiences.

The design for the original website was a culturally deep design specifically selected for North American web interfaces. An extensive use of blue was made for titles, fonts, and navigation bars.

Current web analytics and feedback from the membership department indicate that nearly 15% of members are now from Japan or Southeast Asia. The number of members from other countries is also predicted to grow significantly in the near future.

As a result, the team has been advised to update content on the website to align with guidelines for the design and use of visual information for global audiences.

Lines 1 to 4 in the table below consist of an assertion statement and a reason statement. For each line, identify the appropriate option, from options A to E, that applies. Each option can be used once, more than once, or not at all.

Option	Assertion	Reason	
A	True	True	AND the reason explains the assertion
B	True	True	BUT the reason does not explain the assertion
C	True	False	
D	False	True	
E	False	False	

	Assertion		Reason
1	As the original design was culturally deep, no changes will be required to the design conventions used.	BECAUSE	Culturally deep interfaces are designed to work across a variety of cultures.
2	In future the in-house design team should avoid the use of complex shapes when using symbols in international web pages.	BECAUSE	Standard organizations such as ISO have created a number of international symbols for cross-cultural use.
3	It would be appropriate to check whether the extensive use of the color blue throughout the website works for the Japanese audience.	BECAUSE	Where possible, colors that have negative associations for other cultures should be avoided.
4	Where photographs of members at social events are being used these will need to be re-evaluated and possibly removed.	BECAUSE	For global use, wherever possible photographs should be replaced with simple pictographs of humans.

For example, in question 2 and 3 of the example provided above, the assertion statement is true but the answer to question 2 is a B and question 3 an A.

In question 2 the reason statement is true, however the fact standard organizations have created a number of international symbols does not explain why the team should avoid the use of complex shapes in the future. The answer is B.

In question 3 the reason statement provides an explanation for the assertion. The choice of color can influence how transcultural (global) readers interpret the message, therefore when designing an interface colors that have negative associations should be avoided. The reason is true and explains the assertion. The answer is therefore A.

5. USING THE SCENARIO AND THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

5.1 Where you need to refer back to details provided in the Scenario Booklet in order to answer a question, this is clearly stated in the question header.

5.2 If the question header says '**Using the Scenario ...**' you will need to refer to the scenario.

Examples of the kind of information you may need to reference from a scenario include:

- the key objectives or tasks of the technical communications project
- technical communication products to be delivered by the project
- potential readers of a technical communications product.

5.2 If the question header says '**Using the additional information provided for this question in the Scenario Booklet**', you need to refer to additional information provided in the Scenario Booklet for the question. The additional information is provided for use with that question only.

5.3 Some questions may need you to reference both the scenario and additional information. In this case the question header will say '**Using the Scenario and the additional information provided for this question**.'

5.4 Where there is no '**Using the Scenario**' statement, the scenario provides the context for the question only. There is **no need** to reference specific lines within the scenario in order to answer the question.

6. TIME MANAGEMENT

6.1 The Practitioner examination is 100 minutes in duration. You must manage your time in order to complete all questions. As a general guide, you may wish to spend the first 10 minutes reading the scenario (**excluding the additional information**) and getting familiar with the layout of the paper. If you then allocate 20 minutes for each of the four questions, this will allow 10 minutes tolerance for any additional reading required for some questions. This suggested timing is for **guidance only**. It is expected that some questions will take longer to answer than others due to the style of question and the question's difficulty.

6.2 No support material is permitted. This is a closed book exam.

7. EDITORIAL NOTES

7.1 General Presentation

Although you may have encountered similar terms elsewhere, the use of terminology used in the examination is as per *Technical Communication Today* (6th / 7th edition).

8. USING THE ANSWER BOOKLET

8.1 The Answer Booklets are read electronically and the results generated by computer. It is therefore essential that you follow the instructions given and mark your answers accordingly. Failure to do so may lead to delay and, in some cases, answers being void.

- 8.2 Record your seat number in the 3 boxes at the top. Fill in the associated ovals next to the 3 boxes as shown in the example below for candidate 004.

Seat Number

	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
0	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
0	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 8.3 Select your answers by filling in the ovals that relate to your chosen response, e.g.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 8.4 Fill the oval in **IN PENCIL, NOT PEN**. If a pen is used, the answers will not be marked.

Acceptable ways to complete the answer sheets are either:

completely filling in the oval or drawing a line through the centre of the oval, ensuring that between 80-100% is filled.

Any other method, including ticks or crosses, is not acceptable and may not be marked.

- 8.5 If you wish to change your answer during the exam, completely erase your original answer and mark your new answer. If you give more answers than required, the question will score zero.

9. USING THE ONLINE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

- 9.1 Sample papers are available to take online should you wish to experience the examination system prior to the live examination. Please see <https://sampleexams.apmg-international.com/Marlin/SamplePapers.aspx> for more details.

10. USING THE PROCTORU SYSTEM

- 10.1. If your examination will be invigilated through our partners at ProctorU, please ensure that you are using a device to which you have administrator rights and meets the system requirements. Please run the system checks on the device you plan to use prior to the examination starting to ensure it meets the requirements and avoid issue on the day of your examination. Please see further information at <https://www.proctoru.com/portal/apmg-international>

11. REQUESTING EXAMINATION ADJUSTMENTS

- 11.1. If you have any access or support requirements which mean you would like to make an adjustment request to enable you take the examination, please do so in advance of the examination session. Please speak to your ATO or see our Equality Policy at <https://apmg-international.com/copyright-legal-policies> for further information.