

PRINCE2®

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Introduction to PRINCE2

PRINCE2 is a structured project management method and is the world's most popular project management methodology.

What does PRINCE2 stand for?

PRINCE2 stands for Projects IN Controlled Environments.

It is used by both private businesses and public sector organisations to help them deliver better value for money outcomes from projects.

PRINCE2 is popular in the UK, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. PRINCE2 has established itself as the default standard for project management in the UK public sector and the United Nations.

History

PRINCE evolved from an earlier project management technique known as PROMPT II (Project Resource Organisation Management Planning Techniques).

In 1989, the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA), a UK government body, adopted a version of PROMPT II as a standard for IT project management.

The difference between PRINCE and PRINCE2

This standard method was initially named 'PRINCE', standing for 'PROMPT II IN the CCTA Environment', but was later named as 'Projects IN Controlled Environments. PRINCE2 came about in 1996 as a universal project management approach.

Who created PRINCE2?

In 1996, CCTA created PRINCE2 as an enhancement of the original PRINCE method and from then was solely owned by HM Government until 2013.

What is the latest version of PRINCE2?

The latest revision (6th edition) of PRINCE2 came in 2017. The 6th edition provides additional guidance for practitioners, particularly those working in agile environments. It is expected that further revisions of PRINCE2 will be made to reflect modern changes in project management best practices.

What is the PRINCE2 certification awarding body?

The awarding body for PRINCE2 is [PeopleCert](#). PeopleCert owns and manages a portfolio of global best practice methodologies, including PRINCE2, PRINCE2 Agile, ITIL, MSP, MoP, MoR, P3O, Scrum, DevOps, AgileSHIFT, COBIT, and RESILIA.

Until July 2013, PRINCE2 was under UK Crown Copyright, when the HM Cabinet Office, representing the UK Government, transferred ownership to [AXELOS Ltd](#), a joint venture between the Cabinet Office and Capita, holding 49% and 51% stakes respectively.

AXELOS was tasked with managing, developing, and expanding the portfolio of global best practice methodologies in project, programme and portfolio management, and IT and digitally enabled services, including PRINCE2.

In June 2021, AXELOS Limited was acquired by PeopleCert which until then had been the sole PRINCE2 examination institute.

Methodology

A methodology is a system of practices, techniques, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a discipline. When applied to project management, a methodology is a model used by project managers and teams to plan, execute, and deliver projects.

[PRINCE2 is a methodology](#) because it provides a detailed, process-based approach for managing projects. It includes a set of [principles](#), [themes](#), and [processes](#) that guide the project team through the project lifecycle, from initiation to closure. It also includes a set of detailed responsibilities which it assigns to recommended roles within a project management team.

By providing a structured framework that covers all aspects of project management and can be tailored to any type of project, PRINCE2 embodies the characteristics of a methodology.

PRINCE2 manual

The PRINCE2 manual [Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2](#) is a comprehensive guide to the PRINCE2 methodology for project management, recognized worldwide for its structured, process-based approach. This book is the official PRINCE2 guidance manual, published by AXELOS, the owners of PRINCE2.

Principles

There are [seven principles in PRINCE2](#). They are the guiding obligations and good practices that determine whether the project is genuinely being managed using PRINCE2. They include continued business justification, learn from experience, defined roles and responsibilities, manage by stages, manage by exception, focus on products, and tailor to suit the project environment.

Themes

There are [seven themes in PRINCE2](#). Themes are aspects of project management to be addressed continually and in parallel throughout the project. The seven themes are business case, organization, quality, plans, risk, change, and progress.

Processes

There are [seven processes in PRINCE2](#). The processes describe a step-by-step progression through the project lifecycle, from getting started to project closure. The seven processes are starting up a project, directing a project, initiating a project, controlling a stage, managing product delivery, managing a stage boundary, and closing a project.

Roles

There are [nine PRINCE2 roles with associated responsibilities](#) defined within the PRINCE2 project management team structure. These are the project board, executive, senior user, senior supplier, project manager, team manager, project assurance, change authority, and project support role.

The PRINCE2 guidance also refers to the corporate, programme management or the customer, but this role is considered outside of the PRINCE2 project management team.

Management products

The PRINCE2 manual describes [26 management products](#) which help the project management team plan, manage, and control a project. These management products can be customized to suit the needs of any project.

Templates

The PRINCE2 manual also provides a set of [PRINCE2 templates](#) for the 26 management products. These templates are useful for the project management team to use during a project.

Tailoring

Tailoring, alongside the principles, themes, and processes, is the fourth element within PRINCE2. [Tailoring in PRINCE2](#) refers to the steps taken by the project management team to the themes, processes, roles, and management products to ensure that it meets the needs of a project's environment.

Every project context is different – the shape, size, and nature of the project, as well as the external environment within which the project operates. Therefore, PRINCE2 must be tailored to each individual project's specific needs.

PRINCE2 certification

PRINCE2 certification is valuable for anyone seeking to progress in a project management career. The time, effort, and resources it takes to obtain a [PRINCE2 certificate](#) can provide a solid return on investment. That's because it can boost a candidate's career prospects and open new opportunities in the jobs market.

There are 2 levels of PRINCE2 certification to choose from – Foundation and Practitioner. Which one is chosen depends upon the candidate's circumstances and career goals.

Foundation

Candidates gaining the [PRINCE2 Foundation certification](#) have learned the PRINCE2 method sufficiently well that they are able to work effectively with, or as a member of, a project management team working within an environment supporting PRINCE2.

Most candidates that gain a PRINCE2 Foundation certificate do so by taking either a [classroom or self-paced online training course](#). Successful candidates must pass the 1-hour PRINCE2 Foundation exam which is normally provided as part of accredited training.

Practitioner

Candidates gaining the [PRINCE2 Practitioner certification](#) have learned the PRINCE2 method sufficiently well that they should be capable of, with suitable direction, applying the method to a real project but not to do this appropriately for all situations.

The individuals own project management experience, the complexity of the project and the support provided will be factors impacting what the candidate can achieve.

Most candidates that gain a PRINCE2 Practitioner certificate do so by taking either a [classroom or self-paced online training course](#). Successful candidates must pass the 2.5-hour PRINCE2 Practitioner exam which is normally provided as part of accredited training. A common path for many students to get their Practitioner qualification is to take a combined [Foundation and Practitioner course](#).

PRINCE2 Agile

PRINCE2 Agile provides guidance for those working in an agile project context. It explains to practitioners how to tailor the PRINCE2 method in agile environments.

[PRINCE2 Agile](#) also comes with two levels of certification – Foundation and Practitioner.

PRINCE2 exams

Each of the two levels of certification have their own examination. Foundation is the shorter and the easier of the two. In the UK, over 95% of students pass the 1-hour Foundation exam first time. The Practitioner exam is 2.5 hours, and about 73% of students pass first time in the UK.

[PRINCE2 exams](#) are normally included as part of an [accredited PRINCE2 training programme](#).

PRINCE2 training courses

Most people who get certified do so with an accredited [PRINCE2 training course](#). Accredited training is only available from a PRINCE2 Accredited Training Organisation (ATO). ATO's go through a rigorous accreditation process which assesses their ability to manage and deliver training courses of the requisite standards.

A full list of all [PRINCE2 Accredited Training Organisations](#) is available from AXELOS.

Benefits of PRINCE2

PRINCE2 offers some distinct [benefits for organisations](#) which adopt it. The benefits enable organisations to gain an advantage over others in their industry or sector which do not adopt it.

Adopting PRINCE2

To successfully implement a PRINCE2-based project management method, it's crucial that everyone in the organization understands and uses it correctly. This requires more than just announcing the approach; it must be implemented uniformly, initiated effectively, and utilized practically.

When people talk about [embedding PRINCE2](#) they are referring to the systematic and consistent deployment of a tailored project management method across all projects within an organization.

Case studies

To get an idea for how different organizations have adopted PRINCE2 in their organizations, it would be useful to read these [case studies](#) which describe how different organizations have adopted PRINCE2.

PRINCE2 glossary

The PRINCE2 and PRINCE2 Agile manuals both include a comprehensive glossary which has been combined into a single [PRINCE2 glossary](#).