Major Certification Programs for Supply Chain and Operations Management Professionals

The following provides background information on organizations offering certification to supply chain or operations management professionals. Competitive information included in this report was gathered from the organizations’ websites at the time of the analysis.

APICS certifications are in an enviable market position for a number of reasons:

• APICS’ strict adherence to best practices and high standards in certification development and management is a distinguishing factor. These high standards include:
  o psychometric validations of the APICS certification bodies of knowledge,
  o cut scores, item and test performance, item writing and cut score workshops comprised of experts and professionals in the field,
  o exam references drawn from extensive study of prevailing texts,
  o exam committees comprised of volunteers who represent a balanced cross-section of the market, and
  o independence of certification exam development from education courseware development.

• These standards ensure the APICS certifications provide strong validation of a professional’s knowledge and ability to apply that understanding to the practice of supply chain and operations management.

• The APICS Certified in Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) dominates the marketplace. This is due to the applicability, relevance, content, and business results as well as the maturity of the certification. Approximately 100,000 individuals have earned the designation since 1973.

• Since its introduction in 2005, more than 12,000 people in 78 countries have earned the APICS Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP) designation. The success of the APICS CSCP designation can be traced to a number of key factors: addressing a critical gap in supply chain education and knowledge, the reputation of APICS and the APICS CPIM certification, the quality of the products and services provided by APICS. The APICS CSCP has grown at an impressive rate since its launch in 2006. New professional credentials generally take a significant amount of time to gain acceptance in this market. However, APICS CSCP was accepted almost immediately due the organization’s commitment to provide relevant, high quality information; address a market need; and the APICS reputation.
• For the reasons stated above, APICS enjoys a favorable position related to the APICS CSCP, although there are a number of competitive programs emerging. In addition, the varied scope of supply chain management definitions (transportation and logistics, procurement, end-to-end) allow for other organizations to provide education to specific aspects of the marketplace.

• Both the APICS CPIM and CSCP designations are high-stakes and have a positive impact on the earnings, promotion potential, marketability, and reputation of the professionals who earn them.

Note: Although APICS competitors offer certification references, APICS offers extensive courseware to partners who are teaching exam review courses. This helps to ensure the quality of the preparation and learning experience.

Definitions

The following definitions will be helpful in reviewing the competitive information contained in this document.

Certification/credential: Confirmation of certain characteristics of a person based on some form of external review, assessment, or audit.

Professional association certification: As stewards of the public trust, the boards of directors of nonprofit certification organizations offer certification to individuals. The certifications are based on practice combined with recognized references in the bodies of knowledge as opposed to education. These programs are designed to measure an individual’s “knowledge-in-use” – the application of knowledge and skills by those with real-life experience in this role. Such programs have a higher degree of defensibility than certificate programs or certifications offered by for-profit organizations that cannot claim their primary motivation as public benefit.

Certificate: Programs that verify participation in the education process are more accurately referred to as certificate programs, as opposed to certification programs. Although for-profit and nonprofit professional education organizations alike provide credentials based on the education process, these are most accurately described as certificates.

Review course: Review courses typically cover the domains of certification exams, but success is based on the practitioners experience and on-the-job knowledge of the field of practice.

Preparation course: Education provided to help the professional in practice. The courses are often followed by a final exam to measure understanding, but do not typically measure application.

High-stakes testing: A high-stakes test is a test with important consequences for the test taker. Passing has important benefits, such as salary increases, promotions, employability, etc. Failing has significant disadvantages, such as not being able to find employment or inability to practice in the field.
**Job-task analysis:** Systematic identification of the fundamental elements of a job, and examination of knowledge and skills required for the job's performance. This information is used in human resource management for developing institutional objectives, training programs, and evaluation tools. See also activity analysis, job analysis, and performance analysis.

**Psychometric validation:** Primarily concerned with the construction and validation of measurement instruments such as questionnaires, tests, and personality assessments. Ensures testing is fair and valid across demographic groups of test takers.

**Cut score:** The score that separates test takers into various categories, such as a passing score and a failing score or a selected score and a rejected score.

**APICS The Association for Operations Management**

**APICS CPIM**
The APICS Certified in Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) program focuses on the knowledge and understanding of the principles and practice of production and inventory management. The program is designed to educate individuals in the concepts, tools, terminology, and integration of topics in operations management. The APICS CPIM has been the standard within the operations field for nearly four decades, has undergone numerous updates to reflect changes within operations, and continues to be the premier designation for professionals in the field.

**Target:** operations management professionals

**Market reach:** global

**Maturity:** The APICS CPIM was established in 1973. To date, approximately 100,000 professionals have earned the APICS CPIM designation.

**Validation method:** psychometrically validated exam series (5) based on regular job task analyses.

**Qualifications/requirements:** none

**Preparation support:** APICS maintains an exam content manual that details the material covered in each exam and the references upon which questions are based. APICS has developed APICS CPIM review courses that are instructor delivered through an extensive channel partner network and delivered online via Fox Valley Technical College. Self-study and related preparation materials are also available from 3rd parties.

**Maintenance:** APICS CPIM designees must maintain their credential by submitting an application every five years that verifies continuing education in the field.
APICS CSCP

The APICS Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP) program is the only certification that addresses the entire supply chain – extending beyond internal operations—from suppliers through the enterprise, to end customers. The program is designed to educate individuals in the concepts, best practices, integration, technology, and communication required of today’s end-to-end supply chain management in a global environment. APICS introduced APICS CSCP in 2005. The certification has undergone annual updates to reflect the changes within the extremely dynamic supply chain field and has had tremendous industry acceptance.

Target: supply chain professionals

Market reach: global

Maturity: The APICS CSCP was established in 2006. To date, more than 10,000 professionals have achieved the APICS CSCP designation.

Validation method: psychometrically validated exam based on regular job task analyses.

Qualifications/requirements: must apply to take examination and have the requisite five years of related work experience. With a bachelor’s degree, CPIM, CIRM, or ISM certification, candidates can take the exam with two years of related work experience.

Preparation support: APICS maintains an exam content manual that details the material covered in the exam and the references upon which questions are based. APICS also has developed a self-study learning system. Review classes based on the learning system are instructor delivered through an extensive channel partner network and delivered online via Fox Valley Technical College.

Maintenance: APICS CSCP designees must maintain their credential by submitting an application every five years that verifies continuing education in the field.

Institute of Supply Management

Target: supply management professionals

Market reach: Primarily United States, but have expanded their international market. Memberships and certifications are available for countries such as Canada, Malaysia, Peru, Turkey, and Egypt.

Maturity: CPSM® was initiated in 2008 replacing the long standing CPM credential. CSM was announced in 2011. CPSDTM was announced in 2012. The CPSM requires a bachelor’s degree; the CSM does not have any educational requirements.
**Validation process:** CPSM® is a psychometrically validated exam series (3). Exams 1 and 2 each contain 165 questions. Candidates must complete 150 of the questions in 165 minutes (2 hours and 45 minutes). Current C.P.M.s may take a bridge exam to meet requirements for CPSM® or CSM. Exam 3 and the bridge exam each contain 180 questions. For Exam 3, 165 questions are scored after 180 minutes (3 hours). For the bridge exam, all 180 questions are scored after 180 minutes (3 hours).

*According to the Institute of Supply Management, “The Certified Professional in Supplier Diversity (CPSD™) is a new professional designation for supply management professionals whose responsibilities include supplier diversity. This designation also delivers added value to business leaders and other team leaders who participate in the development of diverse supplier initiatives within the organization.”

The CPSDTM exam contains 120 questions, all of which are scored with 120 minutes (2 hours) allowed.

The CPSDTM requires successful completion of Exam 1 of the CPSM® ® (This requirement can be waived if the candidate holds a current C.P.M. or CPSM®.)

**Qualifications/requirements:**

**CPSM**

- Three years of full-time, professional supply management experience (non-clerical, non-support)
- A bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university or international equivalent
- Note: If candidate is a C.P.M. in good standing, Bridge Exam is only exam required.

**CSM**

- Three years of full-time, professional supply management experience (non-clerical, non-support) with an associate’s degree from a regionally accredited institution (or international equivalent) OR five years of full-time professional supply management experience (non-clerical, non-support)
- Note: If candidate is a C.P.M. in good standing, Bridge Exam is only exam required.

**CPSD**

- Minimum of five years professional (non-clerical, non-support) supplier diversity or supply management experience (does not need to be primary function), OR three years of professional (non-clerical, non-support) supplier diversity or supply management experience IF the candidate has a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university (or international equivalent).

**Preparation support:** ISM produces a detailed exam content manual, but courses are developed by independent instructors. ISM has a number of related preparation materials.

**Maintenance:** The CPSM® qualification is valid for a three year period. To maintain the CPSM®, certificants must recertify by submitting a recertification application with proof of continuing education completed. Individuals with a CPSM® ® that has been expired for more than one year must retake all of the exams to recertify.
*Same maintenance is required for CSMTM

*Same maintenance required for CPSDTM

**Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals**

**Target:** supply chain management professionals

**Market reach:** intended to be global

**Maturity:** The program was introduced at CSCMP’s Annual Global Conference in October 2011. Level 1 was launched January 2012. Level 2 is expected to be launched in early 2013. There is no estimate for when Level 3 will be launched.

**Validation method:** Level 1: Exam focuses on the cornerstone of supply chain management. The exam is 160 questions (20 from each of the 8 learning blocks), takes four hours, and is administered by Pearson Vue.

Level 2: Focus is on analysis and application of supply chain challenges. Professionals must analyze real-world case studies, pinpoint areas for optimization, and recommend efficiency improvements in the supply chain. Participants will be tested via the completion of case studies during a four-hour testing window. (Cost is under development.)

Level 3: Candidates must perform hands-on analysis of a working organization and create a detailed project plan that generates real results, such as increased return on investment (ROI) or improved cycle times. However, Level Three is not limited to an independent project. Candidates are paired with an academic advisor who serves as a mentor throughout this process, then candidates are evaluated by a panel of supply chain experts. (Cost is under development.)

**Qualifications/requirements:** Level 1: Bachelor’s degree or four years of relevant work experience. Candidates must complete a certification application.

Level 2: Level One certification and EITHER a bachelor’s degree and three years of relevant experience OR seven years of relevant experience.

Level 3: Level One and Two designations plus EITHER a bachelor’s degree and five years of relevant experience OR nine years of relevant experience. Note that to engage in Level 3, candidate is paired with an academic advisor.

**Preparation support:**

- SCPro™ Certification Level One Study Guide
- SCPro™ Certification Level One Cornerstones of Supply Chain Management Study Materials: A comprehensive collection of supply chain knowledge

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*Advancing Productivity, Innovation, and Competitive Success*
**Maintenance**: According to CSCMP, “Once you have attained CSCMP SCPro™ Level One Certification, you must participate in continuing education programs to maintain an active certification status. The certification cycle is three years. During the three years, you must attain no less than 20 hours of professional continuing education credits toward maintenance each year, for a total of no less than 60 hours over the three years. You are not allowed to attain all of your continuing education hours in one or two years to ensure that you continue your professional education on an annual basis. Upon completion of the three-year cycle, a new three-year cycle begins.”

**Aspects to Consider When Evaluating a Professional Certification Program**

Professional certification programs vary greatly in quality and acceptance. When evaluating a program, the most important considerations include:

- How is the content developed? Are practicing industry experts involved in the development of the exams and content?
- Is the certification program content based on a recent job task analysis?
- Is the content regularly updated?
- Are the exams psychometrically validated?
- Is the certification recognized by employers?
- Does the certification have a recognized global brand?
- What type of organization is behind the certification? Is it nonprofit or for profit? Is it a well-established organization or is it relatively new?

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Supply Chain Certification Programs**

**ISM Certifications**

**Strengths**
ISM is a well-established organization in the United States with tremendous credibility in the area of procurement and supply management. Professionals who hold procurement positions will benefit from the CPSM® or CSM credential because it is specific to sourcing and procurement.

**Weaknesses**
ISM credentials cover supply management (sourcing and procurement) but not the entire supply chain. This credential may not meet the employer’s need for global supply chain experts.
In addition to the CSM and CPSM®, both of which were launched less than 5 years ago, ISM launched the CPSD. With so many new certifications in the market, acceptance and support for these designations may be more of a challenge than in the past.

CSCMP Certifications

Strengths
The SCPro™ is an ambitious program both for CSCMP to implement and for candidates to complete. CSCMP is a well-established nonprofit organization with credibility in the logistics field as well as in the academic community.

Weaknesses
The body of knowledge supporting this credential has a heavy US and logistics focus. CSCMP claims a market need for a comprehensive certification that diligently measures and accurately reflects an individual's skills and knowledge across the entire supply chain, but this may be true only for those who define supply chain as logistics.

The protracted length of time to achieve the final designation is a concern for candidates. Also, it may be difficult for corporate employers to support disclosure of corporate data required for Level 3. There are currently no review/preparation courses or guided self-study programs available, although CSCMP does provide a collection of reference articles.

APICS Certifications

Strengths
The APICS CPIM and CSCP programs have superior validation methodology, global market acceptance, a broader scope of the body of knowledge (BOK), and involvement of experienced professionals in their creation and development.

APICS has significant advantage in maturity, end-to-end global supply chain coverage, built-in customer base in APICS CPIM, global distribution including transnational corporations, and maturity as a certifying body.

Weaknesses
The increasing competition in the supply chain certification space has the potential to erode or confuse the market. There are certifications that offer more specificity and depth for individuals interested in certain topics within the APICS CPIM.