

WHICH QUALIFICATION DOES WHAT

An honest map of the main project management routes,
and the one thing none of them teach.



There is no shortage of training. The trouble is what it teaches.

Construction names poor planning as the number one cause of delay, year after year. So you would expect the training market to be full of courses that teach a project manager how to plan a job that finishes early. It is not. Here is a plain map of the main routes, what each genuinely gives you, and the one craft none of them teach.

Route	What it genuinely gives you	What it does not teach
Site safety tickets (SSSTS, SMSTS)	The basics of supervising and managing site safety. A baseline, rightly required.	How to plan, sequence or deliver a job.
Apprenticeships and NVQs (L4 Associate PM, L6 Site Management)	The job learned by doing it, qualification layered on top. The closest route to the real craft.	The delivery instinct is not automatic. It depends heavily on a good mentor on the job.
APM (PFQ, PMQ, PPQ, ChPP)	A strong grounding in the language of the discipline: governance, life cycles, leadership theory.	Assessed by describe and explain, no calculations. It does not test whether you can drive a real job to a finish.
PRINCE2	A genuinely useful, structured method. Common and widely recognised.	Deliberately generic. The same seven processes whether you build a hospital or launch software.
Chartered routes (MCIQB, RICS)	Confirmation of professional competence via submissions, case studies and interview. Worth holding.	They do not put you in front of a live programme and a room full of trades and watch what you do.
University MSc (Construction PM)	Management principles, theory and economics, taught rigorously.	Academic by design. A long way from getting groundworks closed out before the frame arrives.
Lean / Last Planner System (LCI-UK)	Collaborative, on-site delivery planning in short, reliable cycles. Genuinely the craft.	A partial view, not the full PM craft. UK adoption is thin, so few are ever trained in it.
Project controls and software (Asta, P6)	How to drive the planning software and run controls. Useful and in demand.	The tool, not the thinking. It teaches you to draw the bars, not to build the plan.
Executive tier (Oxford, Cranfield, MPA)	Some of the best thinking anywhere on why major projects fail, at strategy level.	It operates at the altitude of national programmes, not a 15 million pound school in Croydon.
Commercial, claims and delay schools	How to protect entitlement and build the record for a dispute. A real, skilled trade.	It teaches planning as a defensive art. Finishing so the claim never comes is the opposite discipline.

THE GAP

The craft **none of them fill.**

Line them all up and the pattern is hard to miss. We have built an entire profession that rewards people for being able to describe a project, assessed by exam, essay and interview, and almost none of it asks them to prove they can finish one. Not one route teaches the live craft of planning and leading a job so it finishes early: winning the buffer in preconstruction, running the programme live in the room with the supply chain, and turning a date into an agreement everyone has signed up to.

That craft is real, and it can be taught. It is what The Live Programme Method sets out, and what the Going for Gold programme exists to pass on. These qualifications are valuable and complementary. The point is simply this: the certificate sits on top of the craft. It does not replace it.

Constructing Culture Ltd. Construction business improvement and project management training, built on the method that won a CIOB Gold Medal. constructing-culture.co.uk. Sources held in the Constructing Culture research library, verified June 2026.