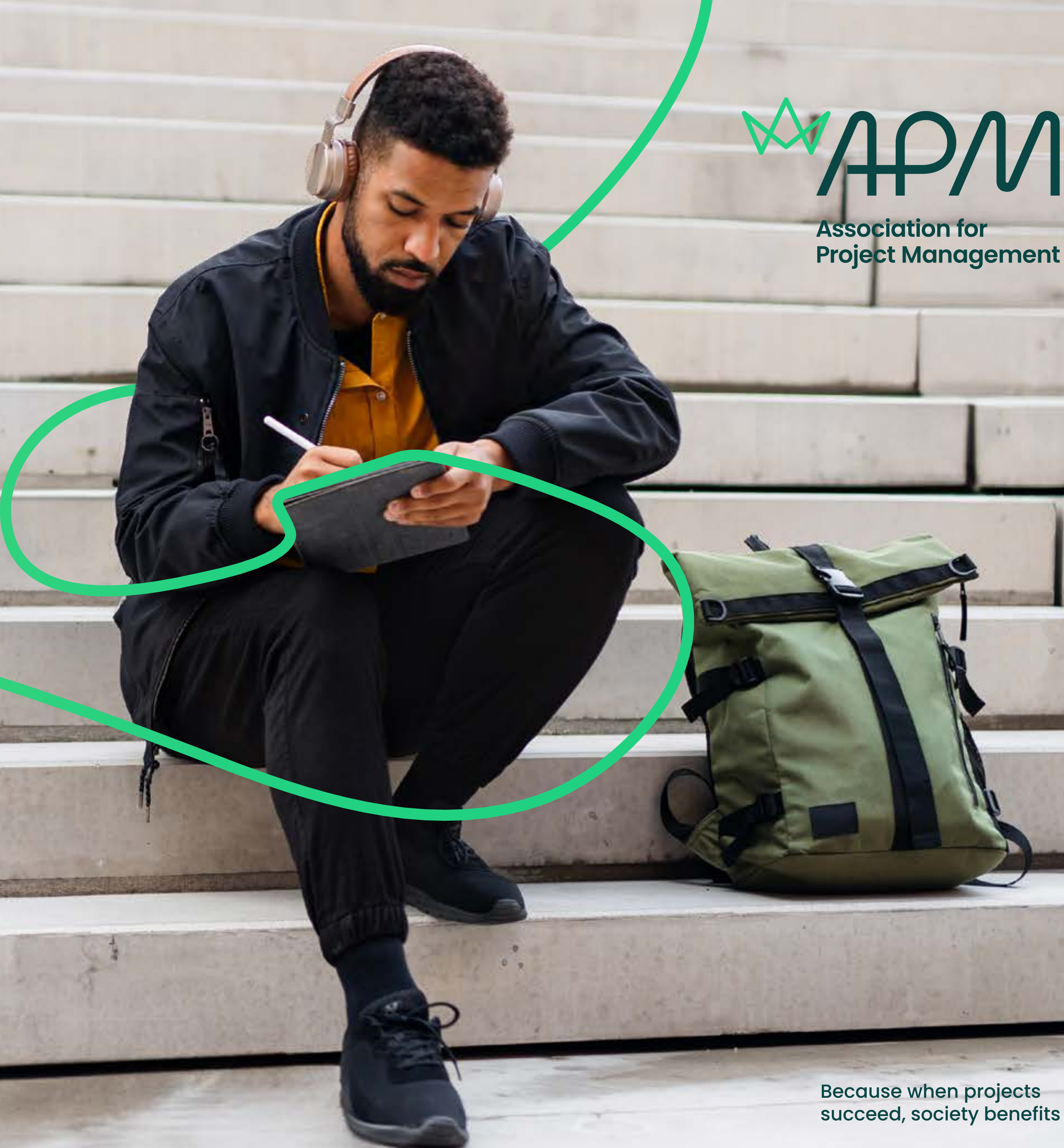


# Project:You

A student guide to project management



Because when projects succeed, society benefits



# What are projects?

Projects come in different shapes and sizes and all have an impact on the world around us.

Every project needs a project team to keep a close watch on plans, budgets, teams, quality of outputs and any issues that may cause a problem to the project. Without one, projects are likely to fail. And that could mean the late opening of an airport or, even worse, no music festival.

**So, what does a project professional look like?**

**They look like you.**

Our short guide shows you more about a profession that plays a big part in making things happen and keeps on growing as more companies in more sectors become project-based.



Burj Khalifa, UAE

## Where in the world?

- Burj Khalifa, UAE
- HS2, UK
- Olympic stadium, Japan
- Three Gorges Dam, China

Projects come in all shapes and sizes and happen all across the globe. When projects succeed, society benefits. The projects listed above are known as megaprojects costing billions of pounds, but the majority of projects aren't this huge and some will be local to you, like a new supermarket or hospital ward.



Three Gorges Dam, China



Olympic stadium, Japan



# The skills you need

So, you've decided that a career in projects looks interesting. Now have a think about the skills you have and compare them with those of a successful project professional.



## Organisation

The chances are that you're the one who arranges the holidays or evenings out with your friends. You probably don't like uncertainty and you prefer to get things done today – after all, why wait until tomorrow?



## Leadership

You're happy to get the job done yourself, but it's no problem to get other people involved too, as they'll have different skills to you. Your talent is being able to bring the right people together at the right time for the right result. Project professionals are experts in making teams work effectively.



## Resilience

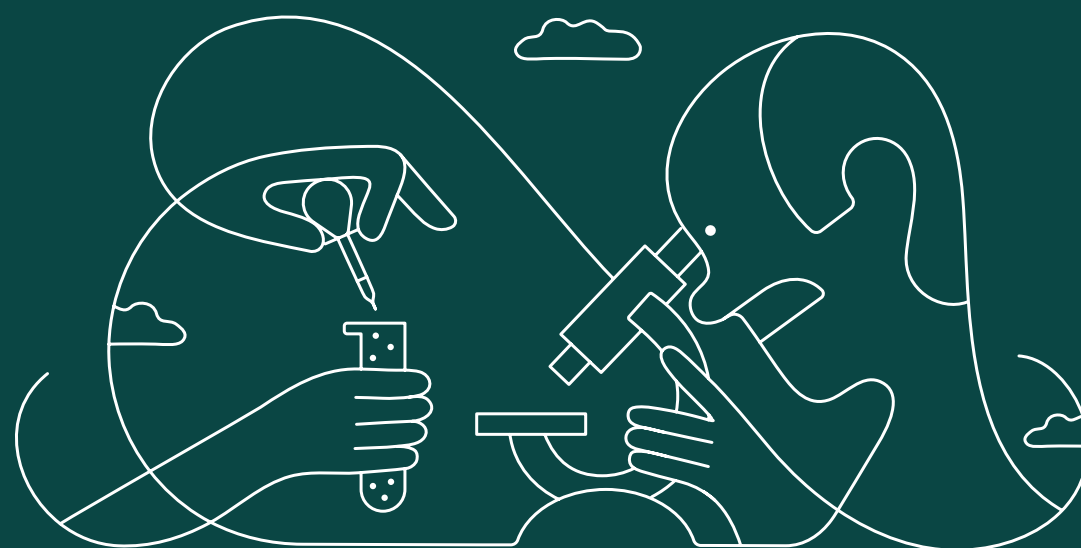
Mañana is not in your dictionary, and nor is failure. Your determination will get others working as a team and solving problems along the way so that together you'll succeed.



## Communication

Making sure that everyone knows what's happening, and what needs to be done, is a critical part of being a good project professional.

You're not expected to be an expert in projects on day one – you'll learn the technical parts on the job, but your attitude and soft skills are what will get you the role.



# What kind of projects can you work on?

Just about every sector has a project function, which means great opportunities for you to combine your job with your interests. Here's a flavour of some of the sectors that engage with projects, with an example of how for each one.

## Media

You could be involved in creating new studios for TV programmes, to make them more flexible for new filming technologies.

## Public sector

The NHS is Europe's largest employer and played a vital role during the worst of the Covid pandemic; major projects included Nightingale hospitals and the vaccine rollout.

## Construction

Building a house is a classic project; but innovation exists here as more construction is done 'off-site' and good project planning brings materials to the right place at the right time, with the right experts on-site.

## Financial services

Project professionals in this sector are busy helping large organisations change the way they engage with their customers, to make it more digital and 'always on'.

## Government

The government is responsible for making important decisions about national infrastructure.

## Engineering

Another classic sector for project management; building a train line or a tunnel requires intense planning, careful budgeting and a lot of stakeholder management (getting everyone on side).

## IT

Nearly every company has an IT function; and with the speed of change in IT, project-based teams are there to implement system updates smoothly across a business.

## Retail

How do a retailer's fast fashion products get from the manufacturer to the store? Through good project management.

## Charities

These organisations have to make every penny count; what better way to do that than by project-based working?

## There are many, many more.

## Money makes the world go round

You'll spend a long time working, so doing something you enjoy will make your world a happy place. Mix work with your interests and values and you'll hit the jackpot.

If your motivation is travelling around the world, you could aim to get involved in megaprojects. So, rather than the Elizabeth Line in the UK, what about a megaproject like the Hong Kong to Macau bridge? Or the Etihad Rail project which plans to link UAE with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait?

If you're more interested in socially-valuable projects in the developing world, take a look at a project like the Fael Khair Project, which saw schools in Bangladesh double up as cyclone shelters.

Once you've done your research on these astonishing projects, you can find out more about salaries – check out our annual Salary and Market Trends Survey which shows that the average salary for project professionals is £47,500 for 2023. However, Full APM members (MAPM) earn an average of £67,500 – which is 42% above the standard\*.

By the time you embark on your career, the Chartered Project Professional standard (ChPP) will have given a competitive advantage to project professionals and companies' project teams bidding for new contracts.

\*APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023

## Informed choices

The next step you make has to be the right one – **for you**.

If uni isn't for you, consider an apprenticeship. You get an APM qualification, a full-time job and a very positive bank balance. Or a degree apprenticeship, which also includes a BSc Project Management paid for by your employer.

More than 10,000 people have been on a project management apprenticeship, in a huge range of sectors and companies across the country.

If you're off to uni, you could take a degree in Project Management. There are more than 20 universities that offer undergraduate PM degrees, and more than 70 that run postgraduate ones. Remember that companies will recruit you based on you and your soft skills, not just the degree you hold.

**You could mix the two** – some have graduated from university before starting an apprenticeship.

**Keep your options open** – unless you're 100% certain about a specific path, apply for universities and apprenticeships.

If you can't see yourself as a project professional just yet, that's ok. People come in to the project profession after doing other roles as varied as TV production, engineering, being in the armed forces and event management.



Hong Kong to Macau bridge





# Project management roles



Project managers play a key role in the project profession, but they're not the only ones.

There are project co-ordinators, change managers, programme managers and directors, portfolio managers and directors, risk analysts, heads of transformation and many more versions of these job titles.

If you're new to the sector, the chances are you'll be a project co-ordinator. You could be involved in maintaining the project schedule, allocating tasks to different members of the project team and looking for ways to make the project as efficient as it can be. You will also update other people in the organisation on project progress.

As you gain experience and expertise you could become an assistant project manager or project manager. This type of role will still see you doing some scheduling and managing stakeholders; you could also use your negotiation skills to iron out any issues between different interest groups; you might do some scoping of the project requirements; you could be involved in the handover of projects – when they become 'business as usual' (BAU); you could also be responsible for securing resources from inside and outside the business; scrutinising budgets and controlling costs; looking at risks and opportunities, and designing responses to them.

# Build your own career

With more experience you will know what you enjoy most, which could be building and leading teams; working on contracts; scoping project requirements; managing stakeholders; or getting approval for business cases.

For some, the next step could be programme manager, someone who oversees large scale projects undertaken in a sophisticated way; it could be portfolio manager – someone with oversight of many large projects at once. Others prefer to work as a business analyst, gathering and scrutinising data from across the business, before making recommendations for improvement. Some become a change manager, moving a company from how it functions now to where it would like to be.

The beauty of the project profession is that there is no prescribed path. You can shape the career journey that is right for you and your skillset.

Jack Stacey, Student member





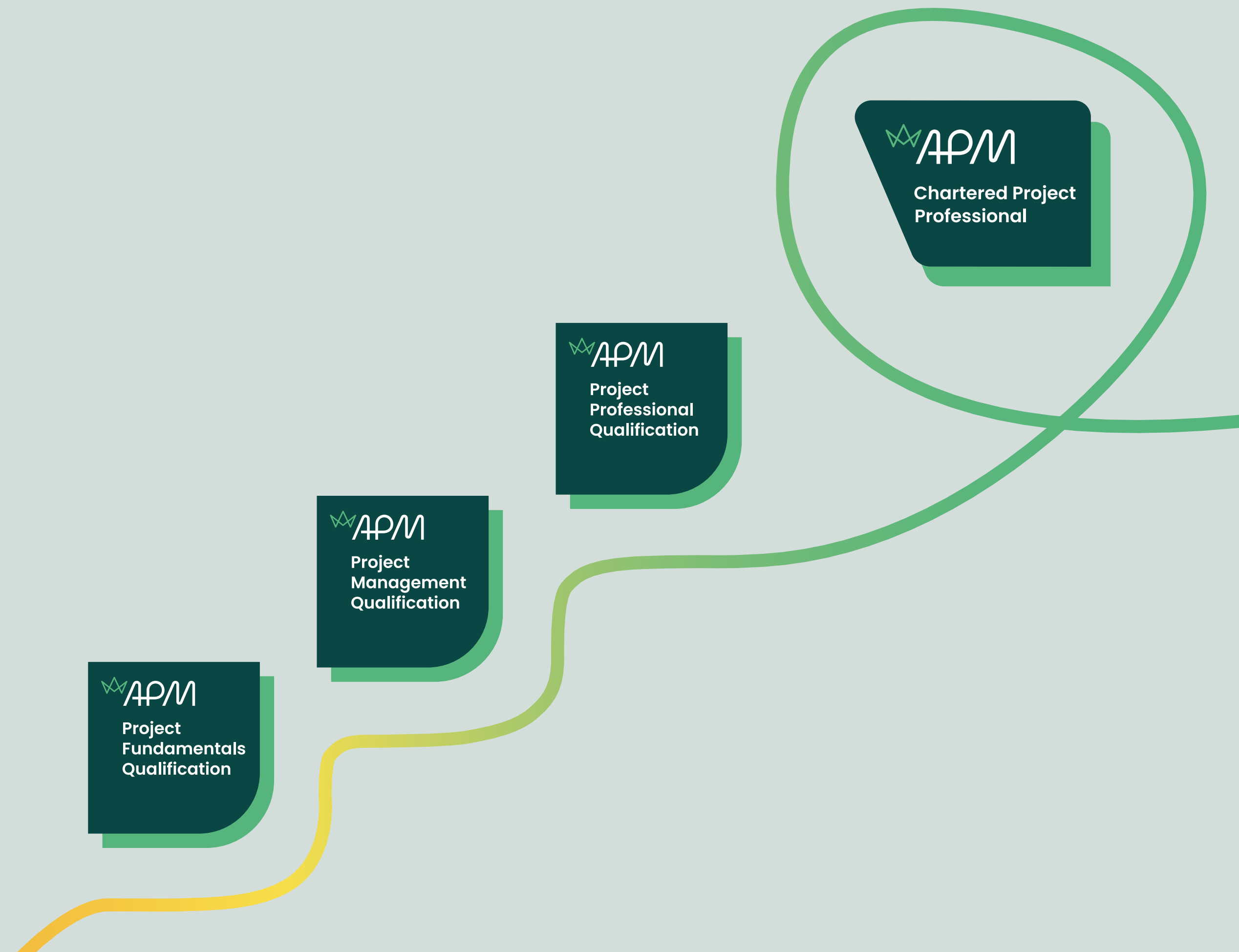
## We help the profession deliver better

We're APM: Association for Project Management. We're the only chartered membership organisation for the project profession in the world. Our activities – from qualifications and networking to research, resources and debate – raise the profile of the project profession, challenge the status quo where it matters and set the highest standards. In a complex world, we're helping the project profession deliver better.



## Stand out from the crowd with our qualifications

We design professional qualifications which you can find on our website [apm.org.uk/qualifications](https://apm.org.uk/qualifications) – the two you are most likely to see early in your career are the APM Project Fundamentals Qualification and the APM Project Management Qualification. The Fundamentals Qualification gives you essential knowledge about the world of projects. It's ideal for those about to start a career in projects, and for those looking to be more efficient in other roles where project-based working is becoming more common. The Management Qualification is the qualification that sits within both project management apprenticeships and graduate schemes – employers value its holistic view of projects including the importance of soft skills.





## Become a member, unlock your potential

If you're older than 16 you can join us as a Student member, for free. You can sign up online via [apm.org.uk/membership](https://apm.org.uk/membership) – and it's open to project management apprentices too. Having APM Student membership on your CV and our digital badge on your LinkedIn profile shows prospective employers that you are serious about your project career. More importantly, membership gives you access to networking events with other Student members and young project professionals, to increase your knowledge and raise your profile. As you develop your career you can become an Associate member, then a Full APM member (MAPM) and eventually become a Chartered Project Professional (ChPP), our most valuable title.



## Make an impact and get recognised

As well as being a chartered membership organisation, we issue the Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) designation to project professionals around the world who have the right mix of knowledge and experience. The chartered brand is valuable in many countries, in many different professions. Having the letters ChPP after your name makes it clear to companies that you are highly qualified, and an asset to any organisation.

If you are looking to study at university you will see that there are Project Management degrees that link to our ChPP status. This linkage means that you don't have to take any further project qualifications after you graduate to be eligible to apply for ChPP – all you need to do is get the right kind of project experience. To find out what it takes to become a Chartered Project Professional, and to see what others have to say about the value it brings, visit [apm.org.uk/chartered](https://apm.org.uk/chartered)



Tariro Chinyamakobvu, Student member



# What our members say



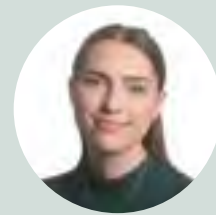
**Adam Hudson**  
National Highways

I joined the National Highways Project Management Graduate Scheme in September 2020 which gave me a chance to work in an environment that was fast paced and made a positive difference.

The on-the-job support and structured learning through the APM course gave me the knowledge and skills required to adapt to a range of situations to gain a breadth of experience. I've been fortunate to work on a range of projects including a construction delivery project, sponsorship, supporting Major Projects Leadership and the Change and Transformation Team. My experiences helped me identify what I enjoy, whilst understanding our wider business and how to work with a range of people to contribute to successful outcomes.

One highlight was when we gained funding approval from the Treasury for a high-profile safety enhancement project with the Smart Motorways Stocktake. It was great to be heavily involved in the process whilst working across our company, with the DfT and supply chain to achieve a positive result. I'm grateful for being given the chance to learn and develop with a high-profile piece of work so early in my career.

Communication, ownership, problem solving, and collaboration are some of the key skills required to be a project manager. The project profession is wide-ranging with many differing routes to pursue – I would encourage anyone to consider it.



**Elinor Dixon**  
Archus

Archus is an organisation which specialises in providing strategic and infrastructure advice across health and social care. I was drawn to working for them by both my interest in health and a desire to work in an agile, fast-paced project environment. Initially, I completed two placements with them alongside my studies for a degree in English Literature before being accepted to join the Graduate Programme.

I have worked across the NHS Capital Project lifecycle, as a project manager on the NHS Technical Guidance and Standards programme, and as a business case author for numerous NHS Trusts developing the case for change and justifying investment of public funds through the benefits case. I have also worked as part of the Project Management Office for a £700m infrastructure project within the New Hospitals Programme, instrumental in the rollout of project controls and dashboard reporting to ensure the 10+ workstreams report accurately, providing robust assurance to the Programme Board.

To support my development, I undertook the APM Project Fundamentals Qualification, following this attainment, I became actively involved in Change Management on a project, implementing and maintaining a rigorous process. I will soon complete the APM Project Management Qualification to further my ability to work in an agile manner.



**Emily Davey**  
QinetiQ

Equipped with a Geography degree after graduating University, I wanted to find a role where I could put my interest in current affairs, organisation skills and good time management into my work. After some research Project Management became the clear starting point in my career, as I enjoy taking on challenges to enhance my knowledge and working on tasks both independently and within a team.

I joined QinetiQ's Project Management Graduate Scheme in 2021 and immediately started developing my leadership capability and communication skills through engaging with a variety of stakeholders. From working across different placements, I have gained an appreciation for the teamwork, engagement and networking skills which Project Management encompasses, and I've enjoyed the fast-paced nature of this role.

Since joining the project profession, my confidence has grown significantly due to working across project and technical teams, and having to manage multiple projects at any one time. I have learnt to prioritise my task lists into daily, weekly and monthly actions, allowing me to be time efficient and prevent overcapacity. I completed my APM Project Fundamentals Qualification shortly after joining QinetiQ, and attended an inspirational APM Women in Project Management Conference in 2022.



**James Cressey**  
Network Rail

After graduating with a degree in Politics, I knew that I wanted to work in a career that would enable me to have a positive impact on people's lives, and that project management was the key to the trajectory I wanted my career to take. This led me to apply for the Network Rail Project Management Graduate Scheme.

This scheme has provided me with the opportunity to successfully deliver large scale, multi-disciplinary infrastructure projects, that improve journeys and connectivity for passengers around the country. It has been a fantastic experience so far to provide tangible, real-world benefits to the public, and have a sense of responsibility for the work that I do. The graduate scheme at Network Rail offers the ability to rotate through multiple placements in different areas of the business, which was a powerful catalyst in furthering my technical knowledge, as well as personal and professional development. I have now been promoted from the graduate scheme to a Portfolio Manager role, in which I am able to take on more responsibility, not only for projects but also direct reports which is helping me further leadership and problem-solving skills.

I believe that nearly everyone has the natural skillsets that make up a great project manager, such as strong communication, collaboration, and leadership, and it is therefore such an accessible career. However, one of the greatest benefits of working in project management is the diverse experience that can be gained, and the broad knowledge that can be accumulated from working with so many different functions.

Finally, I have been fortunate in undertaking and receiving a distinction in the Level 4 Associate Project Management Apprenticeship through Network Rail, as well as being an APM member and successfully passing the APM Project Management Qualification.



# What our members say



**Georgia Taylor**  
Sellafield

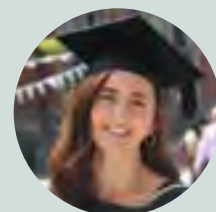
I've always had a keen interest in project management, throughout my GCSE and A-Level studies I sought various work experience placements to develop my interest and to understand if this is a career I'd like to pursue.

After completion of my A Levels, I gained a place on the Sellafield Ltd Project Management Degree Apprenticeship. During the scheme, I've been fortunate to work across multiple placements such as project management in asset care and digital delivery, cost, planning, risk management and an external secondment. I really enjoy working at Sellafield, I've gained valuable experience and worked with some fantastic people.

I'm currently managing a project to open a new waste route on the nuclear site. This piece of work includes modifying existing facilities, procuring a bespoke trailer, and engaging with multiple stakeholders – ranging from the nuclear regulator to operators on the site.

I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've been given as an apprentice, from supporting the organisation in their response to the pandemic on the COVID-19 response team to promoting the profession as an APM Apprentice Ambassador.

I've now completed my apprenticeship scheme and obtained a first-class honours degree in Project



**Jen Saxby**  
BMT

After graduating from the University of Birmingham with a degree in Psychology (and a year in Computer Science), I was unsure what I wanted my career to look like. I knew I enjoyed working with projects and people, so I sought out a project management focused graduate scheme. BMT's management consultancy scheme looked perfect, as it offers departmental rotations, in addition to encouraging progression in project management.

Since joining BMT, I have been placed on two internal secondments: the Portfolio Management Office and the Research & Development department, and I have just started a client-facing placement in a Project Controls role. These rotations have given me an understanding of how projects are managed in large organisations and have provided an insight into the different forms that project management can take. I completed the APM Project Fundamentals Qualification within my first few months, and I am undertaking the APM Project Management Qualification soon. The graduate scheme has also emphasised the importance of soft skills, as project managers should be developing capabilities such as collaboration and time management. My journey so far has been challenging but rewarding, and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for my project management career.



**Kolawole Daniel Odediran**  
Openreach

I never anticipated that project management would become my chosen career path when I started studying Computing with Management at the University of Leicester. However, during my year in industry, I discovered my passion for project management and decided to pursue it further. Working as a project support analyst during my placement and as a Project Manager alongside my final year, I experienced the challenges and rewards of the profession – This first-hand experience solidified my appreciation for project management and inspired me to build a career in this field.

Joining a project management graduate scheme marked the beginning of my journey with the APM. Under the guidance of my mentor, who was a Chair of APM Scotland and a Programme Manager, I gained a comprehensive understanding of the profession and actively engaged with the APM community. As part of this I ended up participating in the APM Project Management Challenge, and although my team didn't win, the experience allowed us to showcase our skills and demonstrate the qualities of an effective project team.

Motivated by the support I received earlier in my career, I became an Education Volunteer, Ambassador, and member of the branch committee within APM. Giving back to the community and supporting aspiring project managers has also now become my mission. Today, I work as a senior programme manager in Openreach, where I continue to contribute to the profession and APM. APM has been instrumental in my growth, and I look forward to driving positive change and continuing to make a difference in the profession.



**Leigh Reid**  
Pinsent Masons

After five and a half years in a training co-ordinator role with Pinsent Masons, I applied for a position with the Legal Project Management team. I believed I had transferable skills required for the role, having previous experience of working to multiple deadlines and prioritising work effectively to meet deadlines. I felt the Project Management Analyst role would enable me to further my career.

Since joining the Legal Project Management team, I have completed the APM Project Fundamentals Qualification to extend my project management knowledge. I continue to grow my knowledge and experience with mentoring from my line manager and senior managers. I have also worked with senior team members, supporting them on delivery of legal matters.

To succeed as a project professional, you should have excellent organisational skills, adapt well to change, have the ability to anticipate issues and be able to liaise with senior stakeholders effectively. Building your own brand is really important when working as a project professional at an international law firm as this can lead to repeat work.

To date, I have been involved in designing and delivering a Portfolio Management solution for the team as well as working on disputes, arbitration and remediation projects.



# Our partners

We have over 500 organisations working with us as part of our Corporate Partnership Programme. Here are just a few to help you see the diversity of projects and potential future employers.







**We are the only chartered  
membership organisation  
for the project profession**

**Association for Project Management**  
Ibis House, Regent Park, Summerleys Road  
Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 9LE  
0845 458 1944  
[apm.org.uk](http://apm.org.uk)



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