CSM vs PSM I: which Scrum Master certification should you take?

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Short answer: choose **CSM** from Scrum Alliance if you want a guided, instructor-led course and your employer will pay for it; choose **PSM I** from Scrum.org if you already know Scrum well, want to prove it with a harder test, and want a certification that does not expire. Both are widely recognised, and many job adverts accept either.

TL;DR The short version

- Scrum Alliance's CSM is built around a course, while Scrum.org's PSM I is a test you can sit without a class and does not expire.
- By the published numbers PSM I is harder, with more questions, a tighter time limit and a higher pass mark.
- Neither issuer shows employers prefer one; choose CSM if you are new and learn in a class, PSM I if you already work in Scrum.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/csm-vs-psm-which-scrum-master-certification

The core difference: course first, or test first

Scrum Alliance builds the CSM around a course. Its page says the CSM course is 16 hours of training, usually over two or three days, taught by Certified Scrum Trainers, and that you get access to the required test after completing the course. Scrum.org builds PSM I around the test. Its page says attending a course is strongly recommended but is not a prerequisite, and that you can take the test whether or not you have attended a Scrum.org class.

	CSM (SCRUM ALLIANCE)	PSM I (SCRUM.ORG)
Course required?	Yes, 16 hours with a Certified Scrum Trainer	No, recommended but optional
Test	50 multiple-choice questions	80 questions: multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false
To pass	37 of 50 correct	85%
Time limit	Not stated on the page we read	60 minutes
Expires?	Yes, renewal with SEUs every two years	No, lifetime certification

From each issuer's own page, read 20 November 2026.

Which one is harder?

By the published numbers, PSM I asks more: more questions, a tighter time limit and a higher pass mark, and you can sit it without a class to prepare you. Scrum.org makes this point itself, contrasting its tests with certifications “awarded for attendance in a class”. CSM’s strength is the other side of the same coin: a structured course with a trainer and other students, which suits people who are new to Scrum.

Which do employers prefer?

Neither issuer publishes evidence that employers prefer one over the other, and we will not invent any. In practice, look at adverts for the roles you want in your market: if they name one credential, take that one. If they say “CSM or PSM”, choose on the course-versus-test difference above.

Choose CSM if…

- You are new to Scrum and learn best in a live class.
- Your employer funds training and wants a course, not just a test.
- You value the community and continuing-education structure that comes with renewal.

Choose PSM I if…

- You already work in Scrum and can self-study the Scrum Guide.
- You want a certification that does not need renewing.
- You want the credential to rest on a test score rather than course attendance.

What neither certification covers

Both test Scrum: roles, events, artefacts and values. Neither tests the engineering that makes Scrum work in a software team: trunk-based development, CI/CD, DORA metrics and safe releases. If you are a Scrum Master in an engineering organisation, IICTP’s Agile Delivery Practitioner (ADP) tests that delivery side: 100 questions in 120 minutes, a 70% pass mark, and at least 24 months of delivery experience. It complements a Scrum certification rather than replacing one.

Related

- How to become a Scrum Master
- Scrum Master interview questions
- CSPO vs PSPO
- Do Scrum certifications expire?

> Facts about Scrum Alliance, Scrum.org and Scaled Agile were read on their own websites on 20 November 2026; facts about PMI were read on pmi.org on 20 October 2026. Issuers change exams and rules, so check their pages before you book.

CSM®, CSPO® and Certified Scrum Trainer® are marks of Scrum Alliance, Inc. Professional Scrum Master™ and Professional Scrum Product Owner™ are marks of Scrum.org. SAFe® is a mark of Scaled Agile, Inc. PMI®, PMP®, CAPM® and PMI-ACP® are marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. IICTP is not affiliated with or endorsed by any of these organisations.

Sources and further reading

1. Scrum Alliance. Certified ScrumMaster (CSM). scrumalliance.org/get-certified/scrum-master-track/certified-scrummaster. Read 20 November 2026.
2. Scrum.org. Professional Scrum Master I certification. scrum.org/assessments/professional-scrum-master-i-certification. Read 20 November 2026.
3. IICTP. Exam facts, eligibility and blueprints. iictp.org/certifications/exam-facts.

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