PMI-ACP vs CSM vs PSM I: which agile certification is best?

20 November 2026 · 6 min read · blogs.iictp.org/pmi-acp-vs-csm-vs-psm-best-agile-certification

Short answer: **PMI-ACP** is for practitioners with agile experience who want a broad, method-agnostic credential; **CSM** and **PSM I** are Scrum-specific and open to beginners. If you have two or more years of agile work and want breadth, PMI-ACP; if you want to prove Scrum knowledge quickly, CSM or PSM I.

TL;DR The short version

- PMI-ACP is a broad, method-agnostic credential for people with agile experience; CSM and PSM I are Scrum-specific and open to beginners.
- An experience requirement tells employers you have done the work, which a course certificate cannot.
- With two or more years of agile work and a need for breadth choose PMI-ACP; to prove Scrum knowledge quickly choose CSM or PSM I.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/pmi-acp-vs-csm-vs-psm-best-agile-certification

	PMI-ACP	CSM	PSM I
Scope	Agile approaches in general	Scrum	Scrum
Experience	2+ years	None stated	None stated
Course required?	See PMI's page	Yes, 16 hours	No
Renewal	PDUs over a three-year cycle	SEUs every two years	None, lifetime

PMI read 20 October 2026; Scrum Alliance and Scrum.org read 20 November 2026.

Why the experience requirement matters

A credential that requires experience tells an employer something a course certificate cannot: that you have done the work. PMI describes PMI-ACP as experience-based and agnostic to any one method. CSM and PSM I make no such requirement, which makes them good first steps and weaker evidence of practice.

Which is best for a software team?

All three certify agile ways of working. None tests whether a team can actually ship small, safe changes often, which is what makes agile pay off in software. If that is your job, pair one of them with engineering evidence: DORA metrics, CI/CD and safe deployments. IICTP's ADP tests exactly that, with a 24-month experience requirement like PMI-ACP's, but centred on delivery engineering.

Related

- CSM vs PSM I
- SAFe Agilist vs CSM vs PSM
- Best agile certifications

> 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.

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Sources and further reading

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4. Scrum.org. Professional Scrum Master I certification. scrum.org/assessments/professional-scrum-master-i-certification. Read 20 November 2026.
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