SAFe Agilist vs CSM vs PSM: scaled agile or Scrum certification?

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Short answer: take **SAFe Agilist** if your organisation runs the Scaled Agile Framework or is adopting it; take **CSM** or **PSM I** if you work in or lead a single Scrum team. SAFe certifies knowledge of one scaling framework across many teams and portfolios. CSM and PSM certify Scrum itself.

TL;DR The short version

- Take SAFe Agilist if your organisation runs or is adopting the Scaled Agile Framework; take CSM or PSM I for a single Scrum team.
- Scaled Agile describes the SAFe Agilist exam as 45 questions in 90 minutes with an 80% pass mark.
- Neither framework delivers unless the engineering underneath can ship small changes safely through CI/CD and safe deployments.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/safe-agilist-vs-csm-vs-psm

What each one tests

Scaled Agile's page describes the SAFe Agilist exam as 45 questions in 90 minutes, with 80% needed to pass, weighted most heavily towards Product Development Flow and Lean Portfolio Management. CSM and PSM I test the Scrum framework at team level: roles, events, artefacts and values.

	SAFE AGILIST	CSM	PSM I
Issuer	Scaled Agile	Scrum Alliance	Scrum.org
Focus	Scaling agile across teams and portfolios	Scrum for one team	Scrum for one team
Course required?	The page says a course is not required	Yes, 16 hours	No
Exam	45 questions, 90 minutes, 80%	50 questions, 37 correct to pass	80 questions, 60 minutes, 85%
Renewal	24 CEUs per two-year cycle	SEUs every two years	None, lifetime

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

When SAFe is the right choice

If your company has trained people in SAFe, runs program increment planning and talks about agile release trains, SAFe Agilist will help you work inside that system and is often expected of managers. Outside such organisations it carries less weight, because it certifies one framework rather than agile practice in general.

When Scrum is the right choice

Most software teams that call themselves agile run some form of Scrum or Kanban. If you are a team member, Scrum Master or product owner, a Scrum certification maps more directly to your work. See CSM vs PSM I to choose between the two.

The part frameworks leave out

Release trains and sprints only deliver if the engineering underneath can ship small changes safely: CI/CD, trunk-based development and safe deployment strategies. IICTP's ADP tests that delivery engineering, with 42% of its exam on Engineering Governance & Agile Delivery.

> 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

1. Scaled Agile. SAFe Agilist certification (Leading SAFe). scaledagile.com/training/leading-safe. Read 20 November 2026.
2. Scrum Alliance. Certified ScrumMaster (CSM). scrumalliance.org/get-certified/scrum-master-track/certified-scrummaster. Read 20 November 2026.
3. Scrum.org. Professional Scrum Master I certification. scrum.org/assessments/professional-scrum-master-i-certification. Read 20 November 2026.
4. IICTP. Exam facts, eligibility and blueprints. iictp.org/certifications/exam-facts.

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