

Literacy — Certification Prep Companion

The honest companion to the certification landscape: what each credential actually tests, which curriculum modules already teach it, where the gaps are, and how a candidate closes them with the bodies' own materials. A companion — never official prep.

Read this first. This page does two things and refuses a third. It maps the professional credentials a capture, proposal, or contract-management professional can earn onto the modules that already teach the tested concepts. It names the gaps a candidate must close on their own, and where to go to close them. And it **does not** claim to be official preparation for any body's exam. The credential bodies — APMP, NCMA, Shipley, PMI, and the government-side academies — own the exams, the study guides, and the standards. They remain the authority, and this curriculum cannot and will not substitute for them. Read the licensing posture before you sign up for anything.

The licensing posture — companion, not prep

The wider doctrine keeps a deliberately license-clean relationship with the professional bodies: it teaches the *concepts* the industry's vocabulary names (the pipeline, the gates, the compliance matrix, price-to-win, color teams) and it never claims to be a body's own product or an authorized-prep channel. Two consequences follow, and this page is written inside them:

1. **The curriculum can honestly say “this teaches the concepts the credential certifies.”** A graduate of this course speaks the vocabulary and has produced the artifacts — compliance matrix, ORBITAL, scored pursuit sheet, gate charter — that the credentialing process assesses.
2. **The curriculum cannot honestly say “this is official prep for credential X.”** Certification bodies assess against *their own* curriculum, study guides, and exams. Earning a credential requires the body's own materials, the body's own assessment, and — for the senior credentials — years of verifiable work experience that no curriculum can manufacture.

So treat everything below as a **conceptual alignment map with an honest gap list**. Where a tested topic is covered, this page names the module. Where a tested topic is *not* covered, this page names that too, and points to where the candidate self-studies — usually the body's own guide and the public rulebook (FAR, [acquisition.gov](https://www.acquisition.gov)), both already in Further Reading (Official Sources). The underlying research, with sources and verification status, lives in `research/credential-mapping.md` — this page is the student-facing rendering of that research.

The credential landscape at a glance

Credential	Issuing body	Level	What it certifies	Curriculum alignment	The remaining leg (not this course's to give)
APMP Foundation	APMP	Entry	Breadth of the proposal/bid/capital pipeline, discipline against the Body of Knowledge	Strong — the pipeline, gates, solicitation reading, scoring, color teams are the doctrine itself	The body's Foundation study guide + a 75-question open-book exam + 1–3 years of experience
APMP Practitioner	APMP	Mid	Applied mastery of the discipline — leading others in the practice	Strong conceptual base; SI-track portfolio/gate sessions as practice ground	3–7 years of experience + APMP's applied assessment
APMP Professional (CPP)	APMP	Senior	Demonstrated leadership and measurable impact on the profession	Strong as a practice ground — the whole curriculum is the narrative a CPP impact paper must tell	7+ years of verifiable impact + a Professional Impact Paper + a panel interview

Credential	Issuing body	Level	What it certifies	Curriculum alignment	The remaining leg (not this course's to give)
CFCM	NCMA	Mid (federal)	Federal contract management — the FAR as the exam	Medium — money flow, solicitations, and FAR-as-governance at concept level	FAR article-level depth is the gap; the body's CMBOK + FAR Parts 12/15 depth + 2 years of contract-management experience
CPCM	NCMA	Senior	Full-lifecycle contract management against the CMBOK	Medium pre-award concepts; weak post-award	Post-award administration is the gap (performance, modifications, terminations, closeout); the body's CMBOK + 5 years of experience

Credential	Issuing body	Level	What it certifies	Curriculum alignment	The remaining leg (not this course's to give)
Shipley Certified (One Star)	Shipley Associates	Foundation-mid	Fluency in the Shipley method — capture, proposal, management	Strong — the doctrine's pipeline, gates, and color teams are the method, paraphrased	A paid Shipley course (the One Star assessment is embedded in the course)
Shipley Two Star / Master	Shipley Associates	Senior	Correct application of the method in real work, judged on a portfolio	Strong conceptual base; the capstone (../course/capstone) is the right <i>shape</i> of a work portfolio	A real-work portfolio assessed by Shipley assessors (../course/capstone-build-an-orbital.md)
PMP (complementary)	PMI	Senior	Project-management discipline — scope, schedule, cost, EVM	Weak — the curriculum is the pursuit pipeline, not project delivery; only the portfolio edge aligns	PMBOK-based exam; PMI's 35-hour training + 36–60 months of project experience
CPSM (lateral)	SMPS	Mid	Professional-services marketing/BD in the A/E/C world	Small overlap — proposals and client/BD domains	A/E/C marketing experience + SMPS's exam

Two honesty notes for the student. First, the credentials **test the vocabulary and the method, not a tool** — a certified professional in 2000 and one today would recognize each other’s craft instantly, which is exactly the durability Doctrine 08 promises. Second, **a credential is a signal of discipline, not a substitute for it** — a certified team that skips its gates still loses, just more professionally. The credential ladder exists so organizations can trust that a practitioner actually knows the canon (`industry-standard-canon.md`).

The tested topic domains, and where this curriculum teaches them

The credentials test the profession’s shared topic domains. This table is the master map — every credential below is graded against it. Citations are to the course’s own files, the same ones the course teaches from.

#	Tested topic domain	Where the curriculum teaches it	Coverage
1	Bid/proposal lifecycle & the pipeline	<code>../doctrine/03-the-steps-to-a-bid-proposal-pipeline.md</code> <code>industry-standard-canon.md</code> (BD lifecycle map)	Strong
2	Gates and bid/no-bid discipline	<code>../doctrine/04-gates-and-bid-no-bid-discipline.md</code> <code>../modules/shared-core.md</code> (S2/S5); DL 210 week 4	Strong
3	Solicitation reading & the compliance matrix	<code>../doctrine/02-rfp-solicitations.md</code> <code>../literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md</code> <code>../literacy/how-to-read-a-nofo.md</code> <code>../modules/shared-core.md</code> (S3); DL 210 week 5	Strong
4	Scoring: pWin × value, thresholds	<code>../doctrine/05-scoring-and-price-to-win.md</code> <code>../modules/shared-core.md</code> (S5)	Strong
5	Price-to-win & cost/pricing concepts	<code>../doctrine/05-scoring-and-price-to-win.md</code> DL 220 (pricing level) & price-to-win fundamentals); MBA track price-to-win session	Strong

#	Tested topic domain	Where the curriculum teaches it	Coverage
6	Capture / win strategy — discriminators, ghost themes	../doctrine/09-capture-and-competitive-strategy.md; DL 210 week 5	Medium
7	Color-team reviews & proposal quality	../doctrine/04-gates-and-governance.md; ../literacy/how-color-teams-work.md; DL 302 (proposal production)	Medium
8	Money flow, identifiers, small-business programs	../doctrine/01-where-money-lives.md; ../literacy/where-the-money-flows.md; ../case-study/ravonics.md	Strong
9	FAR/DFARS as law	../doctrine/04-gates-and-governance.md (governance, not rulebook); MPA track (public-side framework)	Medium (concept, not article-level)
10	Contract formation & the acquisition process	../doctrine/02-rfp-solicitations.md; DL 301 (procurement law & FAR fundamentals)	Medium
11	Post-award contract administration	../doctrine/07-lifecycle-dream-orbital-world.md (deliver stage, conceptually)	Weak
12	Project/program management (scope, schedule, cost, EVM)	MBA track portfolio session; Strategic Initiative track metrics session	Weak (portfolio-level only)
13	Negotiation & orals	Doctrine 10 post-submit corridor (named, not taught); DL 305 (negotiations)	Medium
14	Professional & ethical conduct	The integrity posture across every module; ../doctrine/04-gates-and-governance.md (governance as law)	Strong

The honest headline. The curriculum’s strongest credential alignment is to the **APMP Foundation/Practitioner knowledge base** and the **Shipley method’s concepts** — because those are the disciplines the doctrine is built from. Its weakest alignment is to **NCMA’s CFCM/CPCM** (FAR depth + post-award), **PMP** (project-management discipline), and the **government-side FAC-C / DAWIA** certificates — because those are different bodies of knowledge than the pursuit pipeline. Read the credential-specific sections for exactly what that means.

APMP Foundation

What it is. The entry credential of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals — a one-hour, 75-question, open-book multiple-choice exam testing breadth across the **APMP Body of Knowledge** (the BOK: the profession’s shared framework of 51 topics, plus its glossary, acronym list, and tool/template repository). It is the “do you speak the language” rung of the ladder, and the curriculum’s own vocabulary anchor (`industry-standard-canon.md`) is the same vocabulary the BOK codifies.

Topic domains tested → where the curriculum already teaches them:

BOK-facing topic	Curriculum home	Coverage
The bid/proposal lifecycle and where a pursuit sits in it	Doctrine 03; <code>industry-standard-canon.md</code> (BD lifecycle map)	Strong
Gates, bid/no-bid, and the gate ladder	Doctrine 04; shared-core S2/S5; DL 210 week 4	Strong
Solicitation reading and the compliance matrix	Doctrine 02; how-to-read-an-rfp/nofo; DL 210 week 5	Strong
Scoring, pWin × value, and threshold discipline	Doctrine 05; shared-core S5; DL 210 week 4	Strong
Price-to-win as a position	Doctrine 05; DL 220	Strong (concept level)
Win strategy, discriminators, ghost themes	Doctrine 09; DL 210 week 5	Medium
Color teams and proposal review	Doctrine 04; how-color-teams-work; DL 302	Medium
The four volumes	<code>../literacy/the-four-volumes.md</code> ; DL 302	Medium

The gaps — tested, not covered here: the Foundation exam also asks

about the *operations* of a bid/proposal organization — staffing models, pursuit management tools, the logistics of a production calendar — which this curriculum touches at concept level but does not drill. The BOK’s own glossary and tool/template repository is where the exam’s wording lives; this course teaches the concepts, not the BOK’s exam wording.

Where the student self-studies: the **APMP BOK** and the **APMP Foundation Study Guide** (the body’s own materials — see the authoritative materials); the BOK’s glossary for the exam’s exact vocabulary; three to six months of practice exams from any APMP chapter or training provider.

The remaining leg: buy the body’s study guide, register for and pass the Foundation exam, and hold 1–3 years of bid/proposal experience. Nothing the curriculum can fix stands between you and the exam except the body’s own materials and your registration.

APMP Practitioner and Professional (CPP)

What they are. The middle and senior rungs of the APMP ladder. **Practitioner** (3–7 years) is an applied assessment — you demonstrate that you lead others in the practice, not just that you know the terms. **Professional, CPP** (7+ years) is a three-part process: a professional reference across nine competencies, a **Professional Impact Paper** scored against a threshold, and a 20-minute presentation with a 25-minute panel interview. The senior credential is not a topic exam at all — it is a judgment that you have *done* the discipline and can tell the story of it.

Topic domains tested → where the curriculum already teaches them: the same strong conceptual base as Foundation (the pipeline, gates, scoring, color teams), plus:

What the senior rungs demand	Curriculum home
Leading the pursuit as a business	The MBA track’s price-to-win and portfolio sessions; the graduate capture capstone’s “pursuit as a business” frame
Portfolio thinking — many pursuits through one pipeline	DL 210 week 12; the SI track’s portfolio/gate sessions; ../practice/capstones/graduate-capture-capstone.md
Color-team leadership and review discipline	DL 302; how-color-teams-work; the graduate elective on proposal management & color teams
The post-submission loop — debrief, lessons, the compounding pursuit	Doctrine 10; DL 210 week 13

What the senior rungs demand	Curriculum home
The “doctrine as operating system” narrative	The whole curriculum — a CPP impact paper must tell the story of a discipline applied across a career; that story is what this course teaches you to live and to tell

The gaps — tested, not covered here: the experience years, the verifiable impact, and the body’s own assessment instruments. A curriculum cannot manufacture a career. What it *can* give you is the artifacts — the compliance matrices, ORBITALS, score sheets, and post-mortems — that become the evidence behind the Practitioner assessment and the impact paper, and the vocabulary to tell the story honestly.

Where the student self-studies: the APMP Practitioner/Professional guidance documents (the body’s own descriptors of the competencies and the impact-paper scoring); APMP chapters run mock-panel sessions that are the single best preparation for the CPP interview. Your course artifacts are the raw material; the body’s format is the target.

The Shipley-recognized set

What it is. Shipley Associates — the consultancy (in practice since the 1970s) whose methodology gave the profession its capture plans, win themes, discriminators, color teams, and the compliance matrix — runs its own training and certification on top of its published guides (*Shipley Proposal Guide*, *Business Development Lifecycle Guide*, *Winning Business*). Regional variations exist (the star ladder in the APAC region vs. a 6-core + 4-elective unit route in the US market); check Shipley’s current site for the structure in your region. Shipley is also an APMP-accredited training organization, so Shipley courses can count toward APMP credentials.

Topic domains tested → where the curriculum already teaches them. The Shipley method and this doctrine are the same discipline in two vocabularies:

Shipley method concept	Curriculum home	Coverage
The BD lifecycle: marketing → capture → proposal → negotiate → award	Doctrine 03; industry-standard-canon.md (the lifecycle mapped onto the pipeline)	Strong
The gate ladder	Doctrine 04; DL 210 (the seven-gate capture lifecycle)	Strong

Shipley method concept	Curriculum home	Coverage
Compliance matrix	Doctrine 02; DL 302	Strong
Win themes, discriminators, ghost themes	Doctrine 09; DL 210 week 5	Medium
Color teams	Doctrine 04; how-color-teams-work	Medium
Price-to-win	Doctrine 05; DL 220	Strong (concept level)

The gaps — tested, not covered here: the Shipley certifications assess *course completion* (One Star) and *real-work portfolios judged by Shipley assessors* (Two Star / Master). The curriculum teaches the method's concepts; it cannot substitute for Shipley's own course delivery or for the assessed portfolio of real work.

Where the student self-studies: the paid Shipley courses are the One Star assessment itself; for Two Star / Master, the assessed portfolio is built from your real engagements — and the course capstone (`../course/capstone-build-an-orbital.md`) is deliberately the right *shape* of that portfolio: a real solicitation carried through compliance matrix → ORBITAL → score → bid/no-bid. Take that artifact with you into the assessment.

CFCM — Certified Federal Contracts Manager

What it is. NCMA's mid-tier credential for the *federal contract-management* discipline — the buyer-facing craft of managing federal contracts, distinct from proposal writing. The CFCM exam is **150 questions and FAR-based**: it tests the Federal Acquisition Regulation as a rulebook, not as a concept. This is the largest single gap between the curriculum and any credential on this page.

Topic domains tested → where the curriculum already teaches them:

CFCM topic	Curriculum home	Coverage
The acquisition environment — money, identifiers, small-business programs	Doctrine 01; where-the-money-flows	Strong (environment, not rulebook)
Solicitation and award mechanics	Doctrine 02; DL 301 (procurement law & FAR fundamentals)	Medium
FAR as enforceable governance	Doctrine 04 (governance); MPA track	Medium (concept, not article-level)

CFCM topic	Curriculum home	Coverage
Contract formation and the acquisition process	DL 301	Medium
FAR Parts 12/15 depth — commercial items, negotiated procurement	Not taught	Gap

The gap, stated plainly: *FAR article-level depth is not taught.* This course treats the FAR as the governance frame around the pursuit; the CFCM exam treats it as the object of study. A CFCM candidate needs FAR Parts 12 and 15 (and the surrounding parts) at article depth — a textbook or a DAU-equivalent course — well beyond this curriculum.

Where the student self-studies: the **FAR itself, at acquisition.gov** (already in Further Reading), read at article level for Parts 12/15; the **NCMA CMBOK** and NCMA’s CFCM exam-prep materials; a DAU-equivalent course (CON 1100–1400 style, available from Graduate School USA, Management Concepts, or DAU for the government-side) for the depth a civilian contractor needs. Count on the body’s CMBOK as your anchor text.

The remaining leg: NCMA’s CFCM exam (via Kryterion), 2 years of contract-management experience, and 80 CPE credits. Note the curriculum’s frame: this is a *buyer-side* credential. The course teaches the private-side mirror — reading the government’s documents from the offeror’s side — which is the right posture for a pursuer, not a substitute for the contracting craft.

CPCM — Certified Professional Contracts Manager

What it is. NCMA’s senior credential, the highest rung of the contract-management ladder. The CPCM exam (~179 questions) tests the **Contract Management Body of Knowledge (CMBOK)** across the **full contract lifecycle** — pre-award, award, and post-award — and requires 5 years of contract-management experience plus 120 CPE credits, with recertification every 5 years.

Topic domains tested → where the curriculum already teaches them:

CPCM topic	Curriculum home	Coverage
Pre-award concepts — requirements, solicitation, evaluation	Doctrine 02; DL 301	Medium
Governance and the public-side frame	Doctrine 04; MPA track	Medium

CPCM topic	Curriculum home	Coverage
Pricing and cost concepts	Doctrine 05; DL 220	Medium (concept level)
Post-award administration — performance, modifications, terminations, closeout	Doctrine 07 (deliver stage, conceptually); MBA track flywheel	Weak

The gap, stated plainly: *post-award contract administration is not taught.* The curriculum stops conceptually at award and delivery; the CPCM exam spans performance monitoring, contract modifications, terminations, and closeout — the whole administration phase after the signature. This is the second-largest gap on this page.

Where the student self-studies: the **NCMA CMBOK** as the anchor; the FAR’s post-award parts (performance and delivery, contract modifications, terminations, closeout) at article depth; NCMA’s CPCM exam-prep materials and handbooks. If NCMA alignment becomes a career goal, the curriculum itself could grow a post-award literacy page — but note the honest framing: the curriculum is concept-first and deliberately pursuit-side; NCMA is fundamentally a buyer-side credential, and a CPCM candidate is entering a different discipline than the one this course teaches.

The authoritative materials, named

These are the bodies’ own reference works — the anchor texts for any credential on this page. Names only, license-clean: the curriculum cites them as the authority but reproduces none of their content. The current editions and any required exam-prep bundles come from the bodies directly.

Body	Materials (names)	For which credential
APMP	The APMP Body of Knowledge (the BOK); the APMP Foundation Study Guide; APMP Practitioner/Professional guidance documents	APMP Foundation, Practitioner, Professional

Body	Materials (names)	For which credential
NCMA	The Contract Management Body of Knowledge (CMBOK); the CFCM/CPCM handbooks and exam-prep materials	CFCM, CPCM
Shipley Associates	<i>Winning Business; The Shipley Proposal Guide; The Business Development Lifecycle Guide</i> (also titled the <i>Shipley Business Development Lifecycle Guide</i>); the current Shipley certification courseware	Shipley Certified (One Star), Two Star / Master
PMI (complementary) Public rulebook (shared)	The PMBOK Guide The FAR and DFARS at acquisition.gov; OMB/grants-policy texts at Grants.gov	PMP, CAPM CFCM/CPCM depth; every credential's legal context

The curriculum's own Shipley book canon — the same titles mapped to the modules that teach them — lives in **industry-standard-canon.md**. The government-side FAC-C / DAWIA certificates are not listed here because they are *government workforce* credentials, not industry ones: they certify the buyer side of the transaction and require a government role (see the research for the full treatment).

A study-plan skeleton

The skeleton below is credential-agnostic — it works for APMP Foundation, CFCM, CPCM, or Shipley One Star, with a different body-of-knowledge anchor per row. The honest engine of the plan is the **audit** → **fill** → **drill** → **sit** loop, and the curriculum's contribution is the audit and the fill.

Phase 1 — Audit (1 week). Take the credential's topic list (from its body-of-knowledge) and grade yourself against the master table in this page: *where did the curriculum already teach me this, and how strong am I?* For every topic scored “Medium” or “Weak,” that is your gap list. Build the list; it is your syllabus.

Phase 2 — Fill (4–6 weeks). For each gap, work the curriculum module that teaches the adjacent concept (the coverage table points you to it), then close the

residual gap with the body’s own materials — the BOK/CMBOK chapter, the FAR parts, the guide. The discipline is the same as the doctrine’s: one artifact per gap. A FAR gap gets a one-page brief of the part; a pricing gap gets a worked price-to-win; a color-team gap gets a findings log.

Phase 3 — Drill (2–3 weeks). Work the body’s practice materials and any chapter/partner mock sessions. This is where the exam’s *wording* is learned — the curriculum cannot give you this, and no one should expect it to. If the credential is applied (Practitioner, Two Star), assemble the work artifacts — your course capstone, your score sheets, your post-mortems — into the assessment portfolio the body asks for.

Phase 4 — Sit and maintain. Register, sit the exam or the assessment, and plan the maintenance (CPD points, recertification hours, CPE) on the body’s cadence. The discipline of a career in this field is the same as the discipline of the pipeline: the credential is a checkpoint, not a finish line.

Credential	Anchor for the audit	The biggest gap to plan for
APMP Foundation	APMP BOK topic list	Exam wording and BOK glossary, not concepts
APMP Professional	The nine competencies + impact-paper descriptors	The experience years and the paper
Shipley One Star	The course syllabus (paid course)	The course itself
CFCM	CMBOK + FAR Parts 12/15	FAR article-level depth
CPCM	CMBOK full lifecycle	Post-award administration

The credential ladder — your career map

The five credentials above are not five separate decisions; they are the map of where this discipline can take a career. The recommended single artifact for navigating that map is the **credential ladder career map** — a page that shows the four directions a graduate can walk — *proposal/capture* (APMP Foundation → Practitioner → Professional; the Shipley set), *contracts* (NCMA CFCM → CPCM), *program/project delivery* (CAPM → PMP), and *services marketing/BD* (CPSM) — with each direction’s concept-alignment back to the doctrine. That is the **credential ladder**: `credential-ladder.md`.

Use it the way the doctrine teaches every map: pick the lane that fits the work you actually want to do, and let the ladder show you which credential, on what experience base, next. The credential is the checkpoint; the career is the pursuit.

One practice loop

1. Pick the credential you are closest to (or most curious about). Write its name at the top of a page.
2. Grade yourself against that credential's rows in the master topic table — honestly, in the two columns “curriculum covered this” and “I could defend this in a room.”
3. Where the two columns disagree — the curriculum covered it but you could not defend it — that is not a gap in the curriculum; that is your practice assignment. Work it until the defense is boring.

You now have the honest map: what the curriculum gives you, what the bodies keep for themselves, and where your own work is the missing leg. A credential is a signal of discipline — and the discipline, this course can teach.