

# Earning PDUs: Understanding the Options to Maintain Your PMP® Certification

By Vicki Wrona, PMP

This paper will discuss the requirements for maintaining your PMP® certification and offer tips on the most difficult part for most people, which is earning Profession Development Units (PDUs).

Once you have earned your PMP® certification, there are three things you must do to maintain it.

1. First, you must adhere to the [PMI® Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#).
2. Second, you must pay the renewal fee at the end of your certification cycle, which is called the CCR (Continuing Certification Requirements) cycle. CCR cycles last three years, and your cycle begins the day you pass the PMP® exam.
3. Third, earn 60 Professional Development Units, or PDUs, per CCR cycle.

The following sections will discuss your options for earning PDUs, and how to claim them.

## Earning PDUs

As mentioned before, you have to earn at least 60 PDUs per three-year cycle, which begins the day you pass the exam. As soon as you pass the exam, any classes or PMI® meetings you attend or other activities you undertake to earn PDUs help to fulfill your 60 PDU requirement.

The following activities qualify as PDUs:

- Formal education at a university or attending training by Registered Education Providers (REPs) or other providers
- Writing a project management-related article or course

- Teaching or speaking on a project management (PM) topic
- Performing more than 1,500 hours of PM work per calendar year
  - This qualifies for a maximum of five PDUs per calendar year and 15 PDUs per CCR cycle
- Self-directed studies
  - Qualifies for a maximum of 15 PDUs per CCR cycle
- Attending PMI meetings or programs
- Volunteer Project Management service
  - Maximum of 20 PDUs per CCR cycle

***Your job can earn you PDUs if you are working in project management.***

These options will now be discussed in detail.

## Formal Education

Companies that are Registered Education Providers (REPs) like Forward Momentum offer PMI®-certified courses that count towards your PDUs. The number of PDUs each course earns is based on the course duration. So, for example, re-taking Forward Momentum's 5-day-long *PMP® and CAPM® Certification Exam Preparation* course after you pass the exam qualifies for 35 PDUs, whereas taking the four-hour *Business Writing For Results: Getting What You Want* course gives you 4 PDUs. REPs like Forward Momentum submit their courses for approval by PMI and will know exactly how many PDUs each of their courses will earn you.

Universities also offer courses that may count as PDUs. Based on the percent of the course that is project management-related, you will receive PDU credit for that portion of the course. If this option interests you, the easiest thing to do is talk to the university because they may have already gone through this process and know how many PDUs each class earns.

## Self-Directed Studies

Self-directed learning includes discussions or coaching sessions with colleagues or clients, as well as reading books or watching videos. You can claim a maximum of 15 PDUs per cycle with this activity, with one hour of study equal to one PDU. The idea behind this option is to stay current within the field.

## Writing or Teaching PM Material

Creating PM-related courseware, teaching a course and writing an article are all activities that earn PDUs. Not only does this earn PDUs, it also helps you stay current *and* helps you comply with the Code of Professional Conduct, which requires you to openly and willingly share lessons learned and coach other project managers for the betterment of the profession.

## Attending Meetings or Programs

Having an active base of PMI members makes our certification that much more valuable. Therefore, if you attend a meeting, you get credit. As an added benefit, PMI allows chapters to submit their attendance sheets from these meetings, which means your PDUs are automatically registered for you. Not having to later submit the form manually is a nice benefit.

## Volunteering

You can also volunteer PM-related services to a charity or the community. This could be work done for PMI at the national or local level, such as serving on the committee to write the next *PMBOK® Guide* or by becoming a board member for a local PMI® chapter. You could also volunteer your time for a non-profit organization who is not your client or your employer. All of these are viable options for claiming PDUs through volunteer work.

Volunteering-related PDUs are limited to a maximum of 20 PDUs per cycle.

## Free PDUs

Last but not least, you can do a search on the internet for “free PDUs.” There are normally several free one-hour webinars being offered by various organizations and scheduled in the near future, as well as recorded sessions you can listen to. PMI also has a LinkedIn group called Free PDUs, which is a subgroup of PMI Credentialed PMPs. If you join that group, you can easily find free PDUs within your interests.

***Look for free webinars or join PMI’s LinkedIn group called Free PDUs to learn of other options.***

## Claiming PDUs

As you earn PDUs, go to [www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org) to record and claim them. Earning 60 PDUs in three years is easy as long as you do it a little at a time. If you wait until the last minute, it is more difficult to cram everything in. It is also easier to claim PDUs either as you earn them or in small batches rather than try to enter them all at once at the end of the year or at the end of your cycle. PMI will review and either approve or deny your claimed PDUs. You can look at your transcript on the PMI website at any time to see the hours that were approved and the total hours earned to date. It is prudent to periodically review it for accuracy and fix any errors you find.

Claiming PDUs is simplest when the PDUs are earned through courses offered by an REP. When attending an REP's course, for every class you attend, you should be able to simply enter the REP code and course code to submit your claim for that class. If you do not know the REP number and course codes, you can search for the company by name and find the course you attended in their listing or simply submit your claim by inputting course name, date, process groups and knowledge areas covered.

If you attend a class by a training provider who is not an REP, you have to input a little more information when you submit a claim. In addition to the previously mentioned information, you need to input the address of the provider and know the number of PDUs allocated for your session. Any training that covers project management-related topics count, in whole or part. If a portion of a class covers PM-related topics, then just that portion will count toward PDUs.

As soon as you earn 60 PDUs, you can renew your certification for the next cycle by paying the renewal fee. You do not shorten your cycle time if you renew your certification before your three-year cycle is complete. You will still get the full three years for your cycle.

Note: If you earn more than 60 PDUs in your 3-year cycle, up to 20 extra PDUs earned in the last year will roll to your next cycle, giving you a head start on earning those PDUs. This is a good idea, since you never know if training budgets will be cut or your job changes in such a way as to affect your ability to earn PDUs easily. The extra PDUs must be earned in the last year of your cycle.

***Tip: You can roll up to 20 excess PDUs earned in the last year of your cycle to the next cycle.***

## Conclusion

As we have seen, there are many options for earning PDUs. It is easy to maintain your PMP® certification if you undertake these activities steadily throughout your CCR cycle and claim the PDUs promptly – i.e., before you forget the relevant information.

Happy learning, volunteering and teaching!

## About Forward Momentum, LLC

Forward Momentum, LLC is an 8(a) woman-owned small business and Project Management Institute (PMI)® Registered Education Provider (REP). Since 2000, Forward Momentum has provided project management, leadership, communication and IT training and consulting to commercial, government and non-profit organizations. Let us show you how our approach can optimize your learning experience, improve your processes or empower your team by emailing [dobusiness@forwardmomentum.net](mailto:dobusiness@forwardmomentum.net). Or visit [www.forwardmomentum.net](http://www.forwardmomentum.net) to learn how our abilities can maximize yours.

## About the Author

Vicki Wrona, PMP, is the President of [Forward Momentum, LLC](http://www.forwardmomentum.net), a Project Management Institute (PMI)® Registered Education Provider (REP) and a woman-owned, 8(a) consulting and training company. She has more than 20 years of project management experience, has trained more than five thousand people, has mentored individuals and organizations, and has authored multiple white papers and blogs. She served on PMI®'s committee to write and review the *PMBOK® Guide* 4<sup>th</sup> edition and co-wrote the program that won PMI's Program of the Year Award in 2007. You may contact her at [dobusiness@forwardmomentum.net](mailto:dobusiness@forwardmomentum.net).