In 2009 Ken Schwaber, one of the creators of Scrum, left the Scrum Alliance and started a new organization called Scrum.org. As chairman of the board of the Scrum Alliance, he had an opportunity to observe firsthand how the community reacted to different policies and how those policies were implemented.

With the creation of Scrum.org, Ken created an organization of his own liking to address some of the problems evolved in the Scrum Alliance over a number of years. Although Scrum.org offers a competing Scrum certification to the Scrum Alliance, the programs offered - and the way it operates - are quite different.

> *As a matter of principle, Scrum.org feels that certification should only be granted to individuals that have demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge on an assessment. As a result, all of our certification granting assessments have stringent requirements for passing before a certification is granted.*
>
> *We also feel that certification should be available to all those who possess a particular level of knowledge -- not only to those who have taken a class. As a result, we offer the option of Professional Scrum Master I and II certification to the public -- not only to those who have taken the Professional Scrum Master course. While taking the Professional Scrum Developer and Professional Scrum Product Owner assessments currently require the taking a course, they will soon be open to the public once their associated Bodies of Knowledge are formalized.*
>
> *- Scrum.org*

There are two points of difference from the approach taken by the Scrum Alliance worth discussing:

- The relationship between courses and certifications
- The structure and content of the courses

Both points are discussed below.

In contrast to the Scrum Alliance, Scrum.org are separating certification from education. ***Courses are often recommended but are not required for the Professional Scrum Master I and II certifications.*** Coursework is still required for both the Professional Scrum Product Owner I & II and Professional Scrum Developer I certifications.

Scrum.org offers five certification programs, which are structured as shown in the following diagram:

Scrum.org certification programs

Professional Scrum Developer (PSD)[1,3]

Professional Scrum Master Level 1 (PSD I)[2]

Professional Scrum Product Owner Level 1 (PSPO I)[3]

Professional Scrum Master Level 2 (PSD II)[2]

Professional Scrum Product Owner Level 2 (PSPO II)[3]

1. The PSD program is currently only offered for Java and .NET.
2. A preparatory course is recommend but not required for both of the PSM I and PSM II certifications.
3. A course is required prior to attempting these certifications at the present time.

The other point of difference is Scrum.org has a standard curriculum and presentation Professional Scrum Trainers (PST) are expected to follow. The Scrum Alliance approach has a list of topics trainers need to address. How, exactly, they address those topics and in what order is left entirely up to the trainer's judgement.

The Scrum Alliance approach has led to great variability in the CSM and CSPO courses. The nature of the course is greatly dependent upon the experience and interests of the individual trainers. Some trainers prefer interactive and participatory courses while others prefer more lecture-based courses.

The Scrum.org approach provides greater consistency in the message delivered. It also assures less variation between trainers although different trainers will bring different experiences and abilities.

The Scrum Guide

Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland first co-presented Scrum at the OOPSLA conference in 1995. This presentation essentially documented the learning that Ken and Jeff had over the previous few years applying Scrum.

The Scrum Guide documents Scrum as developed and sustained for twenty-plus years by Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber. Other sources provide you with patterns, processes, and insights about how the practices, facilitations, and tools that complement the Scrum framework. These optimize productivity, value, creativity, and pride.
- The Scrum Guide.

Scrum.org is also home to The Scrum Guide, the official reference of Scrum co-authored by Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland. The guide is simple and clear addressing only the critical elements of Scrum.

It was created in 2009. At the date of this writing, it's on the third version. The first few versions of the Scrum Guide tried to be comprehensive and included a number of practices common within the Scrum community, but were not considered core Scrum. This created pockets of confusion in the community. Later versions of the guide focused on just the core attributes of Scrum.

The new focus has proven to be a very successful approach and the Scrum Guide is now viewed as the definitive reference of Scrum. It's simple, concise - only 16 pages long - and very accessible (translated into 26 different languages). Partly in response to the success of the guide, the Scrum Alliance established their own competing website, the Agile Atlas, mentioned in Chapter 2.

The Scrum Open Assessment

The Scrum Open assessment is available for free to anyone interested in evaluating their knowledge of Scrum. It is also a useful tool for those preparing to take any of the certification granting Professional Scrum assessments.
- Scrum.org, The Scrum Open assessment

The Scrum Open is an online self-assessment tool - an exam that is graded but doesn't have a pass mark. The assessment consists of 30 questions randomly selected from a large pool.

The intention of the Scrum Open assessment is to provide feedback to the participant to give them an understanding of their knowledge of Scrum. By taking the Scrum Open, areas of strength or weakness are identified and can be actively addressed.

As the name implies, the Scrum Open assessment is available at no cost although you do have to create an account on the Scrum.org website. You can start the Scrum Open assessment by visiting it's homepage:

The Professional Scrum Master I & II

The PSM I assessment is grounded in the Scrum Body of Knowledge at Scrum.org, but is quite difficult. Parts of the assessment may ask the taker to think about or interpret the meaning from the Scrum Guide. Or, in some cases, apply their own experience.
- Scrum.org, PSM I assessment.

The first Scrum Master certification offered by Scrum.org is the Professional Scrum Master level 1 (PSM I) certification. It's a multiple choice exam requiring a pass mark of 85%. You have 60 minutes to complete the test.

The cost of taking the PSM I exam is US$100. While there is no requirement to attend a two-day course; anyone who is willing to pay the exam fee is eligible. This is in contrast to the Scrum Alliance's CSM certification which is dependant upon completing an in-person course.

Scrum.org does, however, recommend you take either the Professional Scrum Master courses before taking the exam.

The PSM II assessment is incredibly difficult, and consists of multiple-choice questions, case study questions, and essays.
- Scrum.org, PSM II assessment.

The Professional Scrum Master level 2 (PSM II) follows on from the PSM I certification. It's significantly more difficult and requires the applicant to show practical knowledge applying Scrum to real world scenarios.

The PSM II exam consists of multiple choice questions and unstructured scenario-based essay questions. As you would expect of an advanced certification, the length of the PSM II exam is 120 minutes (2 hours). The essay questions are read and graded by hand and you should expect a delay in getting the results of the PSM II. The pass mark for the PSM II exam is also 85%.

Successfully passing the PSM I certification is the only prerequisite to taking the PSM II exam. Attending a PSM course is not required to take the PSM II although it is recommended. **You should be aware that the course alone is not sufficient for the certification and you will need to demonstrate experience applying Scrum to be able to successfully answer the essay questions.** This final point cannot be stressed enough.

Professional Scrum Product Owner I & II

The Professional Scrum Product Owner level 1 (PSPO I) assessment is available to those who … wish to demonstrate their fundamental knowledge of the Scrum framework and its ability to support value creation and delivery.
- Scrum.org, PSPO I assessment.

The first certification offered by Scrum.org for the Product Owner role is the Professional Scrum Product Owner level 1 (PSPO I) certification. Unlike the PSM I & II certifications, a course is requirement to take the exam. [1] The PSPO I exam is a 60-minute exam consisting of multiple choice questions, with a pass mark of 85%.

The Product Owner role is difficult and there is no natural equivalent role in traditional product development frameworks. Even though the assessment is based upon the course, some questions require the applicant to interpret how to use the Scrum framework or draw conclusions from real life experiences.

The Professional Scrum Product Owner level 2 (PSPO II) assessment is available to anyone who has passed the PSPO I assessment and wishes to demonstrate his or her ability to apply the Scrum framework to solving complex problems regarding Product Management in the real world.
- Scrum.org, PSPO II assessment.

The Professional Scrum Product Owner level 2 (PSPO II) certification is significantly more difficult than the PSPO I certification. It requires the applicant to obtain the PSPO I certification, and to also complete a second, more difficult assessment. The PSPO II assessment is a combination of multiple choice and unstructured scenario-based essay questions. It is 120 minutes in duration and requires 85% to pass.

The PSPO II assessment is marked by hand and it may take time for the results to be returned.

Professional Scrum Developer I

The Professional Scrum Developer level 1 (PSD I) certification is the latest certification to be introduced by Scrum.org. It is based upon the PSD courseware so a PSD course is required prior to taking the assessment. [1]

The examination is a 60 minute, multiple choice exam requiring a mark of 90% for a passing grade. At the present time the PSD certification is only available for .NET and Java developers.

Notes And References

1. Even though the PSPO I & II and PSD I certification currently require the completion of a course, Scrum.org has plans to eliminate this requirement as they did with the PSM certifications. The timeframe has not been established but is dependant on the formalization of either a Product Owner Guide, or a Scrum Developer Guide. Neither of these documents currently exist, but Scrum.org hints that they are coming:

   Once the body of knowledge has been formalized as a Scrum Product Owner Guide, the assessment will be open to the public and anyone – including those who have not taken a Professional Scrum Product Owner course – will be able to assess themselves. -Scrum.org, Professional Scrum Product Owner Assessment.