Frequently Asked Questions from the Scrum Master Training @Reply by comSysto

TOPIC	QUESTION	ANSWER
Certification	How much do I have to prepare for the certification?	You need to know the Scrum Guide very well. It covers a large percentage of the exam. Additionally, get well accustomed to the types of questions and to the wording by doing the open exams several times (the questions change). Save the pages with the solutions and know them by heart. Your preparation is not complete until you consistently score 100% in the open exam!
Definition of Done	When do we test the software?	Quality can not be tested - quality needs to be build in. Therefore you have to include the testing activities in the Definition of Done to make sure each story is tested before delivering the increment. In addition, "test driven develoment", where you write the tests before you write the code, is a possibility. Wherever possible, tests should be automated to enabled regression testing without any additional effort. For integration testing with external systems, there is no general rule except the absence of a dedicated hardening Sprint; still, particular product backlog items for setting up and testing the integration might be required.
Examples, Best Practices	Where to find best practices?	As Scrum is used in a complex environment, it is used differently each time. Therefore there are no 1:1 best practices that you can simply copy. There is, however, an official page with real life case studies where you can get inspiration from: http://www.scrumcasestudies.com/
Examples, Best Practices	Real life examples	As Scrum is used in a complex environment, it is used differently each time. Therefore there are no 1:1 best practices that you can simply copy. There is however an official page with real life case studies where you can get inspiration from: http://www.scrumcasestudies.com/
Product Backlog	Is the Development team also involved in the priorization?	The Product Owner can delegate certain tasks regarding the product backlog to the Development Team. Therefore it is possible that they prioritize the product backlog. However, this is not ideal as the Product Owner should definitely communicate which features he considers the most valuable for the product. As priorization is mostly related to business (and its topics) someone with a deep knowledge in this area should (at least lead those who) prioritize. No matter who does the tasks for the product backlog, the Product Owner always stays accountable.
Product Backlog	Who writes the user stories?	The Product Owner is accountabe for the user stories in the product backlog. However, he can delegate the task of writing them to the Development Team or any Stakeholder. By letting the team write the user stories the Product Owner can check whether the team understands the topic/ story or not. So it is less important who writes the user story than who is involved in the discussion about it.
Product Backlog	Can also someone else care for the product backlog?	The Product Owner can delegate his tasks regarding the product backlog, however he always stays accountable for it.
Product Backlog	Why is the order of the product backlog important if there is a sprint planning?	The product backlog is the single point of truth for all plans regarding the product! Therefore, it also should replace project plans, roadmaps, and the likes whereever possible. For the sake of transparency among all stakeholders, having a bigger picture than just the next Sprint is always advisable. Also, priorization of the backlog is most likely related to the business and customer and not to technical stuff. Once the Development Team meets for the sprint planning, it is essential that they know which features are deemed to be most valuable for the product. Also, if the team finishes the sprint backlog before the sprint ending, they will pull another user story into the sprint backlog. They need to know which item holds the priority 1.
Product Backlog	What if the team doesn't know the technical solution yet and therefore can't estimate?	For estimation, it is not necessary to know exactly, how the technical solution for an item will look like. It also should not matter which person will work on this item. Estimation is not about the solution, its about the problem. You have to state whether the problem is bigger/larger or smaller or even to an already solved problem. The only things that matter for estimation are: size of the story, uncertainty, complexity and risk. All of these can be estimated independently of the technical realization and person. In addition, do not take estimation too seriously! It's not rocket sience. By the way: There is also an agile movement where they do NOT estimate (#NoEstimate) but measure real data in each sprint. So they can forecast based on real measured data under the assumption of approximately equal average product backlog item size in the long run.
Product Backlog	When do we slice user stories and estimate?	Many teams refine particular user stories in smaller groups to improve their efficiency. However, estimation should always be done by the entire team which is responsible for all estimates according to the Scrum Guide. You can use an additional meeting called backlog refinement. Backlog refinement can be used for understanding new user stories, estimating them and prioritizing them. This is not an official event in the Scrum Guide. If you don't have a refinement meeting, you can also use the sprint planning for estimation.
Product Backlog	Can I change a user story once it's in the backlog?	Regarding the Product Backlog: If you are asking as PO: The product backlog is a living artifact and can always be changed. If you are asking as developer: As developer you can change and refine user stories in the product backlog but your PO should be aware of the changes since the PO remains accountable. The sprint backlog is considered fixed and should not be changed. However sometimes it can happen that the originally planned scope of a user story must be adapted as more has been learned during the Sprint. In this case you could split the story in two stories and create the second story with the content that came up.
Product Backlog	What happens if we change the reference story for estimation?	The reference story usually is a story that was already implementend ("done") and therefore would not be changed. Nevertheless it totally makes sense to replace your reference story from time to time with a more up-to date story that all team members are familiar with. It also can be useful to have multiple reference stories for different complexities. The reference story is only used by you and your team in order to be able to estimate stories and therefore needed as a reference to compare. So you need to adapt it when you know better. As estimations are relative, all relations will change proportionally. If you change the reference story, the future estimations will then automatically change accordingly. Just consider it if you look at your velocity which might then reflect the moment you changed your reference.
Product Owner	How many Product Owners do we need?	One product - one backlog - one Product Owner. One Product Owner can also take care of several products. There should not be several Product Owners for one product. In reality, often if you have a large product, you have to scale the structures. In a scaled setup with more than one team the number of Product Owners and Product Backlogs depends on the number of disjoint products that are being built. There are Scaled Agile Trainings that teach more about scaling Scrum.
Product Owner	Does the PO have a delegation function?	It depends on your concept of "delegation". If "delegate" means "forward as a classical manager" then a clear NO! The PO stays accountable for his task and may find someone who helps him doing the work.

Product Owner	Can we expect the PO to know the technical details?	The PO has to know the WHAT of the product he wants to build, this is about the business of the customer, the problem of the customer, the customer itself etc. Therefore the WHAT is about the business value. The HOW of the solution will be covered by the team, so they need to know all the technical details. Still, technical expertise can be useful for the PO - but he must not interfere with technical decisions made by the team!
Product Owner	Why do we need personas if there is a PO and the customer?	You need personas so that you think from our user's perspective. Personas are a model of a user to understand user's life, his behavior and his perspective to define the value of features of the product. You should always build the product thinking about the user and his needs. The PO is not the product's end user and could subconsciously deem features important because he/she likes them instead of thinking from a user's perspective. Still keep in mind that personas are not a compulsory part of Scrum but rather a best practice in the industry.
Scaling	How to scale scrum?	There are different scaling frameworks for Scrum, for example Nexus or LeSS. They explain how you can work with different teams on one product. Scaling is not that easy, the best idea is to scale the product by features and build the organisational structure accoding to the product structure. Moreover, scaling is often done way too early! Until you have optimized your ways of working within one team (e.g. more automation) doing this should always be your primary goal.
Scaling	What if several teams work for the same product and they are dependent of each other? Who manages this?	There are different scaling frameworks for Scrum, for example Nexus or LeSS. They explain how you can work with different teams on one product. In general, if more than one team work on the same product, the teams (product parts) should be sliced in a way that the teams can work mostly independently from each other. In addition the one (or several) Product Owners should communicate and know what the teams work on. Technical dependencies are resolved by representatives from all involved Development teams as they occur. Important: in the Scrum Guide, there is only one Product Owner for one product. In reality, often a structure of Product Owners takes care of the functional structure of the product from a user's prerspective. So, they manage it.
Scaling	Who sorts out dependencies between teams?	There are different scaling frameworks for Scrum, for example Nexus or LeSS. They explain how you can work with different teams on one product. In general, if more than one team work on the same product, the teams (product parts) should be sliced in a way that the teams can work mostly independently from each other. In addition the one (or several) Product Owners should communicate and know what the teams work on. Technical dependencies are resolved by representatives from all involved Development teams as they occur. Important: in the Scrum Guide, there is only one Product Owner for one product. In reality, often a structure of Product Owners takes care of the functional structure of the product from a user's prerspective. So, they manage it.
Scrum Board	How to handle a Scrum board?	The team should decide which Scrum board they prefer for organizing their work on. They are also responsible for handling and improving the Scrum Board. Keep in mind: The Board is a communicaton tool!
Scrum Board	What is a good online substitute for the Scrum Board?	The team should find out which Scrum board works best for them. Examples for online boards are Trello, Excel, Google Sheets or Jira.
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to plan budget?	Ideally, the customer should not order an agile product development process with a fixed budget. It is more about the iterative development of a product and the development stops whenever the customer is happy with the status quo of the product. Why would you try to plan a budget for something you don't even really know yet how it will look like? However, if the customer can only order the product with a fixed budget, the scope will always be undefined for an agile product. In this case, the team will work in iterations and add feature after feature until the budget is exhausted. So, the customer defines a fixed price for the expected product (this will be the "budget") and a delivery date. So budget and time are fixed, scope is open. In reality however unfortunately customers see Agile as silver bullet (which it is definetly not) and define price, delivery date and scope. You will find out that this won't work. You can find more information here: https://www.scrumalliance. org/community/articles/2014/march/good-bad-and-ugly-of-agile-fixed-price-contracts
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to incorporate Scrum in budget planning in collaboration with a customer?	Ideally, the customer should not order an agile product development process with a fixed budget. It is more about the iterative development of a product and the development stops whenever the customer is happy with the status quo of the product. Why would you try to plan a budget for something you don't even really know yet how it will look like? However, if the customer can only order the product with a fixed budget, the scope will always be undefined for an agile product. In this case, the team will work in iterations and add feature after feature until the budget is exhausted. So, the customer defines a fixed price for the expected product (this will be the "budget") and a delivery date. So budget and time are fixed, scope is open. In reality however unfortunately customers see Agile as silver bullet (which it is definetly not) and define price, delivery date and scope. You will find out that this won't work. You can find more information here: https://www.scrumalliance. org/community/articles/2014/march/good-bad-and-ugly-of-agile-fixed-price-contracts
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to transform waterfall to agile?	Step by step. Don't expect a "best practice" or a process for this transformation as it is an extremely complex situation with a lot of uncertainty and individuality. Constantly communicate and try to accomplish working agile in small teams first. Step by step and effort by effort, the organization can transform from only working agile to being agile. Use iterations and constant feedback loops. Also: Measure your progress. Starting from "Scrum by the book" you have to find out what works best for you. And check in every sprint what and how to do better (using retrospectives).
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to deal with people in the team who don't want to apply Scrum?	Find out why they don't want to work with Scrum and teach them what Scrum means. Find out together, how Scrum can help you as a team. But we also have to say that its normal to loose up to 20% of the employees during a agile transition. Agile is not for everyone.
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to plan a project with Scrum?	The project based view is about our processes. The product view is about what the customer needs. In Scrum, we don't talk about projects anymore, but about products. A project usually has a fixed scope and budget which are things we try to avoid in agile working. You also don't plan the entire scope in Scrum because you can't plan a complex situation upfront. The backlog is a living artifact and each iteration you learn something new about your product and adapt the backlog. Detailed planning is only done for one sprint and big picture planning approximately for 2-4 sprints. Find out what the customer needs first - this has the highest value for him. And do this first. As you do not know upfront, what the customer really wants and when the product is considered good enough by him, you can not plan as you did in the past - it won't work.
Scrum in a traditional environment	How does the daily work look like in an only partly agile company?	If only a few teams work with Scrum and the remaining organization is still traditional, it is important that the Scrum Team is protected very well. There should be no disturbance or disruption during sprints. Usually the Scrum Master and/or the Product Owner have to work hard to keep this protection up. Whenever an impediment comes up that the Team can't solve and in addition the Scrum Master / Product Owner also can't solve, they have to escalate it to management and make sure it is being taken seriously and solved. Therefore, management needs to support and protect the teams as well.

Scrum in a traditional environment	How do I explain a customer how to correctly write user stories and convince him to not plan everything upfront?	Communication and feedback loops. If the customer wants Scrum (because it makes sense) then he also needs to allow Scrum. Don't accept otherwise. In a complex environment it is impossible to plan everything upfront. Start by writing the user stories together with him and teach him how or help your customer by writing the user stories on your own in order to help you to understand what he needs. Don't forget that it's not about writing the user stories, it's about communication and common understanding of the team about what the user wants. If planning works 100% fine for your customer and there is no uncertainty whatsoever, he probably does not need Agile. If planning does not work, you do not need to convince him as he should be looking for something that works. In a complex environment - the so called VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) world - having a plan is still good, but being able to change it is key here. You can find more information in the Agile Manifesto: http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to introduce Scrum in a waterfall company?	First find out, WHAT to do - ask your customer. Then find out HOW to do it: step by step. Constantly communicate and try to accomplish working agile in small teams first. Use iterations and constant feedback loops. If only a few teams work with Scrum and the remaining organization is still traditional, it is important that the Scrum Team is protected very well. There should be no disturbance or disruption during sprints. Usually the Scrum Master and/ or the Product Owner have to work hard to keep this protection up. Whenever an impediment comes up that the Team can't solve and in addition the Scrum Master / Product Owner also can't solve, they have to escalate it to management and make sure it is being taken seriously and solved. Don't accept excuses.
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to sell a Scrum project to a customer?	Agile is the only way to handle complex products. If the customer is in a complex environment and the requirements are not all clear yet upfront, there is uncertainty. Explain to the customer that with uncertainty, the only thing that makes sense is to work in short iterations and step by step finding out how the product should really look like and what the user really wants. If there is no uncertainty however, don't sell a Scrum project, it doesn't make sense then.
Scrum in a traditional environment	What are the risks/ disadvantages of Scrum?	Conflict with a traditionally minded management and organization can be foreseen and will certainly occur. Also roles and responsibilities will change which can lead to negative emotions. The expectation to be able to copy a "best practice" Scrum implementation can lead to frustration because unfortunately this does not work. Another risk: if the customer is not available or not able to prioritize and/or not able to define what value means for him.
Scrum in a traditional environment	Chicken or egg?	Egg. Start small in teams and then try to get to the organization.
Scrum in a traditional environment	How to manage customer expectations?	Ask the customer what's the value of the product and ask him for prioritization. Communication and feedback loops are important. Demonstrate working software at each and every Sprint Review meeting. The customer will see how the product evolves, and at which pace he can expect things to change in the future
Scrum in a traditional environment	Who is the Project Manager in Scrum?	There is no Project Manager in Scrum. The role of a project manager is distributed among Product Owner, Scrum Master and Team: * Product Owner takes care of the product * Scrum Master takes care of the process * The Team takes care of the development of the product. As these are different persons they have to communicate well.
Scrum Master role	What are the (soft) success factors of a Scrum Master?	A Scrum Master should have a deep understanding about the theory and practice of Scrum. He/she should know what the five Scum values mean and also live by them (Commitment, Openness, Respect, Courage and Focus). In addition, emotional intelligence as well as (group) facilitation skills are important success factors. Continuous improvement (for the team and himself) should be the main goal of a Scrum Master. Being a good Scrum Master is not about coming up with a solution at first sight. It is about observing and listening while coaching the team based on the corresponding insights. He must have excellent communication skills and be able to say no when nobody else dares to - it's about protecting the team in the end.
Scrum Master role	What does the Scrum Master really do?	In general, the Scrum Master is a servant leader. The Scrum Master protects the team from disturbance and disruption. He makes sure the team can focus on the work from the sprint backlog. Additionally he removes impediments and makes sure that the Scrum events take place and are effective. He mostly facilitates the retrospective and sometimes also the other Scrum events, if the team is not mature yet. The Scrum Master takes care of the team, coaches them and makes sure that the agile values are understood. He fosters constant learning and continuous improvement of the team. Furthermore, he makes sure that communication takes place.
Scrum Master role	How can I notice everything that is happening in the team?	Be as close to the Development Team as possible and spend as much time as possible with them. But don't control them!
Scrum Master role	As a Scrum Master, how to be a great servant leader without knowing the project?	The Scrum Master should understand the scope and the big picture of the product. It is not mandatory that he has a technical background and understands the technical details of the Development Team's work. Being a servant leader means to take care that the team has everything they need and he helps the team to improve and get better. The Scrum Master protects the team from disturbance and disruption. He makes sure the team can focus on the work from the sprint backlog. Additionally he removes impediments and makes sure that the Scrum events take place and are effective. He mostly facilitates the retrospective and sometimes also the other Scrum events, if the team is not mature yet. The Scrum Master takes care of the team, coaches them and makes sure that the agile values are understood. He fosters constant learning and continuous improvement of the team. Furthermore, he makes sure that communication takes place. But the Scrum Master is not a project manager.
Sprint Planning / Sprint Backlog	What if we estimated wrong?	It doesn't matter. If you realize that a story was more complex or bigger than estimated, you learned something for the next estimation.
Sprint Planning / Sprint Backlog	Do you calculate uncertainty (sickness, unforeseen stuff) into the planning?	During sprint planning the development team discusses the scope of the sprint backlog and commits to a scope they expect to be able to complete. This activity can be supported by metrics like velocity ("how many story points did you complete in previous sprints") or planned absences in upcoming sprint. If you expect a high likelihood of unplanned effort in the next sprint, e.g. a new major release will be rolled out and team members most likely need to support or troubleshoot, you could reduce sprint scope to have more capacity for unexpected work. If you do so, the most important thing is to make your assumptions explicit and transparent to everyone.

Sprint Review	How is the Sprint Review done?	The sprint review is an event, where the Scrum Team and the stakeholders meet to inspect and adapt the product. The Development Team presents the new increment and ideally lets the customer use it. The Product Owner explains what Product Backlog items have been "Done" and what has not been "Done". By reviewing the new increment, the participants of the event can think of ways to further develop the product with next increments.
Start with Scrum	How do I improve our current Scrum-like project?	Our recommendation: Do regular retrospectives and continuously inspect and adapt.
Start with Scrum	How to apply Scrum in real life?	Just start with it. Ask the PO to create a backlog with the most valuable features as stories and just start working in your first sprint. Use the retrospective to evaluate what you can adapt and improve regarding your Scrum process and working mode.
Start with Scrum	How to implement Scrum in an existing organization?	Just start with it. Ask the PO to create a backlog with the most valuable features as stories and just start working in your first sprint. Use the retrospective to evaluate what you can adapt and improve regarding your Scrum process and working mode.
Start with Scrum	How do I determine the length of a sprint?	Our recommendation: Start with 2 weeks and check in the first retrospectives if it fits to the structure and complexity of the product. But don't treat the sprint timebox as a flexible range.
Start with Scrum	How to do the first sprint planning?	Use your experience from previous projects to get a rough feeling for a realistic scope, but clearly communicate that this is just an educated guess. If there is no experience with similar problems: You just don't know. Then, start working on the first item. In the first sprint planning, have a look at the product backlog and especially the item at priority 1. Pull this item in the sprint backlog and discuss how you would realize this item. Define tasks for the story and start working on them. Once the first story is done, evaluate how complex it was and how many story points you deem to be suitable (you can also just pick a number). Now you have your reference story. If there is still time left in the sprint, try to estimate the next items in relation to the reference story and pull the second item in the sprint backlog. Work on it until the sprint is over. Now you know how many story points you accomplished in the first sprint. Use the learnings to inspect and adapt the product and your Scrum process!
Start with Scrum	How do I know how many Story Points I can handle in the first sprint?	Use your experience from previous projects to get a rough feeling for a realistic scope, but clearly communicate that this is just an educated guess. If there is no experience with similar problems: You just don't know. Then, start working on the first item. In the first sprint planning, have a look at the product backlog and especially the item at priority 1. Pull this item in the sprint backlog and discuss how you would realize this item. Define tasks for the story and start working on them. Once the first story is done, evaluate how complex it was and how many story points you deem to be suitable (you can also just pick a number). Now you have your reference story. If there is still time left in the sprint, try to estimate the next items in relation to the reference story and pull the second item in the sprint backlog. Work on it until the sprint is over. Now you know how many story points you accomplished in the first sprint. Use the learnings to inspect and adapt the product and your Scrum process!
Start with Scrum	How to actually start and help newbies with their fears?	Just start with it. Ask the PO to create a backlog with the most valuable features as stories and just start working in your first sprint. Use the retrospective to evaluate what you can adapt and improve regarding your Scrum process and working mode. During the events and the sprint and especially during the retrospective communicate a lot in the team and be there for questions. Try to understand where the fear is coming from and try to create a common understanding in the team about "your way of Scrum". You could also use pair programming as a way not to leave someone by himself.
Start with Scrum	How to start with Scrum?	Just start with it. Ask the PO to create a backlog with the most valuable features as stories and just start working in your first sprint. Use the retrospective to evaluate what you can adapt and improve regarding your Scrum process and working mode.
Type of project	Is Scrum only for IT projects?	No, Scrum is a framework for product development in an complex environment. Meaning that there is uncertainty about the requirements. You can use it for any product or project.
Type of project	Does it work well with Legal topics?	If it is a complex topic, yes. Work in iterations and inspect and adapt your Scrum way for your topic.
Type of project	How to decide if Scrum is a good option for my project?	If it is a complex topic, try it. Work in iterations and inspect and adapt your Scrum way for your topic. How to know if it is complex? Whenever there is uncertainty about the exact requirements.
Type of project	When is Scrum not recommended?	If it is not a complex problem or product.
Type of project	Is it for all types of projects (which are complex enough)?	Try it.