

The Scrum Master Journey

The Scrum Master Journey is a program of education designed to provide scrum masters throughout the world with mentorship and guided learning in pursuit of personal excellence. Optionally, the program offers Scrum Alliance certification at three levels.¹

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.” —Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

The Scrum Master Journey offers a self-motivated, peer-supported and networked-learning approach. It is rooted in the principles of andragogy (adult learning) as outlined by Malcolm Knowles.²

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-oriented.

With these principles in mind the Scrum Master Journey is designed to draw on the students' own motivation and experience in the workplace, while remaining aligned with essential Scrum principles and values, including those of servant leadership, self-management, collaboration, reflection, incremental progression, sustainable pace, and trust. It is a rigorous and disciplined program that requires commitment and engagement from all participants.

There are three main elements to this journey, self study, mentoring and interactive workshops, each contributing to the student's discovery and realisation of his or her own scrum master abilities, while using the Scrum Alliance learning objectives³ as a guide throughout the journey.

¹ Certified Scrum Master (CSM) , Advanced Scrum Master (A-CSM) and Certified Scrum Professional, Scrum Master (CSP-SM)

² Adapted from Andragogy: An Emerging Technology for Adult Learning, by Malcolm Knowles, 1970, www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-andragogy.pdf

³ The Scrum Alliance learning objectives for CSM, A-CSM and CSP-SM can be found at scrumalliance.org

1st Element, Self Study

In addition to the Scrum Alliance learning objectives the student is expected to study scrum, and the many associated ideas that support its successful implementation, through books, articles, videos, podcasts and attendance at local meet-ups. Recommendations will be made, as a start, but the student is encouraged to seek out resources that resonate with them.

2nd Element, Mentorship

Each student will have a mentor to guide them through the learning objectives at the appropriate level. The purpose of this is twofold. The student benefits through conversation and support from a more experienced scrum master, and the mentor benefits through the ‘teaching back’ principle, consolidating their own learning, and ensuring they stay a few steps ahead of the student.⁴

Learners are expected to meet with their mentors for one-to-one conversations, either in person or remotely, at a pace and regularity decided between the student and the mentor. In order to witness the action-oriented learning objectives mentors may also choose to observe students in their workplace, if appropriate.

The mentor is responsible for ensuring the student meets the learning objectives, and together with the CST will review written documentation, and determine if the student is ready to complete the current phase of study.

Mentors themselves receive guidance from program leaders, and from one another, as requested.

3rd Element, Interactive Workshops

Students will be required to participate in the workshops appropriate to their current phase of the journey. These workshops are designed to challenge the student’s thinking and offer additional ideas and ways of working to those expressed in the formal learning objectives. Specific information on these workshops is given in the phase descriptions found later in this document.

Students are also expected to attend scrum events, such as gatherings, exchanges or meet-ups, initially as an attendee, later as a presenter or facilitator, and to write of their experiences.

⁴ [2019] An alternative to mentorship that has been piloted successfully by a few students is partnership, or co-mentorship, where two people both on the same journey support and challenge one another. The co-mentorship agreement is now a valid alternative to fulfil this requirement of the scrum master journey.

Program Overview

The Scrum Master Journey is described in three phases, each with its own vision, and a optional end goal of a Scrum Alliance certificate: CSM, A-CSM and CSP-SM respectively. Students will progress at their own pace.

As well as studying the essentials of scrum and its real world application, students will also study and/or experience aspects of relevant disciplines such as Clean Language, The Human Givens, improv, theatre games, Extreme Programming principles, Spiral Dynamics, Theory U and Sociocracy, and will be encouraged to explore related methods and concepts such as those expressed in Lean, Kanban, LeSS, FAST, and the models suggested by the Scrum Alliance learning objectives.

Students considered to be advanced—through scrum master or coaching experience and/or deep study and/or event participation and/or respected online presence, e.g. blogging, podcast, video creation and/or previous attendance at one or more the workshops—may skip some of the described requirements as they will already be deemed to have covered them sufficiently. Such students may also choose to act as mentors to others from an early stage in this program.⁵

Phase I

Scrum Master as Law-giver and Evangelist

One who lives scrum out loud. The CSM workshop is often the entry point to scrum, or occasionally a reset or clarification to adjust common misunderstandings and misinformation. After the preparatory study and the workshop a participant is ready to take on the role of scrum master and start to teach/socialise/evangelise scrum to his or her teams and the wider organisation.

Achievement: Scrum Alliance CSM certificate (optional)

Entry Requirements

- None

Individual Study

- Read the Manifesto for Agile Software Development
- Read the Scrum Guide
- Study CSM learning objectives and bring questions/requests to the CSM workshop

Interactive Work

- Attend Tobias Mayer's CSM workshop⁶ & (optionally) take the CSM test

⁵ See *Fast-track Option* on page 6

⁶ See tobiasmayer.uk/scrum/csm for a description of the CSM workshop, offered online and in-person. Please note, other CSMs will not count towards the completion of phase1. If the student already has a CSM from a different trainer he/she will need to retake it with Tobias Mayer, at a considerably reduced refresher rate.

Phase 2

Scrum Master as Court Jester and Prophet

An effective scrum master must have the trust of others and the courage of him/herself to speak truth to power, as a medieval court jester was wont to do, often to the dismay of other advisors. Speaking truth will not make you popular.

Scrum transitions will commonly go through difficult phases. When times get tough, old habits kick back in, sprint boundaries are not respected, ceremonies are dropped, long working hours to fix "critical issues" become commonplace and the voice of management says "we can't do scrum right now, we'll come back to it".

At such times the scrum master needs to channel the Old Testament prophets, reminding people of 'the law' — i.e. their own agreements predicated on the scrum framework, warning of the inevitable outcome of the straying behaviour, and ultimately bringing them back to the true (i.e. their own agreed) path. This stage transcends and includes the law-giver/evangelist.

Achievement: Scrum Alliance A-CSM certificate (optional).

The candidate must be able to prove one year's work experience as a scrum master to complete this phase. It is recommended the work experience is gained in parallel with this course of study.

Entry Requirements

- Phase 1 successfully completed
- CSM certificate achieved (if A-CSM certificate required)

Individual Study

- Read The Scrum Master Checklist by Michael James
- Read The Scrum Master Role by the LeSS team
- Study A-CSM learning objectives, discuss with mentor, and bring requests for learning to the Scrum Master Clinics. Be confident that each learning objective is met.
- Read *at least* one introductory scrum book, e.g. *The Elements of Scrum* by Sims/Johnson, *Scrum Mastery* by Geoff Watts, *Scrum: a pocket guide* by Gunther Verheyen
- Write a book review describing your learnings, and how the book inspired your journey

Written work will be reviewed by the CST and/or the student's own mentor. Students are free to publish the work on their blog, the Scrum Alliance website, or elsewhere to receive wider feedback from the community. If preferred a student may make a video or podcast to express the same intent.

continued...

Phase 2, continued

Interactive Work

- Attend at least four scrum-related meet-ups or similar events, with a preference for the more interactive formats
- Find a mentor or co-mentor ⁷
- Pair with the mentor to work through the A-CSM learning objectives
- Attend one Scrum Exchange, Scrum Gathering, Scrum Day or similar event
- Write a review of the event, and how it affected your journey
- Attend the following one-day workshops, in any order:
 - Storytelling in the Workplace ⁸
 - Collaborative Product Owner ⁹
 - Conflict Resolution ¹⁰

⁷ As described in the section on mentorship on page 2 of this document

⁸ See tobiasmayer.uk/events/storytelling for a description of this workshop

⁹ See tobiasmayer.uk/events/collabpo for a description of this workshop

¹⁰ See tobiasmayer.uk/events/conflict for a description of this workshop

Phase 3

Scrum Master as Gardener

The vision for the end of this phase is of the scrum master as an organic gardener, lovingly preparing the organisational soil, letting change emerge, nurturing it, guiding the growth patiently, gently and naturally, and removing weeds without introducing toxins. This stage transcends and includes both the law-giver/evangelist and the court jester/prophet.

Achievement: Scrum Alliance CSP-SM certificate (optional).

The candidate must be able to prove two years' work experience as a scrum master to complete this phase. It is recommended the work experience is gained in parallel with this course of study.

Entry Requirements

- Phase 2 successfully completed
- CSM and A-CSM certificates achieved (if CSP-SM certificate required)

Individual Study

- Study CSP-SM learning objectives, discuss with mentor, and implement in the workplace to your own satisfaction. Be confident that each learning objective is met.
- Read at least one non-Agile book that relates to self-organisation or management through release, e.g. *Artful Making* by Austin/Devin, *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* by Pascale et al, *Slack* by Tom DeMarco, *Maverick* by Ricardo Semler, *The Starfish and the Spider* by Brafman/Beckstrom, *The Answer to How is Yes* by Peter Block
- Read *The People's Scrum* by Tobias Mayer
- Write a book review describing how you were inspired and what ideas you will attempt to implement in your workplace—or are currently implementing

Interactive Work

- Attend at least four Facilitation Labs
- *Optionally* act as a mentor to new scrum masters
- Pair with your own mentor to work through the CSP-SM learning objectives
- Attend at least one Scrum Exchange, Scrum Gathering, Scrum Day or similar event as a speaker or session facilitator
- Write a review of the event, and how it affected your journey
- Attend a two-day Facilitation workshop ¹¹
- Attend the two-day Grassroots Leadership workshop ¹²

Written work will be reviewed by the CST and/or the student's own mentor. Students are free to publish the work on their blog, the Scrum Alliance website, or elsewhere to receive wider feedback from the community. If preferred a student may make a video or podcast to express the same intent.

¹¹ Any approved facilitation workshop is acceptable. A workshop taught by Francis Laleman is highly recommended

¹² See tobiasmayer.uk/events/grassroots for a description of this workshop

Fast-track Option

According to the terms of acceptance of this program by the Scrum Alliance I have the freedom to assess people in light of what they have *already* achieved within the scrum community and their own careers, and, where appropriate, offer advanced or professional certification through a minimal program of study, tailored to each individual.

If you consider yourself a candidate for the fast-track program, please get in touch to work out a personal program of advancement.

The Scrum Alliance Learning Objectives

Whether a student chooses to take the Scrum Alliance certification or not, all will be expected to use the Scrum Alliance learning objectives as guides for each of the three phases. While the phase 1 learning objectives (CSM) are largely learned in a classroom setting, the learning objectives at the next two levels are not, and students are expected to take ownership of their own learning for these two levels. A tracking sheet will be provided at each level and the student expected to work through the learning objectives with his or her mentor and—if certification is sought—with the CST.

In keeping with the principles of andragogy, the student is trusted to learn what they need to learn, to spend just as much time as they need or would like, and to ask for help and support as necessary. The majority of the learning objectives will be learnt—or *have already been learnt*—through self-motivated study, mentorship and practice in the workplace. The Scrum Master Journey provides guidance for that learning, including peer support, informed advice, and periodic assessment waypoints to inspect and adapt as necessary.

Program Summary

This is a rigorous program that requires involvement and commitment over two years—or longer. I'm honoured to have the help and support of close and trusted colleagues, willing to offer their time and expertise to support these learning journeys. My own journey to become a scrum master, and later a scrum master mentor and teacher was likewise supported by many experienced and inspiring people. This program, at the same time both disciplined and freeing, is my way of passing on to others what was so kindly given to me—the skills certainly, but more importantly the passion, and the intrinsic motivation to continuously seek to learn, and above all to embrace the beginner's mind. I hope you find your investment in this program to be worthwhile.

Tobias Mayer, August 2017 (last updated, September 2021)