Comparison of PM Standards: PMBOK 7 vs PRINCE2 vs ISO 21500/21502

This document provides a structured comparison of three global project management standards:
- PMBOK® Guide — Seventh Edition
- Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2® (7th Edition)
- ISO 21500:2021 and ISO 21502:2020 (treated as one standard)

The comparison highlights similarities, differences, and unique elements across key project management topics.

Comparison: PMBOK 7 vs PRINCE2 (7th ed) vs ISO 21500/21502

(Treated as: PMBOK 7 | PRINCE2 7 | ISO = ISO 21500 + ISO 21502)

Sources:

- PMBOK® Guide — Seventh Edition (Principles + Performance Domains + Tailoring). fileciteturn1file0

- Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2® (7th ed). fileciteturn1file1

- ISO 21500:2021 (Context & Concepts) and ISO 21502:2020 (Guidance on project management). fileciteturn1file5

NOTE: Where useful I cite the exact clauses/topics referenced in the standards (section numbers as shown in each PDF). Use these citations to deep-link within your repo or viewer.

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1) High-level approach / structure
- PMBOK 7: Principles-based standard (12 principles) + eight Project Performance Domains; systems view and outcomes/value focus. Emphasizes tailoring and models/methods/artifacts. fileciteturn1file6

- PRINCE2: Method-based (integrated elements = Principles, Practices, Processes) with a product-focused planning approach, explicit roles (Project Board, Executive, Senior User/Supplier) and stage-based control. fileciteturn1file13

- ISO (21500/21502): ISO 21500 gives context/concepts; ISO 21502 provides guidance and detailed management practices (clauses 7.x cover planning, risk, scope, quality, procurement, etc.). ISO takes a high-level process/practice approach aligned to organizational governance. 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities (high level):

- All three require explicit governance, role clarity, planning, risk and change management, stakeholder engagement, and alignment to organizational strategy. 【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file1【turn1file5】

Major difference (high level):

- PMBOK 7 is principles + performance-domain oriented (outcomes-focused); PRINCE2 is a prescriptive method with defined practices/processes and named roles; ISO combines context (21500) with practice guidance (21502) and is intentionally neutral/adoptable by organizations. 【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file13【turn1file5】

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2) Governance & Roles
- PMBOK 7: Describes organizational governance systems and functions associated with projects; encourages tailoring of governance to context. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Strong governance model—explicit Project Board, project executive, clear accountabilities, manage-by-exception (tolerances) and directing-process. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- ISO: Defines governance, governing body and project governance framework; aligns project governance with organizational strategy and oversight. 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Need for defined accountability, escalation routes, and oversight. 【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file13【turn1file5】

Differences / Unique:

- PRINCE2 prescribes named roles and the manage-by-exception mechanism (tolerances). ⟦filecite⟦turn1file13⟧

- PMBOK 7 is less prescriptive about specific job titles and more about functions and behaviors (principles-driven). ⟦filecite⟦turn1file6⟧

- ISO frames governance at organizational level (alignment with strategy and integrated governance). ⟦filecite⟦turn1file5⟧

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3) Tailoring & Adaptation

- PMBOK 7: Dedicated Tailoring section; tailoring driven by principles, organizational values and project context; recommends PMIstandards+ for context-specific practices. ⟦filecite⟦turn1file10⟦turn1file12⟧

- PRINCE2: Explicit principle "Tailor to suit the project"; tailoring decisions captured in initiation docs and approved by Project Board; practical guidance on what/how to tailor. ⟦filecite⟦turn1file1⟦turn1file14⟧

- ISO: Emphasizes selecting approaches based on organizational/contextual considerations; ISO 21502 advises on how to adapt management practices to project context. ⟦filecite⟦turn1file5⟧

Similarities:

- All require tailoring to project size, complexity, delivery method, risk, and organizational environment. ⟦filecite⟦turn1file10⟦turn1file1⟦turn1file5⟧

Differences:

- PRINCE2 expects formal tailoring decisions to be approved by governance (Project Board) and captured in initiation documentation. ⟦filecite⟦turn1file14⟧

- PMBOK focuses on tailoring guided by principles and provides a catalog of models/methods (less prescriptive about approval steps). ⟦filecite⟦turn1file10⟧

- ISO focuses on organizational selection criteria and alignment; less prescriptive about specific approval gates (left to organizational practice). ⟦filecite⟦turn1file5⟧

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4) Stakeholder Engagement

- PMBOK 7: Stakeholder Performance Domain — identification, analysis, engagement strategies and continuous alignment. filecite turn1file10

- PRINCE2: Emphasizes people and stakeholder groups; communications practice; roles such as Senior User to represent stakeholders. filecite turn1file13

- ISO: Stakeholder management is a management practice (ISO 21502 clause 7.12) — identify, engage and manage stakeholder expectations. filecite turn1file5

Similarities:

- Systematic identification, ongoing engagement, and use of stakeholder analysis to inform decisions. filecite turn1file10 turn1file13 turn1file5

Differences:

- PRINCE2 assigns stakeholder representation into formal roles (Senior User/Supplier) and links to project assurance; PMBOK treats stakeholder engagement as a cross-cutting performance domain; ISO connects stakeholders to organizational governance and strategy. filecite turn1file13 turn1file10 turn1file5

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5) Risk Management

- PMBOK 7: Treats risk within the Uncertainty Performance Domain and promotes optimizing risk responses; references broader PMI risk materials and a principles-based approach. filecite turn1file6

- PRINCE2: Dedicated Risk practice—risk management approach, risk register, risk budget, owners and action owners; explicit techniques and management products. filecite turn1file9 turn1file8

- ISO (21502): Risk management practice (7.8) — identify, assess, treat and control risks; consistent with ISO risk terminology and processes. filecite turn1file5

Similarities:

- All require identification, assessment (probability & impact), assignment of owners, planned responses, monitoring and communication. 【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file9【turn1file5】

Differences / Unique:

- PRINCE2 explicitly uses "threats" and "opportunities" language and prescribes management products like Risk Register and Risk Management Approach (with templates and content guidance). 【filecite【turn1file9】

- PMBOK 7 frames risk within a broader "uncertainty" domain and favors optimizing responses across the performance system rather than fixed processes. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- ISO provides structured steps similar to PRINCE2 but positions them as guidance aligned with ISO risk principles and often referenced to ISO 31000 practice. 【filecite【turn1file5【turn1file13】

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6) Planning (scope/schedule/cost)
- PMBOK 7: Planning Performance Domain — planning variables, communication, procurement, changes, metrics and alignment; supports multiple delivery cadences and life cycles. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Plans practice — product-based planning, relationship between project/stage/team plans; stage boundaries and manage-by-stages. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- ISO: Includes planning practice (7.2) plus dedicated clauses for schedule (7.6) and cost (7.7). 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Progressive elaboration, baseline and control, and alignment of plans with the business case. 【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file13【turn1file5】

Differences:

- PRINCE2 mandates product-based planning and uses stage plans + work packages to control delivery. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- PMBOK supports a range of planning styles (predictive → adaptive) and emphasizes tailoring plans to delivery cadence. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file6⟧

- ISO offers prescriptive clause-level guidance for schedule and cost processes (7.6 / 7.7) oriented for organizational adoption. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file5⟧

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7) Scope & Requirements / Product focus

- PMBOK 7: Focus on outcomes and deliverables inside performance domains; scope is controlled within planning and project work. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file6⟧

- PRINCE2: Very product-focused (product descriptions drive scope, quality, acceptance). Product Breakdown Structure and Product Flow Diagrams are core techniques. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file3⟧

- ISO: Scope management as a discrete practice (7.4) — define, control, confirm scope delivery. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file5⟧

Similarities:

- All require formal definition, control and confirmation of scope/deliverables. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file6⟧turn1file3⟧turn1file5⟧

Differences:

- PRINCE2's explicit "product" artifacts are unique in their centrality to planning and acceptance; PMBOK is more outcome/value oriented; ISO lays out standard processes for scope management. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file3⟧turn1file6⟧turn1file5⟧

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8) Quality Management

- PMBOK 7: Principle to "Build quality into processes and deliverables" and Delivery Performance Domain includes quality topics. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file6⟧

- PRINCE2: Dedicated Quality practice with product quality lifecycle and quality register / review techniques. ⟦filecite⟧turn1file13⟧

- ISO: Quality management practice (7.11) — plan, assure, control quality. 〖filecite〗turn1file5〗

Similarities:

- Plan → assure → control cycles; integrate quality into project lifecycle rather than as a separate afterthought. 〖filecite〗turn1file6〗turn1file13〗turn1file5〗

Differences / Unique:

- PRINCE2 emphasises product quality checks and product-based acceptance criteria; PMBOK gives a broader set of models/methods to choose from; ISO maps quality activities to a standard process model. 〖filecite〗turn1file13〗turn1file6〗turn1file5〗

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9) Change Control & Issues
- PMBOK 7: Addresses change across planning and project work; tailoring determines specific control mechanisms. 〖filecite〗turn1file6〗

- PRINCE2: Issues & change control practice — change proposals, issue registers, formal process for assessing/deciding on changes with clear responsibilities. 〖filecite〗turn1file13〗

- ISO: Change control guidance (7.10) — establish framework, identify and assess change requests, plan implementation and closure. 〖filecite〗turn1file5〗

Similarities:

- Formal request/assessment/approval/implementation/closure lifecycle for changes; linkage to business case and plan adjustments. 〖filecite〗turn1file6〗turn1file13〗turn1file5〗

Differences:

- PRINCE2 provides detailed roles and templates for issues/change handling; PMBOK leaves the specific mechanism to tailoring and the project's chosen approach; ISO provides clause-level steps to adopt. 〖filecite〗turn1file13〗turn1file6〗turn1file5〗

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10) Benefits & Business Case

- PMBOK 7: Focus on value delivery and outcomes (system for value delivery); business-case thinking embedded in principles. 【filecite†turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Business Case practice is central; evolves through life cycle and is the basis for continued justification of the project. 【filecite†turn1file13】

- ISO: Benefits management practice (7.3) — identify, analyse, monitor, maintain benefits in alignment with strategy. 【filecite†turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Business case / benefits must be defined, monitored and used to justify/terminate projects. 【filecite†turn1file6†turn1file13†turn1file5】

Differences:

- PRINCE2's lifecycle explicitly ties business case updates to stage boundaries and approvals; PMBOK treats benefits as part of the overall value-delivery system; ISO provides structured benefit management activities. 【filecite†turn1file13†turn1file6†turn1file5】

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11) Communications & Reporting

- PMBOK 7: Communication integrated across Planning & Project Work domains; emphasizes adapting to cadence and stakeholders. 【filecite†turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Communications integrated into Organizing and Plans practices; includes standard management products (highlight reports, checkpoint reports). 【filecite†turn1file13】

- ISO: Communication management practice (7.13) — plan, distribute, monitor impact. 【filecite†turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Plan communications, select formats/cadence, monitor impact.
【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file13【turn1file5】

Differences:

- PRINCE2 offers a set of named report types and templates; PMBOK provides models and tailoring guidance; ISO provides standard process steps for planning and reporting.
【filecite【turn1file13【turn1file6【turn1file5】

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12) Procurement & Contracts
- PMBOK 7: Procurement appears as part of Planning performance domain and Project Work considerations. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Supplier side is formalized (Senior Supplier role); procurement aspects integrated into organizing, plans and quality practices. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- ISO: Procurement management practice (7.17) — plan procurement, evaluate/select suppliers, administer and close contracts. 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Plan → select → administer → close lifecycle; alignment with project objectives.
【filecite【turn1file6【turn1file13【turn1file5】

Differences:

- PRINCE2's governance/role model assigns formal supplier representation and assurance roles; PMBOK focuses on procurement processes within the project context; ISO prescribes clause-level procurement steps. 【filecite【turn1file13【turn1file6【turn1file5】

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13) Lessons Learned & Continuous Improvement
- PMBOK 7: Learning throughout the project; measurement and feedback (Measurement domain) and PMIstandards+ for ongoing practices. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Principle "Learn from experience" and explicit techniques to capture lessons and feed them into tailoring and future projects. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- ISO: Lessons learned appears as a practice (7.18) — identify, disseminate lessons. 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Capture, disseminate and apply lessons to improve future projects and tailoring choices. 【filecite【turn1file6】turn1file13】turn1file5】

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14) Measurement, Performance & Uncertainty

- PMBOK 7: Dedicated Measurement domain and Uncertainty domain (includes risk, complexity, ambiguity). Emphasizes outcomes-based measures. 【filecite【turn1file6】

- PRINCE2: Progress practice with tolerance reporting, highlight/exception reports and metrics for stage control. 【filecite【turn1file13】

- ISO: Reporting (7.15) and guidance for monitoring project performance and reporting outputs. 【filecite【turn1file5】

Similarities:

- Define what to measure, use measures for decision-making and governance, handle uncertainty explicitly. 【filecite【turn1file6】turn1file13】turn1file5】

Differences:

- PMBOK provides a performance-domain view and wider set of measures; PRINCE2 prescribes management products/reports and tolerances for exception handling; ISO maps reporting to standardized processes. 【filecite【turn1file6】turn1file13】turn1file5】

Quick practical recommendations for your assignment (how to present the mapping)

1. Present each topic as a 3-column table: PMBOK | PRINCE2 | ISO (21500/21502), then 3 short bullets: Similarities / Differences / Unique points.

2. Use the section numbers I included above to make deep links to the PDFs in your GitHub repo:

- PMBOK: Performance Domains (Section 2), Tailoring (Section 3), Principles (Section 3 of The Standard). ⬚filecite⬚turn1file6⬚

- PRINCE2: Principles (Ch 2), Practices (Ch 4–11), Processes (Ch 12–19). ⬚filecite⬚turn1file13⬚

- ISO 21502: Management practices (Clause 7.x — see 7.2 planning, 7.8 risk, 7.12 stakeholder, etc.). ⬚filecite⬚turn1file5⬚

3. For "deep linking" in the app prototype, map UI topics (Risk, Stakeholders, Planning, Quality...) to the exact clause numbers above so clicking a comparison item can open the PDF at that clause (your PDF viewer must support anchor/page parameters).

4. If you want I can convert this plain text into a CSV/TSV or a markdown table for GitHub; you asked for .txt so I've prepared that here.

If you want the full, slightly-expanded text version (topic-by-topic with longer extracts / exact clause numbers and suggested UI labels), tell me and I will add more detail for each topic (I already pulled the clause mappings above). For now I saved this concise comparison as a .txt file.