

Information Technology Architect Certification Program: Frequently Asked Questions

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Revision 2

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1. Positioning

1.1 What is the Open Group IT Architect Certification Program?

The Open Group IT Architect Certification program certifies IT Architects that meet an open standard for skills and experience. The program includes direct certification of applicants as well as a process and a set of criteria for accrediting an organization's internal certification programs. By defining criteria for recognizing certified professionals it also sets the foundation for establishing a recognized IT Architect profession.

1.2 Who is the target audience of the IT Architect certification?

The program will be of interest to organizations with large IT Architecture practices and to individual IT Architects working in consulting firms, user organizations and as individual consultants.

The certification criteria for skills and experience may also be useful to educational institutions intending to create IT Architect development programs.

The Accreditation Policy defines the requirements for managing a recognized IT Architect Certification Program. These requirements can be used as the foundation for establishing an effective IT Architect practice with a company or organization.

1.3 Can a single individual become certified through the program?

Yes, the **direct** route has been developed specifically to make certification available to individual practitioners, as well as to architects working in practices for which the establishment of an accredited program would not be cost effective.

1.4 What benefit will individuals gain from becoming certified?

- Individuals across the industry will be assessed and measured against the same baseline criteria, thereby establishing a standard for the use of the title of IT Architect.
- Certification credentials are granted to the individual and remain with the individual as long as they maintain good standing as a practicing IT Architect.
- Professional certification may provide additional opportunities for increased responsibility and stature to an individual.

1.5 What benefits will organizations get from participation in the program?

• Companies that have not yet established their own certification program or formalized their architecture profession will benefit from the adoption of the IT Architect Certification program accreditation framework by leveraging the best practices of the contributing members. They will essentially get a head start in developing their own IT Architect Certification program.

- The flexible framework of the program allows companies to add additional industry, cultural and organizational extensions to the base certification framework. Such confidential company methods and added value remain confidential.
- Credibility will be improved for companies or organizations that accredit their certification program or certify their IT Architects.
- Governments, companies and organizations that develop safety- or mission-critical IT systems may require Certified IT Architects to lead the design of important systems to help mitigate risk of project failure or shortfall.

1.6 How is the IT Architect certification different from the TOGAF certification? Is one a higher-level certification than the other?

The two programs are complementary.

The IT Architect Certification program is agnostic about methods and is concerned instead with an architect's skills and experience - their ability to deliver business value to their clients.

TOGAF is one of the methods used in the IT Architecture domain. TOGAF certification confirms an individual's knowledge of the TOGAF Architecture Development Method (ADM) and the TOGAF body of knowledge.

The Open Group's Architecture Forum will continue to evolve and develop TOGAF, the ADM and associated tools. TOGAF certification will operate in parallel with the IT Architect Certification program.

1.7 In the press release announcing the IT Architect Certification program, representatives from IBM and HP are quoted. How are they related to the Open Group? Are they sponsoring accredited IT Architect or TOGAF certification programs at their companies?

IBM and HP are Platinum members of The Open Group and have representatives on our governing board.

They jointly submitted the initial outline of the program to The Open Group and, in concert with other members, have been developing the formal program documentation, processes and systems.

1.8 What is the reason The Open Group's members embarked on the program?

The membership realized that IT Architecture was becoming a critical discipline for large organizations to achieve their IT goals in support of their business objectives. It was clear that the industry needed a formal definition of the skills and experience necessary to be recognized as a certified IT Architect.

Members of The Open Group realized that their companies or organizations had established similar internal programs to support their consulting organizations or IT programs.

1.9 What is the importance of this certification? How is different than other architect certifications?

This is the first independent program to deal with the skills and experience of IT architects as opposed to a particular body of knowledge, and as such represents a most important step in the development of IT Architecture as a profession. While examination based programs are of value, repeated and recognized success (i.e. experience) is a best indicator of professional stature and, ultimately, the ability to succeed.

1.10 Microsoft recently announced a board level certification program for IT Architects. How does your program compare with Microsoft's?

The skill and experience requirements of the two programs are broadly similar, as they have both been developed to respond to the needs of the market. A key similarity is the use of a board of IT Architects to evaluate candidates for certification. In the Microsoft program, about 25% of the requirements are related to Microsoft-related technologies. In contrast, The Open Group's program is agnostic in terms of technology, frameworks, methods, and products. One difference that seems to have been highlighted in the press is the number of years of experience required. Microsoft state that 10 years of experience would be expected, whereas we state that 3 years as a lead architect is required – more similar than might at first appear!

Microsoft's announcement is a validation of our view that the market needs an independent and respected certification program for IT Architects.

1.11 What is the difference between accreditation and certification?

Accreditation is attained by organizations whose internal certification or staff development programs have been assessed as meeting the accreditation requirements of The Open Group's certification program.

Certification is attained by those individual IT Architects who have successfully been assessed as meeting the requirements of the program either directly by The Open Group or by an accredited certification program.

1.12 What does it mean to be accredited?

Before an organization or company can offer IT Architect certifications through the program, their company's own program must be accredited. Accreditation is the process of verifying that the company or organization is managing their certification program according to the established criteria.

Obtaining accreditation requires that the organization submits an application for accreditation to The Open Group. An on-site accreditation assessment will be scheduled once the application is completed and accepted. The process of accreditation was established to ensure uniformity of the process and requirements for managing an IT Architect certification program – and therefore in the certified IT Architects qualifying through the program. The program framework is intended to be flexible and provides for additional industry, cultural and organizational extensions to the base certification framework. As a result confidential company methods remain secret.

1.13 What is direct vs indirect certification?

IT Architects may achieve certification by applying directly to The Open Group, or indirectly by certifying through third party programs accredited by The Open Group for this purpose.

It is an essential feature of The Open Group's IT Architect Certification program that the Conformance Requirements that Candidates must meet are the same for both the direct and indirect routes, and the process by which applications and candidates are assessed meet the same high standard of objectivity and fairness.

2. Process

2.1 When did the IT Architect Certification Program commence?

The program opened on July 18th 2005.

2.2 Are there tests required to obtain the IT Architect certification?

Since there is no prescribed body of knowledge for the program, there is no test. Instead we will assess candidates' experience and skills against the requirements of the program by evaluating their written applications and by a Certification Board interview

2.3 Your white paper talked about "Certification Board reviews" evaluating a candidate's skills. How is that administered? Who is on that board?

In their applications for certification, candidates are required to describe their work experience in sufficient detail to support their claim to meet the skills and experience requirements defined for the program. Certification Boards consist of certified IT Architects and they evaluate applications against the requirements of the program. Evaluation includes interviewing the candidate.

2.4 What are the different levels of certification?

There are presently two conformance levels for IT Architects within the program:

- Level 2: Master Certified IT Architect (able to perform independently and take responsibility for delivery of systems and solutions as lead architect).
- Level 1: Certified IT Architect (able to perform with assistance/supervision, with a wide range of appropriate skills, as a contributing architect).

2.5 Level 1 is a recent addition. What is the motivation for the additional conformance level?

The new level 1 certification is designed to complement the existing Master Certified IT Architect level. The new level will provide recognition for IT architects who are currently in contributing roles and who might expect to qualify for the Master level certification in the future.

2.6 Is there training available and required for the IT Architect certification?

As the program does not prescribe any particular body of knowledge, no training requirements have been defined.

The program does require IT Architects to be knowledgeable of, and have successfully applied, one or more formal methods but makes no requirements about which, or how such knowledge has been gained.

2.7 Will the 24-month validity period of the TOGAF certification apply to this certification as well?

Certification will be valid for three years, at which point certified architects will be required to re-certify

2.8 What is the process to obtain accreditation?

Applicants will request accreditation from The Open Group, who will appoint an assessor. The assessor will conduct a review of the applicant's program documentation and will conduct an on-site assessment of the program's procedures. The assessor will report the results to the applicant and The Open Group, and if the applicant has been successful accreditation will be granted.

2.9 Are there any fees in obtaining the IT Architect certification?

Direct applicants pay certification fees to The Open Group. These fees are \$1250 for the assessment plus \$175 per annum to remain certified. (The fees are the same for both Level 1 and Level 2 certification)

2.10 Will I need to travel to the Certification Board?

It depends on the level of certification. If Level 2 (Master Certified IT Architect) then yes, the applicant will be required to attend the Certification Board and to meet any costs involved in travel and accommodation. If Level 1 (Certified IT Architect) then the Certification Board interviews take place by telephone and no travel is required.

2.11 How long will it take to become certified?

The application process and documentation systems are on-line and can be completed over a period of time. Thorough documentation of how the applicant meets the criteria is required – this is rather like a detailed resume – and it is anticipated that most applicants will take three to six months to complete the entire process.

2.12 Why would I want to go through the effort and cost of certification?

ITAC certification will increase the trust of clients, increasing demand for the services of the

IT architecture practitioner and enabling certified architects to demonstrate independent recognition of their skills and experience."

2.13 How do I know that anyone will actually want this certification or that it will make any difference to me?

Both The Open Group and accredited organizations will be working to build awareness of the program which will build demand. There are numerous industry examples where rigorous certification programs have proven to be highly valued and individuals with those certifications are in demand.

2.14 Will I receive some sort of logo or title that I can promote once I'm certified? What does it look like?

Yes, there are official marks, one for each certification level, that are awarded for use by certified architects. Details of the use of this mark on business cards, proposals, etc. can be found in the Trademark Usage Guide at www.opengroup.org/itac/.

2.15 How do I obtain a Personal Confirmation Code to verify that a person is a Certified IT Architect?

You should contact the individual concerned. As a Certified IT Architect they have an obligation to provide the Personal Confirmation Code (PCC) on request to customers and prospective customers. Once you have obtained the individual's PCC you should enter this together with the surname into the Search facility within the Directory of Certified IT Architects at <http://www.opengroup.org/itac/directory.html>

2.16 Where can I get the certification/accreditation logo artwork?

Once you are certified or accredited a link appears within your login account to a Resource Center from where these can be accessed.

 **3. Criteria**

3.1 What are the certification criteria?

There is an extensive set of criteria defined in the IT Architect Certification Conformance Requirements. The document may be found at www.opengroup.org/itac

3.2 What is the best method of obtaining the skill and experience necessary to meet the Open Group IT Architect Certification criteria?

There is a set of foundation skills criteria that form the basis for a practicing IT Architect. An individual seeking to become certified should obtain training to satisfy the base skills criteria – for example a Project Management course, etc.

Experience is best obtained and imparted through a combination of formal mentoring and individual performance and empowerment.

Many accredited organizations benefit by promoting a formal IT Architect mentoring program in order to grow a community of certified IT Architects. The authors of the original white paper that launched the program are optimistic that academic institutions will leverage this material in the curriculum of their education offerings.

3.3 My organization has a proprietary methodology that we believe provides our architects a competitive edge in the industry. How will my organization obtain accreditation?

The Open Group publishes a set of criteria for the recognition of IT Architecture methods. During accreditation (or subsequently), applicants may submit their proprietary method for evaluation against the criteria. If the criteria are met, the method will be recognized by The Open Group and may be referenced by candidates for certification.

3.4 What are the criteria for recognizing a company specific Method as part of the certification process?

The criteria are documented in the Conformance Requirements in the last section (section 7 in version 1.2)

3.5 What documentation needs to be submitted for getting a method recognized?

A template for providing an assessment of a method is available at: <http://www.opengroup.org/itac/cert/methods.tpl>

You should complete and submit the above template to provide your assessment of how the method meets the published criteria, with sufficient references and/or back up material to support your case when evaluated by an expert the field of IT Architecture. This assessment should be a summary of the case for recognition of the method and limited to no more than five pages of text.

If the method is publicly available, then references (URLs, publication titles, course references) will usually suffice.

If the method is proprietary and not publicly accessible, you will need to provide more information.

3.6 Can a method be evaluated and recognized in advance of an individual certification request?

Yes. You may at any time submit a request for recognition of a method.

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