IT Specialist Certification (ITSC)

Accreditation Requirements

February 2010
Version 1.1

IT Specialist Certification (ITSC): Accreditation Requirements

Document Number: X076

Published by The Open Group, February 2010.

Comments relating to the material contained in this document may be submitted to:

The Open Group
Thames Tower
37-45 Station Road
Reading
Berkshire, RG1 1LX
United Kingdom

or by electronic mail to:

ogspecs@opengroup.org

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contributions to this document by the following individuals and working groups are gratefully acknowledged:

- Gerard Coes, Capgemini SA
- Brian Mitsuki, IBM Corporation
- Co Siebes, Capgemini SA
- Phil Stauskas, IBM Corporation
- Sheila Thorne, IBM Corporation
- Ron Tolido, Capgemini SA
- Mo Voyer, EDS
- Elly de Wert, Capgemini SA
- The Open Group Customer Council
- The Open Group Supplier Council

1.   BACKGROUND

1.1   Introduction

The Open Group IT Specialist Certification Program (the Program) is designed to validate the existence of those qualities and skills in a professional that enable the effective development, implementation, and operation of IT solutions. The Program is skills and experience-based and goes beyond validating the mastery of any specific knowledge base.

The Program includes a framework for accreditation of third parties to establish IT Specialist certification programs affiliated to The Open Group. The framework of accreditation and certification is specifically intended to standardize the process and criteria for IT Specialist professional certification and establish a foundation for the required skills and experience necessary to achieve such a distinction. The Program has been designed to be flexible and extensible so that the framework may be adopted by any industry, country, or organization.

The Open Group supports two different routes to IT Specialist certification:

- The first route is *direct* certification by The Open Group.
- The second is *indirect*, through third-party programs accredited by The Open Group.

The ITSC Conformance Requirements for IT Specialist certification apply equally to the direct and indirect routes to certification.

Beyond the ITSC Conformance Requirements for a Certified IT Specialist, third parties operating Accredited Certification Programs (ACPs) may levy additional requirements on their Candidates in order to satisfy their internal skills requirements. Such additional requirements are called *extended certification requirements* or simply *extended requirements*. For example, extended certification requirements might include experience with proprietary corporate tools or products, or appropriate industry or cultural requirements.

The Program requires ACPs' extended certification requirements to be effectively documented and communicated within the accredited program. In addition, extended certification requirements must not relax the skills, experience, or process requirements set forth by the framework established herein.

The Program is based upon a set of key documents:

1. The *Certification Policy*, which sets out the policies and processes by which an IT Specialist may achieve certification.
2. The *Conformance Requirements*, which documents the skills and experience that a Certified IT Specialist must possess.
3. The *Accreditation Policy*, which sets out the policies and processes by which an Organization may achieve accreditation.
4. The *Accreditation Requirements* (this document), which documents the criteria that must be met by an Accredited Certification Program.

1.2   Terminology and Definitions

This table defines terms or clarifies the meaning of words used within this document. Where an acronym is also used, it is provided in parentheses.

Accreditation Agreement	The agreement between the Organization and the Certification Authority that defines the accreditation service to be provided and contains the legal commitment by the Organization to the conditions of the accreditation program.
Accreditation Logo	The trademarks as designated from time to time by The Open Group for use in association with Accredited Certification Programs.
Accreditation Register	The official list of all Accredited Certification Programs, which is maintained by the Certification Authority and made available via the Internet.
Accreditation Trademark License Agreement (Accreditation TMLA)	The agreement between the Organization and The Open Group that contains the legal commitment by the Organization to the terms and conditions for use of the Accreditation Logo.
Accredited Certification Program (ACP)	A certification program, operated by a group of people under the leadership of a Certification Program Manager, that has successfully completed the accreditation process and for which the Organization has been notified in writing by the Certification Authority that accreditation has been achieved. Depending on context, the term is also used to mean the company or organizational unit that operates an Accredited Certification Program.
Applicant	The Organization applying for accreditation.
Assessment	An inspection of an Organization's processes, procedures, and staff to determine the degree to which the Organization's Candidate Certification Program is operating in accordance with the Accreditation Requirements.
Assessor	An individual who has been appointed by the Certification Authority to perform Assessments.
Candidate Certification Program (CCP)	An Organization's internal IT Specialist certification program that has not yet been accredited.
Certificate of Accreditation	A document issued to Organizations by the Certification Authority certifying that a Candidate Certification Program has successfully met the requirements for accreditation and thus is considered an Accredited Certification Program.
Certification Authority (CA)	The organization that manages the day-to-day operations of the Program, in this case The Open Group.
Certification Board	The group of subject matter experts appointed by the Certification Authority or by an Accredited Certification Program to assess applications for certification.

Certification Package	The detailed description of the skill levels attained and experience undergone that provides the Certification Authority or Accredited Certification Program with sufficient information to determine whether the Candidate meets the Conformance Requirements. The Certification Package is never made public. The Certification Package is created by the Candidate by filling in the Certification Package Template.
Certification Package Template	The template document provided to Candidates by the Certification Authority to enable them to create Certification Packages.
Certification Program Manager (CPM)	The specific individual(s) identified within an Organization as having the overall responsibility for managing the Accredited Certification Program on a day-to-day basis and ensuring that it is carried out in accordance with its documented processes and procedures.
Certification Record	The information identifying the Candidate, including contact details, and describing the way in which the Candidate meets the Conformance Requirements, including the Candidate's selection of Client Focus, Technical Focus, and Stream.
	The Certification Record of a Certified IT Specialist is made available by the Certification Authority at the discretion of the Certified IT Specialist.
Certification System Deficiency (CSD)	An agreed error in the Certification and/or Accreditation System, which is inhibiting the accreditation process. A Certification System Deficiency is one possible outcome of a Problem Report.
Certified IT Specialist	A Candidate that has successfully completed the certification process, who has been notified in writing by the Certification Authority that the certification requirements have been met, and who has accepted the TMLA.
Conformance Statement	The Organization's documented set of claims describing precisely the way in which their Candidate Certification Program meets the Accreditation Requirements, including the Client Focus Areas and Streams in the Candidate Certification Program.
Direct Certification	Direct certification is achieved by applying directly to The Open Group, or to a third party operating the Program on behalf of The Open Group, and successfully completing the certification process.
	Direct certification is open to any Candidate, regardless of who they work for, or where in the world they live and work.
Evaluation Process Deficiency (EPD)	An agreed error in the Evaluation Process that is inhibiting the certification process. An Evaluation Process Deficiency is one possible outcome of a Problem Report.
Indirect Certification	Indirect certification is achieved by applying to an Accredited Certification Program and successfully completing the certification process.
	To be eligible for certification by a particular Accredited Certification Program, Candidates must work for the Organization running the Accredited Certification Program.

Interpretation (INT)	Decision made by the Specification Authority that elaborates or refines the meaning of the Conformance Requirements, Certification Policy, Accreditation Requirements, Accreditation Policy, or a standard or best practice referenced therein. An Interpretation is one possible outcome of a Problem Report.
Organization	An Organization that operates a certification program for IT specialists, and which is interested in applying for accreditation of their program within the Program. During the period in which an Organization is going through the accreditation process to get their program accredited, the Organization may be referred to as an Applicant.
Problem Report (PR)	A question of clarification, intent, or correctness of an accreditation or certification document, or the web-based Certification or Accreditation Systems, which, if accepted by the Certification Authority, will be resolved into an Interpretation, an Evaluation Process Deficiency, or a Certification System Deficiency.
Program Logo	The logo or other trademarks as designated from time to time by The Open Group for use within the Program in relation to Certified IT Specialists.
Specification Authority (SA)	The Open Group IT Specialist Certification working group, or its successor, which is responsible for developing, maintaining, and interpreting the Certification Policy, Conformance Requirements, Accreditation Policy, and Accreditation Requirements of the Program.

1.3   Migration and Change History

Version 1.1 of this document supersedes Version 1.0.

The only changes to the requirements are the inclusion of Level 3 in Section 4.6.

2.   PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document defines the requirements which must be met by an Organization to be accredited to operate the Program.

Although the applying Organization (Applicant) does not have to demonstrate conformity to each and every one of the requirements in this document to gain accreditation, any non-conformance must be identified and justified by the Applicant based upon adherence to the principles embodied in this document. All such justifications must be reviewed and accepted by the Certification Authority.

Requirements that are stated as applying to an Accredited Certification Program apply equally to Applicants for accreditation and *vice versa*.

An Accredited Certification Program may certify only their own employees and, if they so choose, contract staff that have been employed by or contracted to the Accredited Certification Program's parent Organization or affiliate for a continuous period of 12 months or more.

3.   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following parties are involved:

- The Certification Authority

- The Certification Authority's appointed Assessor

- The Applicant, and in particular the person responsible for the operation, quality, and integrity of the Accredited Certification Program termed in this document the Certification Program Manager (CPM). If a CPM is a role that is distributed among several people, one person will be nominated as CPM for the purposes of accreditation.

4. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

This section defines the requirements that the Applicant must meet to be eligible for accreditation.

An Accredited Certification Program (ACP) must adhere to the ITSC Certification Policy and ITSC Accreditation Policy at all times.

These ITSC Accreditation Requirements are a precisely defined and documented set of requirements against which certification programs may be accredited. However, the ITSC Accreditation Requirements include conformance to the applicable technical and process requirements as interpreted by The Open Group from time to time, and a successful outcome from an Assessment of the Candidate Certification Program (CCP).

4.1 Evaluation Criteria

The ITSC evaluation criteria (ITSC Conformance Requirements and ITSC Certification Policy) must be instantiated within the ACP's own evaluation criteria and there must be a clear delineation between base and extended certification requirements. This is required to clarify how the baseline requirements are met.

4.2 Program Documentation and Quality Management

The ACP must define and document its comprehensive Quality Management Program that instantiates the ITSC Accreditation Requirements and ensures that they are consistently applied across geographies over time. The procedures and methods used within an ACP must ensure that the operations of the ACP are repeatable, reproducible, and objective. It not sufficient to simply reproduce the requirements listed here. These requirements state *what* is required, but the Applicant must define *how* these requirements are realized in the day-to-day operation of the CCP.

An ACP must develop and maintain its own working procedures under an appropriate change control authorization process. One of the principle ITSC Conformance Requirements for the ACPs is that they use procedures that are functionally equivalent to the Certification Authority's *direct* evaluation procedures and use evaluation criteria that are no less stringent than those used by the Certification Authority.

An ACP may employ evaluation procedures and criteria that are more stringent or wider in scope than those used by the Certification Authority.

An ACP is required to update their evaluation procedures and criteria whenever this ITSC Accreditation Policy or the ITSC Certification Board Member Handbook is updated in a way that materially affects the ACP's evaluation procedures.

For major changes and new requirements, ACPs must use the updated versions no later than six (6) months after publication of the new version by the Certification Authority. For bug-fixes and minor changes, ACPs must use the updated versions no later than three (3) months after publication of the new version by the Certification Authority. Categorization of changes into major, minor, or bug-fix is done by the Specification Authority.

There must be an explicit and complete mapping between the ACP's documented evaluation criteria and those defined in the ITSC Certification Package Template and the ITSC Conformance Requirements (Multi-level).

4.3　　Roles, Duties, and Experience of the Applicant's ACP Staff

The Applicant's program documentation must define the roles and appointment criteria of the people who operate the ACP. (Note that this is distinct from Certified IT Specialists.)

- Job titles
- Description of organizational context and authority
- Duties associated with that title
- Education required for that role (if any)
- Experience
- Training required for that role (if any)

There must be one or several individuals, referred to in this document as the Certification Program Manager (CPM), responsible for the effective oversight and quality of:

- The day-to-day operation of the Program
- Constituting and populating the Certification Board(s)
- Overseeing the appointment of the Chair(s) of the Certification Board(s) against the appointment criteria
- Approving the certification outcome report (the signature represents that the certification process has been carried out in accordance with process and procedure)
- Determining the outcome of Problem Reports
- The appeals process
- Approving revocation (the signature represents that the revocation is based on objective evidence and that there are adequate grounds for the revocation)
- Primary interface with the Certification Authority
- The advocacy and approval of appropriate ACP procedures and manuals to assure the quality, repeatability, reproducibility, and objectivity of the certification program
- The design, maintenance, and control of the ACP, quality and procedures manual, or its functional equivalent
- The internal audit of certification procedures and other quality-related documents it references against the requirements of the Certification Authority
- The annual internal audit of the ACP, against its documented procedures and processes

The above list of duties is non-exhaustive and other duties may be defined; however, the accredited Organization must document the names, responsibilities, and job titles of those who are responsible within the Organization for each of the duties stated above, together with the mapping between each duty and individual. It is not sufficient to list the above requirements and duties – the ACP must document the methods that it uses to carry them out in the day-to-day operation of the ACP.

The CPM may serve on the Certification Board but must do so without conflict of interest, particularly in the context of any subsequent appeals.

4.4   Procedures to Evaluate Candidates

The ACP Organization must define processes, methods, and procedures for ensuring the repeatability, reproducibility, and objectivity of the evaluation of Candidates. The workflow for ACP certification is to some extent prescribed by the ITSC Certification Policy and the ACP's procedures and workflow should be no less stringent. It is not sufficient to simply reproduce the requirements listed in the ITSC Certification Policy, which constitutes *what* is required, but rather the candidate ACP must define *how* these requirements are realized in the day-to-day operation of the program.

4.5   Process and Workflow Management

The Applicant must document the workflow of the certification process, either in textual description, flow diagrams, or both. Review and approval points must be clearly defined, together with the maximum duration of the review and approval.

The documented processes must define the following:

- Maximum duration of all steps in the process
- The checklist to be followed by the ACP staff that ensures that all steps in the evaluation are followed
- The method by which the person responsible signifies that the step has been satisfactorily completed

4.6   Selection, Conduct, and Operation of Certification Boards

The CPM is responsible for the oversight of the nomination and appointment of Certification Board members against criteria no less stringent than those used by The Open Group.

Certification Board members must be Certified IT Specialists, who are certified directly by The Open Group, indirectly by another ACP, or those grandfathered under the provisions of the ITSC Accreditation Policy and of this document. Certification Board members for Level 3 boards shall be Distinguished IT Specialists. Certification Board members for Level 2 boards shall be Master Certified IT Specialists or Distinguished IT Specialists. Certification Board members for Level 1 may be Distinguished IT Specialists, Master Certified IT Specialists, or alternatively may be certified at Level 1.

Certification Boards will consist of a minimum of three (3) members. ACPs are strongly advised to ensure that they have a pool of potential Certification Board members that is sufficient to deal with the expected volume and geographic distribution of Candidates.

It is strongly suggested that Certification Board members should be the most senior and have the most experience within an Organization, and should normally have a minimum of six (6) years' experience practicing or contributing to the profession and mentoring IT Specialists.

The ACP's Certification Board procedures must document the selection criteria and process, the term of appointment, and the process to be followed when Certification Board members are replaced. These

procedures must also address how the ACP will deal with their expected volume of Candidates for certification.

The ACP's Certification Board documented procedures must also ensure that there is consistency in decision-making, both geographically and over time, and the Certification Board operation must be consistent with the ITSC Certification Board Member Handbook.

The Chair of the Certification Board, who may or may not be one of the three interviewing members, shall always have the following duties and responsibilities:

- To facilitate meeting(s), making appropriate introductions and explanations to Candidate IT Specialists of the process and general management of the work of the Certification Board
- To monitor the objectivity of other Certification Board members and to draw to their attention any inappropriate subjectivity or prejudice
- To draft the Certification Board report or delegate this task to a named individual and authorize the report
- To take full responsibility for the content of the report whether or not he or she drafted it
- To report to the CPM for the conduct of the Certification Board
- To act as single point of contact for the Certification Board to the CPM

4.7   Re-Certification

The Applicant must document the procedures and processes it uses to ensure that the Certified IT Specialists re-certify.

ACPs will operate an equivalent re-certification process to that of The Open Group Program but may impose more stringent requirements.

The ACP's documented procedures must define how and when Certified IT Specialists are contacted for re-certification and the follow-up mechanisms to ensure the necessary action is taken.

4.8   Revocation of Certification

It is an explicit condition of the Program that each Organization operating an ACP warrants and represents that the applicable ITSC Conformance Requirements are met by all IT Specialists certified through their program at the time of their certification and subsequently.

While the certification of IT Specialists will be reviewed at renewal, it is possible that the continuing conformity of an IT Specialist certified within the program comes into question between initial certification and renewal in the midst of a renewal period. The ACP must document the procedures and processes it uses to ensure that Certified IT Specialists remain in conformity with the ITSC Conformance Requirements at all times and the consequences for a Certified IT Specialist of failing to do so.

If it comes to the CPM's attention that the certification requirements are not being met in respect of any particular Certified IT Specialist within the scope of the ACP, there must to be a process that may result in the revocation of certification prior to the next tri-annual re-certification.

4.9   Interface with the Certification Authority

The interface with the Certification Authority must be documented and must meet the requirements set out in the ITSC Certification Policy and the ITSC Accreditation Policy.

The ACP must have documented procures for informing the Certification Authority when:

- An IT Specialist is initially certified.
- An IT Specialist renews certification.
- An IT Specialist's certification is revoked.
- An IT Specialist's Certification Record needs to change (for example, the individual ceases employment with the ACP's Organization):
  — If a Certified IT Specialist moves to an employer that operates an ACP, the ACP must accept the change to the Certified IT Specialist's Certification Record using the ACP's credentials.
  — If a Certified IT Specialist moves to an employer that does not operate an ACP, certification continues as normal until renewal or re-certification. Renewal or re-certification will take place directly with the Certification Authority at the IT Specialist's expense.
  — Change of employment does not affect the term of certification.

4.10   Appeals

The ACP must operate a documented appeals process that meets the requirements of the ITSC Certification Policy. The ACP must have an internal appeals process in the first instance that can, when appropriate, escalate to the Certification Authority's external appeals process.

4.11   Support to Candidates

ACPs are required to provide a mechanism for their Candidates to request support and clarification of certification requirements, policies, and procedures.

4.12   Problem Reporting

The ACP must operate an internal documented interpretations process to deal with perceived errors in its program documentation or the certification process.

The ACP must document how it escalates internal interpretations to the Certification Authority's external problem reporting process when appropriate.

4.13   Extended Requirements

ACPs' extended certification requirements must be effectively documented and communicated to the participants of the accredited program. In addition, extended certification requirements must not relax the skills, experience, or process requirements of the Program.

4.14   Audit and Management Review

Under the direction of the CPM, the ACP must document the procedures and schedules for a comprehensive internal audit of certification procedures and other quality-related documents it references. The internal audit program must determine whether the ACP is being operated in accordance with its documented procedures and processes to ensure that the program is repeatable, reproducible, and objective across all geographies. There must be a process to track the completion of any agreed corrective action.

At least prior to certification renewal, and more preferably annually, the ACP must ensure that an internal review by, or on behalf of, management takes place and indicates that the ACP continues to meet the ITSC Accreditation Requirements.

4.15   Use of Logo

The ACP must document the procedures it uses to ensure that the Accreditation Logo will only be used in accordance with the ITSC Accreditation Policy and Accreditation TMLA and the Certification Logo will only be used in accordance with the ITSC Certification Policy and TMLA.

4.16   Confidentiality

The ACP must document the procedures it uses to ensure that confidentiality is maintained, including both how and where records are stored and eventually disposed of. These should be consistent with both the ITSC Certification Policy and the ITSC Accreditation Policy.

4.17   Disclosure of Information

The ACP must document the procedures it uses to control disclosure of information. These should be consistent with both the ITSC Certification Policy and the ITSC Accreditation Policy.

4.18   Grandfathering

The ACP must document the procedures it uses for grandfathering. These should be consistent with both the ITSC Certification Policy and the ITSC Accreditation Policy.

4.19   ACP Community Participation

The ACP must document the procedures it uses to meet its obligations under the ITSC Accreditation Policy.

4.20   Modification to the Program Once Accredited

The ACP shall document the procedures it uses to determine whether its program has materially changed and the methods it will use to inform the Certification Authority in that event.