

A Guide to Certification – How to Get Started

The Open Group Certified Architect (Open CA) program was designed to validate the proven qualities and skills in an IT professional that enable the effective practice of IT and Enterprise Architecture.

The Open CA program still currently focuses on IT-related work. However, the architecture profession is constantly evolving and, to reflect this, The Open Group will incorporate dedicated Business Architecture and Enterprise Architecture streams into the Open CA program at some point in the future.

The key documents for individuals to initially consider regarding Open CA certification are:

- The Certification Policy – sets out the policies and processes to achieve certification
- The Conformance Requirements – the skills and experience that you must have to become certified

There are two routes to certification:

- Direct via The Open Group
- Indirect via third-party programs accredited by The Open Group

The Conformance Requirements apply equally to both. See [Conformance Requirements](#).

Levels of Certification

Three levels of certification are available, depending on the length and characteristics of the individual's experience.

- **Level 1: Certified** – able to perform with assistance/supervision, with a wide range of appropriate skills, as a contributing architect
- **Level 2: Master** – able to perform independently and take responsibility for delivery of systems and solutions as a lead architect
- **Level 3: Distinguished** – effects significant breadth and depth of impact on the business via one of three advanced career paths: Chief/Lead Architect, Enterprise Architect, or IT Architect Profession Leader

An Open CA Self-Assessment Tool is available to help candidates determine whether they should aim for Level 1 or Level 2. It can be found [here](#).

In terms of experience requirements, for Level 1 you must have at least two (2) years' experience of developing architectures with supervision; e.g., mentoring. For Level 2, you must have at least three (3) years' experience of producing architectures using one of our recognized methods.

Recognized Architecture Methods

An important part of The Open Group Certified Architect (Open CA) program is how you demonstrate that you have used an architectural method as part of your work. A list of those methods that are recognized by The Open Group can be found [here](#).

TOGAF® is one of the recognized methods, but TOGAF certification is not a prerequisite for Open CA.

Organizations can submit their own internal architectural method for approving Open CA recognition.

Certification Package Templates

A Certification Package Template is what you would use to prove that you meet the Conformance Requirements for the level of certification you are aiming to achieve.

You can download these templates [here](#).

There is also a sample package for Level 2 available which will give candidates an idea of the sort of things we are looking for from a Certification Package. The sample package can be viewed [here](#).

All details submitted by candidates during the certification process are confidential between you, the Certification Authority, and the Certification Board members.

The Certification Agreement

This is an agreement between you and the Certification Authority that defines the service and legal commitment to the conditions of service. See an example copy [here](#).

You are required to agree to the Certification Agreement when you start your registration.

Registration

When you are ready to submit your initial Certification Package, you will first need to register on our web-based Certification System.

The Certification Authority provides a Certification System through which individuals can submit themselves for certification. This is a workflow system that will guide you through the necessary steps for completing a registration. The entry point to the system is [here](#) (this is a secure server).

Submitting Initial Certification Information

To log into the web-based Certification System you need a valid username and password on the Certification Authority's web server.

If you don't yet have an account, you may obtain one by selecting "New User" to create your username and password. It takes approximately 30 minutes for a new account to become activated.

Once you have your username from the secure web site, select "Login".

Registering Yourself for the Open CA Program

Once you have successfully logged in, to register for the Open CA program select "follow this link" under the Direct Certification Route, or if you have previously created a registration select the "Home Page" link and then "Start a New Registration".

An application form is then presented on the screen for completion. The form is used to produce your initial Certification Record. This includes giving your contact details and optionally information about your employer. You also need to decide in this screen the initial visibility of your entry on the Directory of Certified Architects, and if visible whether you want your contact details on the public Directory.

You must then select the method(s) that you have chosen to cite with your submission from a set of recognized methods. This is a multiple selection. If your available choice is not available select OTHER. If OTHER is selected, then an upload will be required later in the process containing documentation describing the method.

You can also set the initial value for your personal confirmation code. This is the code that you can give out to third parties for obtaining your details from the Directory of Certified Architects if you select not to have a visible entry.

After you select the "Submit" button, you are then presented with the Payment Screen. You should also complete this screen at the same time otherwise when you return you will need to repeat the previous screen.

Payment

Payment is required to complete the initial submission for registration. Payment must be made by credit card. Fees are non-refundable and net of all taxes. Included with the payment screen is the Certification Agreement, which must be accepted in order to proceed with the registration.

Completing your Certification

You submit your Certification Package to the Certification Authority and if for any reason the submission was not complete, you will be notified within ten (10) business days so that any corrections can be made and the package resubmitted. Then a Board member will review your package and advise you of any improvements that you may want to make.

Once the Certification Authority has accepted your Certification Package, it will be passed to three Certification Board members for review. Each Board member will read the package and prepare for a one-hour interview. For Levels 2 and 3, the interviews are held face-to-face, usually at one of The Open Group quarterly conferences, or through our local partner offices.

Interviews can also take place at an organization's site and The Open Group will provide Board members to facilitate this. Interviews for the initial Boards are normally organized about six (6) weeks after the package has been submitted. For Level 1, there are still three one-hour interviews, but they are conducted by telephone.

After the interviews, the Board will decide whether you have achieved Open CA status, and candidates will be notified within ten (10) business days.

There is also an appeals process for candidates who are not initially awarded certification.

For additional details on the certification process, renewals, and recertification, you can contact the Certification Authority by emailing openca-cert-auth@opengroup.org.