

# IBM transforms the Professional Certification Program

*Enable, prepare and pass!*



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## Highlights

- IBM clients hire certified staff because they are more productive than non-certified individuals
  - University students and recent graduates use certification to jump-start their careers
  - IBM Business Partners certify to gain a competitive advantage in selling and implementing IBM products and solutions
  - IBM employees certify to enhance their skills and provide greater value to clients
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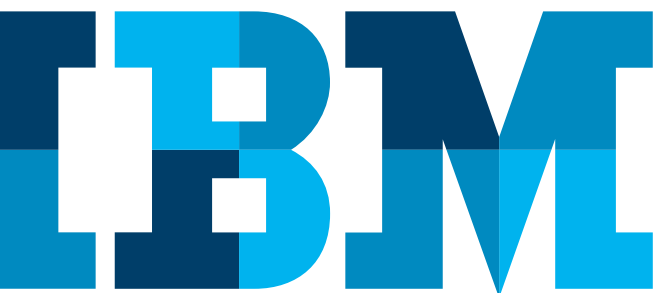
The IBM Professional Certification Program provides industry-recognized credentials focused on IBM technology and solutions that are relevant to its customers, Business Partners and employees. Such credentials help demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to excel in a given area of information technology.

IBM develops certification offerings based on products, solutions and new technologies that are most relevant in the marketplace. Employers and customers use IBM certifications to validate that job candidates and IBM Business Partners have the prerequisite skills needed to join an organization and bring rapid value to their team. IT professionals use IBM professional certifications to remain competitive and differentiate themselves from others. Clients recognize that IBM certified professionals are effective and get work done efficiently.

IBM Professional Certification Program consists of three types of tests:

- Mastery test (Sales/Technical)
- Certification (Entry/Intermediate/Advanced)
- Standardized levels of tests across IBM business units

Certification prerequisites require the candidates must be at least 18 years old, review the enablement materials and have on-the-job experience in the technology area of the certification.



## Transformation through governance

The process of building the certification tests has been thoroughly reassessed and transformed. IBM has strengthened its commitment to the certification program by establishing a certification leadership council to provide ongoing input on all aspects of the program. It uses an improved methodology and careful governance to help ensure IBM certification tests are of the highest quality and as secure as possible.

Test development governance allows for standardized processes and tools for test development projects. The types of tests and the development approach, or criteria, have been clearly defined, complete with minimum requirements and best practices.

Standardized certification test development across IBM defines clear guidance on the purpose and profile of each type of test. The complexity of the questions is aligned using Bloom's taxonomy. Bloom's multitiered model classifies thinking according to six cognitive levels of complexity and helps ensure a certification candidate who demonstrates understanding at one level has also mastered the material at the lower levels.

## Benefits

This transformation has led to major improvements to the certification program:

- A standard test development governance process helps ensure consistency across the test portfolio.
- Assessment tests provide better preparation resources for candidates.
- Solution-oriented certifications certify that candidates have the ability to apply products in specific business scenarios.
- Enhanced reporting capabilities help monitor test effectiveness and efficiency.
- A blog and test user feedback surveys helps ensure the program's audience has a channel to provide feedback.

## Badging and certification

The IBM Professional Certification Program is linked to the IBM open badge program. This open badge program provides IBM, our clients and IBM Business Partners with a strong learning and skills validation journey that allows candidates to demonstrate enhanced skills and help with their career progression. Combined, they promote the candidates' capabilities and drive skills development in the industry, while promoting proficiency in vital information technology.

Certification credentials are highly desirable. The tests are expensive to develop and are in the market for at least a few years. Badging allows for skill updates between certification test updates. Both certifications and badges can be promoted as individual accomplishments through social media to allow IT professionals to showcase their newly credentialed skills.

## Security

Most people understand that to pass a test, they must put in effort, study and possess real-world experience. Most certification candidates work hard to help ensure that their test scores are a true reflection of their knowledge and abilities. An IT Certification Council (ITCC) survey found that 83 percent of test takers surveyed agree that cheating devalues certification and 80 percent of those taking the survey strongly agreed that cheaters should face serious consequences.<sup>1</sup>

Certification credentials are recognized in the marketplace as fairly representing the skills of those who have earned them. To help assure employers, and others reviewing certifications, that every candidate has actually taken and passed an IBM certification test, IBM has implemented a non-independent test-taking (NITT) program. The NITT program detects, investigates and takes action when it becomes aware that a test taker has violated testing policy. This finding can result in the revocation of a certification and include a suspension or banning of the candidate from the IBM Professional Certification Program.

The IBM (NITT) program investigates whenever it detects candidates have:

- Discussed test questions and answers with other candidates
- Prepared for a test using unauthorized questions and answers from an actual text
- Obtained or copied a test without the permission of the test owner
- Obtained answers or help from someone during the test
- Copied someone else's answers during a test

## Conclusion

IBM is dedicated to continually improving the certification program. By implementing a test feedback survey, all certification candidates have the opportunity to provide feedback on their testing experience. IBM is confident that this continuous loop of developing the test, taking the test, and getting feedback about the test helps ensure the highest quality tests. And—just as important—it helps ensure the most meaningful certification credentials have been obtained.

The Business Partner Advisory Council (BPAC) and IBM executives regularly interact to:

- Minimize risk to clients and gain credibility
- Enhance training and readiness
- Identify technical job candidates and qualified downstream partners

IBM Business Partner certification candidates surveyed report:

- 93 percent said tests met the stated objectives
- 84 percent believe there is strong value in their IBM certification
- 82 percent would recommend IBM certifications to others

IBM continually listens to IBM Business Partners, customers and other test takers, to help make the certification process more efficient and protect the security of the IBM tests portfolio.

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## How valuable is IBM certification?

Results from a 2013 Prometric IT Certification Research study found<sup>2</sup>

- 81 percent believe certifications increase the value and productivity of staff
- 86 percent of employers believe certifications make their staff more valuable
- 85 percent of employers would consider or grant an interview to the person with a certification
- 84 percent of employers say a certification makes staff more attractive for promotion
- 76 percent believe a certification helps them troubleshoot problems without outside help

The Pearson VUE 2016 Value of IT Certification Survey found<sup>3</sup>

- 65 percent believe certification has a positive impact on their professional image
- 20 percent received a salary increase
- 26 percent leveraged certification to move into a career in IT
- 19 percent believe certification was a factor in finding a job
- 14 percent believe that certification was a factor in being promoted

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## For more information

To learn more about the IBM Professional Certification Program, visit: [ibm.com/certify](http://ibm.com/certify)



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- 1 *Survey on Attitudes Around Cheating & IT Certification*, ITCC white paper June 30, 2014
- 2 *The Pearson VUE 2016 Value of IT Certification Survey*, Prometric IT Certification Research, February 2013
- 3 *Value of IT Certification Survey*, Results summary, Pearson VUE 2016



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