QA Certification

Theses

Certification is an additional proof that one possesses knowledge at the time of passing certification.
For many people a certificate is a way to satisfy personal ambitions.

There is certain knowledge at the time of passing an exam, but there is no guarantee that it will be demanded and not lost.

A certified specialist is of great value for a customer. And companies employing such specialists are valued even more highly.

Keywords*: Testing, certification, estimation of knowledge.*

Introduction

At present certification of quality assurance specialists gathers pace. There is a great amount of certification centers, which specialize in different regions. Today there are vendor certifications aimed at assessment of knowledge of certain products (QTP, LoadRunner,etc), there are various levels of certificates (Foundation, Advanced, Expert). Some types of certification require a certain work experience, and in some cases it is required to visit courses or trainings.

Which certifications are the most widespread and who gives certificates?

IIST
The International Institute for Software Testing (IIST) has been offering the Certified Software Test Professional (CSTP) certification since 1999. At present thousands of specialists hold its certificates, confirming various stages of the CSTP program.
It consists of 2 courses:
- Certified Software Test Professional (CSTP)
    - *Principles of software testing*
    - *Testing Design*
    - *Managing the Testing Process*
    - *Test Execution and Defect Tracking*
    - *Requirement Definition, Refinement and Verification*
    - *Test Automation*
    - *Static Testing*
- Certified Test Manager (CTM)
    - *Test Process Management*
    - *Test Project Management*
    - *Test Process Measurement and Improvement*
    - *Test Organization Management*
    - *Risk Management*
    - *Test Automation Strategies and Architectures*
    - *Software Quality Assurance*
Cost – starting from 800$
Pass mark- 80%
An obligatory requirement – attendance of the courses.
Cost of resitting for a test- 100$, 1 resitting is allowed, in case of failure it is required to visit the

courses again.

Proof of knowledge - in 3 years.

Core market – USA

CSTE

The Quality Assurance Institute (QAI) was founded in 1980 as a professional association of software product quality assurance. The process of certification has begun in 1990. At present QAI certification is the one of global character. From the moment of its foundation the organization has certified more than 35000 IT specialists in 43 countries.

The institute has 6 certificates in the sphere of quality assurance:

- Certified Associate in Software Quality (CASQ)   100$
- Certified Software Quality Analyst (CSQA)   350$ - 420$
- Certified Manager of Software Quality (CMSQ)   450$
- Certified Associate in Software Testing (CAST)   100$
- Certified Software Tester (CSTE)   350$ - 420$
- Certified Manager of Software Testing (CMST)   450$

Core market – USA

ISTQB

ISTQB was officially founded in Edinburgh in November 2002. It is the ISTQB's role to support a single, universally accepted, international qualification scheme by providing the core syllabi and by setting guidelines for accreditation and examination for national boards. At present more than 100 thousand specialists hold Foundation Level certificates. Nearly 12 thousand specialists are holders of Advanced Level certificates.

There is the following scheme of certificates:

- Foundation Level (**CTFL)**
- Advanced Level (**CTAL)**
  - Advanced Level Test Manager
  - Advanced Level Test Analysis
  - Advanced Level Technical Test Analysis
- Expert Level

The cost is not fixed and varies from 130$ up to 300$ for one exam (depending on the level and country where the test is held).

Pass mark 65%

An obligatory requirement for Advanced Level - 1 year of work experience in the IT-industry.

Core market - Europe

ISEB

The Information Systems Examinations Board (ISEB) is one of the departments of British Computer Society (BCS). ISEB was founded in 1990 as a result of investigation of the council analysis system, which was founded in 1967. ISEB conducts exams and gives certificates on various subjects in the engineering sphere.

There is the following scheme of certificates:

- Foundation Level
  - Foundation certificates   194$
- Intermediate Level:
  - Intermediate Certificate in Software Testing   164$
- Advanced Level:
  - Practitioner Certificates   224$

- ▪ Practitioner Certificate in Test Management   224$
- ▪ Practitioner Certificate in Test Analysis   269$
- Expert Level
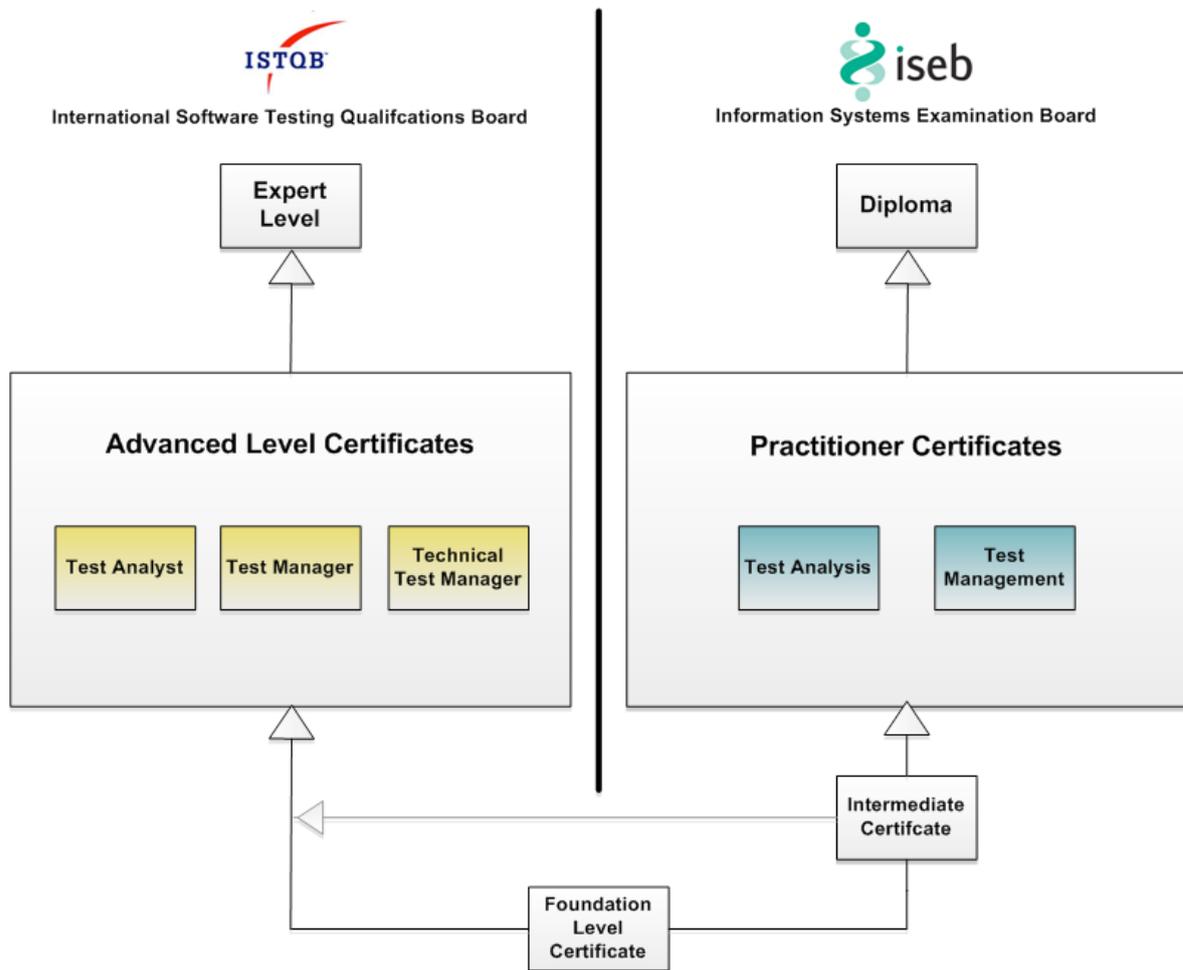 - ▪ Diploma in Software Testing   269$

Pass mark - 65%

Core market − Australia, Japan, South Africa, Brazil.

ASTQB

ASTQB is similar in every way to ISTQB, it provides services on the USA territory. Cost: 200$ for Foundation Level, 300$ for Advanced Level.

Difference between ISTQB and ISEB

Foundation Level is the same for both certification programs. It is a positive moment, as it offers a candidate alternative variants (i.e. after completing Foundation Level, the candidate can choose his or her further path). As soon as Foundation Level is completed, it becomes visible, in which way certifications differ from each other. ISEB has an Intermediate Level, preceding its Practitioner Level, while ISTQB does not have such a level.

ISEB uses ISTQB syllabus for conducting ISEB certifications.

Comparative analysis of certification programs

	IIST's CSTP	**QAI's CSTE**	**ISTQB**
Organization	International Institute for Software Testing www.iist.org	Quality Assurance Institute www.qaiusa.com	International Software Testing Qualification Board www.istqb.org
Organization status	Private - non-profit	Private - non-profit	Boards - non - profit
Obligatory training before the certification	10 day courses	Optional 3 day courses	Optional 3 day courses, held by accredited specialists
Certification process control	IIST officials	QAI officials	An independent board
Requirements	Everyday test after training, Pass mark - 80%	One 3 hour test Pass mark - 80%	One 90 minute test Pass mark - 65%
Required testing experience	1 year	Not required	2 years for Advanced Level
Preparation	All the required information is given at the obligatory 10 day courses	All the required information is given at the optional 3 day courses	All the required information is given at the optional 3 day courses
Cost	From 800$	$300 for passing an exams or its resitting	$150 - $300 for passing an exams or its resitting

What certification scheme to choose?

The choice of certification scheme depends on many factors, the main ones are its availability (it is not needed to go abroad), low cost and certification center authority.

What use is it to have a certificate?

1. Holding a certificate confirms that the specialist being certified possesses knowledge at the moment of passing certification.
2. A certified specialist can be sold at a higher price.
3. Many major customers require to have certified employees in the team
4. An employee holding a certificate studies the material during his or her training, which will probably be useful and demanded in his or her future work.
5. During the training the employee systematized his or her knowledge.

A bitter pill to swallow

Holding a certificate definitely does not confirm competence of a specialist in a certain sphere and only indicates that this specialist had knowledge at the moment of passing certification, which corresponds to the level of certificate.

Links

[1] Blog of Alexey Bulat http://alexeybulat.blogspot.com/
[2] Alexey Barantsev http://www.interface.ru/home.asp?artId=19014

[3] IIST http://www.testinginstitute.com/
[4] CSTE http://www.softwarecertifications.org/
[5] ISTQB http://www.istqb.org/
[6] ISEB http://www.bcs.org/
[7] ASTQB http://www.astqb.org/

[8] http://www.articledepot.co.uk/article-314443.htm
[9] http://automated-testing.info/
[10] http://www.it4business.ru/