The new ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level
Focus on practical know-how

by Professor Mario Winter

The new ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level syllabus is now finding its way into practical use. By September 2009 at the latest, all German-language course providers must either have switched to the new advanced level syllabus or have successfully completed re-accreditation. This is not just a rewrite of the “old” syllabus that has been in use since 2003 but a fundamentally revised, updated, intensified and expanded offering for software testers who want to go much further than the basic Foundation Level know-how, be it as test managers, as test analysts or as technical test analysts.

The International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB®) approved the new ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level syllabus at the end of 2007 and from September 2009 at the latest all training providers must offer only courses based on this new version. What attendees will offer only courses based on this new version.

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test analyses. While the former concentrate on

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ward, however, by drawing a clear line be-

Advanced Level now distinguishes between

different categories of test procedures: speci

based test procedures, the technical test

data is acquainted with all test procedures

except for a few special specification-oriented

techniques. In addition, the new syllabus offers the follow-

new content:

- Testing of quality characteristics as de-

defined by ISO 9126, such as functionality,

reliability or maintainability

- Additional review procedures: manage-

ment reviews and audits

- Additional error management procedures

- Adopting additional process standards with a focus on improving test processes

- New procedures for automating testing

- New types of tool for automating testing

- Recommendations for the industrialisation of testing processes

Practically oriented

The Advanced Level Certified Tester in its new

form has developed into practical training that
covers the specific, day-to-day requirements

of industry. Its new and clearly defined cov-

erage of the different work areas of testing is

oriented to the development that commercial

software quality assurance has undergone in

recent years. The separate view of functional

and technical testing in particular fulfills to

the highest degree the requirements of software

projects today.

Now that this experience and these best prac-
tices have been incorporated into an interna-
tional standard the new look training boosts

the status of testing activity in general and

thereby takes software testing further toward

the standing of a profession for highly quali-
fied specialists. In this way it is not just the

software industry that will benefit from testers

who are more professional and more practice-

oriented in their approach. Conversely, soft-

ware testers who have undergone this training
can look forward to further and more highly

qualified career paths.

The new Advanced Level – Key data

When does it happen?
The first course providers in Germany are already holding seminars based on the new Advanced Level. By September 2009 all course providers must have fully converted their seminars to the new syllabus and completed their re-accreditation. From September 2009 all ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level examinations will be based on the new syllabus.

What does the exam look like?
The individual test manager, test analyst and technical test analyst modules are taught and examined separately. All examinations are based on multiple-choice test format.

What preconditions must be fulfilled?
To sit the exam you must already hold the Certified Tester Foundation Level certificate and have at least 18 months of career experience as a software tester.

Do existing certificates retain their validity?
Advanced Level certificates issued on the basis of the old syllabus retain their validity. Holders of these certificates are naturally re-

quired to learn the new and expanded content of the 2007 syllabus.

How long do the training courses take?
For the new Advanced Level the duration of seminars has increased from three to five days per module (such as test manager) be-
cause the training covers much more content and includes a significantly higher share of practical work.

Why do seminars for the new ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level take five days instead of three days as hitherto?
There are two main reasons:

1) First, the course content has been increased considerably. In the scope and depth of what is taught, the new Advanced Level has become a fully-fledged training qualification for an advanced tester with different focal points.

2) Second, training courses are now even more practical in orientation. Course content is more strongly oriented toward everyday proj-

ect scenarios, and the number of practical exercises has increased significantly. Theory and practice now each account for roughly half

the time spent training. All of this is only feasible if training is given over a longer period.

Why are there three different course specialisations at the new Advanced Level?
Especially as a more highly qualified activity, the tester per se virtually no longer exists. In recent years his work has extended to dif-

erent specialisations. The old Advanced Level syllabus already made a clear distinction between test management and functional

testing. In addition, the tasks that face many IT projects require technically oriented testing specialists – for the technical integration

of test environments, for example. ISTQB® training now caters for this demand, which mainly comes from business. It distinguishes

between three roles, those of the test manager, the test analyst and the technical test analyst.

Does the expansion of course content not jeopardise the standardisation of certified tester training?
Quite the reverse. A wider range of experience and best practices from more countries than ever before has found its way into the new

syllabus. The ISTQB® and national boards such as the GTB have harmonised and standardised these different approaches in years of

work with the result that today’s new ISTQB® Certified Tester Advanced Level is a standard that can be used better internationally than
ever before. It has become an ideal instrument for companies to simplify communication in cross-border IT projects.
Biography

Mario Winter is professor at the Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering Science of Cologne University of Applied Sciences, and a member of the Software Quality Group. From 1983 to 1987, he was engaged in industrial and scientific software projects, and between 1994 and 2002, he was research fellow at the FernUniversität Hagen. Currently he is spokesman of the German Special Interest Group in Software Testing, Analysis, and Verification of the German Informatics Society (GI-TAV) and a founding member of the German Testing Board (GTB). His teaching and research focus is on software development and project management, especially on the model-based development and quality assurance of software.