Test Engineering Foundation:
For Those Pursuing Certification

I designed this course specifically to cover the International Software Testing Qualification Boards (ISTQB) Foundation Syllabus 2011 (www.istqb.org). I recommend that certification candidates who intend to take an exam under one of the ISTQB-recognized National Boards do the following:

- Carefully study the syllabus. Refer back to the course materials and books used to prepare for the exam if you encounter any statements or concepts you do not *completely* understand. Test questions often require a *precise* understanding of a concept.

- The syllabus refers to international standards and an ISTQB glossary. Copies of those standards and glossary are included in the course materials. Read them *carefully*. Test questions often require *full and precise* understanding of standards and terms, and you may well be unfamiliar with these.

- Do all the exercises in this course. If you do them, you will probably understand the concepts. If you have not done the exercises, you may well fail the test.

These tests are designed to separate the professionals and the experienced from the amateurs and the dilettantes. These tests are not perfect. Even well-qualified candidates often miss a few questions or disagree with some answers. Study hard, so you can take the test relaxed and confident, and you will do well.

However, if you take the exam unprepared, you should expect your lack of preparation to show in your score. Since you'll have to pay to retake the exam, consider preparation time an investment in protecting your exam fee.

In terms of studying, additional out-of-class study *is* required, either prior to or in the evenings during the course (for multi-day courses). Not everyone who doesn't study fails, but everyone who failed didn't study enough. My goal is for 100% of our course attendees to pass the exam the first time. The best way to assure that is to study prior to as well as during the course.

To study prior to (or failing that, during) the course, here's how I recommend using this noteset, in order of decreasing importance:

1. Read the Foundation syllabus.

2.   Study the "terms to remember" from the Foundation syllabus which are defined in the Glossary.

3.   Review the IEEE 829 templates. Study the standard to remember the contents of each template (their relationships and use will be explained in the course).

4.   Review the other standards referenced in the Foundation syllabus and familiarize yourself with the main topics covered in the standards. Especially focus on the following:

   a. Know the characteristics and subcharacteristics of ISO 9126

   b. Know the review types covered in IEEE 1028

   c. Know the maturity levels of CMMI and the general description of each level

   d. Know the processes covered in IEEE 12207

5.   Try one of the two sample exams in the noteset, or the one in my book, *Foundations of Software Testing*. Review the syllabus for the questions you missed.

6.   Read the exam question guidelines.

7.   Read the rest of the noteset.

Refer to your local national board website to obtain a copy of your exam guidelines document. If it is not posted, contact your board for a copy.

As you see, this could be a lot of work, but even just doing steps 1 and 2—which would take less than two hours—will help. I wouldn't start this process more than two weeks before the course. Some of the exam questions are recall-type questions, and if you study this kind of material too early you'll forget it by the time you take the course.

The ISTQB Foundation Syllabus 2011 is the current syllabus. It replaced the ISTQB Foundation Syllabus 2010, which replaced the ISTQB Foundation Syllabus 2007, which replaced the ISTQB Foundation Syllabus 2005, which in turn replaced the Information Systems Examination Board (ISEB) Foundation Certification syllabus and the ASQF Foundation Certification syllabus. Do not refer to the old syllabi, as the test covers the new syllabus.

The Foundation Certification exam is available in an electronic version at Kriterion (www.kryteriononline.com), Prometric (www.2test.com), and Pearson Vue (www.pearsonvue.com/isqi) test centers around the world. This is a real advantage for those who live or work away from those cities where in-person courses and exams are offered. The price is competitive with the in-person exam fee, so you won't pay a big premium for convenience.

Regardless of which National Board administers the exam, if you pass, all National Boards are bound by the ISQTB Constitution to recognize the certification granted.

Therefore, you are free to choose ISQTB-accredited trainers, if desired, and ISQTB-accredited exam providers based on factors like convenience, competence, suitability of the training to your immediate professional and business needs, and price.

As of May 2010, I personally held the ISEB Foundation Certification, the American Software Testing Qualification Board (ASQTB) Foundation Level Certification, the American Software Testing Qualification Board Advanced Level Functional Tester Certification (equivalent to the current Advanced Level Test Analyst Certification), the American Software Testing Qualification Board Advanced Level Technical Tester Certification (equivalent to the current Advanced Level Technical Test Analyst Certification), the American Software Testing Qualification Board Advanced Level Test Management Certification (equivalent to the current Advanced Level Test Manager Certification) and the CompTIA Security+ Certification.

I wish you good luck with your certification exam, and best of success in your career as a test professional!

Sincerely,

Rex Black, CTFL, CTAL, Security+
President, RBCS, Inc.
Past President, International Software Testing Qualification Board (2005-2009)
Past President, American Software Testing Qualification Board (2005-2008)