Assessors handbook - Introduction

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The INGOT certification program is designed to provide recognition for functional capability in ICT (information and communications technologies) in modern office environments and a capacity to deal with technological change through confidence in underlying technological principles. In the context of a world where issues related to software licensing and standardisation are becoming increasingly important, understanding the rights and responsibilities associated with these issues is a necessary part of international citizenship in the digital world.

These qualifications have been developed in collaboration with small businesses and members of the **Open Source Community,** a worldwide network of people dedicated to providing free access to software across as many computer platforms as possible. All aspects of the INGOTs can be achieved with Free and Open Source software which can be obtained by download from the Internet e.g. from www.openoffice.org, www.firefox.org, www.NVU.com or the massive library of titles at Sourceforge.org. If you buy a disc with any of this software, you can copy it perfectly legally to as many computers as you like. This is a characteristic of Open Source software and promotes social inclusion through more efficient business models for development and quality assurance. A key purpose of the INGOTs is to lower barriers to entry both in terms of cost and educational starting points. Progression routes from basic skills in the Bronze certificates are provided by a hierarchy of levels through Silver, Gold and Platinum INGOTs.

The requirements for assessment are **independent of the particular software tools** and candidates are encouraged to try several applications for mainstream applications so that they have some basis for judgment about value for money, interoperability and fitness for purpose. They will learn that it is perfectly possible to achieve most technological functions with tools that are entirely free and can be obtained from the Internet without complications of managing license keys, paying for up dates and lock-in to proprietary file formats. In many cases the risk of virus infection is much reduced and lower specification hardware can be used with positive implications for the environment.

The certification is **vocationally related and culturally neutral** in that it is designed to support the attitudes and capabilities needed in the modern workplace as well as preparing candidates for technological change. There has been extensive input from the small business sector and the endorsement of e-skills, the UK Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecommunications. The expectation is that candidates will not only develop a range of technological skills and related knowledge, but that they will develop the attitudes needed to work in teams, cope with social and technological change and to continue with self-development, lifelong learning and good citizenship. Although the INGOTs originate and are accredited to meet UK government quality standards, trials conducted in a wide range of countries demonstrate the flexibility for use in a wide range of cultures.

There are several **themes** running throughout. The first is the development of positive attitudes to learning particularly in relation to new concepts and methods related to technology. We want flexibility and **readiness for change** rather than entrenchment in currently popular systems that will themselves inevitably change. With this in mind the second theme is to develop an **understanding of Open Standards**, Open Source Software (OSS) and the rise of the digital communities that are democratizing digital developments. These key issues in global technological development are having an increasing effect on the industry worldwide. This brings us to the third theme which is a combination of **social enterprise, citizenship** and learning through participation.

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Open Source communities lend themselves to "International Citizenship". There is a well-established concept of "the good citizen" as someone who contributes as well as takes from the community.

This developing example of social enterprise is summed up by the African word Ubuntu which means "I am what I am because of who we all are". In other words, learning to contribute collectively repays the individual many times over. These principles are driving a new paradigm for the development of software and globally shared information that is, according to global research specialist IDC, **“the most significant all-encompassing and long-term trend that the software industry has seen since since the early 1980s**. We are therefore preparing candidates to become contemporary citizens in the technological world.

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