Assessors handbook - Frequently asked questions

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1. What is an INGOT?

INGOTs are International Grades in Open Technologies. In English the word INGOT is associated with a metal bar of high value. The INGOT certificates provide a motivating progression route from complete beginner to professional level expertise in commonly used productivity tools found in the modern workplace such as word processing, presenting and searching for information. More importantly they prepare the candidate for citizenship in a rapidly changing technological world by learning through participation.

2. Why are INGOTs different from other available qualifications?

INGOTs share some things in common with other qualifications but there is no other qualification that has all the characteristics of the INGOTs which are:

- They are competency based and outcome specific, not determined by any particular teaching course.
- They encourage assessment for learning with candidate self-assessment, peer assessment and mentoring as key aspects.
- They are designed to reduce bureaucracy and enhance the professional role of the teacher/assessor.
- The certification can be easily and directly authenticated using theINGOTs.org web site.
- The certificates are independent of age and suitable for use with young children or mature adults based solely on their competence against the criteria.
- Assessment is appropriate for the skills and capabilities assessed. ie practical "doing" skills are assessed by practical tasks and direct observation, knowledge components by objective testing.
- INGOTs give credit for co-operative attitudes to work and encourage candidates to take part in productive projects to produce useful resources and support for others.
- The certification is low cost.
- INGOTs are not tied to proprietary software and can be achieved with entirely free and open digital resources.
- The INGOTS are vocationally related qualifications for anyone working in an office environment and for learning about the growing importance of open standards and open source software in the IT and IC industry sector.

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3. What is the awarding body for INGOTs?

The awarding body is The Learning Machine Ltd which is accredited by the UK Regulators. The INGOTs were originally developed in collaboration with members of the OpenOffice.org community, SchoolforgeUK, The Open Source Consortium, The Association for Free Software, and over 50 INGOT Academies in 10 different countries. The Chief Executive of The Learning Machine and lead designer of the INGOTs is Ian Lynch who was responsible for assessment as part of the team that set up the UK's first City Technology College. He has extensive experience of inspecting schools as a Registered Inspector accredited by the UK Office for Standards in Education and in needs assessment as an assessor for the UK National Professional Qualification for Headteachers. He has a MSc in Education Management and he has provided extensive education support for the OpenOffice.org community worldwide. The Chief Moderator for the INGOTs is Joan Knott who is a chartered assessor with extensive experience as Senior Moderator for Statistics for one of the largest Awarding Bodies in the UK.

4. What do I have to do to become an INGOT assessor?

You need to attend a training course or be trained by an INGOT Assessor trainer. Contact your regional INGOT agency or E-mail us for further details. Most assessors are qualified teachers but that is not mandatory as people with technical support backgrounds have demonstrated the required capacity to carry out the assessments. Those with less experience are likely to need more training than those with most experience.

5. How is quality assurance guaranteed for the certification of the INGOTs?

All accredited assessors will be trained by an Assessor Trainer. A senior member of each INGOT Center or Academy will act as Principal Assessor, undertaking responsibility for standards within the Center, and acting as the single point of contact for the Awarding Body's Regional Moderator through a named Account Manager. Moderation and quality assurance will take place by both systematic and random samples of the assessed work. Some of this moderation will take place internally under the direction of the Principal Assessor and some by an independent external moderator, usually the Center's Moderator/verifier, appointed by The Learning Machine Ltd. The Center must agree to participate in random sampling as determined by the Awarding Body. Certificates will only be authorized for printing when an agent of the Awarding Body, independent of the center judges that the criteria have been met. At a local level, the candidates and assessors must agree that the assessment criteria are matched before independent tests or set tasks are undertaken under controlled conditions to verify internal assessment. This ensures that the assessment criteria have been covered during the program of learning and that few candidates should fail to at least achieve a pass in the formal testing. We want to eliminate the situation where candidates are confronted with formal testing that destroys confidence by allowing a pass with substantially fewer than a majority of the marks being achieved or simply causes the learner to fail. In addition, the Principal Assessor must ensure consistency within the Center before awards can be made. All certificates awarded can be verified for authenticity at the Awarding Body's web site. The most experienced assessors for the lower level INGOTs will be invited to become assessors and assessor trainers for the higher level INGOTs. The assessment model is deliberately formative Ã¢â‚¬â€œ assessment for learning using criteria matching through dialog between the assessor and candidate. The outcomes of set tasks and tests are used to validate the assessors' judgements in the same way that good teachers use short diagnostic tests to confirm progress. Over time, assessors will improve the consistency of their judgements enhancing their professional capabilities. There will be regular training courses to further update assessors' skills. These will be voluntary for assessors where there are no issues and compulsory for those where there are problems of consistency or where a major change is taking place.

6. How can those in countries around the world access the INGOTs?

The same rules apply to anyone in any country. Anyone is free to use theINGOTs.org assessment criteria available in the handbook from the web site but to be officially certificated, the candidate must have been assessed by an accredited assessor registered with The Learning Machine Ltd. Furthermore, to obtain a certificate recognized by a country's Regulatory Authorities, certain aspects of the Quality Assurance procedures are mandatory. We will support training assessor trainers in any country in the World, normally free of charge if the country demonstrates it has a viable business plan to expand the INGOT program and will support translation of the web site, certificates and the handbook into their language. If you can help in this respect, please contact us.

7. How does certification take place?

When the candidate has demonstrated competence against the criteria, the assessor uses the web site to enter the candidates' details. There is an on-line mark book to support this process and it can be used with flexibility to suit different ways of working. Once the data is entered for criteria matching, the Account Manager will make available any Awarding Body tests or tasks as necessary to verify the assessments made. When the formal tests/tasks are completed satisfactorily the Account Manager will authorize printing the certificates from the web site. Unit certificates and

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certificates for the full awards are available in this way. There are also some certificates available that are not subject to external quality assurance that the Center can use for additional motivation of learners at its own discretion.

8. Where can I find the details of the assessment requirements for the INGOTs?

These are in printed form in theINGOTS.org handbook.

9. How much work is involved for the Gold INGOT (Level 2)?

The basic Gold INGOT is nominally 60 hours of work for a complete beginner, 20 hours of work supporting basic general knowledge associated with Open Systems and Open Source Software, 20 hours on technical skills development in the most commonly used applications and 20 hours applying skills and knowledge in support of a community project of interest to the candidate and defined by the candidate perhaps with help from their assessor. Some learners might take more than 60 hours, some less. The INGOTs are NOT designed to be specific courses although such courses are provided as examples in the Moodle VLE available from the web site. INGOTSs are designed to be an accreditation framework for learning flexible enough to fit to many different course designs in many different countries. The Gold INGOT can be extended with two additional 20 hour units in Enterprise and Business growth.

10. What facilities are there for candidates to store their work and develop their own e-portfolios?

candidates can set up accounts on the INGOT community web site at any time and use this to comment on their work, develop a dialog with their assessor or their peers. The Level 1 qualification requires the candidate to set up a basic web based e-portfolio using the Awarding Body's community site. In the Level 2 qualification they will keep track of their community service projects using a BLOG (web log) on the INGOT community site which will provide a key part of the assessment. They are free to continue to maintain and enhance their portfolio as they see fit.

11. I have to certificate lots of individuals, won't this cause me a lot of detailed administration?

INGOTs are designed to reduce administration to an absolute minimum while maintaining credible quality assurance. here is an on-line web based mark book that will automatically work out assessment weightings as data is entered and even the certificates are awarded through this automated process. On-line verification ensures that the risk of certificate fraud is much reduced. If you have suggestions about how any aspect of the procedures can be improved, bring these up in the discussion forums or talk to us directly. In essence, certification is simply a matter of typing the names of candidates and their assessment details into a form on the website which is very much what most teachers would need to do for any internal course. There is a small overhead in administering tests for quality assurance but the benefit is that the candidate achieves recognition through an externally accredited method.

12. Do I need to keep portfolios of paper based evidence?

In most cases, candidates will have their work stored in their own user area on the Center's network so there is no need to print to paper. The Principal Assessor is responsible for ensuring that candidates' work is secure through backups and appropriate network security. Some stored candidate work will be required for moderation/verification and may be sent to the Awarding Body by E-mail, inspected at moderation visits or stored as file attachments up loaded to e-portfolios on the community site. centers will also need to keep at least some samples for monitoring standards locally over time through local standardization meetings led by the Principal Assessor. Specific requirements for assessment evidence are given in the assessors' guides in the handbook and these are generally kept to the minimum needed to meet the quality assurance requirements. Centers are expected to conduct at least one standardization meeting per year led by the Principal Assessor to ensure expectations are consistent within the Center. In general, there is no requirement to keep any paper based evidence.

13. Can candidates use Microsoft Office to achieve their INGOTs?

Yes, INGOTs are designed to be independent of particular software applications. We want to encourage the use of Free and Open Source Software as part of our inclusion policy but we accept that the practicalities of doing this will vary in different circumstances. All aspects of the certificates can be assessed with popular Open Source applications and where we provide optional support, courses and other materials, they will generally employ open source applications, open data and open information. Our starting point is for our own systems to be as fully Open as possible. The whole INGOT infrastructure including the production of handbook and certificates has been done entirely with free, open source software. This does not mean that candidates can't use proprietary applications, they certainly can. The only requirement is to be able to match the criteria. In practice,

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OpenOffice.org, Star Office and MS Office are very similar and principles transfer to tools such as Google Docs so it doesn't matter which tool is used. For K12 it's much more important that candidates are prepared for change by making comparisons to enable informed choice in the interests of best value. If any of the criteria can not be satisfied using a proprietary application, the Center can always install Open Source applications on as many machines as required at no charge, even if only for the particular aspect of the assessment. OpenOffice can, for example, produce pdf files directly and it can import MS proprietary documents so it does have some clear functional benefits in its own right. Contributions by candidates to the Open Resources section of the web site are encouraged and should be in open formats unless there is a very good reason to use proprietary files. We accept that candidates are learning and might not appreciate why open formats are important although they should have a very much improved idea by the end of the Gold INGOT. We will treat work submitted by learners in proprietary formats sensitively, we don't want to de-motivate them. We hope that in the longer term it simply won't be an issue because open formats will be the norm, it will just take some time to get there.

14. Do you have an INGOT certification for young children or those with learning disabilities?

INGOT certification is independent of age and we we have devised the Entry Level 1 certificate as part of our social inclusion aims to involve hard to reach groups and those who previously have not participated in an accreditation of their work. The certificate is called My First INGOT, Bronze 1, or Entry Level 1. The context for learning will vary with different ages but the basic competencies are applicable to all. This certification can be linked to membership of Otto's club. Otto is the mascot of the OpenOffice.org schools project and Otto's club will be developed as a separate section of the web site with web based activities designed to develop learning but also to be fun. We want to increase the positive motivation for learning using rewards and incentives that are positive and attractive to young children as well as adults. We also want to provide leadership in the development of freely accessible, open, web based applications in keeping with the UK government's e-strategy. (See www.theINGOTs.org/Ottos_club for a preview) If most learning applications are transferred to the Open Internet it greatly reduces the administrative overhead of managing digital learning in schools. This is especially important in primary schools and for home access. Sustainable social inclusion requires fundamental change since technical support to maintain locally installed applications is not readily available and beyond the budgets of many individuals and small groups. Otto was designed by 16 year old Italian candidate Andrea Gabbiano as part of a competition run by the OpenOffice.org Schools project.

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[1] https://theingots.org/community/handbook

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