

Exam Structures and Rules

Version 1.2

Compatible with Syllabus on Foundation and Advanced Levels, and
Specialist Modules

International Software Testing Qualifications Board



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Revision History

Version	Date	Remarks
1.2	May 2, 2025	Changed 4.1.4, defining glossary terms as examined with K2-level questions
1.1	October 1, 2021	Adding text for Specialist modules (after levels for Specialist has been removed)
1.0	April 15, 2021	Collecting all previous S&R documents for individual syllabi into one document

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1. Introduction

1.1. Validity

All live and sample Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module Exam sets shall comply with the structure and rules in this document, regardless of language and media.

1.2. Purpose

This document shall serve as a common guide for the structure and contents of all ISTQB® Exam sets on Foundation and Advanced Levels, and Specialist Modules. It covers the generic rules for Exam questions and for the structure of the Exam sets.

Main consumers of this Document

- Examination Director of a Member Board, or similar role with an Exam Provider, who is accountable for the generation / creation of an Exam set
- Training Providers who are using this as a tool to prepare future Exam takers for an Exam
- Future Exam takers who are preparing for an Exam

1.3. Scope

This document contains the structure and rules for the Exam sets related to the ISTQB® Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module syllabi.

2. Definitions

- 2.1.1. Exam question: A question in the form of a multiple-choice question
- 2.1.2. Exam set: Collection of *Exam* questions
- 2.1.3. LO (Learning Objective): Abbreviation for *Learning Objective*. Learning objectives describe the gain on cognitive competence to be achieved in relation to a given content
- 2.1.4. MC: Multiple-Choice is a form of assessment in which respondents are asked to select the best possible answer (or answers) according to the relevant syllabus (or Glossary for keywords) and body of knowledge if exists from the options in a list
- 2.1.5. Pass rate: The amount of point needed to pass an Exam
Selectable Learning Objective: In some cases, an Exam set may contain a question targeting one LO from a group of LOs. In that case, there may be variations among Exam sets as regards to which LO is the target of the question in a particular Exam

3. References

- [EST] Exam Structure Tables
An appendix file to this document

4. Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module Exam Set

4.1. Exam Set Rules

- 4.1.1. The Exam sets shall be based on the syllabus of the certificate scheme. Answers to Exam set questions may require the use of material from more than one section of the syllabus
- 4.1.2. All learning objectives in the syllabus are Examinable (see restriction for Advanced Level in section 4.1.5)
- 4.1.3. All keywords in the Glossary related to the syllabus are Examinable

Applies to Foundation Level and Specialist Module Exam Set Only

- 4.1.4. All keywords in the syllabus are Examinable for understanding their definition (K2)

Applies to Advanced Level Exam Set Only

- 4.1.5. An Advanced Level Exam will not include any questions of a K1 level (and by extension questions on keywords)

4.2. Exam Set Structure

- 4.2.1. Each Exam requires mandatory questions targeted to specific Learning Objectives as well as a specified number of questions based on "selectable" Learning Objectives (see [EST])

5. Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module Structure

5.1. Structure Rules

For an Exam derived from an existing syllabus, the exact number of questions an Exam shall comprise of can be found in [EST] Overview table

- 5.1.1. An Exam shall consist of a minimum of 40 questions
- 5.1.2. Each Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module Exam set shall comprise a set of multiple-choice questions, as defined in section 4.1 (of this document), for that specific syllabus. The level of coverage and distribution of questions based on the Learning Objectives, their K-levels, and their level of importance as evaluated by the ISTQB® and details on the structure for each Exam set module are provided in [EST]

5.2. Point Values of Exam Questions

Applies to Foundation Level Exam Set Only

- 5.2.1. Each question is worth exactly ONE point

Applies to Advanced Level and Specialist Module Exam Set Only

- 5.2.2. The points available for a question should reflect the difficulty of the question. A K2 question is to be allocated 1 point. In general, a K3 question should be allocated 2 points and a K4 question should be allocated 3 points. However, K3 questions may be set at 1, 2, or 3 points, and K4 questions may be set at 2 or 3 points at the discretion of the question author

5.3. Passing Score

For an Exam derived from an existing syllabus, the exact number of points an Exam taker may earn can be found in [EST] Overview table.

- 5.3.1. A score of at least 65% is required to pass
Example: An Exam has a maximum of 102 points, 65% equals 66,3 points, meaning that Exam takers will need 67 points in order to pass the Exam

5.4. Question Target

- 5.4.1. All questions shall assess at least one Learning Objective from the syllabus under Examination. Questions may include supporting material at the K1 level from the rest of the syllabus
- 5.4.2. Where questions address more than one LO, then the question should primarily address the highest K-level LO

6. Timing of Foundation and Advanced Level, and Specialist Module Examinations

6.1. Timing of Questions

- 6.1.1. Exam takers are expected to allocate 1 minute to K1 level questions
- 6.1.2. Exam takers are expected to allocate 1 to 2 minutes to K2 level questions
- 6.1.3. Exam takers are expected to allocate 3 minutes to K3 level questions
- 6.1.4. Exam takers are expected to allocate 4 minutes to K4 level questions

The Exam setter should keep in mind that this is only a guideline for an average time, and that it is likely that some questions will take longer, and others will take less time for Examinees to complete.

6.2. Timing of Exam

- 6.2.1. The time allowed for each Examination is defined in *[EST]* - Overview table section. If the candidates' native language is not the Exam set language, the candidate is allowed an additional 25% time