

COMPTIA

A+®

COMPUTER SUPPORT  
TECHNICIAN  
PROGRAMME

Start A+ at  
your college!

CompTIA®



# 12

## STEPS TO GETTING COMPTIA

# A+

## STARTED AT YOUR COLLEGE

The CompTIA A+ certification is an international industry credential that validates the knowledge of computer service technicians. Major hardware and software vendors, distributors and resellers accept A+ as the standard in foundation-level, vendor-neutral certification for service technicians. The exams cover a broad range of hardware and software technologies, but are not bound to any vendor-specific products. The skills and knowledge measured by the A+ exams were derived from an industry-wide and worldwide job task analysis.

### 1

**Raise own awareness of benefits of running the programme at your establishment:** visit the CompTIA Web site [www.comptia.org](http://www.comptia.org) and do some research — you'll find information here on test objectives, exam format, authorised curriculum, student and instructor testimonials. Contact CompTIA and request their overview presentation.

### 2

**Establish how A+ certification can fit into your curriculum offer.** Are you already offering similar curriculum (e.g. OCR iPRO suite of qualifications, City & Guilds eQuals Systems Support Diploma, or any other vendor certification courses)? If not, would this new certification enhance your offer and attract students to your courses, perhaps as part of another qualification? If you are already delivering material which builds to potential A+ certification, it's only a small step to ensuring that all your students take this additional qualification. Exam costs are discounted for students and can be included in course fees to make them more acceptable.

### 3

If you wish to offer A+, **make a case with the management of your establishment by establishing demand:**

A. Check any local market research or skills analysis studies (e.g. Business Link, LSC, e-Skills UK, or CompTIA research), which reinforce the case for narrowing the skills gap in your area.

B. Canvas past/present/potential students to gauge their interest in the certification. For example, present the idea to students doing courses in other departments.

C. Research your current enquiry base to confirm demand. Bear in mind they may not be familiar with this qualification — be prepared to sell it to them. Use this research to establish the most in-demand mode of study. Ask questions. Get to know your potential market.

D. Consider steering A+ students on to other courses at your establishment (e.g. CCNA, or your HNC/HND/Degree courses).

4

Once demand is evident, **document course implementation** in line with the requirements of your own establishment — course materials, timetables, budget, etc. Present to college management for approval.

5

**Assess potential funding available to your establishment** (see insert).

6

Join **CompTIA through the E2C (Education to Careers™) programme**, to enable your college or school to get the most out of the delivery of this qualification.

7

**Appoint or delegate to an enthusiastic staff member, the role of course leader/supervisor, to manage the process at your college or school.** It is recommended that trainers should have passed the A+ examination themselves. Members of the E2C programme receive free testing vouchers for instructors when they join.

8

**Market the training you offer, highlighting the desirability of A+ certification in the job market.** Don't forget to mention progression — offer the full range of certifications if possible. Use the CompTIA branding kit so students can easily identify with the courses.

9

**Establish contacts with local businesses' ICT departments.** Their input can provide you with a perspective on employers' needs, links to their own contact base, referrals, opportunities to obtain surplus equipment, work placements, and mentoring.

10

**Recruit students**  
See Appendix A for suggested prerequisites.

11

**Prepare the classroom/lab:** See Appendix B for Teacher/Lab resources, configurations and additional lab components.

12

**Look out for unwanted and surplus computers.** CompTIA is developing information on sources of computers for teardown. See the CompTIA Web site for the latest information.

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**For further information about CompTIA membership and certifications, please e-mail [e2cuk@comptia.org](mailto:e2cuk@comptia.org) or call 020.7743.6153.**

## APPENDIX A

### Suggested student prerequisites for A+

Students who would benefit from such a course are those with an interest in a computer related field, and those who are looking for a career change into a computer related field. Technicians already working in such a field will benefit from the confirmation of their skill level as a result of completion of this certification.

Prerequisites for the course could include: computer literacy or basic familiarity with a computer, and good reading skills.

You may wish to use a test preparation programme to assess the level of knowledge of the potential student (e.g. Self Test Software). If your group of students is already IT literate, this may enable you to deliver the A+ qualification in a shorter time by avoiding repetition.

## APPENDIX B – RESOURCES

### Classroom/Lab

This course is best taught in a computer lab with Internet access. The Web is a great source of technical information and when you are teaching the operating systems part of the course, access to computers is necessary.

If another room for lab work is available, then the computer hardware part of the class can be taught in this classroom. One lab computer for every two students is an ideal situation but many classes have up to three to four students per lab computer. Lab computers do not need to be the latest or newest systems, but it helps if they are all identical. It is recommended that you do not use the computers used by other classes as students may tear down the machines. You should have a supply of redundant computers for this task, and CompTIA is working to establish sources of supply for this equipment.

### Teacher Resources

- One LCD Projector (or TV with hook-up to computer)
- Workstation hooked up to network (both LAN and Net) with CD-Rom and CD burner for making copies of CDs and for collecting/showing student work and using teacher CDs that come with texts.

### Lab Resources

- Computers on LAN with Internet access — suggested ratio of one for every student (for theory work).
- One server to save class work (student presentations etc.)
- One lab area with tables, electrical outlets, extra network jacks and, if possible, elevated storage shelves for routers, switches and monitors.
- One or two storage cabinets for tools and consumables.
- Storage area for lab computers and spare parts (shelving, cabinet etc.)
- Lab (tear-down) computers — suggested ratio of one for every two students.

### Lab Computer Configuration

- Old computers are acceptable, but a common configuration among all computers makes teaching the class easier.
- Computer with separate video, sound, network (Ethernet/Combo) cards
- Hard drive over 1 gig
- CD-Rom 32X or bigger
- 3 1/2" floppy drive
- Windows 98, XP or 2000 Operating System
- Keyboard and mouse
- Laser and inkjet printers

### Additional Lab Components

- Extra hard drives
- Additional memory to install into lab computers
- Some SCSI cards with SCSI devices
- Network hubs
- Network Ethernet patch cables
- Network Thinnet Coaxial cables (along with terminals and T-connectors)
- Network crossover cables
- DCC cables (serial or parallel)
- Digital multi-metres with extra fuses and batteries
- Anti-static wrist straps (one per student)
- Small toolkit for each lab group that includes: screwdrivers +/-, star, multiple head etc., crimpers, needle-nose pliers, cable cutters, electrical tape, small ruler, black felt pen, masking tape, small jar for screws, inexpensive cable tester, and torch
- Anti-virus software
- Extra computers or components to replace damaged equipment

### Courseware

There are many courseware providers of A+ materials. CompTIA recommends that you use approved courseware (CAQC™ stamped courseware — see [www.comptia.org/caqc](http://www.comptia.org/caqc) for full list of approved courseware) as this confirms that the courseware meets CompTIA certification objectives.

Examples of these are:

- Gts Learning
- Sybex
- McGraw Hill
- Selftest Software
- Cisco sponsored curriculum IT Essentials 1

### TESTING

To enable your students and others to be tested at your site, consider becoming a Testing Centre. Contact [www.pearsonvue.com](http://www.pearsonvue.com) or [www.prometric.com/sites/](http://www.prometric.com/sites/) to find out how this can be achieved.

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### THIS INFORMATION WAS PUT TOGETHER BY:

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Bridgend College  
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Cornwall College St. Austell  
Deanery High School  
Gateshead City Learning Centre

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# funding for colleges

## Funding a CompTIA A+® Course

With the development of VRQs (Vocationally Related Qualifications), it is now possible for colleges to claim LSC funding for delivery of CompTIA A+ courses, as well as courses for various other vendor certifications. Some of the new VRQs (specifically the City & Guilds e-Quals Diploma in Systems Support and the OCR iPRO Certificate for IT Practitioners) allow A+ to be delivered as a single embedded unit within the qualification.

While it has previously been possible to deliver funded training towards the A+ qualification by mapping the objectives to those of a QCA-approved qualification such as the OCR Certificate in Computer Maintenance and Installation, this approach had two main drawbacks. First, the mapping of objectives was often complex and rarely exact, meaning that some course content may not be relevant in the context of the certification exams, but would still have to be delivered as part of the funded course. Second, and perhaps more important, students were required to pass two sets of assessment: one for the funded course and one for the certification.

The main advantage offered by the use of VRQs in the funding of vendor certification programmes is that the vendor certification exams are now recognised as the method of assessment for units of the funded qualification. This solves both of the problems previously mentioned, in that the syllabus for the unit must exactly match the exam objectives, so no mapping is required, and as the certification exams are also assessing the VRQ unit, no additional assessment is required.

In the case of CompTIA A+ certification, there are now two awarding bodies offering this certification as an embedded unit. These are City & Guilds (as part of the e-Quals suite) and OCR (in the iPRO suite). Additionally, Edexcel are ostensibly supporting A+ within the BTEC National Diploma for IT Practitioners, but this is mapped rather than embedded, so it suffers from the drawbacks outlined above.

In choosing between the City & Guilds and OCR qualifications as a funding vehicle for an A+ course, the following points should be considered:

- Both the OCR iPRO programme and City & Guilds Systems Support Diploma offer unit certification for the embedded A+ module.
- If you choose to run a full qualification rather than a single module, the additional modules required for the City & Guilds e-Quals programme map more closely to the A+ content than do those of the OCR iPRO programme.
- If considering progression routes, the OCR iPRO programme contains more embedded vendor-certified modules than the City & Guilds e-Quals programme, providing a smoother progression to Network+™, CCNA and MCP.
- The OCR iPRO suite is listed, so can be delivered over a shorter time without losing funding. NB. The City & Guilds e-Quals Systems Support Diploma A+ route is likely to become listed in due course.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE SUMMARISES THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE QUALIFICATIONS

|                | OCR iPRO                                                                                                                                                                                             | City & Guilds e-Quals                                                                                                                                                                                  | BTEC National Diploma                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| advantages     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedded, not mapped</li> <li>Offers unit accreditation</li> <li>Flexible additional modules for full programme</li> <li>Best multi-vendor support</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedded, not mapped</li> <li>Additional modules for full programme map well to A+ content</li> <li>Offers unit accreditation</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large listed programme attracts more funding</li> <li>Possibility of developing single, large multi-vendor course</li> </ul>                                             |
| disadvantages  |                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No flexibility in choice of modules for full programme</li> </ul>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex mapping required</li> <li>A+ not a single unit, so unitisation impractical</li> <li>Majority of content of full programme not directly relevant to A+</li> </ul> |
| consider if... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You want to deliver a pure A+ course, especially if using standard courseware</li> </ul>                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your students do not qualify for unitisation (i.e. under 19)</li> <li>Your students lack experience so will benefit from extra guided learning hours</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You already offer the BTEC qualification and want to make A+ available to students on this course</li> </ul>                                                             |

The amount of funding received per student depends on various factors, but mainly on the number of guided learning hours (GLH) delivered on the programme. While there is some scope for variation, this should not greatly exceed the recommended GLH specified for the awarding body. Both City & Guilds and OCR recommend 120 hours for the embedded A+ module, or 240 hours for a complete programme. As both courses are funded at programme weighting B, this gives a total of £764 for the A+ embedded unit alone, or £1284 for either complete programme. This is broken down as follows:

|                                     | assumed fee | programme funding | achievement | total   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|---------|
| <b>A+ Unit*</b>                     | £170        | £518              | £76         | £764    |
| <b>OCR iPRO Full Level 2</b>        | £286        | £870              | £128        | £1284   |
| <b>C&amp;G e-Quals Full Diploma</b> | £286        | £870              | £128        | £1284** |

\* Note that only adult learners are eligible for unit funding; under 19s must complete a full programme

\*\* Assuming 240 GLH

Note that each element of the funding is conditional. Specifically:

- The assumed fee will generally be withheld, as it is assumed that the student pays this portion. However, the assumed fee will be paid by the LSC if the college waives the fee due to the student qualifying for fee remission. The main categories of students who qualify are 16-18 year-olds, students receiving Jobseekers' Allowance or income-based benefits or their unwaged dependants, and asylum-seekers in receipt of equivalent benefits.
- The base funding is conditional on the student completing the course. Where the student withdraws before the end, funding will be paid based on the amount of the course attended.
- The achievement funding is subject to the student passing the qualification. In the case of the unitised qualification, this means achieving the A+ certification. For students on a full programme, the A+ certification and two additional units must all be passed.

It should also be noted that these calculations represent the most general case. Funding may be increased further, depending on the circumstances of the individual student (disadvantage uplift) and the location of the college (area cost uplift). Uplift values vary with individual circumstances.

Finally, when claiming LSC funding, it is important to use the correct Learning Aim Reference (LAR) on the college's Individualised Learner Record (ILR). The LAR for a unitised A+ is CUNA206B. The LAR for the complete iPRO level 2 qualification is 10030864. The LAR for the City & Guilds e-Quals Diploma with embedded A+ module is 10015875.

If you would like further information, then please contact Mark Waldron, New Technology Centre Manager, at South East Essex College at [mark.waldron@southend.ac.uk](mailto:mark.waldron@southend.ac.uk) or on 017.0222.0400.

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