

Secure Communications

Week 9


Trust and Digital Certificates

Sections

A. Introduction

A.1 <http://asecuritysite.com/encryption/digitalcert>

Certificate 1

 **Digital Certificates**

[\[Encryption Home\]](#)[\[Home\]](#)

Digital certificates are used to carry the public/private key (which is kept secret). They are typically used to store the key pair, or, once the private key is stripped-off, they are used to authenticate an entity (by gaining access to the public key). The typical formats are IKE; - PKCS #; - PKCS #10; and X.509v3 certificates. To load the certificate press the button.

Load Example 1	Download Certificate	Load Example 2	Download Certificate
Load Example 3	Download Certificate	Load Example 4	Download Certificate
Load Example 5	Download Certificate	Load Example 6	Download Certificate

The results are then:

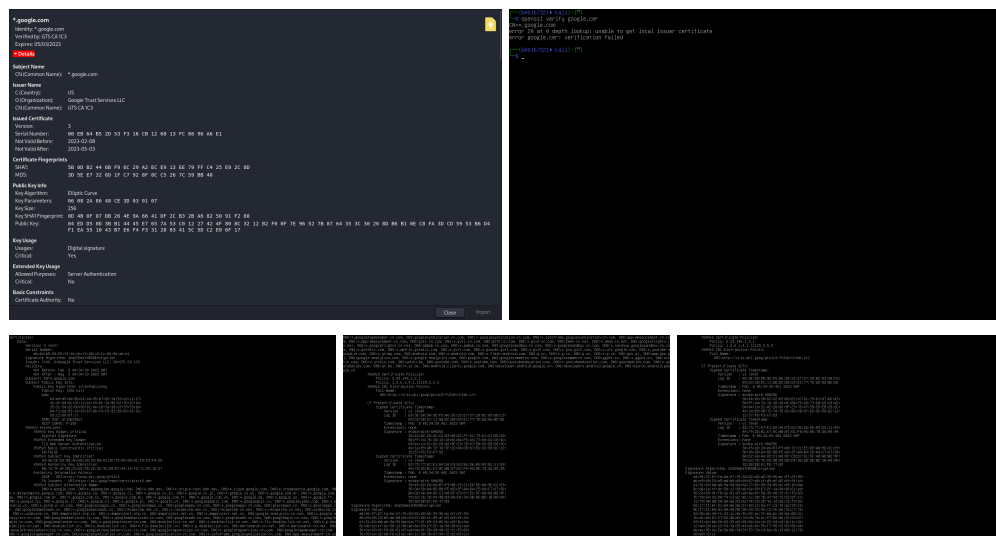
Message:	
Serial number:	702958
Effective date:	4/24/2008 8:18:42 PM
Name:	CN=Fred Smith, OU=None, E=fred@home, O=Nowhere, L=Edinburgh, S=Lothian, C=GB
Public key:	30818902818100CA62FB39A9A62A78DB144F6AF8E18C90BCA897F5742ECB279023F3F8805EE5A67352A4F859C10EE21854A2CED8D4D57998C0B77B6AB415E81748D23A56EA3D9DEC2352AA58877EBBADE65DC0226CC0CD16EC29BAC07E0B8BC94E6FE1E3077AAB7AF051CE64F94EA2CFAE65BE1CD76D7181A72BD4D7E469A8F7AB014F5E5F1E10203010001
Public key algorithm:	1.2.840.113549.1.1.1
Issuer Name:	CN=Fred Smith, OU=None, E=fred@home, O=Nowhere, L=Edinburgh, S=Lothian, C=GB
Base-64 format:	-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE----- MIICpDCCAg2gAwIBAgIDcCLYMA0GCSqGSIb3DQEBBQUAMIGDMQswCQYDVQQGEWJH QjEQMA4GA1UECBMTG90aG1hbjESMBAGA1UEBxMJRWRpbmJlcmdoMRAwDgYDVQQK EwdOb3doZXJlMRgwFgYJKoZIhvcNAQkBFglmcmVkbWUxDTALBgNVBAsTBTE5v

Serial number:	702958
Effective date:	4/24/2008 8:18:42 PM
Name:	CN=Fred Smith, OU=None, E=fred@home, O=Nowhere, L=Edinburgh, S=Lothian, C=GB
Issuer:	CN=Fred Smith, OU=None, E=fred@home, O=Nowhere, L=Edinburgh, S=Lothian, C=GB
What is CN used	The Common Name – the primary name of the certificate

for:	holder, typically the domain name or person's name
What is ON used for:	Organizational Unit – identifies the department or group within the organization
What is O used for:	Organization – the company or legal entity owning the certificate
What is L used for:	Locality – the city where the organization or certificate owner is located

A.2 `openssl x509 -inform der -in [filename].der -noout -text`
`openssl verify google.cer`

Certificate 3



What other information can you gain from the certificate:	Signature Algorithm: sha256WithRSAEncryption Issuer: Google Trust Services LLC (GTS CA 1C3) Key Usage: Digital Signature Extended Key Usage: TLS Web Server Authentication
What is the size of the public key:	Public-Key: (256 bit) <i>256-bit EC (elliptic curve), curve prime256v1 / NIST P-256</i>
Which hashing method has been used:	Signature Algorithm: sha256WithRSAEncryption <i>SHA-256</i>
Is the certificate trusted on your system:	error google.cer: verification failed <i>No</i>

A.3 `openssl s_client -connect www.live.com:443`

```
openssl s_client -connect www.live.com:443
CONNECTED(00000000)
00000000>
SSL handshake has read 3881 bytes and written 2003 bytes
New TLS session with TLSv1.2
TLSv1.2 Cipher is TLS_AES_256_GCM_SHA384
TLSv1.2 Hmac is SHA384
TLSv1.2 Compression is NONE
TLSv1.2 Extension is renegotiation
TLSv1.2 Session ID is 00000000
TLSv1.2 Session ID length is 0
TLSv1.2 Session ID is 00000000
Verify return code: 0 (ok)
```

Certificate Chain (from leaf → root):

1. Leaf certificate (server certificate)
 - CN = outlook.live.com
 - O = Microsoft Corporation
 - Issued by DigiCert Cloud Services CA-1
2. Intermediate CA
 - CN = DigiCert Cloud Services CA-1
 - Issued by DigiCert Global Root CA
3. Root CA
 - CN = DigiCert Global Root CA
 - Self-signed (trusted root)

Subject(Leaf Certificate):

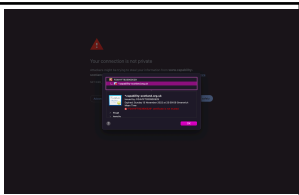
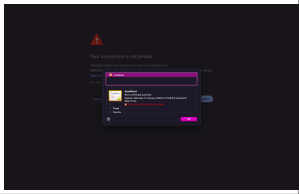
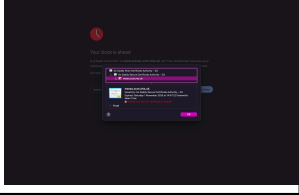
subject=C=US, ST=Washington, L=Redmond, O=Microsoft Corporation, CN=outlook.live.com

Issuer(Leaf Certificate):

issuer=C=US, O=DigiCert Inc, CN=DigiCert Cloud Services CA-1

A.4 A scan, at the time, on health and social care sites from the following page showed problems in digital certificates:

<https://bit.ly/2EkUvX0>

https://www.capability-scotland.org.uk	Expired: Sunday 13 November 2022 at 23:59:59	
https://www.heartstroketayside.org.uk	localhost (is not trusted) Root certificate authority	
https://www.travax.scot.nhs.uk	Expired: Saturday 1 November 2025 at 14:57:22	

<p>https://www.capability-scotland.org.uk</p> <p>ssllabs this website</p>	<p>Sun, 13 Nov 2022 23:59:59 UTC (expired 2 years and 11 months ago) EXPIRED</p>	 <p>T Rating</p>
<p>https://www.heartstroketayside.org.uk</p>	<p>Alternative names - INVALID</p>	 <p>T Rating</p>

Cert	Organisation (Issued to)	Date range when valid	Size of public key	Issuer	Root CA	Hash method	Is it trusted?
2	No One / Nowhere Ltd (CN=No One)	Oct 29 2011 – Oct 28 2013	1024-bit RSA	No One (self-signed)	None (self-signed)	sha1WithRSAEncryption	No
3	Google (CN=*.google.com)	Feb 08 2023 – May 03 2023	256-bit EC (P-256)	GTS CA 1C3	Google Trust Services Root	sha256WithRSAEncryption	No
4	Cisco Systems (CN=www.cisco.com)	Jul 10 2012 – Jul 11 2013	1024-bit RSA	VeriSign Class 3 Secure Server CA - G3	VeriSign Root	sha1WithRSAEncryption	No
5	Microsoft Corporation (CN=microsoft.com)	Jan 13 2023 – Jan 08 2024	2048-bit RSA	Microsoft Azure TLS Issuing CA 05	Microsoft Root CA	sha384WithRSAEncryption	No
6	Oracle Corporation (CN=oracle.com)	Feb 14 2023 – Feb 26 2024	2048-bit RSA	DigiCert TLS RSA SHA256 2020 CA1	DigiCert Root	sha256WithRSAEncryption	No

<http://asecuritysite.com/der.zip>

[illegible]

B. Creating certificates

B.1 `openssl genrsa -out ca.key 2048`

Create a Private Key for CA using OpenSSL

- `genrsa` → generates an RSA private key
- `-out ca.key` → saves the key to a file named `ca.key`
- `2048` → key length in bits (can be 4096 for higher security)

```
(b00167321@kali)~$  
$ openssl genrsa -out ca.key 2048  
(b00167321@kali)~$  
$
```

- **A 2048-bit RSA private key stored in `ca.key`**
- **This key will be used to sign other certificates** (it is the Root CA's private key)

This command generates a new RSA private key for the Certificate Authority (CA). `genrsa` creates an unencrypted key, and `-out ca.key` saves it as a file

B.2 `openssl req -new -x509 -days 1826 -key ca.key -out ca.crt`

Generate the certificate using OpenSSL

- `req` → create a certificate request
- `-new -x509` → generate a self-signed X.509 certificate
- `-days 1826` → certificate validity (5 years)
- `-key ca.key` → use the private key created earlier
- `-out ca.crt` → output file (the new CA certificate)

```

kali@kali:~$ openssl req -new -x509 -days 1826 -key ca.key -out ca.crt
You are about to be asked to enter information that will be incorporated
into your certificate request.
What you are about to enter is what is called a Distinguished Name or a DN.
There are quite a few fields but you can leave some blank.
For some fields there will be a default value,
If you enter '.', the field will be left blank.
-----
Country Name (2 letter code) [AU]:
State or Province Name (full name) [Some-State]:
Locality Name (eg, city) []:
Organization Name (eg, company) [Internet Widgits Pty Ltd]:
Organizational Unit Name (eg, section) []:
Common Name (e.g. server FQDN or YOUR name) []:
Email Address []:

```

- **Generated a self-signed CA certificate valid for 1826 days**
- **Output file: ca.crt**
- **This certificate includes the public key + issuer information**

This creates the Root Certificate.

Because no external CA signs it, `-x509` makes it self-signed, meaning it signs itself using `ca.key`.

B.3 `openssl genrsa -out ia.key 2048`

Generate a private key using OpenSSL

- `genrsa` → generates an RSA private key
- `-out ia.key` → saves the key to a file named `ia.key`
- `2048` → key length in bits (can be 4096 for higher security)

```

kali@kali:~$ openssl genrsa -out ia.key 2048
kali@kali:~$

```

- **Created a 2048-bit RSA private key for the intermediate authority**
- **File `ia.key` will be used to create a CSR next**

This is the private key for the subordinate CA, also called "Intermediate CA."

B.4 `openssl req -new -key ia.key -out ia.csr`

We now create a Certificate Signing Request (CSR) — a file containing identity details and the public key.

- `req -new` → creates a new certificate request
- `-key ia.key` → uses the subordinate CA's private key
- `-out ia.csr` → saves the request in ia.csr

```
(b00167321@kali) ~  
└─$ openssl req -new -key ia.key -out ia.csr  
You are about to be asked to enter information that will be incorporated  
into your certificate request.  
What you are about to enter is what is called a Distinguished Name or a DN.  
There are quite a few fields but you can leave some blank.  
For some fields there will be a default value,  
If you enter '.', the field will be left blank.  
-----  
Country Name (2 letter code) [AU]:  
State or Province Name (full name) [Some-State]:  
Locality Name (eg, city) []:  
Organization Name (eg, company) [Internet Widgits Pty Ltd]:  
Organizational Unit Name (eg, section) []:  
Common Name (e.g. server FQDN or YOUR name) []:  
Email Address []:  
  
Please enter the following 'extra' attributes  
to be sent with your certificate request  
A challenge password []:  
An optional company name []:  
  
(b00167321@kali) ~  
└─$
```

→ **Output file: ia.csr**

→ **Contains:**

- **Intermediate CA's public key**
- **Identity information**
- **Intended certificate fields**

A CSR is like an "application form" sent to a CA to request a certificate.

It contains the public key and subject (organisation) information, but not a signature yet.

B.5 `cat ia.csr | openssl req -in ia.csr -noout -text`

After generating the CSR, we can open it to view its encoded content

The CSR begins with

-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE REQUEST-----

and ends with

-----END CERTIFICATE REQUEST-----

- Req: This subcommand handles certificate requests (CSRs). It can both create and inspect them
- `-in ia.csr`: Tells OpenSSL to read input from the file `ia.csr` — our CSR file
- `-noout`: Means “don’t output the encoded base64 content again.” Without this, OpenSSL would print both the base64 data and the decoded info
- `-text`: Displays the decoded details of the CSR in a human-readable format

(END)

- **Subject information (organisation, common name)**

- **Public Key (2048-bit RSA)**
- **Signature (CSR signature)**
- **Algorithm used**
- **Proof the CSR was signed using ia.key**

-text makes the CSR human-readable.

This confirms what information will appear in the issued certificate.

B.6 `openssl x509 -req -days 730 -in ia.csr -CA ca.crt -CAkey ca.key -set_serial 01 -out ia.crt`

Use the Root CA to issue a certificate for the Intermediate CA

- `-req` → process a certificate signing request
- `-days 730` → validity period (2 years)
- `-CA` & `-CAkey` → specify the Root CA's certificate and private key
- `-out ia.crt` → output subordinate certificate

```
(b00167321@kali) ~$ openssl x509 -req -days 730 -in ia.csr -CA ca.crt -CAkey ca.key -set_serial 01 -out ia.crt
Certificate request self-signature ok
subject=C=AU, ST=Some-State, O=Internet Widgits Pty Ltd
(b00167321@kali) ~$
```

- **Output: ia.crt (Intermediate CA certificate)**
- **Valid for 730 days (2 years)**
- **Signed by the Root CA (ca.crt + ca.key)**
- **The certificate now has:**
 - **Issuer: Root CA**
 - **Subject: Intermediate CA**

This step turns the CSR into a real certificate.

It is signed by the Root CA, establishing a trust chain.

B.7 `openssl pkcs12 -export -out ia.p12 -inkey ia.key -in ia.crt -chain -CAfile ca.crt`

To combine the key, certificate, and chain into a single file

- Used for digital signing and verification (e.g., code signing)
 - `ca.key`
 - `ca.crt`
 - `ia.key`
 - `ia.crt`

```

kali@kali:~$ openssl pkcs12 -export -out ia.p12 -inkey ia.key -in ia.crt -chain -CAfile ca.crt
Enter Export Password:
Verifying - Enter Export Password:
kali@kali:~$

```

→ **Created a file: ia.p12**

→ **Contains:**

- **Intermediate CA private key**
- **Intermediate CA certificate**
- **Root CA certificate (the chain)**

PKCS#12 files (.p12 or .pfx) are used for:

- Importing keys into browsers or servers
- Code signing
- TLS authentication

This bundles everything into one password-protected file.

B.8 `openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ca.crt - out ca.cer`
`openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ia.crt - out ia.cer`

Convert binary .crt to Base64 .cer for email or web use

```

kali@kali:~$ openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ca.crt -out ca.cer
kali@kali:~$ openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ia.crt -out ia.cer
kali@kali:~$

```

- **ca.cer and ia.cer created in Base64 (PEM) format**
- **These are easier to distribute or email**
- **Same certificate data, different encoding**

PEM format (.cer) is Base64 encoded and includes the header lines:

```
-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE-----
```

```
-----END CERTIFICATE-----
```

This makes the certificate readable and portable.

Lab 4: Trust and Digital Certificates

Objective: Digital certificates are used to define a trust infrastructure within PKI (Public Key Infrastructure). A certificate can hold a key pair, while a distributable certificate will only contain the public key. In this lab we will read-in digital certificates and analyse them.

Lab demo: <https://youtu.be/-uNQFv0GTZE>

A Introduction

No	Description	Result
A.1	From: http://asecuritysite.com/encryption/digitalcert Web link (Digital Certificate): Open up Certificate 1 and identify the following:	Serial number: 92350 Effective date: 4/24/2008 8:18:42 PM Name: Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera Issuer: Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera What is CN used for: What is ON used for: What is O used for: What is L used for:
A.2	Now open-up the ZIP file for the certificate (Certificate 3), and view the DER file. Which hashing method has been used: Is the certificate trusted on your system: [Yes] [No]	What other information can you gain from the certificate: What is the size of the public key: 2048 bits Is the certificate trusted on your system: [Yes] [No]
A.3	Make a connection to the www.live.com Web site: <code>openssl s_client -connect www.live.com:443</code>	Can you identify the certificate chain? [Yes] What is the subject on the certificate? Who is the issuer on the certificate?
A.4	Google moved in July 2018 to mark sites as being insecure if they did not have a match between their digital certificate and the site. A scan, at the time, on health and social care sites	Outline three sites that still have problems with their digital certificate, and the reason for the problem (you perhaps should try Chrome to assess):

1

from the following page showed problems in digital certificates:

<https://bit.ly/2EKUvX0>

Pick two sites that you feel are not setup properly for their digital certificate, and then run a scan from SSL Labs (www.ssllabs.com). Identify the problems that they have with their digital certificate:

What are their SSL Labs rating?

Can you find a site with an "A" rating?

A.5 Which the certificates in A.2, for Example 2 to Example 6. Complete the following table:

Cert	Organisation (Issued to)	Date range when valid	Size of public key	Issuer	Root CA	Hash method	Is it trusted?
2	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	4/24/2008 - 8/18/42 PM	2048 bits	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	SHA-256	Yes
3	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	4/24/2008 - 8/18/42 PM	2048 bits	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	SHA-256	Yes
4	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	4/24/2008 - 8/18/42 PM	2048 bits	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	SHA-256	Yes
5	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	4/24/2008 - 8/18/42 PM	2048 bits	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	SHA-256	Yes

2

6	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	4/24/2008 - 8/18/42 PM	2048 bits	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	Google Search, Windows, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, Opera	SHA-256	Yes
---	---	------------------------	-----------	---	---	---------	-----

A.6 Now download the DER files from:

Web link (Digital Certificate): <http://asecuritysite.com/der>

Now use openssl to read the certificates:

`openssl x509 -inform der -in [certname] -noout -text`

B Creating certificates

Now we will create our own self-signed certificates.

- Step 1: Create a Private Key for the CA (MegaCorp)
- Step 2: Create a Self-Signed Certificate for the CA (MegaCorp)
- Step 3: Create a Subordinate (Intermediate) CA
- Step 4: Generate a CSR for the Subordinate CA
- Step 5: Inspect the CSR File
- Step 6: Root CA Signs the Intermediate CA's CSR
- Step 7: Create a PKCS#12 File for Signing
- Step 8: Convert Between Formats

No	Description	Result
B.1	Create a Private Key for CA. Can do this using OpenSSL: <code>openssl genrsa -out ca.key 2048</code> - genrsa → generates an RSA private key - -out ca.key → saves the key to a file named ca.key 2048 → key length in bits (can be 4096 for higher security)	Created a self-signed CA certificate valid for 365 days. The CA certificate is saved to ca.crt. The CA private key is saved to ca.key.
B.2	You can generate the certificate using OpenSSL: <code>openssl req -new -x509 -days 1826 -key ca.key -out ca.crt</code> Explanation: - req → create a certificate request - -new -x509 → generate a self-signed X.509 certificate - -days 1826 → certificate validity (5 years) - -key ca.key → use the private key created earlier - -out ca.crt → output file (the new CA certificate)	Created a self-signed CA certificate valid for 1826 days. The CA certificate is saved to ca.crt. The CA private key is saved to ca.key.
B.3	You can generate a private key using OpenSSL: <code>openssl genrsa -out ia.key 2048</code> Explanation:	Created a 2048-bit RSA private key for the intermediate CA. The private key is saved to ia.key.

3

B.4	We now create a Certificate Signing Request (CSR) — a file containing identity details and the public key. <code>openssl req -new -key ia.key -out ia.csr</code> Explanation: - req -new → creates a new certificate request - -key ia.key → uses the subordinate CA's private key - -out ia.csr → saves the request in ia.csr	Created CSR: ia.csr The CSR contains the public key and identity details. The CSR is saved to ia.csr.
B.5	After generating the CSR, you can open it to view its encoded content: <code>cat ia.csr</code> Explanation: - The CSR begins with -----BEGIN CERTIFICATE REQUEST----- - and ends with -----END CERTIFICATE REQUEST----- -openssl req -in ia.csr -noout -text Explanation: -openssl: The OpenSSL command-line tool (used for cryptography, keys, and certificates). -req: This subcommand handles certificate requests (CSRs). It can both create and inspect them. -in ia.csr: Tells OpenSSL to read input from the file ia.csr → your CSR file. -noout: Means "don't output the encoded base64 content again." Without this, OpenSSL would print both the base64 data and the decoded info. -text: Displays the decoded details of the CSR in a human-readable format.	Viewed the content of the CSR file. The CSR begins with -----BEGIN CERTIFICATE REQUEST----- The CSR ends with -----END CERTIFICATE REQUEST-----
B.6	Use the Root CA to issue a certificate for the Intermediate CA: <code>openssl x509 -req -days 730 -in ia.csr -CA ca.crt -CAkey ca.key -set_serial 01 -out ia.crt</code> Explanation: - -req → process a certificate signing request - -days 730 → validity period (2 years)	Created a certificate for the intermediate CA. The certificate is saved to ia.crt. The certificate is valid for 730 days.

4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-CA & -CAkey → specify the Root CA's certificate and private key-out ia.crt → output subordinate certificate	
B.7	<p>To combine the key, certificate, and chain into a single file:</p> <pre>openssl pkcs12 -export -out ia.p12 -inkey ia.key -in ia.crt -chain -CAfile ca.crt</pre> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used for digital signing and verification (e.g., code signing).- ca.key- ca.crt- ia.key- ia.crt	<pre>openssl pkcs12 -export -out ia.p12 -inkey ia.key -in ia.crt -chain -CAfile ca.crt</pre>
B.8	<p>Convert binary .crt to Base64 .cer for email or web use:</p> <pre>openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ca.crt -out ca.cer</pre> <pre>openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ia.crt -out ia.cer</pre>	<pre>openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ca.crt -out ca.cer</pre> <pre>openssl x509 -inform pem -outform pem -in ia.crt -out ia.cer</pre>

What I should have learnt from this lab?

The key things learnt:

- Understand how digital certificates are generated and ported onto systems.
- Identifying problems with digital certificates on sites.