Microsoft Certified Azure Developer Associate

AZ-204

# Introduction

Studying for certifications is a crucial activity for any IT or development professional. If you're used to working with one piece of technology daily, you may be very good with that technology, but there are certain aspects of it that you may not work with. Certification studying helps fill in the gaps. And when you're starting out in your career, certifications are a great way to get something on a resume that shows you have basic knowledge of the specific technology used.

Microsoft is now going in the direction of career-focused certifications rather than certifications for specific technologies. The Certified Azure Developer Associate (AZ-204) certification is for someone who wants to become or is a developer. The core technologies used are Azure SDKs, serverless, containerization, security, and automation. Instead of focusing solely on a piece of technology, the certification is focused on the tools that will help you either fill in the Azure developer gaps or learn to become a developer in Azure.

In this guide, you will learn everything you need to know to help you prepare for the Certified Azure Developer Associate certification.

# Prerequisites

Microsoft recommends the following prerequisites for the AZ-204:

Candidates should have at least one to two years of professional experience in the development of cloud solutions and Microsoft Azure.

Candidates should have promising fluency in programming in a high-level programming language supported by Azure.

Having one to two years of experience with Azure doesn't necessarily mean you have to have worked with it in a professional environment. If you are using Azure in a lab environment, testing it at home, and learning about it by getting hands-on experience, you will have a solid understanding of the platform for taking the test.

If you do not have any hands-on experience in Azure, it is highly recommended to start doing labs in Azure. Azure has a 30-day free trial, which you can find [here](https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/free/). Once the free trial is complete, you can use a Pay-As-You-Go subscription, which means you only get charged for what you use. The trick to using the Pay-As-You-Go subscription is to delete all of the Azure resources once you are done doing labs. That way you don't run into high billing issues.

Who the certification is for?

The AZ-204 is for anyone that wants to:

Learn how to become a better developer

Learn how to become a developer in Azure

Fill in knowledge gaps

Learning to become a better developer can be quite difficult. There are tons of beginner projects out there, and it can be cumbersome and confusing to choose between them. Following specific steps like certifications can certainly help. Azure maps out the exact steps you need to take and what steps lead to which result. If you google the domains of the certification, for example, there are tons of Microsoft documents that walk through the code and how to use it.

Let's say you are already a developer, perhaps working on a different platform such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), and you're moving to Azure. Going through a certification path can be an excellent way to get yourself up to speed with the current Azure technology stack and how to put your development abilities to use.

# The Exam

The AZ-204 exam was recently updated by Microsoft and was considered beta until the end of May 2020. It is one exam, so you only have to take one test. The exam can be taken either on-site at a proctored testing facility or in the comfort of your home. If you decide to take it at home, ensure that you have a webcam and can show your room or office to the online proctor.

# Skills Measured

The AZ-204 exam covers the following domains:

Develop Azure compute solutions (25-30%)

Develop for Azure storage (10-15%)

Implement Azure security (15-20%)

Monitor, troubleshoot, and optimize Azure solutions (10-15%)

Connect to and consume Azure services and third-party services (25-30%)

The purpose of these areas is to ensure that you understand how to be a developer on the Azure platform. This means that you need to know Azure SDKs, computing solutions in an automated way, such as how to automate the creation of a virtual machine, storage, security, and monitoring. You also need to understand how to tie third-party services into Azure.

The AZ-204 exam takes 40 to 60 minutes to complete. As of right now with the beta exam, it is an exam of multiple-choice and multi-select questions. The registration fee to take this test either from home or in a testing center is $165.00 USD.

Although this is not a complete list, expect to be tested on automation, Azure SDKs, Azure development (the most popular appear to be Azure CLI, PowerShell, JavaScript, and C#), serverless, and monitoring.

# Certification Path

The AZ-204 is one certification in a larger path. It is considered an associate exam and there is a subsequent expert exam. The expert exam on this path is the AZ-400, which is the DevOps Expert certification. Although the AZ-400 is not needed, if you want to take the next step, the AZ-400 is the appropriate direction.

How you study for the AZ-204 exam will depend on your study habits and how you learn best. Some studies on how humans retain information suggest that 30 minutes to an hour a day is a good amount.

When you are studying daily for the AZ-204, ensure that you:

Do labs while reading

Watch videos and read to get two aspects of learning, both visual and auditory

Read Microsoft documentation on each exam objective. Almost all of the Microsoft documentation contains hands-on labs, which are crucial when studying for the test.

As this is a beta exam, there are no official study guides out at the moment, but one accurate study guide you could use is [Thomas Maurer's](https://www.thomasmaurer.ch/2020/03/az-204-study-guide-developing-solutions-for-microsoft-azure/).

Although it is not available yet, Pluralsight is creating a learning path specifically for the AZ-204 that will be released in the coming months.

# Compensation and Employment Outlook

The average salary for an Azure developer starts around $40,000 and ranges to $170,000. Your salary will depend partly on your location. If you live in a higher paid location, say New York City, expect a six-figure salary, depending on experience.

Those with senior-level Azure developer roles understand the development aspects, and most of the other Azure services, extremely well. They are typically leaders of engineering departments and go-to professionals for any Azure development related issues.

Compensation will also depend on your industry experience. If you are just starting out, don't assume you will start out at a six-figure salary. The more experience you have under your belt, the better your reward.

There are over 3,000 jobs currently on LinkedIn and Indeed for individuals who are Azure certified. Although this certification will not guarantee you a job, it will certainly help you market yourself in the industry as an Azure Developer. Once you obtain the certification, it will also be easier to achieve success in Azure development from an academic perspective.

# Conclusion

The AZ-204 is a great place to start for any Azure developer. Whether you want to learn how to be a developer, understand the Azure platform a bit better, or transfer skills from one cloud platform to another, the AZ-204 is a perfect path to take.