

The Complete Guide to Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) Certification Exams



MOS University

BowTieLearning



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1. What are MOS certifications?

The purpose of Microsoft Office Specialist exams is to provide you with independent certification that you have proven, practical skills in the specific software in which you have taken an examination.

Exams are available for any one of the Microsoft Office products. When you pass any of the individual exams you are provided with a certificate and a MOS exam badge which authenticates your proficiency in that product.



The requirements for each exam are set out in the Objective Domain for that exam. This is simply a categorised list of the skills that you need to master in order to pass the exam. So Microsoft make it very clear what it is that they expect you to know if you are to be awarded the qualification. As an example, the Objective Domain for the Microsoft Excel 365/2019 exam is included in Appendix 1. Here you will see how the subject is split into various groups and sub-groups, with specific techniques associated with each element of the domain. In preparing for any MOS exam it is critically important that you are aware of the domain requirements and that you have covered every technique specified.

2. Are there different certification versions?

There are multiple versions of MOS certification, each of which correspond to a specific release of Microsoft Office. Exams are specific to the version of the software you choose to use in the exam. The most recent versions are those for Microsoft Office 2016 and for Microsoft Office 365/2019. (At the time of writing in 2021, the certifications for Office 2010 are about to be retired by Microsoft. Certifications last for many years.) Although there are slight differences in the available certifications we believe that both are equally valuable. The differences between the

versions of software are not very substantial. This means that your certified skills in any version will be equally valuable to an existing or prospective employer irrespective of the version of Office that they are currently using. If you are certified in Office 2016 you will have little difficulty in using the features of Office 365/2019 and vice versa.

Office 365/2019

For Office 365/2019, Associate or Expert level certifications are based on a specified **combination** of individual exams. However, **each individual exam** provides you with a certification in that particular software, either at the Associate or Expert level.

For example, the [MO-200](#) exam in Microsoft Excel 365/2019 demonstrates competency in the fundamentals of creating and managing worksheets and workbooks, creating cells and ranges, creating tables, applying formulas and functions and creating charts and objects. The exam covers the ability to create and edit a workbook with multiple sheets, and use a graphic element to represent data visually. Workbook examples include professional-looking budgets, financial statements, team performance charts, sales invoices, and data-entry logs. An individual earning this certification has proven competency at an industry associate-level and is ready to enter into the job market. They can demonstrate the correct application of the principal features of Excel and can complete tasks independently. So if you pass the [MO-200](#) exam you achieve the Excel Associate certification badge. Each piece of software has its own certification. These individual exams can be taken for any one of the Microsoft Office products.

When you **combine** individual exam certifications, such as the MO-200 certification, with other exam certifications, then you have the opportunity to achieve an overall [Microsoft Office Specialist](#) certification at Associate or Expert levels. That level of certification proves your ability in the complete

range of important Microsoft Office products. That's the key difference between individual software certification and the overall Microsoft Office certification.

To earn the **Microsoft Office Specialist: Associate certification**, you have pass any three of the following exams:

MO-100: Microsoft Word (Word and Word 2019)

MO-200: Microsoft Excel (Excel and Excel 2019)

MO-300: Microsoft PowerPoint (PowerPoint and PowerPoint 2019)

MO-400: Microsoft Outlook (Outlook and Outlook 2019)

To earn the **Microsoft Office Specialist: Expert certification**, you have to first earn a Microsoft Office Specialist Associate and then you have to pass any two of the following three Expert exams:

MO-101: Microsoft Word Expert (Word and Word 2019)

MO-201: Microsoft Excel Expert (Excel and Excel 2019)

MO-500: Microsoft Access Expert (Access and Access 2019)

Office 2016

If you are taking the exams based on Microsoft Office 2016, the certification designations are slightly different. For this version of Office, the first level of certification is known as Core certification (as opposed to Associate certification in the case of Office 365/2019). Individual certifications at Core level are available in all of the Office 2016 software products. Expert level certifications are available for Excel 2016 and Word 2016 but not for Access, which is only available as a Core certification.

The other principal difference is that Office 2016 provides you with an opportunity to obtain the **Microsoft Office Master certification**, which is the highest level of MOS certification for Office 2016. This is not available as an option with Office 365/2019.

In order to obtain Master Certification, you must pass each of three required exams:

77-726: Microsoft Word 2016 Expert

77-728: Microsoft Excel 2016 Expert

77-729: Microsoft PowerPoint 2016

You must also pass one of the following electives:

77-730: Microsoft Access 2016

77-740: Microsoft Outlook 2016

When you obtain the above listed certifications Microsoft will automatically award you the MOS Master certification, so you don't have to complete any additional requirements.

To view the detailed requirements and available courses for any of the above exams visit www.mosuniversity.com.

3. How do I organise to take an exam?

Exams are administered for Microsoft by a company called Certiport VUE. To take a MOS exam you must have a Certiport VUE test candidate account. You can register your candidacy at the following link:

<https://www.certiport.com/portal/SSL/Login.aspx>



Prior to the pandemic, MOS exams were only conducted in supervised exam centres. Most likely, when the current restrictions are relaxed, those centres will begin to operate

once again. If that is the case then you will be able to find an exam centre near your location by using the following link:

<https://www.certiport.com/locator>

This will allow you to find a physical test centre for your MOS exam.

However, under current restrictions, you can take a MOS exam at home using the 'Exams from Home' facility. You can book a remote test using the following link:

<https://certiport.pearsonvue.com/Support/Install/Exams-from-Home.aspx>



If you use this facility then you will be assigned an online 'Proctor' or supervisor who will monitor you as you take the exam. We have used this facility for many of our University students and, while, it works very well, it can be a little stressful for both the student and the supervisor, as it requires additional checking of the test environment, distribution of the exam links in a timely manner and other housekeeping issues which don't arise in a purely physical testing environment.

When you take a test in this manner, you are presented with a 'virtual' environment for whatever software you are being examined on. So in effect, your screen is taken over and monitored by the Proctor. This is fine except that the screen real estate is a little more restricted than in the standard PC interface available in a physical exam centre. This may cause you some minor difficulties if you are unaware of the restriction.

4. How difficult are MOS exams?



The first issue to be sure of is that you must be extremely familiar with the techniques being tested. The reason this is assumed is because all MOS exams, irrespective of the standard being tested, are 50 minutes long. That is a very tight timeframe indeed. It's assumed that you have prepared well. However, many students still fail to make the grade because they haven't prepared for the pressure of the time involved in the exam. So while knowing the software back to front is obviously of critical importance, being ready for the exam pressure,

understanding the exam interface, and understanding the structure and requirements of the exam are just as important.

You can familiarise yourself with the exam interface using the following link which provides an overview of the way that the test is presented to you on the day of the exam. It's well worthwhile to review this a couple of times before taking an exam.

<https://vimeo.com/504832659>

5. Are practice exams available?



Practice exams and solutions are well worthwhile investing in as they give you a better sense of the type of questions asked and the best way to answer those questions. Knowing the style in which

the questions are asked, being ready for the project based nature of the exams, and understanding the best approach to take will make a big difference to your chances of success. MOS University provide Practice Exams and Video Solutions for most of the Office products. To view the available courses visit www.mosuniversity.com

6. How much does it cost to take a MOS exam?

To take a MOS exam you either have to have access to a test account through a certified test centre, or you can purchase an exam voucher for the specific exam you want to become a candidate for. Vouchers can be purchased through Certiport at the following link:

<https://shop.certiport.com/category-s/1905.htm>

Vouchers in the United States cost \$100. Our courses are designed to ensure that you will pass on the first attempt. Of course, sometimes life takes over and you can't devote sufficient time to complete your course as

planned. If you want to cover such an eventuality you can purchase the 'retake' option because it gives you two chances for very little additional cost - \$120 rather than \$100. Note that the price to take an exam differs depending upon the country in which you are registered. The above is the cost in the United States.

Exam vouchers are valid for 12 months from the date of purchase and must be used in that timeframe. In the event that you purchase a 'retake' option, and you do not pass the exam on the first attempt, a retake code will be emailed to you. You have to wait for 24 hours from the time your initial exam was first started and retake vouchers must be used within 30 days of the failed exam. If you have other more specific country specific question contact Pearson VUE at the following link:

<https://home.pearsonvue.com/microsoft/contact>

7. Are MOS certifications worth the cost?

MOS certifications are valuable because employers can depend on them as authentic proof of your skills. If your CV has a MOS certificate and badge then the person interviewing you knows that you can hit the ground running in terms of the skills you possess. These certifications may be the starting point to your new career or serve to advance your existing career prospects.

Although you may be hired without MOS certifications, it's always good to go a step ahead and get the certification first. Every business is using Microsoft Office products, and certified knowledge in Microsoft Office is really becoming a necessity if you want to be relevant in terms of new technology. Apart from retaining your job, you will also increase the chances of earning more as your employer may find it necessary to increase your salary in order to retain your skills.

8. Can a MOS certification get you a job?



If you are starting out on your career, or if you are uncertain which path to take at the moment, adding MOS certifications to your profile could be very beneficial. MOS certifications allow employers to see your qualifications even before interviewing you. This will definitely enhance your chances of getting the job! You will come up against other job candidates who may have the same degree as yours, but only a few of them will add other certifications. This is why being certified as a MOS expert will make you competitive. It's all about being unique.

Microsoft have conducted research which indicates that certified candidates can command up to 15% more in salary than those without official certifications. This will also land you to higher positions. MOS certification will advance your career and even open doors for you to pursue other professions that may need it as a starting requirement.

9. Which MOS certifications should I start with?



That really depends on your current skill levels. As explained earlier, there are essentially two levels of certification – Associate (called Core for Office 2016) and Expert, with a Masters level defined for Office 2016. You need to determine your current skill level in the product in which you wish to be certified. The best way to do so is to explore the standard of questions posed in the exam. Get your hands on sample exams from [MOS University](https://www.mos.com) who understand the system and the exams. This is particularly true if you intend to take an Expert level exam. While there are reasonable sources available at Associate or Core levels, there are very few reliable resources available for Expert Level Word or Excel.

Our advice is to purchase sample practice exams and solutions and make a judgement call on your existing skills but do so in the context that, if you have never taken a MOS exam before, you need to factor in the lack of experience you have in taking an exam, the nerves that are inherent in the exam itself and, in particular, the time constraints involved. You might consider yourself an expert and in fact, you might well be brilliant at using the product you want to be examined in. But there is a massive difference between being good at using a product and being good at knowing how to pass the exam!

10. Are MOS certifications shown in my LinkedIn profile?



When you get a MOS certification you can opt to have the badge associated with the exam you've passed applied automatically on your LinkedIn profile. Potential employers will know that you are equipped

with the necessary skills required to make work a lot easier. They also know that you will be more productive. With Microsoft Office skills, you can handle more work compared to someone who has got no knowledge of the same. This will increase the company's productivity and reduce costs at the same time. So flagging your MOS badges in your LinkedIn profile will reap rewards for sure!

11. Which MOS certification is best for beginners?

That depends on your objectives. There is no pre-requisite for taking an Expert level exam. However, we believe that it is best to take a Core (Office 2016) or Associate (Office 365/2019) certification in the first instance and only to take an Expert certification exam if you have passed at the lower level. For the most part we recommend this because you need to familiarise yourself with the exam and how it is conducted first. We recommend Word, Excel or PowerPoint at Core or Associate level as the best place to start your journey.

12. When do MOS certifications expire?



This is not something that you will need to worry about unduly. We all know that Microsoft update their software every few years or so. At the moment the current version of Office is Office 365/2019. While many organisations are using this version, it takes time for large organisations in particular, to migrate to newer versions. So

for example, more organisations will currently be using Office 2016 than the 365 version. Certifications for Office 2013 are still current. It takes many years for these certifications to be retired and Microsoft generally give around 2 years notice in any event. The move to Office 365 has seen people begin to use the subscription based version of Office products so , as time goes on, it is likely that the desktop versions of the products will be phased out. This will take many years however. The skills that you get certification in today will be current for at least 10 years (probably longer) based on past history.

13. What are MOS badges?

Every MOS exam has its own special designated badge. Images are shown below. These are added to your LinkedIn profile if you choose to do so. Certificates are also provided as part of the 'Acclaim' process and you will receive a copy of your certificates from Microsoft shortly after completing the exam.



14. What books would you recommend to study for MOS?

The best way to learn depends to an extent on the type of learner you are. Some students prefer to use textbooks to prepare for MOS exams, and Microsoft sponsor study guides for the MOS exam products. However, we firmly believe that for the vast majority of candidates, because MOS exams are project based, the best way to prepare is to thoroughly learn the techniques involved, based on the set Objective Domain set by Microsoft. Online learning courses that demonstrate the techniques involved, that have provide plenty of practical project based exercises, and can provide experienced advice based on real knowledge of the exams, are by far the best way to prepare.

15. How will I know my MOS exam score?



When you take a MOS exam you indicate the point at which you have completed the test. As soon as you do so, the score report is generated online and your score is displayed within a minute or so. You will be told the mark you received out of 1000, with a passing score of 700 being required for success. In addition, a short report is generated which provides the score you received in each of the major sections of the objective domain for the subject in question.

16. Are there multiple choice questions in a MOS exam?

There are no multiple choice questions in a MOS exam. All of the exams are project based. In the Core or Associate exams, you generally get 7 projects, each of which has 5 project tasks. In the Expert level exams, the question are grouped into 5 projects with 5 or 6 tasks in each. All of the exams are allocated 50 minutes for completion. If you don't finish on time the exam is automatically terminated and your score is generated based in the quest that you have answered in the allotted time.

17. What service does MOS University provide to candidates?

We have set up MOS University to guide exam candidates to success on their first attempt. Our courses are geared towards that objective. For each MOS subject we offer two course types – one that provides tuition in all of the required techniques and a second that provides practice exams with video solutions.

In addition MOS University students are entitled to access our **webinars** which explain the approach needed for specific exam question types for the subject being examined.

The best reason to subscribe to MOS University is simple – **we are expert in the requirements for MOS exams and subjects**. We've been teaching these subjects online and offline for many years and have a depth of experience that you will not find anywhere else. While there are other courses available from other sources, we are solely dedicated to MOS exams and to your success. Although MOS University does not claim to be a 'University' in the normal sense of the word, all of our instructors are professional University Lecturers, Microsoft Certified Professionals and MOS Masters.

Make sure to check out our complete techniques and practice exam courses at www.mosuniversity.com.



Appendix 1 – Sample Objective Domain

Sample Objective Domain

MO-200 Excel 365/2019 Associate Certification

| | |
|------------|--|
| 1 | Manage Worksheets and Workbooks |
| 1.1 | Import Data into Workbooks |
| 1.1.1 | Import Data from .txt Files |
| 1.1.2 | Import data from .csv Files |
| 1.2 | Navigate within Workbooks |
| 1.2.1 | Search for data within a workbook |
| 1.2.2 | Navigate to named cells, ranges, or workbook elements |
| 1.2.3 | Insert and remove hyperlinks |
| 1.3 | Format Worksheets and Workbooks |
| 1.3.1 | Modify page setup |
| 1.3.2 | Adjust row height and column width |
| 1.3.3 | Customise headers and footers |
| 1.4 | Customize Options and Views |
| 1.4.1 | Customize the Quick Access toolbar |
| 1.4.2 | Display and modify workbook content in different views |
| 1.4.3 | Freeze worksheet rows and columns |
| 1.4.4 | Change window views |
| 1.4.5 | Modify basic workbook properties |
| 1.4.6 | Display formulas |
| 1.5 | Configure Content for Collaboration |
| 1.5.1 | Set a print area |
| 1.5.2 | Save workbooks in alternative file formats |
| 1.5.3 | Configure print settings |
| 1.5.4 | Inspect workbooks for issues |

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| 2 | Manage Data Cells and Ranges |
| 2.1 | Manipulate Data in Worksheets |
| 2.1.1 | Paste data by using special paste options |
| 2.1.2 | Fill cells by using Auto Fill |
| 2.1.3 | Insert and delete multiple rows and columns |
| 2.1.4 | Insert and delete cells |
| 2.2 | Format Cells and Ranges |
| 2.2.1 | Merge and unmerge cells |
| 2.2.2 | Modify cell alignment, orientation and indentation |
| 2.2.3 | Format cells by using Format Painter |
| 2.2.4 | Wrap text within cells |
| 2.2.5 | Apply number formats |
| 2.2.6 | Apply cell formats from the Format Cells dialog box |
| 2.2.7 | Apply cell styles |
| 2.2.8 | Clear cell formatting |
| 2.3 | Define and Reference Named Ranges |
| 2.3.1 | Define a named range |
| 2.3.2 | Name a table |
| 2.4 | Summarise Data visually |
| 2.4.1 | Insert sparklines |
| 2.4.2 | Apply built-in conditional formatting |
| 2.4.3 | Remove conditional formatting |

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| 3 | Manage Tables and Table Data |
| 3.1 | Create and Format Tables |
| 3.1.1 | Create Excel tables from cell ranges |
| 3.1.2 | Apply table styles |
| 3.1.3 | Convert tables to cell ranges |
| 3.2 | Modify Tables |
| 3.2.1 | Add and remove table rows and columns |
| 3.2.2 | Configure table style options |
| 3.2.3 | Insert and configure total rows |
| 3.3 | Filter and Sort Table Data |
| 3.3.1 | Filter records |
| 3.3.2 | Sort data by multiple columns |

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| 4 | Perform Operations by using Formulas and Functions |
| 4.1 | Insert References |
| 4.1.1 | Insert relative, absolute and mixed references |
| 4.1.2 | Reference named ranges and named tables in formulas |
| 4.2 | Calculate and Transform Data |
| 4.2.1 | Perform calculations by using the AVERAGE(), MAX(), MIN() and SUM() functions |
| 4.2.2 | Count cells by using the COUNT(), COUNTA() and COUNTBLANK() functions |
| 4.2.3 | Perform conditional operations by using the IF() function |
| 4.3 | Format and Modify Text |
| 4.3.1 | Format text by using RIGHT(), LEFT(), and MID() functions |
| 4.3.2 | Format text by using the UPPER(), LOWER(), and LEN() functions |
| 4.3.3 | Format text by using the CONCAT() and TEXTJOIN() functions |

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| 5 | Manage Charts |
| 5.1 | Create Charts |
| 5.1.1 | Create charts |
| 5.1.2 | Create chart sheets |
| 5.2 | Modify Charts |
| 5.2.1 | Add data series to charts |
| 5.2.2 | Switch between rows and columns in source data |
| 5.2.3 | Add and modify chart elements |
| 5.3 | Format Charts |
| 5.3.1 | Apply chart layouts |
| 5.3.2 | Apply chart styles |
| 5.3.3 | Add alternative text to charts for accessibility |