

STUDYING FOR SUCCESS IN CLOUD CERTIFICATION

A PERSONAL AND PROVEN GUIDE

ABOUT ME



Over 20 years in
information technology,
with over 13 years in
software engineering



Currently serving in a
Cloud Solutions Architect
role



6+ years with cloud
platforms, primarily
AWS, but also GCP and
Azure



4 AWS Certifications
since August 2018



MBA (emphases in
marketing & technology
management), 2009



MSc – Information
Systems, 2011

WHY CERTIFICATION?

Validates skills

Role based exams

Provides industry recognition

Access to technical resources

Swag

Specialized sessions and forums

Better responses and dialogue with engineers and architects from the cloud provider

WE NEED STEENKIN' BADGES



Badges open up discussions... place them in your email signature and you'll be surprised by the conversations you may have. Links open up to verification of your Certification.

PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS



Additional opportunities



Training and support

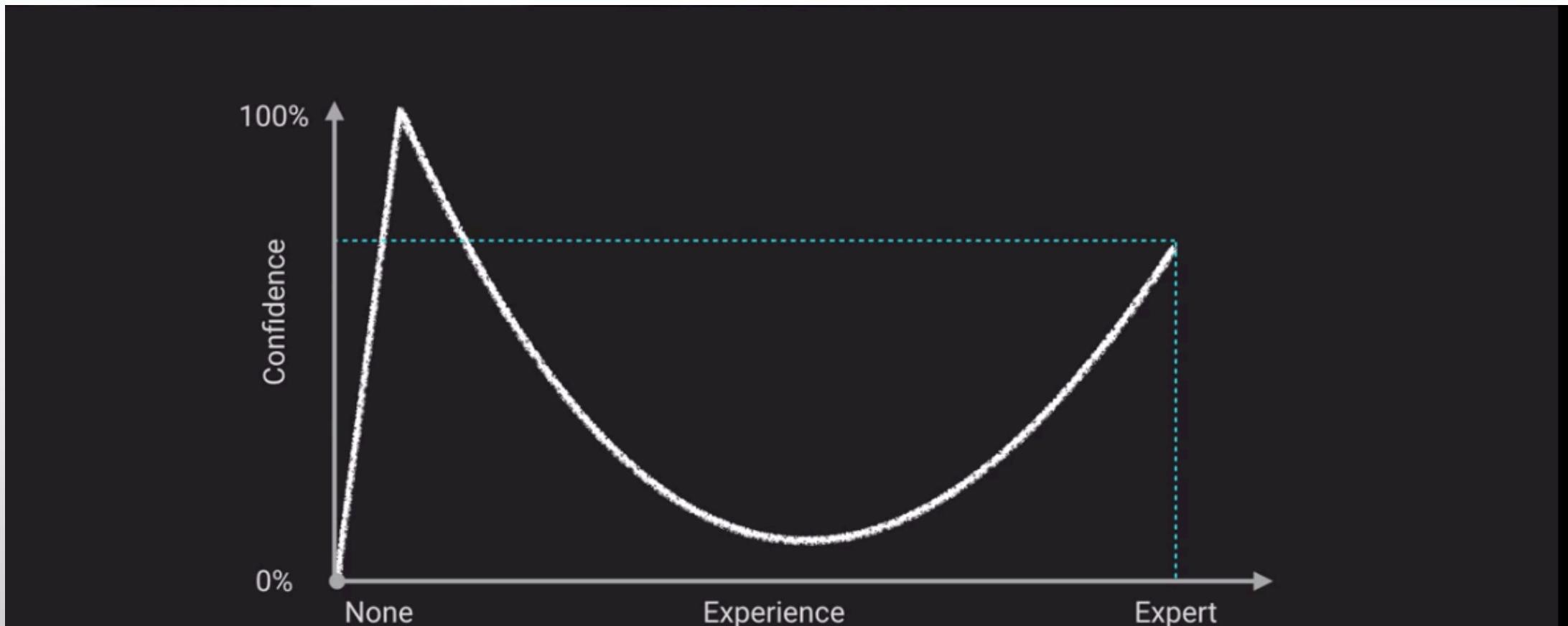


Access to technical resources



Early access to beta programs

UNSKILLED & UNAWARE OF IT (DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT)



"Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments",
Kruger, J. & Dunning, D., Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 77(6), Dec 1999, 1121-1134.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Blooms Taxonomy



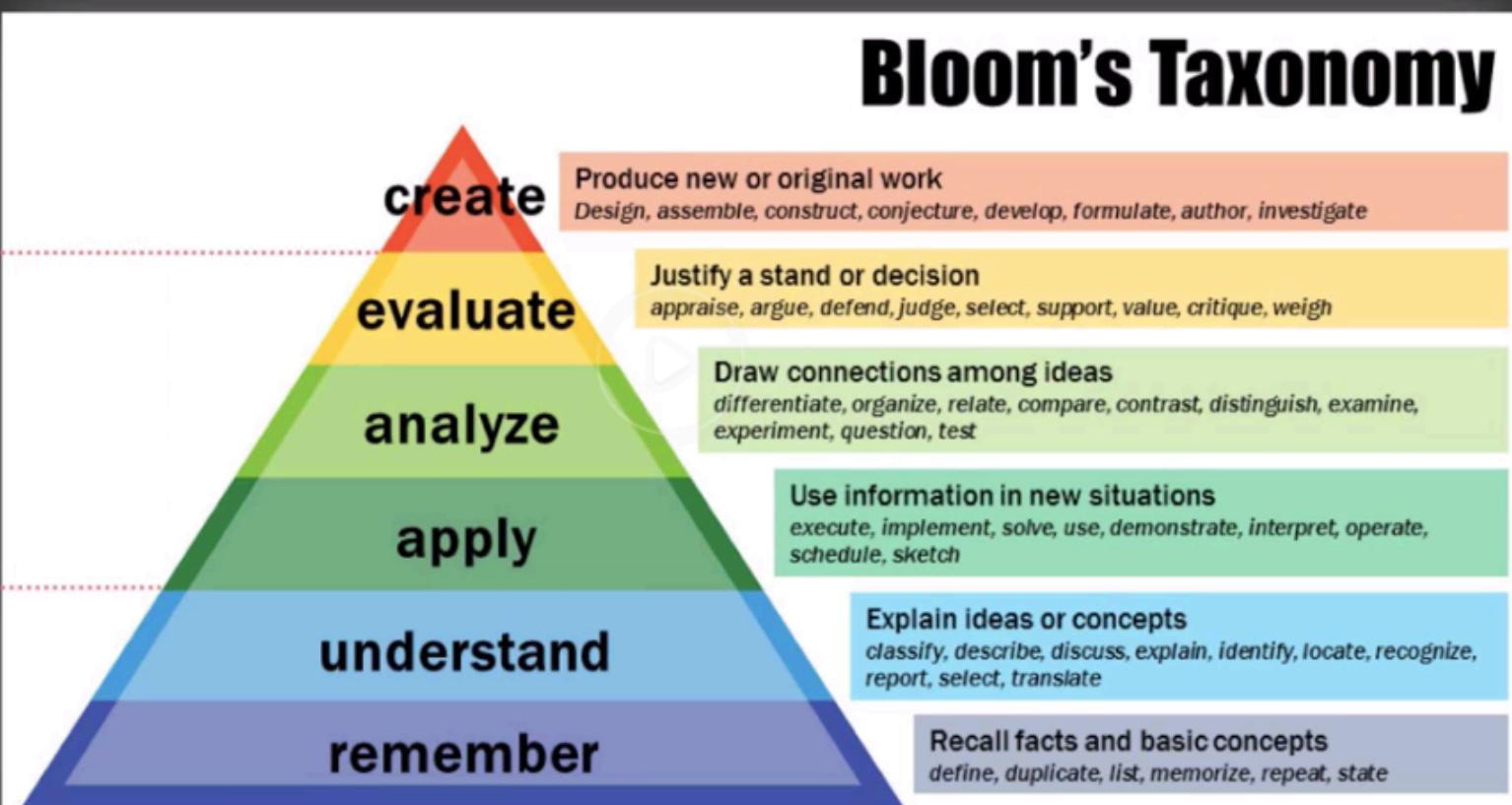
A CLOUD GURU

Bloom's Taxonomy

AWS
Objective

Professional
Exams

Associate
Exams

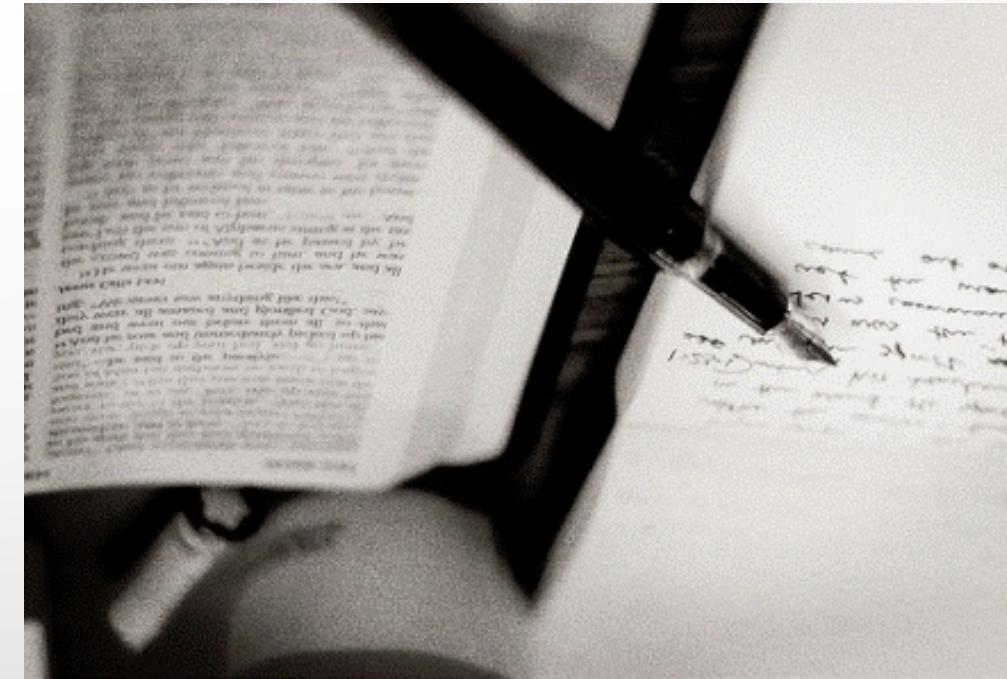
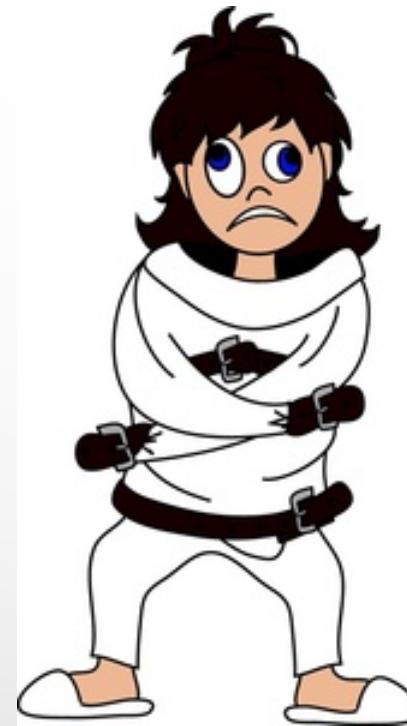


Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching



Attributed to [Author] via [Source]

COMMITMENT





Everyone will be different as far as their work, home, and family obligations



I personally spend 5-10 hours / week, working section by section

Course

Hands-on practice

Exam if applicable



Work at your own pace... the end goal is to obtain the certification, not finishing first

TIME

MONEY

- EXAMS RANGE FROM \$100-300 PER EXAM
 - DISCOUNTS OFFERED (1/2 OFF IN SOME CASES) AS A RESULT OF PREVIOUS CERTIFICATIONS
- COURSES CAN VARY WILDLY; I BUDGET ~ \$10 PER COURSE, NO MORE THAN \$20
- MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTIONS (E.G. A CLOUD GURU) CAN ADD UP
- CLOUD PLATFORM ACCOUNT... SETUP BILLING ALARMS AND WORK TO STAY IN THE FREE TIER WHEN YOU CAN
- OVERALL, I SPEND ROUGHLY ~ \$100 – \$200 / MONTH ON OVERALL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING CLOUD ACCOUNTS



GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

- SIGN UP FOR AN ACCOUNT IN THE APPLICABLE CLOUD PLATFORM
 - SETUP BUDGET ALARMS AND THRESHOLDS
 - MOST CLOUD PROVIDERS OFFER FREE-TIER SERVICES
 - RUN THROUGH THE LABS YOURSELF HANDS-ON, AND EXPERIMENT
 - THE BEST INSTRUCTORS WILL WARN WHEN A LAB WILL NOT QUALIFY FOR THE FREE-TIER OFFERINGS

COOL COURSES

- UDEMY (<HTTP://WWW.UDEMY.COM>)
 - CAUTION... PRICING CHANGES BASED ON USER
 - TYPICALLY I STAY IN THE \$10-20 RANGE, AND OFTEN BASE DECISIONS ON PREVIOUS COURSES OR REVIEWS
- A CLOUD GURU (<HTTPS://ACLOUD.GURU>)
 - ALSO ON UDEMY
 - OFFERS PRACTICE EXAMS
- LINUX ACADEMY

COOL COURSES (PART DEUX)



Platform providers
offer training:

Aws direct from their
training site
Google via coursera
Azure direct from their
training site



Brief Me Now
(<https://www.briefmenow.org>)



Coursera (<https://www.coursera.com>)

A CLOUD GURU

Course Outline

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

✓ Welcome	01:10
✓ Introduction	03:27
✓ About the Exam	04:36
✓ About This Course	09:53
✓ About the Labs	02:51

CHAPTER 2

Data Stores

✓ Introduction	00:59
✓ Concepts	04:26
✓ S3	10:14
⌚ Glacier	04:40
⌚ Elastic Block Storage	06:52

request a record of completion.

 Request Record of Completion

Exam Simulator MEMBERS ONLY

Hone your skills by practicing under real exam conditions.

 Open Simulator

UDEMY

The screenshot shows a Udemy course page. At the top, the Udemy logo and the course title "Ultimate AWS Certified Developer Associate 2019 - NEW!" are visible. To the right are "Your progress" and "Share" buttons. The main content area features a video player with a play button and a thumbnail for the first video, "API Gateway – Deployment Stages". Below the video player, there's a yellow bar with the text "AWS Certified Developer © Stephane Maarek". At the bottom of the main content area, there are navigation links for "Overview", "Q&A", "Bookmarks", and "Announcements". On the right side, a sidebar titled "Course content" lists several sections with their respective subtitles and durations:

- Section 1: Course Introduction (7 / 7 | 15min)
- Section 2: Code & Slides (Download | 1 / 1 | 1min)
- Section 3: AWS Fundamentals: IAM + EC2 (15 / 16 | 1hr 23min)
- Section 4: AWS Fundamentals: ELB + ASG + EBS (7 / 7 | 43min)
- Section 5: AWS Fundamentals: Route 53 + RDS + ElastiCach... (9 / 9 | 43min)
- Section 6: AWS Fundamentals: Amazon S3 (10 / 10 | 46min)

PRACTICE EXAMS

Good practice exams sites:

- Brain cert (www.braincert.com)
- Whizlabs (www.whizlabs.com)
- A cloud guru (offered with each course now)
(<https://acloud.guru>)
- Udemy (<https://www.udemy.com>)
- Platform providers

Do not try and memorize questions... these are similar, but not copies of those on your exam.

Question 1

Correct

Domain : Other

Your company is planning on move their on-premise MySQL database to an AWS RDS Instance. They want to understand what are the key activities that will be performed by AWS which would reduce the administrative activities of their IT staff. Which of the following is carried out by AWS for database hosted in the AWS RDS? Choose 2 answers from the options given below

- A. Create and maintain backups so that you can restore to a point in time recovery of 5 minutes ✓
- B. Create and maintain backups which are specially built for long term retention of 6 months to one year
- C. Installing critical security patches for the database ✓
- D. Optimizing database queries fired on the database

Explanation:

Answer – A and C

Option B is incorrect since the maximum retention period possible for RDS databases is 35 days.

Option D is incorrect because query optimization is not at all related to RDS. Query optimization is related specifically to the respective database engine.

Option C is correct because Amazon RDS is a fully managed service. So, under the Shared Responsibility Model AWS will take care of the security patches.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Platform faqs & whitepapers

- I know plenty of people who have successfully passed based on just reading faqs and white papers
- Many of the questions are based on platform documentation

Blogs and articles

Peers and team mates

Hands-on experience

SITTING FOR THE EXAM



- IT'S OK TO BE NERVOUS (I AM EVERY TIME)
- YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE ANYTHING WITH YOU TO THE EXAM ROOM (E.G. KEYS, PHONE, ETC.)
- WATCH YOUR TIME
- FLAG QUESTIONS YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT!!!!
 - FLAGGING CAN HELP YOU TO MAXIMIZE TIME AND ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS THAT YOU ARE CONFIDENT IN THE ANSWERS, WHILE COMING BACK TO REVIEW AFTER YOUR FIRST RUN THROUGH THE EXAM
- TAKE YOUR TIME !!!

ABOUT THE EXAM

Exams are updated every 2-3 years, and typically valid for 2-3 years

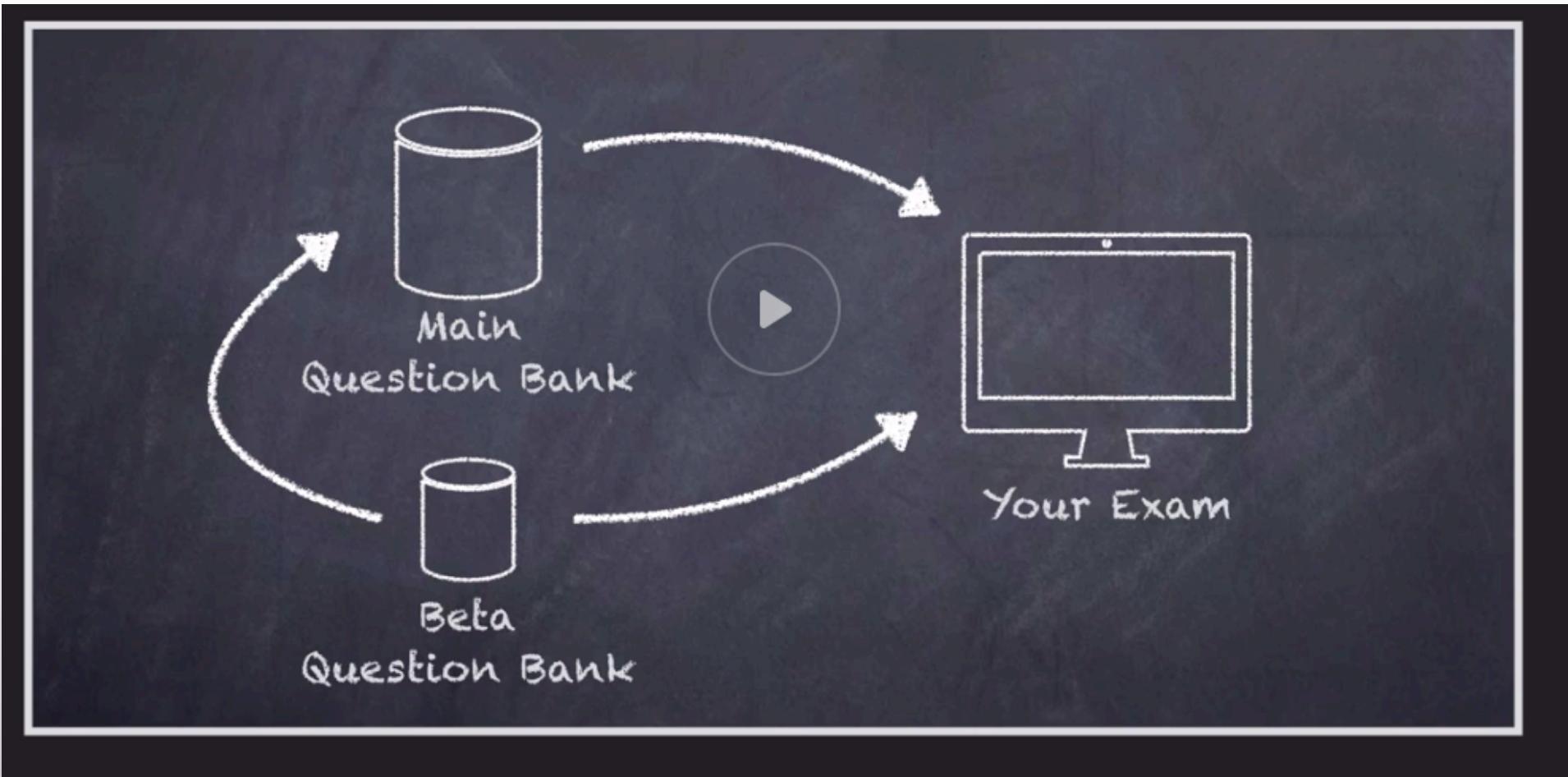
Consist of:

- Multiple-choice (pick one)
- Multiple choice, multiple answer (pick 3 of 8 for example)
- Fortunately, no essay questions (hehe)

Several right answers, choose answers that are most appropriate based on context (read the question fully)

Each exam is dynamically generated, some consist of beta questions

EVERY EXAM IS UNIQUE



WHAT ABOUT NEW SERVICES?



Cloud services are constantly being offered



Typically services will appear on an exam after being ga for at least 6-12 months



Best to focus on core service offerings and practices

ABOUT THE EXAM PART II



Questions from 60 – 85



Time limit from 120 – 220 minutes



Ability to flag and revisit questions (**do this!!!**)



Look for **keywords** to identify what's being asked:

Lowest cost
Secure
Reliability



“select one or more responses that **best** complete the statement or answer the question



Designed to find gaps in your skills and knowledge... they will try and trick you!

EXAM ASPECTS

- THE EXAMS ARE DESIGNED TO TEST THE FOLLOWING ABILITIES:
 - KNOWLEDGE OF THE CLOUD PLATFORM
 - CONTEXTUAL REASONING
 - TIME MANAGEMENT
 - COMPREHENSION SKILLS
 - WORKING UNDER PRESSURE

YOU FAILED THE EXAM, NOW WHAT?

Failure can be an opportunity to reset

While results are pass / fail, score will be made available after a few days

Scoring ~ 80% on practice exams is typically an indication that you are ready to sit for the exam

Review areas where you flagged questions

Take additional practice exams, review the areas where you may be weaker

Don't stress!!!

QUESTIONS?

I HOPE THAT THIS HAS BEEN MEANINGFUL FOR YOU, AND THAT YOU CAN TAKE AWAY SOME TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU IN PURSUING CERTIFICATION.

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GITHUB: [HTTPS://WWW.GITHUB.COM/AJLEVINSON](https://www.github.com/ajlevinson)