



Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization

Program Guide, Audit Checklist, and FAQ

Valid January 1, 2020–June 30, 2020

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Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization

1. Program Overview

Workload migration presents partners with a unique opportunity to secure long-term cloud relationships with customers that can lead to high-value, innovative services and managed services that bring in new, recurring revenue streams.

The Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization allows partners with an active Gold Cloud Platform Competency to further differentiate their organizations by demonstrating their expertise in migrating and optimizing Windows Server and SQL Server-based workloads to Microsoft Azure.

Partners who earn an advanced specialization will have a customer-facing label displayed on their business profile and will be prioritized in customer searches in the Microsoft Partner Directory. For those reasons, this opportunity is available only to partners who meet stringent requirements which include a third-party audit to prove they've met Microsoft's highest standards of service delivery and support.

This document defines the requirements for the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Azure Advanced Specialization program and provides guidelines for the auditing process.

2. Program Prerequisites for July 1–December 31, 2019

To earn the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization, a partner must meet all the requirements listed below: Microsoft and/or a third-party vendor, either automatically or by manual review, and are subject to change.

Prerequisites	
Relative Competency	Must maintain an active Gold Cloud Platform Competency
Performance	<p>Your company must show customers migrating to Azure and meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three customers must show a monthly average Azure Consumed Revenue (ACR) (from previous three months) that meets the following threshold for Windows Server migration:• USD10,000 Windows Server Virtual Machines (VM) ACR <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three customers must show a monthly average ACR from the previous three months that meets following threshold for SQL server migration:• USD10,000 SQL server VM (IaaS) ACR OR• USD10,000 SQL Database ACR* OR• USD5,000 SQL Managed Instance* ACR <p>*At least one customer should meet these thresholds for SQL Database ACR OR SQL Managed Instance ACR.</p>

	<p>Note that you can have the same set of three customers meeting the requirement for both Windows and SQL server or they can be different.</p> <p>Your company should achieve ACR through Digital Partner of Record, Partner Admin Link, and Cloud Solution Provider.</p>
Knowledge	<p>Your organization must have five individuals that pass the following certifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One unique individual must pass Azure Administrator Associate certification AND • One unique individual must pass Azure Solutions Architect Expert certification AND • One unique individual must pass Azure DevOps Engineer Expert certification AND • One unique individual must pass Azure Security Engineer Associate certification AND • One unique individual must pass Azure Data Engineer Associate certification
Audit Requirement	
Audit	Must complete and pass a third-party audit against the below checklist.

3. Information on the Audit

The audit checklist will be updated every six months to keep up with technology and market changes.

The audit is conducted by an independent third-party auditor.

Partners may only apply for the audit when the Program Prerequisites are fully met. The audit must be completed within 30 calendar days of audit application and must be against the then-current program requirements.

Partners will be awarded a Pass or No Pass result upon completion of the audit. The Pass result is valid for one calendar year.

If a partner receives a No Pass result, they will have an opportunity for remediation on the checklist items that were failed. If they fail their remediation, they may not retake the audit against the same audit checklist. However, they may re-apply to be audited against a subsequent audit checklist providing they still meet all other program requirements.

4. Program Status and Term

When a partner meets all requirements and Microsoft receives a valid Pass Report from the third-party audit company, the partner will be awarded Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization for one calendar year.

Status and the associated Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization can only be used by the organization that met all requirements and passed the audit (determined by Partner ID). Subsidiary or affiliated organizations may not advertise the status or leverage the associated badge.

5. Program Re-enrollment

Partners must requalify annually, completing a re-audit before their current audit pass certificate expires.

To requalify, partners must meet all the requirements current at the time of their requalification. Requirements will be published on the MPN Portal or in the applicable Program Guide.

6. How to Apply

Only administrators of an organization's Microsoft partner account can submit an application for the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization on behalf of the organization.

If you have the appropriate role and access, you can apply by [signing in to your Partner Center account](#) and navigating to your Partner Center dashboard > Competencies > Advanced Specialization. If you are still in PMC, work with your Partner Development Manager to migrate to Partner Center. Once you are fully migrated, you can apply through your Partner Center dashboard.

Audit Process

Process Overview

Microsoft uses an independent third-party audit company, Information Security Systems International, LLC (ISSI), to schedule and conduct Azure MSP audits.

Step	Action	Responsibility
1	<p>Review requirements</p> <p>Applications are submitted in 2 stages</p> <p>Initial Application Phase:</p> <p>(1) Prerequisites</p> <p>(2) Audit</p> <p>Recommended: Please review the audit checklist thoroughly and do not begin your application unless you are ready to undertake the audit.</p>	Partner
2	Validation that partner meets Prerequisites	Microsoft
3	Confirm to third-party audit company that partner is eligible for audit	Microsoft

4	Schedule and confirm audit within 2 business days	ISSI (with partner)
5	Conduct audit within 30 calendar days of the approval for audit	ISSI
6	Provide Gap Report within 2 business days of the completed audit to partner listing Open Action Items*	ISSI
7	Provide Open Action Item response within 15 calendar days to auditor in Gap Review Meeting, if required*	Partner
8	Send Final Report to partner within 5 calendar days of audit or Gap Review Meeting, if necessary	ISSI
9	Notification to partner of program status	Microsoft

*These steps will be skipped if the partner has no Open Action Items after the audit.

Glossary and Audit Phases and Roles

Glossary

Pre-Audit Assessment

An optional one-day remote assessment checking partner readiness for audit and giving guidance on preparation for the audit.

Audit

Half-day audit. Carried out remotely by a qualified ISSI auditor. Partners must present evidence for 100 percent of checklist items.

Open Action Items

If the auditor deems that the partner has failed to demonstrate the required evidence for an audit checklist item during the audit, this will be recorded as **Open Action Items** and is included in the Gap Report.

Gap Report

Open Action Items are listed in the Gap Report, which will be sent to partners within 2 business days of their Evidence Review Meeting. The Gap Report will detail all Open Action Items and the evidence still required. Partners have 2 business days to acknowledge receipt and to schedule a Gap Review Meeting. The Gap Review Meeting must take place within fifteen (15) calendar days of the Gap Report being issued.

Gap Review Meeting

Partners who receive a Gap Report have fifteen (15) calendar days from receipt of the report to close the Open Action Items via a Gap Review Meeting. The Gap Review Meeting is done over Skype and may not exceed 3 hours.

Missed Items

If the auditor deems that the partner has failed to demonstrate the required evidence for an audit checklist item during the Gap Review Meeting, this will be recorded as **Missed Items** and is included in the Final Report.

Final Report

The Final Report is provided to the partner and denotes whether they earn a **Pass or No Pass** in the audit. Final Reports showing a “pass” can be issued at the end of either the audit or the Gap Review Meeting. Final Reports showing a “no pass” will be issued after the Gap Review Meeting or, in the case where a partner chooses not to proceed to a Gap Review Meeting or fails to acknowledge receipt of the Gap Report.

Audit Phases

Audit Preparation and Scheduling Phase

Microsoft uses an independent third-party audit company (ISSI) to schedule and conduct advanced specialization audits.

Once a partner meets all program prerequisites, Microsoft will pass their details to the audit company.

Partners will receive a communication from the auditor asking them to propose dates for their pre-audit assessment and audit.

Note: Partners cannot schedule their pre-audit assessment or audit until they have met all other program prerequisites (see Program Prerequisites).

The audit company will make every effort to accommodate the partner’s requested audit date. Once the date and auditor are confirmed, the partner will be provided with a detailed confirmation for the audit day(s).

Partners have a maximum of 30 calendar days from notification of a successful application to complete their audit.

Prior to the pre-audit assessment, the partner is expected to review the audit checklist and prepare questions for the auditor around the audit process. The intention of the pre-audit assessment is to enable the partner to have a general discussion of the audit scope, expectations, preparation, and the requirements of the controls, allowing you to gain general knowledge of the program requirements.

The pre-audit assessment is not:

- A review of prepared materials, or
- A deep dive into specific controls

** Please note there is a cost associated with the pre-audit assessment and audit. See Payment Terms and Conditions.*

Pre-Audit Assessment Phase

The Pre-Audit Assessment Phase is **optional** and is conducted by the third-party audit company (ISSI). The purpose is to help the partner prepare for the audit. The Pre-Audit Assessment can be scheduled at any time.

Partners work directly with ISSI to schedule this remote session (online web conference).

- Conducted using your preferred conferencing platform. The duration is typically 6-8 hours. Partners review the audit requirements and discuss the required evidence with an experienced MSP auditor.
- To ensure objectivity, the pre-audit assessment is conducted by someone other than your assigned remote auditor.
- Deliverable is a written report detailing any identified gaps and recommendations for closure.

** Please note there is a cost associated with the pre-audit assessment. See Payment Terms and Conditions.*

Audit Phase

Prior to the audit, the partner is expected to have undertaken a thorough review of the Audit Checklist, compiled all required evidence, and ensured the right subject matter experts are available to present the required evidence.

An agenda will be provided to the partner upon confirmation of the audit date. During the audit, the partner must provide access to the appropriate personnel who can discuss and disclose evidence to demonstrate compliance to program requirements. It is highly recommended that subject matter experts (SMEs) for each section attend.

On the day of the audit, the partner must be prepared to provide the auditor with access to live demonstrations, documents, and personnel as necessary to demonstrate compliance to requirements.

During the audit, the auditor will seek to verify whether the partner can provide satisfactory evidence to show they meet all required audit checklist items.

There are two possible outcomes at the end of the **audit**:

- (1) The partner passes the audit.
 - a. The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit, including identifying observed strengths and opportunities for improvement.
 - b. The auditor will provide a **Final Report** to the partner.
 - c. The auditor will notify Microsoft (subject to Auditor Terms and Conditions).
- (2) The partner does not satisfy all checklist items during the **audit**.
 - a. The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit at the end of the day, including observed strengths and **Open Action Items**.
 - b. The partner will receive a **Gap Report** detailing the **Open Action Items**.
 - c. The partner will move into the **Gap Review Phase**. (See [Gap Review Phase](#).)

Gap Review Phase

If the partner does not demonstrate evidence to the auditor's satisfaction to meet the required scores across all audit categories during the audit, the partner will move into the **Gap Review Phase**.

The partner will receive a **Gap Report** detailing the **Open Action Items** with the required outstanding evidence within 2 business days of the **audit**. Upon receipt of the **Gap Report**, the partner has 2 business days to acknowledge receipt and schedule a Gap Review Meeting. The **Gap Review Meeting** is conducted over the partner's virtual conference platform of choice with the auditor and must take place within fifteen (15) calendar days of when the **Gap Report** was sent, and last no more than 3 hours. During the **Gap Review Meeting** the partner must present evidence to address all the **Open Action Items**.

There are two possible outcomes at the end of the **Gap Review Meeting**:

- (1) The partner passes the audit.
 - a. The auditor will confirm the partner has satisfied the required evidence during the **Gap Review Meeting**.
 - b. The auditor will provide a **Final Report** to the partner.
 - c. The auditor will notify Microsoft (subject to Auditor Terms and Conditions).

- (2) The partner does not satisfy all checklist items during the **Gap Review Meeting**.
- a. The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit, including **Missed Items**.
 - b. The partner will receive a **Final Report** detailing the **Missed Items**.
 - c. The auditor will notify Microsoft (subject to Auditor Terms and Conditions).

If the partner is still unable to provide evidence that satisfies the auditor during their Gap Review meeting, they will be deemed to have failed the audit and will need to begin the application process again.

Roles

Role of the Auditor

It is the role of the auditor to review submitted evidence and objectively assess if the evidence provided satisfies the audit checklist requirements.

The auditor will select and evaluate evidence, based on samples of the information available, from live systems. The appropriate use of such sampling is closely related to the confidence that can be placed in the audit conclusions.

All ISSI auditors are under nondisclosure agreement (NDA) with Microsoft. Auditors will also comply with requests from partners to sign a direct NDA.

Role of the Partner

The partner must provide objective evidence to satisfy the auditor for all checklist items. It is the responsibility of the partner to have reviewed all checklist items prior to the audit, to have collated all necessary documentation and evidence, and to ensure the right subject matter experts are available to discuss and show systems as appropriate.

All audit evidence must be reproducible and verifiable.

Role of the Microsoft Partner Development Manager

The Microsoft Partner Development Manager (PDM) is responsible for ensuring that the partner fully understands the requirements prior to applying for the audit. The Partner Development Manager may also attend the audit to address any Microsoft partner business relationship issues that may arise but may not otherwise intervene in the audit process.

Payment Terms and Conditions

Pricing Schedule

Pre-audit Assessment: USD2,000

Audit: USD2,000

Gap Review Meeting: Included

Payment Terms

The cost of the audit and pre-audit assessment, if selected, is payable in full to the audit company and must be settled before the audit or pre-audit assessment. Failure to pay will result in cancellation of the audit.

Audit Checklist

The V1.0.1 Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization audit checklist is made up of 12 checklist controls. For some controls, a reference customer or customer evidence is required as part of the documentation requested. For audit evidence relating to customer engagements, a customer case study may be referenced multiple times. However, no fewer than five (5) unique customer case studies may be used throughout the audit.

All audit checklist items must be met in order to pass the audit.

This audit aims to validate that the partner:

- Applies a framework for successful migration to a cloud environment (governance, architecture decisions, networking, security, etc.).
- Has experience in successfully migrating production workloads to Azure.
- Has depth of knowledge to provide guidance on the various SQL migration options within Azure and can deliver on these options successfully.
- Uses automated tools and processes for migration assessment and delivery.
- Promotes its workload migration to Azure practice on its public-facing website.

1.0 Cloud Foundation and Migration Planning

Partner must apply a framework for successful cloud adoption (governance, architecture decisions, networking, security, etc.).

Partner Roles Required

Solution Architect/Consultant/Platform Engineer

Requirement

Met
(Y/N)

1.1

Security Assessment

Partner must have a methodology to assess customer security policies relevant to the workloads being migrated, including:

- A methodology for performing and identifying gaps in customer's security policies and procedures
- A framework to document and report on customer's existing security implementation on Azure, gap identification, and best practice recommendations

Required Evidence

Description of security assessment process and the relevant assessment document, and reports for at least two (2) projects. Evidence provided must clearly indicate security conditions and recommendations.

1.2	<p>Networking Architecture Design (Topology)</p> <p>Partner must be able to describe and demonstrate the design of the Azure Virtual Network and extended environment when relevant to the workload being migrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced understanding of the Azure Virtual Network (VNet) functions and capabilities, such as Hub-spoke VNets, VNet Peering, and site-to-site VPN ▪ Hybrid architectures using Azure ExpressRoute and VPN Gateway ▪ Resource and perimeter security such as bastion hosts, Network Security Groups and Azure Firewall, and/or virtual security and routing appliances with appropriate monitoring <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Description of above design with the relevant network and architectural diagrams for customer implementations, design guides, and specifications. Case studies must also be provided for at least three (3) customers to demonstrate consistent use of best practices leveraging the Hybrid Networks best practice guidance.</p>	
1.3	<p>High Availability and Resilient Infrastructure</p> <p>Partner must demonstrate the ability to set up regions and availability zones based on data residency, sovereignty, compliance, and resiliency requirements. Partner must leverage the Azure Resiliency, high availability, and availability zones best practices for creating appropriate infrastructure.</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Demonstration of competency and use-cases for Availability Sets, Availability Zones, VM scale sets, region pairs, storage replication, geo replication, SQL Server resilience from documented customer projects.</p>	
1.4	<p>Migration Risk Assessment</p> <p>Partner must have a process for assessing risks during migration, similar to the business risk assessment section in the Cloud Adoption Framework.</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Description of process and evidences of risk assessment for at least two (2) projects.</p>	

2.0 Migration Delivery

Partner must have processes in place for building for, and migrating customers to, Azure, and for supporting customers during the migration process.

Partner Roles Required

Solution Architect/Consultant/Platform Engineer

Requirement	Met (Y/N)
2.1	
<p>Infrastructure Migration</p> <p>Partner must provide documented and demonstrated infrastructure migration capability. Design documents must include infrastructure architecture that is aligned to or similar to the best practices and reference architectures described in the migration section of the Cloud Adoption Framework (CAF).</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Partner must provide description of infrastructure migration with relevant migration design documents and completed migration records for three (3) customer projects with the compute infrastructure migration scenario below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehost Windows servers on Azure <p>Migration design documents can be statements of work, customer proposals, or project updates from a previous Azure migration that outline the framework and methodology of using the framework. Each of the three (3) customer migration projects must have been implemented within the last twelve (12) months.</p>	
2.2	
<p>Database Migration</p> <p>Partner must provide documented and demonstrated database migration capability. Design documents (provided in Section 3.1) must include infrastructure architecture that is aligned to (or similar to) the best practices and reference architectures described in the migration section of the Cloud Adoption Framework (CAF).</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Partner must provide description of database migration with relevant migration design documents for at least two (2) projects from each of the migration scenarios highlighted below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehost SQL on Azure Refactor SQL on Azure (SQL Database or SQL Managed Instance) <p>Migration design documents can be statements of work, customer proposals, or project updates from a previous Azure migration that outline the framework and methodology of using the framework, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration design/strategy documents must outline which applications, databases, or database auxiliary components (reporting service, integration service) are in scope for migration. Outlining the migration method to use for each of the application, database, database auxiliary components, etc. The impact of downtime of the application, if any. High level of migration sequence and estimated time to finish for migration and how to validate if migration is completed and successful. Description of the mitigation plan, if any, of the migration steps failed and the rollback strategy. 	

2.3	<p>Service Validation and Testing</p> <p>Partner must have documented processes for Service Validation and Testing, including a methodology to ensure that deployed services meet customer expectations. This step should be performed right after customer's migratable estate moves to either the customer's Azure environment or the partner's management umbrella through the migration process.</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Documented service validation and testing processes, and the relevant service validation and testing records for at least two (2) projects where customer estate was recently migrated to either the customer's Azure environment or onboarded to partner's management umbrella.</p>	
2.4	<p>Service Transition</p> <p>Partner must have a process for transitioning MSP services for a customer workload with minimal business disruption, if any. The process must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Methods for ensuring that transition is achieved with minimal business disruption of services, if any, including planning for maintenance windows and adhering to agreed planned maintenance time frames ▪ Maintenance of customer records, including their disposition ▪ Policies addressing data considerations, including how data governance, confidentiality, integrity, and quality are preserved during migration ▪ Partner must be able to provide evidence that standard terms and conditions (e.g., SLAs) are consistent with policies and procedures <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Description of processes addressing the above and evidence of customer migration showing the above are met for at least two (2) projects.</p>	
2.5	<p>Post-deployment Training</p> <p>Partner must have documented processes for delivering or planning customer training post-deployment, to ensure customers are successful in using the new service in Azure.</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Documented customer handoff and training plan for at least two (2) projects where customer estate was recently migrated to either the customer's Azure environment or onboarded to partner's management umbrella.</p>	

3.0 Tooling

Partner must have automated tools in place for building for, and migrating customers to, Azure and for customers during the migration process.

Partner Roles Required

Solution Architect/Consultant/Platform Engineer

Requirement	Met (Y/N)
<p>3.1</p> <p>Migration Tools</p> <p>Partner must demonstrate specific products/tools/scripts used for assessment and migration of workloads.</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Partner must prove experience with one of the following options (A, B, or C):</p> <p>A. Experience using native Azure migration tools by providing a step-by-step demonstration that the partner can effectively use four (4) of the native Azure migration tools below.</p> <p>Azure Migrate Server Assessment for VMware and Hyper-V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Migration Assistant (DMA) SQL Server Migration Assistant (SSMA) Azure Migrate Server Migration VMware and Hyper-V (use of Azure Site Recovery is also accepted) Azure Database Migration Service Azure Data Box Storage Migration Service <p>B. Experience with the third-party tools that integrate with Azure Migrate by demonstrating a customer project where assessment data is available from Azure Migrate or available to partner offline.</p> <p>C. Experience with all other third-party tools by referencing the tools used in a project plan for successfully migrating a customer to Azure, or by providing snapshots of results/output file from the tools that were used.</p>	
<p>3.2</p> <p>Automated Deployment and Provisioning Tools</p> <p>Partner must demonstrate specific products/tools/scripts used for automated provisioning and deprovisioning, and deployment of infrastructure, including tools for continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD).</p> <p>Required Evidence</p> <p>Demonstrations of products/tools/scripts used for automated deployment, including creation of workload deployment templates; cloud service provisioning, including viewing of service template/packages used in the deployment of end customer Azure environments; automation of routine operations; or automated scale-out. Demonstration must be done in a customer-facing manner.</p>	

4.0 Migration Practice Promotion

Partner must demonstrate active promotion of its Azure migration practice to customers.

Partner Roles Required

Marketing

Requirement	Met (Y/N)
<p>4.1 Cloud Migration Practice for Azure Partner must have a public-facing webpage demonstrating Cloud Migration approach and capability.</p> <p>Required Evidence Partner must demonstrate publicly available website promoting the Cloud Migration practice and must mention migration to Azure.</p> <p>Website must also contain or link to at least two (2) customer case studies for one of the scenarios below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rehost Windows servers on Azure ▪ Rehost SQL on Azure ▪ Refactor SQL on Azure <p>Case studies must include a documented example of migrating a customer from on-premises to Azure in the last 24 months. Case studies must also contain information about the customer, including industry, core business, number of employees, geo, and workload migrated (including o/s and if applicable database types).</p>	

Partner FAQ: Audit

Program Contact Information

If you have a question we haven't answered in this document, please contact <https://partner.microsoft.com/support>.

Who can participate?

The program is open to any members of the Microsoft Partner Network program who can meet the prerequisites and pass the audit.

Is there a cost to participate?

Microsoft does not charge a program fee, however there are direct costs associated with the following requirements:

Gold Cloud Platform Competency

Azure certifications

Audit and optional pre-assessment

Third-party certifications

In addition, there are indirect costs associated with preparation for the audit.

How much time and resource (people) do I need to commit to meeting the requirements?

The amount of time it takes to meet all requirements and pass the audit varies greatly depending on how many full-time employees you already employ with the required Azure skills, whether or not you have documented customer wins, and how you document your people, technology, and processes.

We're a global company. Does the audit cover all my subsidiaries or just my headquarters? What is the scope?

Microsoft recommends that your organization participate in the audit process where your primary cloud operations center is headquartered and present data and information representing your global footprint.

Note: As we evolve the program to meet the needs of our partners, future audits may require you to demonstrate consistency in your global offering.

What is the application process?

1. Go to the [advanced specialization landing page](#).
2. Select "[See more](#)" under Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure.
3. You will be redirected to a PDF providing more information on the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure.
4. If interested, you can apply by signing in to your Partner Center account and navigating to your Partner Center dashboard > Competencies > Advanced Specialization. If you are still in Partner Membership Center (PMC), visit partners.microsoft.com to move your account from PMC to Partner Center.

Important Notes:

Please do not apply for the program until you have met all the prerequisites, have thoroughly reviewed the audit requirements, and are confident you can meet them.

Take note of the active dates for the audit checklist. Partners will be audited against the checklist that is active on the date of their half-day remote audit. The date of application has no bearing on the version of the checklist used at audit.

How do I apply?

You can apply by signing in to your Partner Center account and navigating to your Partner Center dashboard > Competencies > Advanced Specialization. If you are still in Partner Membership Center (PMC), visit partner.microsoft.com to move your account from PMC to Partner Center. Once you have moved your account from Partner Membership Center to Partner Center, you can apply through your Partner Center dashboard.

Partner FAQ: Requirement Details

What are the requirements to earn the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization?

Prerequisites	
Relative Competency	Must maintain an active Gold Cloud Platform Competency
Performance	Your company must show customers migrating to Azure and meet the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three customers must show a monthly average Azure Consumed Revenue (ACR) (of previous three months) that meets the following threshold for Windows Server migration:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USD10,000 Windows Server Virtual Machines (VM) ACR

Performance	<p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three customers must show a monthly average ACR from the previous three months that meets following threshold for SQL server migration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USD10,000 SQL server VM (IaaS) ACR OR USD10,000 SQL Database ACR* OR USD5,000 SQL Managed Instance* ACR <p>*At least one customer should meet these thresholds for SQL Database ACR OR SQL Managed Instance ACR.</p> <p>Note that you can have the same set of three customers meeting the requirement for both Windows and SQL server or they can be different.</p> <p>Your company should achieve ACR through Digital Partner of Record, Partner Admin Link, and Cloud Solution Provider.</p>
Knowledge	<p>Your organization must have five individuals that pass the following certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One unique individual must pass Azure Administrator Associate certification AND One unique individual must pass Azure Solutions Architect Expert certification AND One unique individual must pass Azure DevOps Engineer Expert certification AND One unique individual must pass Azure Security Engineer Associate certification AND One unique individual must pass Azure Data Engineer Associate certification

Audit Requirement	
Audit	Must complete and pass a third-party audit against the below checklist.

Prerequisites

What is the required competency?

You must have an active Gold Cloud Platform Competency.

Where can I get more information about the Cloud Platform competency?

You can find details about the Cloud Platform competency [here](#).

What is the customer Azure consumption requirement?

Your company must show customers migrating to Azure and meet the following requirements:

- Three customers must show a monthly average Azure Consumed Revenue (ACR) (of previous three months) that meets the following threshold for Windows Server migration:
 - USD10,000 Windows Server Virtual Machines (VM) ACR

AND

- Three customers must show a monthly average ACR from the previous three months that meets the following threshold for SQL server migration:
 - USD10,000 SQL server VM (IaaS) ACR OR
 - USD10,000 SQL Database ACR* OR
 - USD5,000 SQL Managed Instance* ACR

*At least one customer should meet these thresholds for SQL Database ACR OR SQL Managed Instance ACR.

Note that you can have the same set of three customers meeting the requirement for both Windows and SQL server or they can be different.

Your company should achieve ACR through Digital Partner of Record, Partner Admin Link, and Cloud Solution Provider.

What customer Azure Consumed Revenue (ACR) counts towards meeting the performance requirement for the advanced specialization?

Azure Consumed Revenue calculations will be based on customer consumption where the partner is attached as Cloud Solution Provider, Digital Partner of Record, or via the Partner Admin Link. We do not count consumption from a partner's own Enterprise Agreement.

What are the certification requirements?

- One unique individual must pass Azure Administrator Associate certification AND
- One unique individual must pass Azure Solutions Architect Expert certification AND
- One unique individual must pass Azure DevOps Engineer Expert certification AND
- One unique individual must pass Azure Security Engineer Associate certification AND
- One unique individual must pass Azure Data Engineer Associate certification

I see that some of the same exams are a requirement for both the Cloud Platform competency and Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization. Do I need five people in addition to those that took the exams to earn the competency?

No. If anyone in your organization took one of the qualifying exams as part of your competency attainment, those same individuals count toward your five skilled people.

Is the certification requirement global or per country?

Your organization must have a minimum of five unique and certified full-time employees (FTEs) globally to earn the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization.

What is the definition of a certified FTE?

A certified FTE is a full-time employee at your company. A person who is contracting for a short term, or just on a project basis, does not count toward your unique five individuals.

Audit Requirements

What are the different roles of people involved in the audit process?

Role of the Auditor

It is the role of the auditor to review submitted evidence and objectively assess if the evidence provided satisfies the audit checklist requirements.

The auditor will select and evaluate evidence, based on samples of the information available, from live systems. The appropriate use of such sampling is closely related to the confidence that can be placed in the audit conclusions.

All Information Security Systems International, LLC (ISSI) auditors are under nondisclosure agreement (NDA) with Microsoft. Auditors will also comply with requests from partners to sign a direct NDA.

Role of the Partner

The partner must provide objective evidence to satisfy the auditor for all checklist items. It is the responsibility of the partner to have reviewed all checklist items prior to the audit, to have collated all necessary documentation and evidence, and to ensure the right subject matter experts available to discuss and show systems as appropriate.

All audit evidence must be reproducible and verifiable.

How is the audit scored?

The partner score for the audit checklist V1.0.1 is based on the 12 checklist items.

Partners must meet all sections by category to pass, while providing adequate evidence demonstrating existence, effectiveness, and efficiency of processes, policies, procedures, and tooling against the checklist item being assessed.

What if I only meet some of the requirements?

Because this is an advanced specialization and an opportunity to truly differentiate your business, we expect partners to demonstrate that they meet each of the four sections and provide the evidence that satisfies the requirement.

What happens if I don't pass the audit outright?

There are two possible outcomes at the end of the audit:

- The partner passes the audit.
 - The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit to the partner (this is not shared with Microsoft), including identifying observed strengths and opportunities for improvement.
 - The auditor will provide a **Final Report** to the partner (this is not shared with Microsoft).
 - The auditor will notify Microsoft of the final result.
- The partner does not satisfy all checklist items during the **audit**.
 - The auditor will present a brief synopsis at the end of the audit, including observed strengths and **Open Action Items**.
 - The partner will receive a **Gap Review** detailing the **Open Action Items**.

- o The partner will move into the **Gap Review Phase**. You will have a 15-day window to schedule and complete a Gap Review Meeting to present your missing evidence.
- o The auditor will provide a **Final Report** to the partner including the final result: Pass or No Pass (this is not shared with Microsoft).
- o The auditor will notify Microsoft of the final audit result.
 - If partner receives a No Pass report, their application to join the program will be rejected.

Audit Process

Who conducts the audit?

The audit is carried out on behalf of Microsoft by an independent third-party auditor, appointed by Microsoft. The audit company is Information Security Systems International (ISSI).

Can I contact the auditor to schedule the audit before I apply or as soon as I apply?

No, the audit company will not be able to schedule your audit until they receive official notification from Microsoft. Microsoft only issues the notification when you meet all the program prerequisites and apply.

How long does the audit take?

The audit will take about half a day. However, there will be significant preparation required to be audit-ready. We recommend that you read the audit checklist thoroughly and consider the pre-audit assessment offered by ISSI to streamline your preparation.

How much does the audit cost?

The audit fee is USD2,000

The optional pre-audit assessment fee is USD2,000

Both fees are paid to the third-party independent auditor. The audit fee must be paid in full before the audit is completed.

In addition, there are indirect costs associated with preparation for the audit.

What is the difference between the audit and the pre-audit assessment?

The **Windows Server and SQL Server to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization** pre-audit assessment is conducted by an auditor to provide a detailed and objective assessment of where a partner stands against the **Windows Server and SQL Server to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization** audit requirements.

The pre-audit assessment is a remote session, conducted using your preferred conferencing platform. The duration is typically 6-8 hours and allows you the opportunity to review the audit requirements and discuss the required evidence with an experienced **Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization** auditor. To ensure objectivity, different auditors will be assigned to conduct the pre-assessment and the half-day remote audit.

The intention of the pre-audit assessment is to enable the partner to have a general discussion of the audit scope, expectations, preparation, and the requirements of the controls, allowing you to gain general knowledge of the program requirements.

The pre-audit assessment is not:
A review of prepared materials, or
A deep dive into specific controls

Is the pre-audit assessment mandatory?

No, the pre-audit assessment is optional. It is recommended to opt for the pre-audit assessment as it will ensure you are more prepared for the audit.

Partner FAQ: Advanced Specialization Overview

What is an advanced specialization?

An advanced specialization is an extensive validation of a partner's capability to deliver high-fidelity services in a specific solution area. Advanced specializations are customer-facing labels displayed on a partner's business profile and are used in our customer referral engine to enable partners to showcase their differentiated capabilities in a specific solution area. To earn an advanced specialization, partners must first hold gold competency status in an aligned competency.

How is it different from a competency?

A competency measures a partner's broad technical capability in a Microsoft product or technology. An advanced specialization measures more in-depth capabilities in a specific solution area, for example, SAP on Azure. Advanced specializations require that a partner must first have active gold competency status in the competency aligned to the advanced specialization they are interested in earning.

Does a partner need a competency to earn an advanced specialization?

Yes. Advanced specializations can only be earned by partners with an aligned, active gold competency. For example, to earn the SAP on Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization, partners must first have a Gold Cloud Platform Competency.

What advanced specializations are available to partners?

Advanced specializations can only be earned by partners with an aligned, active gold competency. For example, to earn the SAP on Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization, partners must first have a Gold Cloud Platform Competency. The advanced specializations available for you to earn will depend on which gold competencies you have attained.

Why would a partner want to get an advanced specialization?

An advanced specialization allows partners to differentiate their capabilities to customers looking for partners who can help them with a business need. Partners with an advanced specialization will be listed first in Partner Finder, a Microsoft-owned, customer-facing tool. Advanced specializations will also be indicated on a partner's business profile, alongside their competency status.

What are the benefits of an advanced specialization?

Partners with an advanced specialization will be listed first in Partner Finder, a Microsoft-owned, customer-facing tool. Advanced specializations will also be indicated on a partner's business profile, alongside their competency status.

How does a partner earn an advanced specialization?

Each advanced specialization will have a set of requirements that a partner must meet. The specific criteria will depend on the advanced specialization being sought, but can include performance requirements, exams, customer evidence, or third-party certification, among others. Please refer to your Partner Center dashboard for detailed criteria for individual advanced specializations. Advanced specializations are not available in PMC.

What advanced specializations are in market?

The first advanced specialization available requires Gold Cloud Platform Competency:

- Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure
- Linux and Open Source Database Migration to Microsoft Azure
- Data Warehouse Migration to Microsoft Azure
- Kubernetes on Microsoft Azure
- Modernization of Web Applications to Microsoft Azure
- SAP on Microsoft Azure

Can a partner have more than one advanced specialization?

Yes, you can earn as many advanced specializations as you qualify for. This will increase your visibility to customers in the Partner Finder tool.

Is the partner's advanced specialization global or local?

It depends on how your company has set up your account. If your company has one global account, then your advanced specialization will be assessed and awarded at the global level. If you have set up your account country by country, only the location that earned the advanced specialization will be awarded it.

Is there a cost associated with the advanced specialization?

Microsoft does not charge a program fee, however there are direct costs associated with the following requirements:

Gold Cloud Platform Competency

Azure certifications

Audit and optional pre-assessment

Third-party certifications

In addition, there are indirect costs associated with preparation for the audit including travel and expenses and audit preparation hours.

How long does the partner keep an advanced specialization?

Your advanced specialization will remain in place for one year, but it is required that you maintain an active gold competency defined in the advanced specialization prerequisites. If you do not maintain your Gold Cloud Platform Competency, you will lose your advanced specialization status. On your renewal date, you will need to meet the current requirements which may evolve over time.

When does the partner renew the advanced specialization?

On the anniversary date of your advanced specialization.

How does my company renew its advanced specialization?

Partners will need to renew against the current published requirements at the time of their renewal.

Will a partner need to requalify for the advanced specialization after a specific period of time?

Yes. Partners must meet the requirements each year for the Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure Advanced Specialization. You should expect that the prerequisites will evolve year on year to best meet the needs of customers. Partners will be expected to undergo an annual audit as part of the renewal process.

What happens to the advanced specialization if a partner does not renew their associated gold competency?

To maintain an advanced specialization, partners must keep their gold competency status active at all times.

How will a customer know if my company has an advanced specialization or not?

Your advanced specialization will be listed on your Business Profile.

What can partners tell customers about my advanced specialization(s)?

An advanced specialization is a customer-facing label on your Business Profile. It is not a brand and does not have a badge associated with it. However, you can tell your customers which advanced specializations you have earned. They can validate by reviewing your Business Profile in the Partner Finder tool.

What if my company has an endorsement now?

As advanced specializations go live, they will replace endorsements on the customer-facing profile. Each advanced specialization has published objective criteria for partners to earn them.

Can my company have both an endorsement and advanced specialization in their profile?

No. As advanced specializations go live, they will replace endorsements on the customer-facing profile.

Does a partner get a badge to use externally in their marketing to note their advanced specialization differentiation?

Advanced specializations do not have a badge or logo. Your advanced specialization will be displayed on the partner's customer-facing Partner Profile.

Other Questions?

If you have a question we haven't answered in this document, please contact us atazureAS@microsoft.com, or go to <https://partner.microsoft.com/support> to create a ticket with our Frontline team.