

IRAQI MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IMPLEMENTS POSTGRADUATE DIGITAL LITERACY EXAM REQUIREMENTS



“After living in scientific isolation for the past 35 years, it is critical for Iraqi postgraduate students to prove their digital skills to the global market with the internationally-recognized IC³ certification.”

**- Dr. Ammar Hasan, Deputy Minister
of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraq**

Partner: Certiport
Program: Certiport IC³
Market Sector: Higher Education
Sub-Sector: Postgraduate Universities

BACKGROUND:

The Iraq Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHE) aims to better prepare the country's postgraduate students for further studies and careers abroad. With the intent to ensure each postgraduate applicant has the foundational digital literacy skills to succeed in a global economy, the MHE approved the Certiport Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³®) as a national requirement for application to postgraduate studies at all of Iraq's 19 universities.

The Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³) provides students and job-seekers with the foundation of knowledge they need to succeed in environments that require the use of computers and the Internet. The Global Standard 3, an internationally recognized standard for digital literacy, reflects the most relevant skills needed in today's academic and business environments including: Computing Fundamentals, Key Applications, and Living Online.

Following more than 35 years of scientific isolation, the MHE discovered Iraqi postgraduate students were completing their studies in various specialties, but many still lacked basic computing skills such as familiarity with key word processing applications and skills for working in a networked environment. After examining various technical certifications, the MHE chose the internationally -recognized IC³ exam to ensure postgraduate students began their studies with core digital literacy skills in place.

In order to improve higher education in Iraq and better prepare students for careers and studies abroad, the MHE began to administer IC³ exams in 2010.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS:

- Strong relationships with international academic and workforce leaders
- Trial period to allow MHE and Iraq University Professors to complete the IC³ exam.
- Ability to position Certiport IC³ as ideal global standard for digital skills
- Localized Certiport Authorized Testing Centers
- Iraq University validation of IC³ has been used across the globe for nearly a decade to measure the broad-based ICT literacy required by students and teachers to succeed.



STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Problem Assessment: Dr. Ammar Hasan, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq, received feedback from universities and organizations around the world indicating that many Iraqi students lacked the essential digital literacy skills to succeed. Dr. Hasan had observed the same predicament first hand as a medical professor earlier in his career. Other top Iraqi officials and leaders at Iraq's universities agreed their students needed further preparation in information technology to compete on a global scale.

2. Initiative: Dr. Hasan worked with representatives at Iraq's top universities to create an initiative to search for an internationally-recognized certificate that would verify Iraq's postgraduate students possessed basic digital literacy skills. Iraq had administered their own tests for many years, but other countries did not recognize these internal tests and they did not sufficiently measure postgraduate student IT preparedness.

3. Trial Period: The MHE administered a variety of digital literacy tests for a trial period at Iraq university computer training centers. The MHE and university computer science experts took the tests themselves, collected data and analyzed the results. They determined the IC³ certification was the most useful test and met their needs for certifying postgraduate students for digital literacy.

4. Approval: Early in 2010, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research approved the IC³ exam as a requirement for all postgraduate applicants in Iraq.

5. Communication: In February, 2010, the MHE began to notify the public of the new IC³ certification requirements for postgraduate applicants through Iraqi Satellite TV and the MHE website.

6. Implementation: The MHE worked with Certiport to establish a sufficient amount of testing centers and preparation materials for postgraduate applicants. Approximately 50,000 students apply to postgraduate studies each year, and the MHE recommended each applicant complete the three certification exams.

7. Messaging: Some Iraqi postgraduate applicants did not respond favorably to new testing requirements. The MHE worked to develop proper messaging around IC³ to show students the exam would further their career and help them succeed in a global market. Some Iraq testing centers presented exam results to the media to further communicate the success rate and positive changes to improve the exam preparation process.

NEXT STEPS:

The MHE has full support for the IC³ exam from Iraq's universities, but students are still reluctant to adopt the new requirements for applying to postgraduate studies. The MHE is working to distribute messaging to students to help them understand the need for an internationally-recognized certification and how it will ultimately help them succeed.

A vast majority of Iraqis participate in postgraduate studies, and the MHE is working to return the country's academic sector to global respect and admiration. By requiring the IC³ exam for every postgraduate applicant, a large portion of Iraq's population will possess basic digital literacy skills. In the future, the MHE plans to implement the exam at an undergraduate level. The MHE is also working to develop a financial assistance programs for Iraqi students who cannot afford the IC³ exam.

Said Dr. Hasan, "Although they may not understand yet, we are working to better prepare Iraqi students for the workforce and for international travels and diplomacy. After living in isolation for many years, we look forward to reemerging as an educated people who can contribute and compete in the scientific world in meaningful ways."

