

Oracle Adds to IT Qualification

Four Oracle units have been added to leading awarding body OCR's suite of qualifications for aspiring and practicing IT professionals, iPRO. The units are delivered through the Oracle Academy, a virtual academy developed by the corporation to equip students with the technology and business skills needed for the 21st century.

The Oracle units within iPRO add to vendor units from other global organisations including Cisco, CompTIA and Microsoft and increase the versatility of iPRO – already a successful employer-focussed suite of qualifications. The iPRO units offered by Oracle are in Data Modelling and Relational Database Design, SQL Programming and Java.

"In today's knowledge-driven economy, a company's primary asset is its people and as IT becomes an increasingly integral part of business strategy, it should not be underestimated how important it is for IT staff to have the skills to support the business. We are delighted to be working with OCR because at Oracle we believe technology vendors have an essential role to play in supporting education bodies, who deliver the skills qualifications required by the ever-changing demands of the IT industry," says Ian Smith, an Oracle senior VP & GM.

Developed in consultation with industry, OCR's iPRO suite offers five qualifications across two levels, with opportunities to specialise in two areas: Systems Support and Software Development. Each qualification can be tailored to suit the needs of an organisation or individual, making it ideal for both new and experienced IT professionals. Learners will receive a certificate for each unit they achieve, meaning they can study at their own place and develop their own progression path.



Have you paid your lighthouse bill?

Strategic Thought Group, an IBM Premier Business Partner, has helped to deliver a new Automatic Light Dues Information System (ALDIS) to Trinity House for the collection of Light Dues from commercial shipping around the coast of England, Wales, the Channel Islands and Gibraltar.

Trinity House provides nearly 600 aids to navigation ranging from lighthouses, buoys and beacons to the latest satellite navigation technology and is funded from Light Dues levied on commercial shipping in some of the busiest sea-lanes in the world. Until early 2004 the process of collecting Light Dues and issuing Light Due Certificates was done manually and carried out by shipping agents in the UK. The new system surely has positive implications for maritime-related software development projects around the world.

The ALDIS project is an Internet-based system that assesses liability, calculates the Light Dues and prints the Light Due Certificates. The second phase of the project involved the migration of data from an HP 3000 written in COBOL to a more modern open environment to enable the checking of vessel movements against Certificates issued and the incorporation of a financial system for the collection of unpaid dues.

Chris Booth, Strategic Thought senior management consultant said, "ALDIS was built on an IBM solution based on DB2 and WebSphere Application Server. This gave Trinity House the open platform, thin client approach they required combined with the assurance of a resilient and robust system needed for such a business critical system."

Phase Two of ALDIS went live in April last year and has shown significant benefits in terms of a reduction of the number of errors in comparison to the paper based system which involved a great deal of data entry. Payments are now collected from the shipping agents' bank accounts by direct debit reducing the amount of errors and time involved in banking.

Gerry Callen concluded, "The whole project was delivered on time and within budget. We have calculated it will have paid for itself within 24 months as a result of reduced costs. The system has also been designed to allow for change, for example if the Merchant Shipping Act is altered – we have the flexibility to quickly change the way in which Light Dues are collected or the levels of the dues. I wonder what King Henry VIII would make of the changes since he first issued Trinity House with the Charter to collect Light Dues in 1514?"