Certiport, Inc.

Review Dates: August 2002

Organization Description: Certiport, Inc. was founded in 1997 and has done business under the names Marketshare, Inc. and Nivo International. The company is a leading provider of global, performance-based certification programs and services. Certiport is also the exclusive provider of the Microsoft Office® User Specialist (MOUS) program since 1997. Certiport, a Utah Corporation, is wholly owned by NJK Holding Corporation, a private company based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC^3) set of three examinations (IC^3 Computing Fundamentals, IC^3 Key Applications, and IC^3 Living Online) is a partnership between SkillCheck, Inc. a leading assessment provider to the staffing services, human resources, training, education and certification industries, and Certiport, Inc., a leading provider of performance-based certifications. SkillCheck, Inc. has been responsible for the development and validation of the IC^3 examinations, and Certiport is the exclusive distributor of IC^3 through its network of over 9,000 examination centers, called iQcenters, worldwide.

SkillCheck, Inc. was founded in 1988 as Useable Portable Publications, Inc., publishers of computer quick-reference manuals for over 30 software products and resellers of third party testing and training solutions to the staffing services industry. The company changed its name to SkillCheck, Inc. in 1995 after introducing its own line of assessment products and test development and deployment services. SkillCheck, Inc. is a privately owned corporation headquartered in Burlington, Massachusetts.

In developing the IC^3 program, SkillCheck and Certiport shared the objective of creating a research-based, validated standard for computer and Internet literacy to permit students and employees to be able to provide an instrument that certifies their knowledge of basic computer and Internet concepts and skills. Such a certification, backed by employers and by the training and educational industries, will allow job seekers and students to measure and improve their computer and Internet knowledge and skills based on professionally researched and validated standards.

A number of key program partners are engaged to ensure the success of the IC^3 certification program. Current participants in the program include: (1) The professional test center network (Certiport's iQcenters) that facilitates proctored examinations in a secure testing environment in thousands of locations worldwide; (2) Training partners who take part in the program's Independent Courseware Vendor (ICV) program. IC^3 currently has a large number of book, courseware, CBT and eLearning partners creating training materials that map to the IC^3 curriculum. These include Course Technology, CCI Learning, and other book publishers and training providers around the world; (3) Technology and certification industry partners including CompTIA, the IT industry's most important professional association and provider of A+ and other globally recognized IT certifications (see http://www.comptia.com/aboutus/pr/pr020507.htm for information on CompTIA's support of IC^3); and (4) Institutional partners such as the National Skills Standard Board (NSSB), the federal organization chartered to establish certification standards for major industry segments. (IC^3 is the first IT certification approved by the stringent NSSB review organization - see http://www.nssb.org for information on NSSB's approval of IC^3).

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How Examination Results Are Reported: The Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC^3) consists of three examinations: IC^3 Computing Fundamentals, IC^3 Key Applications, and IC^3 Living Online. Detailed information on the subjects covered in the three exams can be found at http://www.certiport.com/yourPersonalPath/ic3Certification/examContentOverview.asp. In order to obtain IC^3 certification, a candidate must successfully pass all three examinations.

The three IC^3 exams are delivered at Certiport secure testing centers (called iQcenters) and consist of software-based tests that are delivered on the test center's computers, with candidate and scoring data communicated to Certiport's centralized database via the Internet. To find an iQcenter that provides IC^3 certification, visit Certiport's iQcenter locator site at http://www.certiport.com/iQcenters/iQcenterLocatorInternal.asp.

The three IC^3 exams are scored on a pass/fail basis based on a 1000-point scale. The percentage of items that must be answered correctly for an exam varies between 700 and 800 points, depending on the exam. Exams consist of both linear and performance-based test questions covering various areas of computer and Internet literacy. For example, the IC^3 Computing Fundamentals exam includes linear (multiple-choice, matching, etc.) test items covering computer hardware and software concepts, and performance-based test questions on operating systems that require candidates to perform tasks as if they were using the real software.

Tests can only be delivered by authorized administrators of the IC^3 program who set up candidates and provide them with standardized candidate instructions at the beginning of each exam. Candidates are all required to "sign" a click-through non-disclosure agreement before being given access to an exam. These standards have proven to be successful for the administration of over half a million MOUS exams in over 9,000 test center locations worldwide.

Upon the candidate's completion of an exam, score information is automatically uploaded to the Certiport database and a score report for the exam is generated on the test center's PC for candidate and test-center record keeping. Once a candidate has completed all three IC^3 exams successfully, Certiport's data system automatically generates a record that indicates the candidate has successfully completed the IC^3 certification, and a certificate is automatically mailed to the candidate.

Summary of ACE Review: The review was conducted at the facilities of SkillCheck, Inc. in Burlington, Massachusetts. SkillCheck and Certiport staff, addressing both technical and exam content, made extensive presentations, with supporting documentation, to ACE team members and were available to respond to ques-

tions posed by review team members. Security for the examinations was judged to be adequate. The three examinations were found worthy of college-level credit recommendation.

Content Validity: The content team reported that Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC[3]) consists of three 45-minute examinations of approximately 45 questions each in the area of Computing Fundamentals, Key Applications, and Living OnLine. The examinations may be taken in any order but all the three must be passed to complete certification. These examinations test general knowledge of candidates in PC hardware, software and skills needed to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Internet Explorer. The test is administered on the computer at approved sites and is well designed and fairly current in addressing the content material.

Technical Adequacy: The technical team reported that the three tests are technically and statistically sound, meeting industry and ACE standards. The procedure for setting specifications (domain measures) is very detailed and is based upon extensive survey results from highly qualified subject matter experts (SME) regarding task analysis relevant to the content being measured. This results in specifications that appear to be closely tied to the level of competency, which the tests attempt to certify. Test reliability, validities, and procedures used to determine such are more than adequate by acceptable industry standards. The domains measured appear to be adequately and clearly defined.

Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC[3])

Dates: February 2002-Present

Credit Recommendation: In the vocation certificate or lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, 1 semester hour in General Education or Computer Literacy. **NOTE:** All three supporting (see following) examinations, which define the certification, must be successfully completed for the credit recommendation to apply.

IC[3] Computing Fundamentals

Description: This examination is one of three IC[3] examinations required for IC[3]certification. The exam measures knowledge and skills in three areas of computing: computer hardware, computer software and use of an operating system. The 45-minute exam consists of 45 questions that include standard linear test items (multiple-choice, multiple-response and matching) and performance-based test items (using interactive simulation test items).

Skills Measured: (Approximate percentage of examination by content area)

43% Computer Hardware—different types of computers, hardware components, computer performance, how to purchase or select a computer

22% Computer Software—how hardware and software work together to perform computing tasks, different types of software and the popular programs in each software category

35% Using An Operating System—operating systems and how they work, Microsoft Windows desktop, files and disks, system settings and installation software

IC[3] Key Applications

Description: This examination is one of three IC[3] examinations required for IC[3] certification. The exam measures knowledge and skills in three areas of using computer applications: understanding common features of computer applications, knowledge and skills in using a word processor and knowledge and skills in using a spreadsheet application. The 45-minute exam consists of 44 questions that include standard linear test items (multiple-choice, multiple-response and matching) and performance-based test items (using interactive simulation test items).

Skills Measured: (Approximate percentage of examination by content area)

42% Common Program Functions—Microsoft Windows applications, structure, screen elements, file management, editing and formatting functions, printing, online help

19% Word Processing Features—text formatting, tables, graphics

39% Spreadsheet Features—data sorting, formulas, worksheets, charts

IC[3] Living Online

Description: This examination is one of three IC[3] examinations required for IC[3] certification. The exam measures knowledge and skills in four areas of knowledge and skills regarding computers, networks and the Internet: networks, electronic mail, the Internet and the impact of computing and the Internet on society. The 45-minute exam consists of 45 questions that include standard linear test items (multiple-choice, multiple-response and matching) and performance-based test items (using interactive simulation test items).

Skills Measured: (Approximate percentage of examination by content area)

16% Networks and the Internet—network fundamentals and network computing, relationships among computer networks, communication networks and the Internet

30% Electronic Mail—how it works, using electronic mail applications, use of e-mail

27% Using the Internet—types of Internet information sources, Web browsing, searching the Internet

27% The Impact of Computing and the Internet on Society—how computers are used, risks of using computer hardware and software, using the Internet safely and legally