



Getting the “Correct” Answers in the TOGAF Exam

by Roger Evernden

Level 2 of the TOGAF® exam is the level where you are given a set of scenarios, and then asked for each one what you would do in that situation. There are four alternative responses: one is the most “correct”; two are distractors that are not as good as the “best” option; while the final option usually describes a response that ignores TOGAF altogether.

The big question that I get time and again is how do you know which answer is “correct”. Many students find Level 2 difficult because several of the possible options seem reasonable replies. Three of the options describe responses that are partly “correct”. And the potential responses include things that are intended to either misdirect students or at least confuse them.

TOGAF expects students to answer questions in both Level 1 and Level 2 according to the recommendations, suggestions, and directives of the TOGAF documentation. In other words, you must answer the questions “according to TOGAF”, and not get distracted by any ideas you may have picked up elsewhere. This can be particularly difficult for students who have some experience of architecting, because day-to-day practical hands-on experience doesn’t always tally with the way that the TOGAF documentation describes things.

Just to confuse things further... When it comes to taking the official exam the scenarios, questions and responses have been vetted and tested carefully to avoid any misunderstandings, but if you are preparing for the exam you may come across example scenarios that have been written by trainers or practitioners that are not quite so rigorous. It is useful to check whether the examples you are working through are from official sources or not; the most useful ones to help you prepare for the exam are official examples, or questions from previous, actual exams.

What else can you do to improve your chances of success in the exam?

Well firstly, remember that the Open Group Level 2 exam depends on very precise wording and context. In the official exam you can assume that the wording of the scenarios, questions and answers is checked very thoroughly, so when it comes to taking the actual exam it is extremely unlikely that you will get anything that strays from the gospel according to TOGAF. You can use this to your advantage by reading exam questions very carefully, and by applying the good EA technique of deconstruction to really get to understand the topic that each scenario is testing.

Another useful EA technique is to examine every concern within its broader context – and again you can apply this technique to analyse the circumstances and viewpoint that lie behind the scenario.

Architects must always work with a degree of uncertainty and fuzziness. Issues and concerns are never straightforward, and a lot of what we do as architects is to raise thinking to the architectural level so that decision makers can make an informed choice between options. In the real world, options and choices are all relative. In some ways, this is reflected in the exam, by the fact that answers are relative – you must rate the responses according to whether they are the “best”, “next best”, etc., which is, to some extent, a matter of interpretation or opinion.

In the real world this is part of the architectural debate led by the EA team to decide the most appropriate resolution of a set of concerns. In the official exam the ordering of the answers is again something that is rigorously checked, but you may also come across examples elsewhere that reflect the views of the one or two people responsible for writing the examples!

So, when you are analysing your options in the exam you can apply the same type of comparative thinking. On the one hand, from your study and knowledge of the TOGAF documentation you have a set of criteria that you can use to evaluate the “correct” answer. The more that an option matches the descriptions and concepts in TOGAF, the more likely it is to be the “correct” answer in the exam.

If you check the answers for any of the official questions against the documentation you will find that they are a match for the wording within the documentation. When it comes to taking the Level 2 exam the scenarios, questions and answers do follow a precise wording, and it will conform to the TOGAF documentation.

So, try to understand the logic and thinking behind the TOGAF documentation. As always, think as an architect; but in preparing for the TOGAF exams, think as a TOGAF architect!

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