

## An alternative route to TA qualifications!

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Becoming a qualified Transactional Analyst takes time, effort, commitment – and not an inconsiderable amount of money.

The learning path *needs* to be robust, the need for accruing many hours of learning, application and supervision justified from the point of view of ethical practice.

However, the journey can be a lonely one and many people drop out long before they would be expected to be ready to take their CTA exams. They will have already spent money and time on their personal and professional TA development, but may for varied reasons have felt the need to stop. The road to CTA can be a long one and someone leaving after one, two, or three years for example, will not have a TA qualification to show for their effort.

Many candidates find that their unresolved script issues only really surface as soon as they start to write their written exam. Students may show up well in the training room, but find the process of writing their written exam is when those script issues overwhelm, proving to be a big barrier. It is rather far down the line to discover these blocks at this point, and even more problematic when everything rests on one final oral exam.

On top of this, the Certified Transactional Analyst (CTA) status does not hold any currency in organisations so trainers, consultants, coaches and teachers etc, even once they have achieved this standard, will find that it does not mean anything to most commissioners of their work. The fact that they have come a long way in their professional and personal development, that they will have accrued hundreds of hours of training and supervision, successfully submitted a 24,000 word exam and passed a viva-style presentation will not mean much to an HR Director or Head Teacher. The same thing will apply to ICTAQ qualifications – although the titles of TA Practitioner, Advanced TA Practitioner and Master Practitioner will be more familiar, thanks to the success of the Neuro-Linguistic Programming training. But there the similarity ends, as NLP training is far less rigorous than TA training.

Of course those of us in this community understand that we do not commit many weekend and evening hours, time away from family and not even mentioning the cost ... just for a piece of paper. Of course we understand what value and benefits TA brings to our lives personally and professionally – the development, the friendships, the opportunities to travel .....

But of course, here is another major factor, and it is something that has bothered me for some time – many people cannot afford to pursue TA, to become qualified, to share its power with others. Many people cannot find the hard cash required to travel to and to pay for training, to pay their supervisors, to travel to exam sites (often in other countries).

I am uncomfortable with the fact that TA is only available to those who can afford to spend thousands of pounds on themselves. I am uncomfortable with the fact that the many “TA

airmiles” are contributing to climate change. I am uncomfortable with the fact that TA is only available to those who are mobile, and who do not have caring responsibilities. In 2016 I launched TA Tribe, and with the arrival of Covid 19 the transfer of my TA training was accelerated. Many other TA Trainers have done the same and I personally see this as a silver lining to the black cloud that is the pandemic.

Many years ago a group of TA Trainers got together to launch a continuing professional development qualification route to run alongside the EATA and ITAA qualifications. We also built in online examining (long before Covid!) and are really glad to see that the ITAA successfully launched online exams in February 2021. Online training, supervision and examining is a solution to make TA more accessible in many ways .

The portfolio route offered by ICTAQ is a work-based process whereby the trainee selects projects from their practice, whether they are a coach, trainer, educator or consultant etc, then submits a portfolio based on a module which might be about individual development, or group process, or the characteristics of an organisation, or the dynamics of a relationship. This portfolio, including evidence (flip charts, emails, reports, workshop designs etc – in any language) and a TA-based reflective commentary is submitted for assessment. The journey to that assessment will consist of draft portfolios submitted to the sponsoring supervisor, feedback given, supervision taken, etc. A great deal of support for the client-work, in real time!

There are requirements for training, supervision and application hours that match those for CTA – the main difference is the inclusion of continuous assessment. This route facilitates an active blend of learning and direct application, time for supported reflection, more learning, more application etc in an upward learning spiral.

Diploma onwards includes a focus on research. So many National TA Associations are now reporting that they have real problems getting TA recognised due to a lack of research. So this element is built into the programme, requiring students to critique research methods and conduct their own research project. Many of the same volunteers who run ICTAQ are also involved in the publication of IJTARP – the International Journal of TA Research and Practice, where we are doing our best to overcome this issue.

| <b>Level</b>      | <b>Title</b>             | <b>EATA/ITAA</b> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Certificate:      | TA Practitioner          |                  |
| Diploma:          | TA Advanced Practitioner |                  |
| Advanced Diploma: | TA Master Practitioner   | CTA              |

The advantages to the student of these interim qualifications are primarily as follows:

1. The portfolio route allows for a continuing feedback loop which helps the practitioner to embed their TA learning in their work assignments
2. Like university qualifications, they provide a staged mechanism for taking your TA qualifications as far as you choose (and to decide over time how far you want to go);

3. They can run alongside if you want to achieve EATA/ITAA Certified TA Practitioner (CTA) status - the same requirements are being met and our team are P/TSTAs;
4. There are options for undertaking an MSc in Transactional Analysis alongside them (and for those with CTA already to convert that to an MSc through accreditation of prior learning)

We have learnt through experience that the closer contact afforded by the portfolio route of continuous professional development encourages students to achieve levels of proficiency whereas the lack of such steps means that people often give up because it is taking so many years.

By following the ICTAQ route, the trainee is supported to “show up”, to reveal to the supervisor their strengths and areas for improvement at the same time as they apply TA in their professional role. This is also significant in terms of protecting the public. Trainees are learning the theories, and concurrently receiving professional mentoring support from their supervisor. The trainee benefits, and so do their clients.

ICTAQ provides this qualification route with the joint aims of upholding the rigorous and ethical standards of TA as it is delivered to the public, and offering a mentoring mechanism to trainees in their professional practice. The latter also contributes to the ethical application of TA with clients.

The flexibility of this approach also means that after each stage of learning, the trainee can either build on their progress by advancing to the next level, or they can leave TA training with a recognisable qualification and a TA identity. They can also still go for CTA if they wish, by completing the Master Practitioner level and submitting their work in a different format.

The TA qualification pathway does not have to be a solitary slog – it can be a focussed and planned trip, with meaningful exits and options for further excursions!