

Enterprise Architect Certification – Myths and Realities

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The demand for Certified Enterprise Architects is increasing rapidly in both the Government and private sectors. Much of the information concerning certification, especially that available on the Internet, contains misperceptions as well as misleading information about certification.

Inaccurate information is harmful to parties seeking certification as well as to the entities that provide the certification. **This paper seeks to set the record straight on some of the most glaring myths and misunderstandings about certification of Enterprise Architects.**

Myth #1: There is an overarching, authoritative certification body for Enterprise Architects.

Reality: There is no overarching authoritative certification body for Enterprise Architects.

While efforts are underway to develop a Certification Board, so far they have not been successful. It follows that the FEAC Institute, despite the message its name may connote, is not an overarching certification body for the U.S. Government or the private sector. FEAC is singled out as an example here because some organizations have been led to believe that “FEAC Certification” is the only authorized or officially endorsed game in town. The fact is, the FEAC Institute, like other entities that provide legitimate EA Certification, is a *for-profit corporation*.

Myth #2: There is only one source for authoritative certification for Enterprise Architects.

Reality: The most “authoritative” sources of EA certification are individual universities.

A university-backed EA certification, of which there are a few, ensures that the student has not only been exposed to study material but has passed a rigorous test and has demonstrated mastery of the material and shown a defined level of competence in the craft. A university-backed certification further ensures that the study material itself has been examined and approved by university authorities. For example, Carnegie-Mellon University’s EA certification program is backed by CMU, the SowellEAC EA certification programs are backed by National-Louis University, and FEAC’s EA certification programs are backed by California State University.

Myth #3: There exists an authoritative definition of “EA certification.”

Reality: Currently, there is no official, authoritative definition of EA certification.

The term “EA certification” has no universally-agreed definition. So, what is to stop anyone from saying that their program offers a “certification” for enterprise architects?” Nothing! Nothing at all! However, an accredited university, which backs and describes a program and its criteria for achieving certification, is a reasonable and trustworthy quasi-authoritative source for defining EA certification.

Myth #4: FEAC is the only program offering separate certifications in multiple EA frameworks.

Reality: Sowe//EAC also offers certifications in multiple EA frameworks.

The FEAC website states that FEAC is the only EA program that offers two EA Framework options for certification. Contrary to this claim, *Sowe//EAC* offers certification in both a universally applicable *Sowe//EAC* Framework and also in DODAF, a duality that is clearly described on the *Sowe//EAC* Website.

Myth #5: FEAC is the only certification program requiring the development of EA models and artifacts.

Reality: The Sowe//EAC certification program has always required that its students develop and defend a full enterprise architecture

The FEAC Institute, in its recently published book and also on its website, falsely claims that FEAC is the only certification program that requires students to construct an architecture as a basis for competency demonstration and evaluation.

Kathie Sowell included a requirement for students to build an architecture in the original (*pre-FEAC*) EA training courses she designed and taught at the MITRE Corporation. In fact, as a former Director and Principal Faculty member of the FEAC Institute, it was Ms. Sowell who instituted the requirement for FEAC students to develop an architecture as a core part of their student projects. At *Sowe//EAC* Ms. Sowell has continued and further refined the design-build requirement to give students the best training possible.

Myth #6: “Black Belt EA certification” is simply another title for EA certification.

Reality: Achieving Black Belt EA certification should be recognition of having acquired training and expertise well beyond the ability to develop architectures.

Some EA certification programs appear to have named their *non-certification* short programs as “Green Belt” and renamed their pre-existing EA certification programs as “Black Belt.” Admittedly, there is neither formal guidance nor standards governing certification titles that would prevent this.

In contrast, *SowellEAC* offers both a basic EA certification program and a Black Belt EA certification program. Both programs confer university-backed Enterprise Architect certifications. However, the *SowellEAC* Black Belt program is a distinctly different and more advanced program than basic EA certification programs. In fact, the *SowellEAC* Black Belt EA certification program was created in response to the evolving OSD requirements for EA analysis,

Certification in a basic EA training program is a pre-requisite for enrolling in the *SowellEAC* Black Belt program, and the program *begins* with an enterprise architecture brought to class by the student. The *SowellEAC* Black Belt program teaches its students *EA analysis and systems engineering techniques*, and covers EA analytical methods and class projects regarding business improvement, systems interoperability, information assurance, performance, and capability progression modeling and strategies. Upon the successful completion of this program, a bona fide advanced Black Belt EA certification is conferred upon successful students