Curriculum for Certified Professional for Software Architecture (CPSA)® Advanced Level

COSMO – *Collaborative Software Modelling*

2026.1-rev1-EN-20260909

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Learning Goals Overview

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- LG 6-2: Be Able to Select Suitable Collaborative Approaches for the Individual Context
- LG 6-3: Know Specific Requirements for the Presented Approaches

Introduction: General information about the iSAQB Advanced Level

What is taught in an Advanced Level module?

The module can be attended independently of a CPSA-F certification.

- The iSAQB Advanced Level offers modular training in three areas of competence with flexibly designable training paths. It takes individual inclinations and priorities into account.
- The certification is done as an assignment. The assessment and oral exam is conducted by experts appointed by the iSAQB.

What can Advanced Level (CPSA-A) graduates do?

CPSA-A graduates can:

- Independently and methodically design medium to large IT systems
- In IT systems of medium to high criticality, assume technical and content-related responsibility
- Conceptualize, design, and document actions to achieve quality requirements and support development teams in the implementation of these actions
- Control and execute architecture-relevant communication in medium to large development teams

Requirements for CPSA-A certification

- Successful training and certification as a Certified Professional for Software Architecture, Foundation Level® (CPSA-F)
- At least three years of full-time professional experience in the IT sector; collaboration on the design and development of at least two different IT systems
  - Exceptions are allowed on application (e.g., collaboration on open source projects)
- Training and further education within the scope of iSAQB Advanced Level training courses with a minimum of 70 credit points from at least three different areas of competence
- Successful completion of the CPSA-A certification exam

Essentials

What does the module “COSMO” convey?

The **Collaborative Software Modelling** module teaches participants how to use collaborative modeling to design robust software architectures together as a team.

Because architecture work is always created by teams or has an impact on them, participants learn concrete, field-tested techniques that enable better collaboration and foster more productive discussions about business and technical concerns.

By the end of the module, participants will be familiar with a range of collaborative modeling approaches, understand their strengths and limitations, and be able to place them in the context of the underlying principles. They will be able to contribute effectively to modeling sessions, prepare and facilitate at least one collaborative modeling method themselves, and establish collaborative modeling practices within their own projects.

In addition, the module equips participants to make complexity visible and to prepare team decisions earlier and with greater clarity.

Curriculum Structure and Recommended Durations

Content	Recommended minimum duration (minutes)	Exercises (minutes)
1. Software Development as a Social System	60	30
2. Fundamentals of Collaborative Modeling	120	90
3. Advanced Collaborative Modeling	120	90
4. Succeeding with Collaborative Modeling	60	60
5. Creating Impact as Facilitator	60	60
6. Overview of Collaborative Techniques	60	60
Examples		210
Total		1080 (18h)

Bitte in dieser Datei nur die "**?**"-Platzhalter durch die Anzahl der Tage sowie die erreichbaren Punkte ersetzen. Ansonsten keine Änderungen vornehmen!

Duration, Teaching Method and Further Details

The times stated below are recommendations. The duration of a training course on the COSMO module should be at least 3 days, but may be longer. Providers may differ in terms of duration, teaching method, type and structure of the exercises, and the detailed course structure. In particular, the curriculum provides no specifications on the nature of the examples and exercises.

Licensed training courses for the COSMO module contribute the following credit points towards admission

to the final Advanced Level certification exam:

Methodical Competence:	10 Points
Technical Competence:	0 Points
Communicative Competence:	20 Points

Prerequisites

Participants should have the following knowledge and/or experience:

- A basic understanding of software architecture and the typical challenges in this field.
- Practical experience with the common challenges and approaches involved in architectural work in software projects.

The following knowledge is **helpful** for understanding some of the concepts covered in the module:

- Working with Groups:
  - Experience with and knowledge of facilitation techniques.
  - Experience with and knowledge of structuring and running effective meetings.
- Architecture Work
  - Experience with and knowledge of documenting and visualizing software systems, particularly software architectures.
- Sociotechnical Aspects
  - A basic understanding of sociotechnical systems and their impact on software architecture and software development.

Structure of the Curriculum

The individual sections of the curriculum are described according to the following structure:

- **Terms/principles**: Essential core terms of this topic.
- **Teaching/practice time**: Defines the minimum amount of teaching and practice time that must be spent on this topic or its practice in an accredited training course.
- **Learning goals**: Describes the content to be conveyed including its core terms and principles.

This section therefore also outlines the skills to be acquired in corresponding training courses.

Supplementary Information, Terms, Translations

To the extent necessary for understanding the curriculum, we have added definitions of technical terms to the iSAQB glossary and complemented them by references to (translated) literature.

To describe learning objectives, this curriculum uses the terms **Know**, **Understand**, and **Apply**. These terms represent different levels of competence and build upon each other.

Know: Participants are aware of the existence of a concept, term, or practice and can roughly classify it.

Understand: Participants have engaged with the concept, term, or practice and can explain its meaning,

context, and relationships.

Apply: Participants have gained practical experience with the concept, term, or practice during the training and are able to use it independently.

The competence levels follow a hierarchical order:

Know < Understand < Apply

Each higher level includes the preceding ones.

1. Software Development as a Social System

Duration: 60 min	Practice time: 30 min

1.1. Terms and Principles

- Sociotechnical Systems
- Collaboration and Collaborative Modeling

1.2. Learning Goals

This learning block introduces the fundamentals of collaborative modeling. Participants understand that architecture is always the result of a collective effort. They learn the prerequisites for successful collaboration and the factors that can hinder effective teamwork. In addition, they recognize which people and perspectives need to be brought together for effective collaborative modeling.

LG 1-1: Understand the Impact of Sociotechnical Systems on Modeling

Participants understand the concept and implications of sociotechnical systems. They are able to relate the different aspects of collaborative modeling to the elements of a sociotechnical system.

The training provides a detailed understanding of the significance of the elements "organizational structure", "people", "technical system", and "processes".

Participants understand that these elements influence one another and that architectural decisions have an impact within the broader sociotechnical system.

LG 1-2: Understand the Fundamentals of Human Collaboration

Participants understand that people collaborate for a variety of individual and shared motivations.

Participants understand which factors can encourage or hinder the willingness to collaborate.

Participants are familiar with the fundamental social and organizational conditions that support successful collaboration.

Participants understand that trust, psychological safety, transparency, and shared goals are important prerequisites for sustainable collaboration.

Participants understand that collaboration must be actively fostered and continuously maintained.

LG 1-3: Identify the Relevant Partners for Collaborative Modeling

Participants are familiar with the typical participants involved in collaborative modeling, including development teams, stakeholders, management, and users, as well as their different perspectives and interests.

Participants understand that collaborative modeling is not limited to people in the role of software architect but benefits from a diversity of roles and viewpoints.

They are familiar with the typical participants in successful collaborative modeling.

2. Fundamentals of Collaborative Modeling

Duration: 120 min	Practice time: 90 min

2.1. Terms and Principles

- Facilitation
- Preparation
- Follow-up and Review
- Roles in Collaborative Modeling

2.2. Learning Goals

This learning block explains when and why collaborative architecture work is valuable and how it can be applied effectively. Participants learn to recognize common situations that call for collaborative modeling and assess its value in their own context. Through hands-on practice, they experience collaborative modeling firsthand and understand the role of facilitation as a means of supporting effective collaboration.

LG 2-1: Recognize and Assess the Need for Collaborative Architecture Work

Participants are familiar with typical scenarios in which collaborative architecture work can positively influence collaboration, decision-making, and architectural quality. They understand that collaborative architecture work is particularly effective when addressing complex problems, coordinating across multiple stakeholders, or working with distributed knowledge.

Participants are able to identify the need for collaborative architecture work in different scenarios, especially within their own organizational context, by recognizing and assessing symptoms such as knowledge silos, coordination problems, misunderstandings, or decision bottlenecks.

LG 2-2: Experience Collaborative Modeling in Practice

Participants have experienced collaborative modeling through a practical example and actively participated in a collaborative modeling session. As a result, they understand collaborative modeling from the perspective of a participant.

LG 2-3: Fundamentals of Facilitation

Participants understand the role of the facilitator in collaborative modeling sessions and are familiar with the typical responsibilities involved in preparation, facilitation, follow-up, and review.

They understand that facilitation can be performed in a lightweight manner and does not require a formal role or extensive training in facilitation methods.

LG 2-4: Conduct a Collaborative Modeling Session

Participants are able to prepare, facilitate, follow up, and review a collaborative modeling session.

They can create the necessary conditions for a successful session, including arranging the physical or virtual environment, providing the required tools, and planning the schedule.

Participants can facilitate a collaborative modeling session, keeping track of time, gathering feedback, and

ensuring that outcomes are captured.

They can document the results of a collaborative modeling session and make them available for subsequent work.

After facilitating a collaborative modeling session, participants are able to reflect on their own performance and identify opportunities for improvement for future sessions.

LG 2-5: Reflect on Collaborative Modeling

Participants reflect on their practical experience with collaborative modeling by considering questions such as:

- What roles did they play during the modeling session?
- How did this approach differ from the way they have worked previously?

As a result, participants understand how collaborative modeling can become part of their own professional toolkit.

3. Advanced Collaborative Modelling

Duration: 120 min	Practice time: 90 min

3.1. Terms and Principles

- Facilitation
- Tools
- Common Language

3.2. Learning Goals

This learning block provides the practical foundations of collaborative modelling. Participants learn how to use tools effectively, involve the right stakeholders, and make information visible throughout a session. They understand how session format, group composition, and a shared language influence the success of a session.

LG 3-1: Select and Use Tools for Collaborative Modelling

Participants are familiar with common analogue and digital tools for collaborative modelling and are able to assess their suitability for different session formats.

In particular, they are familiar with:

- Analogue whiteboards, pens, and paper
- Sticky notes and other tactile working materials
- Digital whiteboards, such as Miro or Mural
- Templates from relevant communities

Participants are able to describe the strengths, limitations, and typical use cases of these tools and select suitable tools for their individual context.

Participants are able to use a selection of tools confidently enough to prepare, facilitate, and document collaborative modelling sessions.

LG 3-2: Identify Roles and Participants for Collaborative Sessions

Participants understand that the success and lasting positive impact of collaborative sessions largely depends on the composition of the participant group.

Participants are able to identify the relevant skills and responsibilities required for a given context.

Participants are able to distinguish the facilitator role from actively contributing to architecture and design decisions.

They understand that, in collaborative architecture work, many participants can contribute to the design, regardless of their formal role in the software development process.

Participants are able to assess the implications of a person acting both as facilitator and as an active designer.

LG 3-3: Visualise Information Interactively During Collaborative Sessions

Participants are able to capture information during a collaborative modelling session through listening, asking questions, and visualising.

They understand that, in such situations, the facilitator role combines aspects of moderation, interviewing, translation, and visualisation.

Participants are able to transform what they hear into a model that the group can understand and to evolve this model collaboratively step by step.

They are able to use visualisation deliberately to involve inexperienced participants in the modelling process and foster a shared understanding.

LG 3-4: Decide Between In-Person and Remote Formats for Collaborative Modelling Sessions

Participants are familiar with the typical strengths and weaknesses of in-person and remote sessions in collaborative architecture work.

They understand that not every collaborative format is equally suitable for different organisational, social, or spatial contexts.

Participants are able to assess how session format (in-person vs. remote), group dynamics, degree of interaction, and organisational conditions influence the course and success of collaborative modelling and derive appropriate measures for the chosen format.

They understand that consciously selecting or adapting a collaborative format can help reduce risks and increase the effectiveness of a session.

Participants are able to justify whether an in-person or remote format is more appropriate for a given collaborative modelling session, based on group dynamics, interaction requirements, and the organisational context.

LG 3-5: Understand the Importance of a Common Language

Participants understand the importance of language and a shared understanding of terminology for collaborative architecture work. They understand the need to continuously question and refine terminology.

Participants know the challenges involved in developing a shared understanding of problem domains.

They understand the benefits of establishing a deliberately designed common language and are able to recognise when such a language is missing.

Participants understand that language comprises not only words and their meaning, but also the ways in which the elements of a language can be combined. [Abelson-et-al-1996]

4. Succeeding with Collaborative Modeling

Duration: 60 min.	Exercise time: 60 min.

4.1. Terms and Concepts

- Organisational Culture
- Constraints
- Meeting Energy

4.2. Learning Goals

This learning block explores the cultural, organisational, and situational factors that support or hinder collaborative architecture work. Participants learn to identify initial situations, constraints, and potential disruptions early and assess how they may affect the course and outcome of a session. This develops the situational awareness needed to prepare collaborative work effectively and improve it purposefully.

LG 4-1: Identify Enabling Factors and Constraints for Collaborative Architecture Work

Participants understand that the presence or absence of suitable cultural conditions within an organisation influences collaborative architecture work.

Participants learn to identify constraints and requirements that directly affect architecture work.

The training provides practical guidance on how people with responsibility for architecture can influence organisational conditions and how to respond when such influence is not possible.

Participants understand the importance of securing buy-in from relevant stakeholders for effective collaborative architecture work.

They are familiar with practices for assessing existing buy-in and for revealing or strengthening missing buy-in.

LG 4-2: Assess the Impact of Collaborative Sessions on Architecture Work

Participants develop an awareness of the effects of collaborative design sessions, particularly their impact on existing plans and designs.

Participants understand that the timing, scope, and participant group of a session can significantly affect its energy and, consequently, the course of a development initiative.

LG 4-3: Assess the Initial Situation for Collaborative Architecture Work

Participants understand situational awareness as the ability to realistically assess the initial situation of a sociotechnical system in terms of people, organisation, collaboration, and constraints.

They understand that insufficient situational awareness can result in unrealistic expectations, unsuitable formats, or ineffective collaborative architecture work.

Participants are familiar with practices for building situational awareness and continuously refining it throughout collaborative work.

LG 4-4: Clarify the Initial Situation of a Specific Collaborative Session

Participants understand that an effective collaborative session requires a clear understanding of the task, the available knowledge, and existing knowledge gaps.

They are able to identify relevant knowledge sources, interests, and perspectives required to address the task.

Participants are familiar with practices for preparing and visualising the initial situation of a session and validating it with the participants.

LG 4-5: Turn Spontaneous Meetings into Structured Collaborative Modelling Sessions

Participants understand that spontaneous discussions about architecture and modelling can benefit from collaborative modelling.

They are familiar with measures for quickly introducing an appropriate structure in such situations, including clarification of goals, the question to be addressed, the available time, the participants, and the expected outcome.

Participants know simple facilitation and questioning techniques for turning an unstructured discussion into a collaborative modelling session.

They understand that prepared working environments and readily available tools, such as architecture walls, whiteboards, pens, and sticky notes, support spontaneous collaborative sessions.

Participants are familiar with practices for documenting the results of a spontaneous session and deriving next steps.

LG 4-6: Recognise Behavioural Patterns That Support or Hinder Collaborative Architecture Work

Participants understand that organisational behaviour and cultural conditions can significantly affect collaborative architecture work.

They know typical behavioural patterns and cultural characteristics that can support or hinder collaborative architecture work.

Participants understand that establishing collaborative ways of working often requires changes to existing habits, communication patterns, and perceptions of responsibility.

They are able to identify areas in which behavioural change may be necessary to establish collaborative architecture work effectively.

Participants understand that existing communication, decision-making, and responsibility structures can affect the adoption of collaborative ways of working.

LG 4-7: Identify Disruptions and Barriers in Collaborative Sessions

Participants understand that power imbalances, dominant participants, and dissenting opinions can be intimidating and can significantly reduce the expected quality of a collaborative session.

Participants know methods for preparing and facilitating collaborative sessions in ways that identify and mitigate potential disruptions.

LG 4-8: Understand How Workshop Logistics Influence the Success of Collaborative Sessions

Participants understand that organisational and logistical conditions can significantly affect the course

and outcome of collaborative sessions.

They understand the importance of breaks, energy levels, and session rhythm during extended periods of collaborative work.

Participants understand that suitable refreshments, appropriate working environments, and deliberate pauses can support concentration and collaboration.

They understand that informal interaction and socialising can foster trust, networking, and sustainable collaboration.

LG 4-9: Understand Inclusion and Diversity as Success Factors for Collaborative Architecture Work

Participants understand that collaborative architecture work can help ensure that underrepresented groups have an equal voice.

They understand that collaborative sessions can make the perspectives of underrepresented groups visible and open to discussion, whereas such perspectives may easily be overlooked in centralised or hierarchical decision-making processes.

Participants understand that diverse groups can bring a broader range of experiences, needs, and perspectives into architecture work.

They know ways of designing collaborative formats that enable different perspectives to be contributed effectively and considered appropriately.

Participants understand the fundamental principle that everyone involved in a collaborative session contributes different knowledge, experiences, roles, positions, abilities, and backgrounds.

They also understand that everyone involved has an equal right to be acknowledged, to speak, and to contribute to the collaborative architecture work.

Participants know facilitation practices for making different perspectives visible and including them in collaborative work with equal respect.

5. Creating Impact as Facilitator

Duration: 60 min	Practice time: 60 min

5.1. Terms and Principles

- Clear communication
- Active listening
- Creating a safe environment
- Linear communication
- Interactive communication
- Transactional communication

5.2. Learning Goals

This learning block introduces the communicative foundations of effective facilitation. Participants learn how to support collaborative sessions through clear communication, active listening, and a neutral stance. They understand how different forms of communication shape collaboration and how to deal constructively with disagreement.

LG 5-1: Being able to facilitate collaborative sessions

Participants know basic facilitation techniques for designing workshops.

They understand the importance of the following skills for facilitation and are familiar with practices to apply or acquire them

- Clear communication
- Active listening
- Creating a safe environment

LG 5-2: Knowing basic communication models

Participants have an overview of these three types of communication models:

- Linear communication
- Interactive communication
- Transactional communication

They understand the differences between these categories and can relate them to typical situations in everyday software development (e.g., meetings, design workshops, pair programming).

A detailed understanding of specific methods (e.g., Shannon–Weaver) is not part of COSMO.

LG 5-3: Being able to act neutrally as a facilitator

Participants understand the importance of a neutral stance for facilitators. They understand that conflicts of interest on the part of the facilitator can reduce the effectiveness of collaborative sessions, and that other, potentially external, individuals can serve as facilitators to mitigate this.

LG 5-4: Mastering basic facilitation skills

Participants understand that the perception of the facilitator role also requires facilitation skills. They understand, in particular, that different practices may require different facilitation skills. The training imparts facilitation skills to an extent appropriate for the role.

LG 5-5: Being able to deal with disagreement in collaborative sessions

Participants understand that disagreement in collaborative modeling sessions is a normal part of joint architecture work.

Participants can contribute as facilitators to making different assumptions and mental models visible and guiding the group toward a shared understanding of the design task.

They are familiar with ways to promote ownership and consensus-building without overlooking or prematurely resolving technical differences.

A detailed understanding of conflict analysis and conflict resolution is not part of COSMO. For further study, the CPSA-A module SOFT is recommended.

6. Overview of Collaborative Techniques

Duration: 60 min	Practice time: 60 min

6.1. Terms and Principles

6.2. Learning Goals

This learning block provides an overview of collaborative approaches. Participants learn how to select, combine, and adapt suitable practices for different situations and contexts. They understand the respective requirements regarding preparation, facilitation, and the group of participants.

LG 6-1: Know Collaborative Approaches for Architecture Work

Participants have gained an overview of collaborative approaches and have learned individual practices that are particularly valuable for architecture work in detail.

Participants know collaborative modeling techniques for areas such as:

- Domain Exploration and Discovery
- Software Design
- Requirements Clarification
- Organization
- Strategic Consideration

Participants can decide, based on practical scenarios, which technique is applicable in which situation (e.g., requirements analysis, modeling). Participants are able to make the necessary preparations for the practices covered in the training, to lead collaborative sessions, and to follow up afterwards.

LG 6-2: Be Able to Select Suitable Collaborative Approaches for the Individual Context

Participants can decide which collaborative formats are suitable for which situation. To do this, participants know the characteristic features of the presented methods and understand which conditions are crucial for the success of each method. They know how to combine collaborative modeling techniques.

Participants understand how the prevailing conditions and expectations in the organizational context affect the preparation, execution, and follow-up of collaborative sessions.

LG 6-3: Know Specific Requirements for the Presented Approaches

For all presented approaches, practices, and methods, participants know the requirements for:

- Facilitator
- Location and space
- Group of participants

References

This section contains references that are cited in whole or in part throughout the curriculum.

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