The technical practitioner career path: from Associate to Portfolio level

26 October 2026 · 5 min read · blogs.iictp.org/technical-practitioner-career-path

A credential ladder is only useful if each step matches a real change in the work. IICTP's four core credentials are built around that idea: each one is aimed at a different stage of a technical career, and each asks for experience that fits the stage.

TL;DR The short version

- IICTP has four core credentials, each matched to a stage of a technical career: ATP, CTP, PgTP and PfTP.
- The work shifts at each step from doing, to deciding, to coordinating, to steering.
- Six specialist credentials sit alongside the ladder; choose the step that matches what you do now, not the one you hope to reach.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/technical-practitioner-career-path

The four steps

1. **ATP™, Associate Technical Practitioner**, for people with roughly 0 to 2 years in technical work.
2. **CTP™, Certified Technical Practitioner**, the flagship, for tech leads, engineering managers and senior IT project managers, around 3 to 7 years in.
3. **PgTP™, Program Technical Practitioner**, for people running several related technical efforts, around 7 to 12 years in.
4. **PfTP™, Portfolio Technical Practitioner**, for people steering a whole portfolio, 12 years or more.

What changes at each step

The work shifts from doing to deciding to coordinating to steering. At the associate level you are judged on sound fundamentals. At CTP you are judged on design trade-offs, risk and how well a team delivers. At programme and portfolio level the question becomes how many efforts you can keep coherent at once, and which ones to stop.

Exam depth follows the same curve. Exact question counts, durations and pass marks for each credential are on the exam facts page.

Where the specialist credentials fit

Alongside the ladder sit six specialist credentials: AI, cloud architecture, agile delivery, IoT and edge, local LLMs, and clean software telemetry. They are not rungs. You take one when your day-to-day work lives in that area, whatever your level.

How to choose your starting point

1. Count your relevant years honestly and check each credential's eligibility rules.
2. Pick the step that matches what you do now, not the one you hope to reach.
3. Use the eligibility planner to see your options in one place.

> Related credential: Certified Technical Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. IICTP. Credential pages. iictp.org/certifications.
2. IICTP. Exam facts. iictp.org/certifications/exam-facts.

Published by IICTP, an independent technical credential body, on 26 October 2026. The current version of this post is at https://blogs.iictp.org/technical-practitioner-career-path. More guides: blogs.iictp.org.