

Passed 70–315 today

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Yes, it's another one of those "yay! I passed" posts. But as I found sifting through these posts in Google Groups rather reassuring when I had my last-minute panic in the last few days, I hope this will help future candidates too, even if it's a bit long. :)

The exam consisted of 43 questions to answer in 2 hours. It took me one hour to run through all the questions once. I then used another half hour to review questions I didn't feel confident about, and went through all the questions again in the last half hour. I passed with 962 points (the passing score is 700). Based on my score report and a quick check afterwards (followed by a cry of "doh!"), I know I got at least one question wrong, but there was no indication of what the maximum possible score might have been.

Since these questions get asked a lot around here, here's some stuff about my background, and what study materials I used.

My last job was as a technical support engineer and systems administrator. I have a lot of ASP experience from personal projects, and I was the web master and SQL administrator for the company I worked for, so I did have a good background in ASP, IIS and SQL to start with (which is why I've started my MCAD/MCSD route with 70–315). I have also implemented and supported a couple of ASP.NET applications in the past, though I never wrote any myself. Aside from my ASP work, I've written some tiny, unambitious things in C++ and C# – just enough to convince me that this is an avenue I want to pursue further.

I used the following resources to learn the material and prepare for the exam:

Microsoft MCAD Self-Paced Training Kit

(see <http://www.microsoft.com/MSPress/books/6714.asp>)

Having read through it twice before getting the Kalani book, I didn't find this book massively useful. It gives a high-level overview of the topics covered by the exam, but the exercises aren't very helpful, and the explanations aren't always very clear either. After completing it, I didn't feel I had a good grasp on some of the topics at all. However, I did find the practice exam on the CD quite useful. It is very difficult (though

partly because of the hideous interface! :), and provides feedback on the areas where you have weaknesses, much as the real exam does. It's like a sadistic version of the real exam, only you get half the time to do it. So if you pass that, you're probably ready for the real thing. However, I can't recommend actually spending money on this book if your budget is tight. I couldn't pass its practice test after working through the book, and I doubt I would have passed the real exam either.

Que 70–315 Training Guide by Amit Kalani

(see <http://tinyurl.com/4rhh7>)

Anyone who hangs around this group for any length of time will have noticed the amount of praise heaped upon this book. Let me heap some more. The author's command of the English language might be dubious at times, but his command of the subject matter, and how to impart that knowledge to his readers, is excellent. I did all the exercises and all the practice questions, and it really did teach me the essentials of ASP.NET and the related concepts. The practice test in the book doesn't bear much resemblance to the real exam, but it does check that you've learned the material. I also found the PrepLogic preview exam on the CD quite a challenge and a good encouragement to research some of my weak points (though unfortunately, part of the challenge was provided by poorly-worded questions).

Once I'd worked my way through the whole of Kalani's book, I was confident I knew enough about the subject matter to attempt the exam. So that's when I decided to book it at <http://www.vue.com> (that's also when I realised that this week would be my last opportunity to sit the exam, as I'm expecting a baby in three weeks' time – I wonder if I'm the most pregnant MCP? :). But I gave myself two weeks to revise, using the following resources:

- A final read-through of Kalani's book. If you skip all the exercises, it doesn't take that long to read (though I'd recommend re-reading some of the exercises too, as some of them contain information not mentioned in the rest of the text!).
- MSDN (<http://msdn.microsoft.com>). Whatever study guide you use, there's no substitute for reading the details straight from the horse's mouth, as it were. Kalani's book taught me the concepts, but MSDN has all the nitty gritty of the methods and properties that the classes use; although I don't think you have to learn these by rote, it does help if you know whether a given method/property/directive actually exists!
- Miscellaneous web sites that came up when searching for "ASP.NET C#" in <http://www.google.com>. This mostly gave me a general understanding of C#, which is good background, though not vital material for the exam itself.
- Some tips and suggestions found when searching for "70–315" in Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com>). In fact, as I said at the beginning of this post, just reading about people who had passed the exam gave me great hope! :)

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I also did as much poking around Visual Studio .NET as I could whenever a question in a practice exam or a code sample in MSDN made me want to see something for myself. But Kalani's book is really excellent in this regard, as his exercises give you plenty of productive poking around to really learn that environment.

Anyway, I hope that was useful to anyone who is planning to take this exam!

Emma Burrows

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