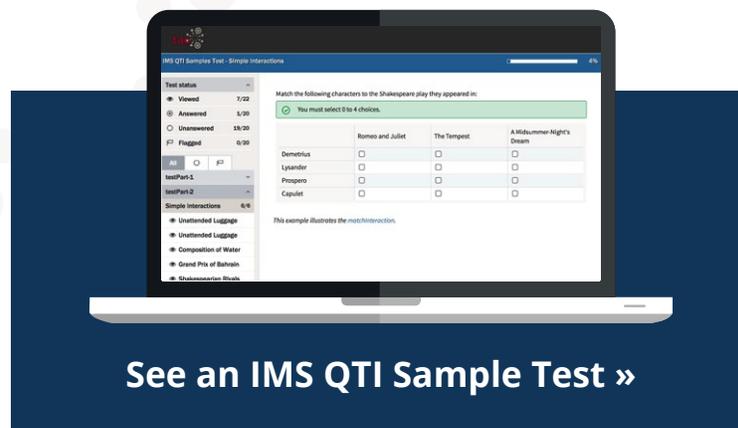# The Importance of IMS Certification and QTI Compliance

IMS Global Learning Consortium develops and maintains, among other specifications, the Question & Test Interoperability® (QTI®) standard, to enable the exchange of item, test, and results data between authoring tools, item banks, test constructional tools, learning systems, and assessment delivery systems.

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A lot of products and vendors claim QTI compliance, and even use the QTI name, but that can be misleading. Here's the fine print: being QTI-compliant isn't the same thing as being IMS-certified. The requirements for the latter are much more stringent.

With QTI compliance, a product's implementation and interpretation of the QTI standard are often untested. If you assume interoperability because of the mention of QTI, you might be disappointed. Subsequently, when untested implementations of QTI-compliant products fail, it gives "interoperability" and standards like QTI a bad name.

IMS Global Learning Consortium conformance certified products are in a class of their own. The IMS Global conformance certification program is a testing program that ensures a product is interoperable and up-to-date with the evolving specifications. According to the official listing in the IMS Certified Product Directory, only two dozen products—and from even fewer organizations—have made the cut as some have multiple products that qualify as QTI conformance certified.

See an IMS QTI Sample Test »

In 2014, TAO became the first product to obtain
IMS conformance certification for QTI in all four categories

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In 2014, TAO became the first product to obtain IMS conformance certification for QTI in all four categories: Authoring and Editing systems, Delivery systems, Item and Test bank systems, and most importantly, the QTI content itself. Taken together, they make test content completely portable, which is of critical importance as users migrate from legacy proprietary platforms to open, interoperable environments. Additionally, QTI can be used to create best-of-breed solutions; combining delivery and authoring modules from multiple vendors; where adherence is key in building these learning solutions of the future.

TAO uses QTI as a native format, i.e. items are stored in QTI. We don't only import/export QTI, we store it natively and therefore item and test editors actually author QTI directly. This means no information is "lost in translation" from a proprietary internal spec to or from QTI.

See a TAO Sample Test »

We have been actively working within IMS and the QTI Technical Working groups to assure valid implementations and therefore assure interoperability. For example: the IMS Global Executive Board on Assessment (which our CTO, Mark Molenaar chaired from 2016 to 2017) organizes regular "plugfests" to verify the vendor implementations, and based on the results improve the implementations and the specification itself (e.g. resolve ambiguities in documentation). Only organizations truly dedicated to the QTI standard participate in these plugfests.

ABOUT TAO

Redefining Digital Assessment: Open Source, Open Standards, Open Possibilities. TAO, from Open Assessment Technologies, is the leading assessment solution for education and career advancement. Break free from proprietary data silos, eliminate expensive licensing fees, gain full control of your testing resources, and enjoy enterprise level support. Learn more at taotesting.com.

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