

Training over IP

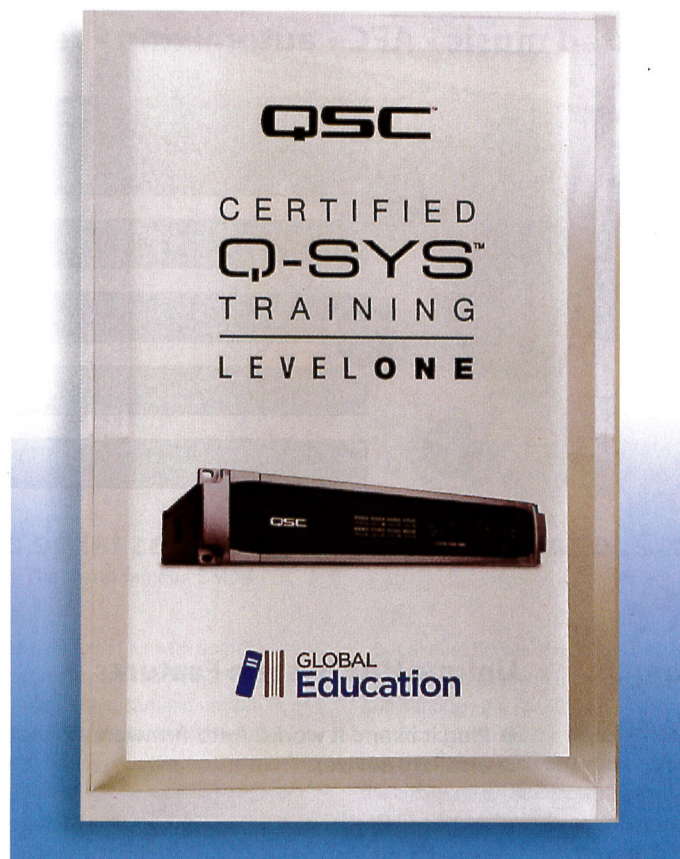
What are the benefits and challenges for students taking audio qualifications online? **James Ling** visits qsctraining.com to get certified

ON THE SURFACE, ONLINE TRAINING holds many benefits. Students can study at their own pace at a time suitable to themselves, while manufacturers are able to deliver a standard course to a wide variety of users without spending months on the road.

The argument for this approach is compelling, as proven by the increasing number of manufacturers which now offer this service. But what is the experience actually like? In an attempt to find out, *Pro Audio Central* headed over to www.qsctraining.com to go through the Q-Sys certification process.

The website itself is a strong example of what is possible with online training. QSC has taken the bold step of making the site completely accessible to anyone. This means you don't need to be a registered QSC user to search and use the training material – opening it up to a wider range of students.

The site itself is clean and well designed with the educational courses and certification forming the main bulk of the content. There are four separate courses, with brief tutorial videos for Q-Sys and the KLA Series and two more courses with assessment components for the K and KW Series products and the Q-Sys training.



The result of a day of online training

At the beginning of the process, a rather cocky *Pro Audio Central* was thinking it would be able to breeze through the certification

Most modules have between four and seven videos and each film averages around five minutes in length. This equates to roughly the day out of the office that you would spend at a training session, the advantage being you don't need to do this all in one chunk. You can split the modules over several different days, but *Pro Audio Central* would recommend that you do an entire module and its assessment on the same day to give yourself the best chance of scoring a passing grade.

The modular nature of the certification allows the course to build on its levels of complexity and the amount of knowledge it assumes. Early videos look at the overview of the hardware and software components of the system, and the knowledge picked up here lays the foundations for the more challenging aspects as the course advances. This approach is advantageous for the new user who doesn't work with these tools every day, but more experienced students may feel like this is covering old ground.

The assessment at the end of each module is sufficiently challenging to add credence to the qualification – as it also offers CTS RU credits it is important that there is a level of difficulty. The tests consist of a

selection of 'multiple choice', 'fill in the blanks' and 'check all that apply' questions of differing severity, and the 80 per cent pass mark is harder to achieve than it first seems. If *Pro Audio Central* is entirely honest, it did not pass every assessment first time and one particularly challenging unit required a few attempts to score a passing grade.

The difficulty seems to be pitched at exactly the right level. There are a few 'gimmie' questions in there such as 'How is the Q-Sys core powered? A. Universal Power Supply B. Dilithium Crystals', but the majority test the important aspects from the training and have clearly been designed to make sure the students have picked up the essential knowledge.

The overall experience is a satisfying one for the student. The process keeps the attention longer than a more traditional classroom-based approach, and when the student starts to drift away or is needed for another matter, they can walk away and come back to it later. There is also the continuous assessment aspect which means at every stage, the manufacturer knows there is the level of understanding required to move on to the next level – again adding to the validity of the certification.

This being said, there is one area that on the surface needs addressing: multiple retakes could lead to students cheating the test. However, QSC has taken steps to prevent this. 'While we don't limit the number of times you can take the test, we review every certification submission carefully,' explains Patrick Heyn, senior manager for QSC's training and education department. 'The reason that the certification is not automatic is that we reserve the right to investigate the validity of the test results by examining the back-end analytics. For example, if we see that one person took the test five or six times over the course of 10 minutes, more likely than not, the system flags it and that student gets an inquiry email from us when they request certification.'

Overall, the certification process is a positive experience. QSC has designed a comprehensive teaching method for one of the most complex areas of pro audio and delivers it well through the videos. With courses such as this, online certification deserves to be held in high regard.

www.qsctraining.com

SEMINAR DIARY

12-14 NOVEMBER

Tesira Certification Training Hong Kong

Biamp's Tesira Certification Programme is designed to sharpen existing skills on its flagship DSP platform. Participants are required to be certified on Audia before attending this class.

www.biamp.com

20-21 NOVEMBER

School of A/V Technologies for systems designers Seoul, Korea

System designers who complete this two-day school attain a thorough understanding of various A/V system designs and gain practical skills during the hands-on system planning and execution for real-world scenarios.

www.extron.com

25-29 NOVEMBER

Asian Rigging Training and Workshop Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

The Prolyte Campus provides the training to use the Prolyte Group products safely and in compliance with applicable standards and regulations. It offers a complete programme of learning activities on the safe use of its products.

www.prolytepap.com

11-12 DECEMBER

BSS Level 1 Training Sydney, Australia

The course features in-depth training direct from application engineers. By the end of the course, every student will be able to program and implement a London Architect system design.

www.jands.com.au

16-20 DECEMBER

AMX Control Programming 1 Bangalore, India

The training covers the basic techniques for programming an AMX Control system. It offers the key features and skills needed to design a page in TPDesign4 for AMX's new G4 touch panel.

www.amx.com



The QSC education and training web page

Pro Audio Central was aiming for the most recent addition to the site, Q-Sys certification. This course has been broken down into nine modules which are each filled with a number of embedded YouTube videos explaining different aspects of Q-Sys in bite-sized chunks. In order to gain certification, a user needs to watch all the training videos in each of the modules and score 80 per cent or higher in the assessment section for each module.

process quickly. However, the level of detail and the number of videos to watch added to the difficulty of the assessments, ensured it took around a full day to complete the course.

The videos themselves are well-produced and are of a high standard. They range from around two minutes in length up to just over nine minutes. While this does not sound that long, it adds up to a large amount of information.