

BACKGROUND

On 26 January 2023, the Security Professional Education Development (SPeD) Program Management Office (PMO) hosted a webinar to provide a general overview of available certifications and credentials, explain the program target audience, and summarize the general process for candidates to obtain and maintain certifications. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask written questions during the webinar; below are selected questions with their corresponding answers.

TEST MAINTENANCE / DEVELOPMENT

Q: Is there going to be an update to the SPeD certifications based on Trusted Workforce 2.0?

A: The SPeD PMO constantly monitors the policy, practice, and performance of assessment questions to determine what changes are required. The SPeD PMO will integrate policy requirements of Trusted Workforce 2.0 into the appropriate certifications at the direction of the program's governance bodies, the DoD Security Training Council (DSTC) — who governs the SPeD Certification Program) and the Adjudicator Certification Governance Board (ACGB) — who governs the Adjudicator Professional Certification (APC) and Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential (DPAPC).

Q: How are cut-off scores determined, by whom, etc.?

A: SPeD assessment cut-off scores are determined by subject matter experts (SMEs) who participate in a psychometrically sound process of systematically reviewing and rating each assessment question. These cut-off scores are then recommended to and approved by the program's relevant governance board.

Q: What is the pass rate for the Security Fundamentals Professional Certification (SFPC)?

A: For CY 2022 the SFPC pass rate was approximately 46 percent. SPeD Certification Program assessment metrics are published periodically on the program's website at <https://www.cdse.edu/Certification/About-SPeD-Certification/Certification-Tracker/>.

Q: What is the question format for SPeD assessments?

A: SPeD assessments include traditional multiple choice questions. In addition, some SPeD assessments include multiple choice questions that are based on scenarios. SPeD assessments do not require candidates to submit any written answers (e.g., essays, short answers)

ASSESSMENT PREPARATION

Q: Will Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) have virtual study groups?

A: Neither DCSA nor the SPeD PMO will sponsor virtual study groups. It is the candidate's responsibility to prepare for SPeD assessments, working closely with their supervisor, by leveraging all available resources. Current SPeD certificants should refrain from participating

in study groups as their participation may constitute a violation of the program's non-disclosure agreement.

Q: Is there any type of pre-training that we can take prior to taking the assessment?

A: The SPēD PMO publishes competency preparatory tools (CPTs) which candidates can use as a self-study guide. In addition, while SPēD assessments are training-agnostic, candidates are encouraged to avail themselves of security training, education, webinars, conferences, and other activities to prepare for SPēD assessments.

Q: Is there a site where we can do a practice test before taking the actual assessment?

A: There are no practice tests available for assessments. Candidates are expected to properly prepare for assessments by building foundational knowledge (by taking Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE) training courses or other means).

Q: Is the older version of the handbook still available? It seems that was the winner of the poll.

A: No. The purpose of the question was to ascertain what was most useful in preparation historically with the audience. The new DOD Professional Certification and Credentialing Handbook is an updated consolidation of the two resources.

Q: How often are CPTs updated? Per the website, the last update was published in Dec 2019.

A: Once the CPTs in the new format are published (this coming Spring/Summer), they will be updated or re-verified for accuracy every six months.

TESTING / TEST SECURITY

Q: Why is there not an opportunity to review missed test questions after an exam?

A: SPēD assessments represent a substantial investment for the government and as such, the assessments are protected by the program's non-disclosure agreement which all candidates complete prior to sitting for the assessment. Providing candidates with a copy of questions and answers would compromise the integrity of the assessment, which would undermine the equal opportunity for all candidates to perform on the assessment. Candidates are provided with a summary score report at the conclusion of the assessment session which provides their overall performance, as well as benchmarking their performance against their peers on various sections of the assessment.

Q: How long is the test?

A: Information about the number of assessment questions and how long candidates have to complete each assessment, are provided in the DOD Professional Certification and Credentialing Handbook, available here:

<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/certification/DOD-Professional-Certification-and-Credentialing-Handbook.pdf>

Q: Are the SPēD Certification Assessments open book?

A: No, SPēD assessments are closed book. SPēD candidates may not bring any resources or electronic devices into the testing environment.

Q: Can you explain training-agnostic? What does that mean?

A: SPēD certification assessments are not designed to assess candidates' mastery of any program of instruction, such as training. They are designed by SMEs at the direction and guidance of the DSTC or ACGB, independent of the development and delivery of training. SPēD candidates, however, may find it valuable to take security education and/or training courses as part of an overall strategy to prepare for SPēD assessments.

ELIGIBILITY

Q: Are non-DOD Federal employees who perform security duties eligible?

A: Currently, policy states the target audience are individuals in positions with responsibilities for security capabilities or performing security activities, to include military, civilian, and contractors (mandated in statement of work of contract). Please contact the SPēD PMO directly with any other eligibility questions.

Q: Why am I unable to test for the Antiterrorism Credential (ATC) if I am not an Antiterrorism Officer (ATO)?

A: All SPēD certifications and credentials assessments have eligibility requirements that candidates must meet prior to sitting for any assessment. The relevant governance board determines the eligibility requirements. The ATC is designed explicitly for candidates currently performing ATO functions.

Q: Why am I unable to test for the Adjudicator Professional Certification (APC) if I am not an adjudicator?

A: The APC program was established in a series of memos signed by the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence over ten years ago. These memos specifically indicate the purpose of the APC program is to professionalize the adjudicator workforce. This purpose was operationalized to indicate only individuals currently performing adjudicator functions are eligible to attempt the APC. The ACGB, the governance board for the APC program, verified these requirements in 2022.

Q: I am an employee performing security duties on behalf of a DOD Defense contractor company. Who is my "Component Service Representative (CSR)?"

A: The CSR for a DOD contractor is based on the Service/Component the candidate is contracted with. If the candidate works on a US Air Force (USAF) contract, the USAF CSR would be the appropriate point of contact for applications, eligibility, and general program questions. Contact information for CSRs can be found on the SPēD website:

<https://www.cdse.edu/Certification/Additional-Certification-Credential-Assistance/>

Q: As an industry Facility Security Officer (FSO), does my DD-254 or Statement of Work (SOW) require me to be SPēD certified? What specific document is needed for my eligibility?

A: FSOs that cannot be verified via National Industrial Security Systems (NISS) must have their Industrial Security Representative (ISR) verify their position to the CDSE SPēD PMO, who will then act as their CSR and facilitate their applications for assessment.

Q: Can contractors filling security roles for DOD Components take a SPēD certification assessment?

A: Contractors performing security duties on behalf of DOD Components are eligible for SPēD certification(s) as long as those certification(s) are stipulated in the SOW or contract. Verification from a government supervisor or contracting officer representative (COR) stipulates in the contract or SOW that SPēD certification(s) are required for the SPēD PMO to grant approval. Approval will only be granted for candidates to attempt those SPēD certification(s) stated in the contract or SOW.

DIGITAL BADGING

Q: How do certificants accept, download, and utilize digital badges? If we no longer have the email from Credly to get our digital badge, how can we request it?

A: After successfully passing and being conferred for a certification or credential, certificants will receive an email from Credly giving them access to their newly earned digital badge. Log into Credly or create an account/reset your password at:

<https://www.credly.com/earner/earned>. Use the same email as your MSC account.

Q: Is there a digital badge repository where someone can verify your certification. For example, if you had a digital badge on an application seeking work outside of DOD, where would the screener look to verify?

A: The SPēD PMO does not maintain a public-facing repository of digital badges. To fulfill this use case, certificants should share their digital badge with the recipient via email or social media.

Professional Development Units (PDUs)

Q: Are certificants able to submit PDUs as they occur throughout the two-year renewal period, or should certificants wait until they have collected the 100 PDUs before they submit the Certification Renewal Package (CRP)?

A: Yes, certificants can submit PDUs at any time during the two-year window.

Q: The 16-week education courses would cover the 100 PDUs that are required, correct?

A: Yes, 16-week education courses cover the 100 PDU requirement.

Q: What constitutes Higher Education for obtaining PDU's in Category 2? Do CDSE courses qualify?

A: CDSE's education courses qualify for higher education PDUs in Category 2.

Q: Do annual training requirements count toward PDUs and if so, how do certificants know how many points each activity counts?

A: Yes, annual training counts, but can only be used once per renewal cycle (e.g., you cannot claim annual cybersecurity training twice although completed twice. It is considered the same course or duplicate training, for the purposes of renewal). Please refer to the handbook for how these PDUs are calculated.

Q: Am I able to use training that I conduct at my organization for our personnel as PDUs?

A: No, if you are conducting the training, it is considered as part of your normal duties.

Q: Does the two-year certification renewal cycle reset the date 100 PDUs are submitted or does it go by the two-year expiration date?

A: The renewal/expiration date changes at each qualifying event, successful achievement of an additional certification/credential, or submission of a Certification Renewal Package.

Q: If the conference does not give attendance certificates, how do we submit conference attendance for PDUs?

A: Please refer to the handbook

(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/certification/DOD-Professional-Certification-and-Credentialing-Handbook.pdf>) for "how to" information on supporting documentation for conferences and seminars.

Q: What are some examples of non-security related courses?

A: An example is "JFLD -101-Joint Force Leadership" offered on <https://jkodirect.jten.mil/Atlas2/page/login/Login.jsf>. Any course not expressly related to security that a military, civilian, or contractor is authorized to attend may be considered as applicable to this category.

Q: Does providing new employee onboarding training count towards PDUs?

A: No. This is a part of normal duties.

Q: What is considered a Security Conference?

A: A conference, seminar, roundtable, symposium, or meeting that discusses security policy, procedures, regulations, training, or concepts related to those topics.

Q: Can certificants earn PDUs for providing (teaching) security-related training?

A: Not if this is a part of your normal duties.

Q: Can certificants earn PDUs if they are a security presenter for new employees every month?

A: Not if this is a part of your normal duties.

Q: What is a SPēD Certification Project and non-SPēD Project?

A: A SPēD Certification Project is one which the SPēD PMO communicates to the community in an effort to utilize the experience and knowledge of security professionals.

Q: Some online training is designated less than one hour in the training description. How should certificants account for this for PDUs?

A: The current system does not allow for decimals. Please round-up to the nearest whole number for all entries.

Q: If a certificant has an Adjudication Professional Certification (APC)/Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential (DPAPC) and then obtains a Security Fundamentals Professional Certification (SFPC), can they submit 100 PDUs under category 1 to renew their APC/DPAPC certification/credentials?

A: Yes.

Q: If I am an Anti-Terrorism rep for my organization and I conduct Random Antiterrorism Measures (RAMs) throughout the month/year, could those count as PDUs under Category 5?

A: Not if this is a part of your normal duties.

Q: What documentation is required to obtain PDUs for participation in working groups? Is there a template?

A: No, there is no formal template, but a memo signed by the organization conducting the working group is generally acceptable. Please contact the SPēD PMO for more information regarding the use of working groups as PDUs.

Q: I took the week long Special Security Officers Course (SSOC) virtually with DNI. I did not receive a certificate, however, I have my enrollment confirmation email for the course. Can that be used to upload my PDUs?

A: The handbook stipulates that a certificate is required for all training.

Q: If a certificant has obtained multiple certifications, can they reuse the same PDUs for each certification?

A: Yes. Only one Certification Renewal Package (CRP) is necessary to renew all current certifications.

Q: Can a certificant obtain PDU credit for briefing new employees once a month on all security pillars?

A: Not if this is a part of your normal duties.

Q: If we went through the two-week DSS Sec Officer Course before 2010, can we get credit for that in our certifications (i.e., SPFC)?

A: No. All PDUs must be earned within the current two-year renewal cycle.

Q: Is there a specific browser to use when trying to add a PDU entry?

A: Chrome and Firefox are recommended. Edge and Explorer often do not function optimally.

CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT

Q: What happens if a SPēD candidate does not pass within eight attempts?

A: The SPēD candidate will no longer be allowed to attempt that SPēD assessment without explicit approval by the Chief, SPēD PMO.

Q: My position is indexed for me to obtain SPēD certification. When does the two-year condition of employment implementation timeline begin?

A: The two-year condition of employment requirement is between a SPēD candidate and their employer, but generally the timeline starts on the candidate's entry on duty (EOD) date. Candidates should address questions about requirements and time frames, to obtain and maintain SPēD certifications with their supervisor, chain of command, and human capital / human resources office.

Q: What are the ramifications for security professionals who are under a condition of employment who do not obtain their required certification(s) within the two-year time frame?

A: SPēD candidate questions about the implementation of the condition of employment should be directed to their employer, including their supervisor, chain of command, and/or human capital / human resources office.

NOTES

CDSE Education Division: All questions directly related to the CDSE education program, graduate courses, degree-granting status, course availability, and enrollment eligibility should be directed to the Education division (dcsa.cdseeducation@mail.mil).

CDSE Training Division: All questions directly related to CDSE-provided training, to include training curriculum and end of course exam issues (provided through STEPP), should be directed to the Training division (dcsa.cdsetraining@mail.mil).