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Adjudicator Professional Certification (APC) Program Overview

Introduction

The APC Candidate Handbook is a tool to help you navigate the APC Program. This handbook provides information on how to take a certification assessment, the certification and/or credential available to you, how to maintain your certification and/or credential, as well as some background into the APC and Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential (DPAPC) programs. You will also find test-taking tips, links, and guidance for every step of the way.

What is the APC Program?

The Security Professional Education Development (SPēD) Certification Program Management Office (PMO) oversees the APC Program. The APC Program is part of a holistic effort to professionalize the adjudicative workforce and ensures personnel security practitioners demonstrate proficiency in a common set of competencies through training, initial testing and certification, and approved continuing education. They also recognize the long-term career path leading from entry-level adjudication trainee to positions in personnel security policy.

The APC will certify you as an adjudicator qualified to perform all essential adjudicative functions related to determining the eligibility of a government employee, military service member, or contractor employee under the National Industrial Security Program (NISP) for access to classified information or assignment to sensitive duties. As a certified APC adjudicator, you are authorized to perform all adjudicative functions, except due process determinations. You must acquire the DPAPC to authorize due process determinations.

The APC Program serves as a valid and reliable indicator of your mastery of facts, concepts, and principles the Department of Defense (DoD) community deems critical to successfully perform functions, implement programs, and pursue missions necessary to manage risks and protect DoD assets.

The APC and DPAPC programs ensure:

- Only fully-qualified and appropriately-trained professionals make clearance determinations.
- The training program matches job requirements and provides each adjudicator with the knowledge and skills needed to perform the work at a high level of proficiency.
- Adjudicators have the opportunity and incentive to engage in continuing professional education to keep themselves current on new policies, national security trends, job-related technologies, and research relevant to applying adjudicative guidelines.

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Certification	Acronym	Description
Adjudicator Professional Certification	APC	You have demonstrated understanding and application of the occupational and technical knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to proficiently perform essential adjudicator tasks, with the exception of due process functions.
Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential	DPAPC	You have demonstrated understanding and application of occupational and technical knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to proficiently perform essential due process adjudicator tasks (i.e., writing statement of reasons (SOR), evaluating SOR responses, recommending eligibility determinations or other functions following SOR response evaluations).

Certification Program Accreditation

The APC Program is an essential element of the DoD initiative to professionalize the security workforce. Per the DoD Manual (DoDM) 3305.13-M, "DoD Security Accreditation and Certification," all certifications developed under the direction of this Manual must be accredited and maintain accreditation by meeting the published standards of the national recognized certification accreditation body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). Accreditation is the process by which certifications are evaluated against defined standards and, when in compliance with these standards, are awarded recognition by the NCCA. Accreditation is proof the program has been reviewed by a panel of impartial experts and has met the stringent standards set by the NCCA. The NCCA uses established standards to assure programs meet threshold expectations of quality and assure they improve over time.

The APC Program has achieved national accreditation from the NCCA. Achieving an APC Program certification or credential publicly confirms you and the program meet comprehensive quality standards and you are prepared for success in the security profession.

APC Eligibility

You are eligible to pursue the APC if you are a personnel security adjudicator employed by the DoD and/or the DoD Intelligence Community (IC) Central Adjudications Facilities (CAFs) or a federal government employee working as a personnel security adjudicator and employed by an agency accepted for participation in the APC Program.

You must also meet the following training, experience, and testing requirements for certification. You must successfully complete a program of instruction, including the Introduction to DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS001.18) and DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS101.01) courses provided by the Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE), or equivalent instruction as determined by CDSE on behalf of the Director, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA). You must also satisfy and document all

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on-the-job experience requirements identified in the Experience Requirements Form for DoD Personnel Security Adjudicator Certification and submit the documentation to your immediate supervisor, and attain a passing score on the APC assessment.

Note: Eligibility for certification of non-DoD federal agencies requesting inclusion in the APC Program will be coordinated with the requesting agency, the Adjudicator Certification Governance Board (ACGB), and CDSE.

Contact your APC Program Component Service Representative (CSR) if you have questions about your eligibility (https://www.cdse.edu/certification/sped_contact.html).

Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential (DPAPC) Eligibility

You are eligible to pursue the DPAPC if you are a personnel security adjudicator employed by the DoD and/or the DoD/IC CAFs or a federal government employee working as a personnel security adjudicator and employed by an agency accepted for participation in the APC Program performing due process functions.

You must also meet the following training, experience, and testing requirements for credentialing. You must successfully complete a program of instruction, including the Introduction to DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS001.18), DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS101.01), and DoD Advanced Personnel Security Adjudications (PS301.10) courses provided by CDSE, or equivalent instruction as determined by CDSE on behalf of the Director, DCSA. You must also satisfy additional due process experience requirements and submit the documentation to your immediate supervisor, and attain a passing score on the DPAPC assessment.

Note: Eligibility for credentialing of non-DoD federal agencies requesting inclusion in the APC Program will be coordinated with the requesting agency, the ACGB, and CDSE.

Contact your APC Program CSR if you have questions about your eligibility (https://www.cdse.edu/certification/sped_contact.html).

APC Program Contact Information

For general information about the APC Program, contact your CSR: https://www.cdse.edu/certification/sped_contact.html.

APC Program webpage: https://www.cdse.edu/certification/index.html

APC Program customer care email: dcsa.spedcert@mail.mil

Acclaim customer support: Submit a ticket request at https://support.youracclaim.com/hc/en-us/requests/new

Pearson VUE test cancellation/rescheduling: 1-888-477-0284

Scheduling an APC Program Assessment

My Security Professional Education Development (SPēD) Certification (MSC) Account

MSC is the system of record for the APC Program. Before scheduling your APC and/or DPAPC assessment, you must establish an active and up-to-date MSC account. Your MSC account is where you will manage your APC activity.

To create and update your MSC account:

1. Create or update your MSC account (https://i7lp.integral7.com/durango/do/login?ownername=dss).
   a. Enter or update your information.
   b. Review and, if needed, update the following fields to conform to the listed requirements:
      i. Organization: If you are performing your security duties as a federal employee, select the appropriate organization name or entity.
      ii. DoD Identification (ID) number, address, phone number, government email address, government status, and U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) job series.
   c. Select the "Submit" button to save.
2. You will receive an email within 48 hours to confirm your interest and be provided a link to your MSC account. Select that link and follow the instructions to activate your MSC account.

Effective June 1, 2020, the SPēD Certification PMO will migrate account creation and profile management from the Security, Training, Education, and Professionalization Portal (STEPP) to MSC. MSC will be the only location for new and existing account creations.

Requesting Authorization to Test and Scheduling Your Assessment

After your MSC account is active and updated, and before scheduling an APC or DPAPC assessment, you must obtain authorization from your employing Component or agency to take an APC or DPAPC assessment.

Complete the following to request authorization to test:

1. Notify your supervisor of your intent to participate in the APC Program.
2. Log in to (or create) your MSC account. If you have previously participated in the APC Program, have an MSC account, and have tested at a Pearson VUE testing facility, skip to Step 5.

3. You will receive a confirmation email within 48 hours with a link and a verification code to your new MSC account. **Please note**: MSC is a non-DoD commercial website.
4. Verify your MSC account information using the verification code, and create your user ID and password.
5. Sign in to your MSC account. Edit your MSC profile page by selecting the edit profile link located on the left-hand navigation bar.
6. Under "Forms" on the left-hand navigation bar, click "Complete a Form."
7. From the "New Forms" tab, select, complete, and submit your Assessment Request Form.
8. If your request is approved, follow the instructions within the confirmation email.
9. After you have scheduled your assessment, you will receive a confirmation email with important information for assessment day, including directions to the test center.

Upon receiving authorization to test, the assessment must be scheduled and completed within 120 calendar days.

Canceling or Rescheduling an APC Assessment

You may cancel or reschedule your assessment without penalty at least 24 hours in advance. If you cancel less than 24 hours in advance, you will be placed on a 90-day hold and will not be allowed to reschedule until that 90-day period expires. If you believe extenuating circumstances warrant an exception, contact your APC Program CSR.

You may reschedule existing appointments within the 90-calendar day authorization allotment.

Retaking an APC Assessment

If you do not obtain a passing score or do not complete the assessment, you can retake the APC assessment after a 45-day waiting period, and then a 90-day waiting period for each subsequent unsuccessful attempt. This waiting period is applied after each sitting, regardless of whether you completed the assessment. "Sitting for the assessment" occurs when you log on to the testing workstation. Suggested preparatory tools and resources to aid in improving performance when retaking the assessment can be found in the Competency Preparatory Tools (CPTs) section.

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Accommodations for Disabilities

If requested, the APC Program will provide reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act, and DoD policy.

In general, an accommodation is made when a disability is relieved by an auxiliary aid or a procedural change during assessment administration. Reasonable accommodations will be made for known physical or mental limitations if you are an individual with a qualifying disability.

A request for a reasonable accommodation is a verbal or written statement from you requesting an adjustment or change for a reason related to a disability. A request does not have to use any special words, such as "reasonable accommodation", "disability," or "Rehabilitation Act." If you have a disability, you may request a reasonable accommodation, even if you have not previously disclosed the existence of a disability.

It is your responsibility to seek accommodations in advance of your assessment date. This request is initiated by responding to the question included in the assessment request form available in your MSC account.

The SPēD Certification Program Management Office (PMO) may request documentation from an appropriate health care or rehabilitation professional about your disability and functional limitations when the disability and need for accommodation is not obvious.

Appropriate professionals include, but are not limited to, doctors (including psychiatrists), psychologists, nurses, physical therapists, vocational rehabilitation specialists, and licensed mental health professionals.

The need for and the ability to provide any specific accommodation is determined on an individual basis, depending on the unique circumstances involved and taking into consideration your specific disability and the existing limitations in completing the certification process.

The SPēD Certification PMO, along with the testing location, will make reasonable efforts to accommodate your request, including offering an alternative means to take the certification assessment. If it would impose an undue burden to provide the required testing environment, you will be notified with a written explanation of the denial and a statement of the reasons for the denial. Grievances regarding accommodations denied by the SPēD Certification PMO may be brought to the DCSA Office of Equal Employment Opportunity at DCSA.quantico.DCSA-hq.mbx.eeo@mail.mil or 571-305-6737.

Competency Preparatory Tools (CPTs)

CPTs help you prepare for your APC Program assessment. These tools deliver a means to gauge your experience in and knowledge of security competencies tested in each assessment.

CPTs are organized by subject area and provide you with relevant preparatory questions and associated references to assist you in increasing your proficiency in each subject area.

Note: Specific questions found on the CPTs are not on the assessment.

To view available CPTs for each APC Program assessment, visit https://www.cdse.edu/certification/ prepare.html. CPTs are also available through mobile devices.

In addition to the CPTs, consider the following when preparing for your APC Program assessment:

- The body of material covered on the assessment cannot be memorized in its entirety. Use memory techniques only to help recall key points.
- Focus on the application of accepted principles, practices, and theories, not memorizing facts, dates, and names.
- The assessment is based on DoD policy only, and does not incorporate additional Component or agency requirements.

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Taking an APC Program Assessment

All APC Program assessments are delivered online via computer-based testing through our partner network of test delivery centers. All APC assessments are approximately 100 items/questions.

Assessment Day

After scheduling your assessment, you will receive a confirmation email with information about the test center's admission, rescheduling, and cancellation policies.

Arrive at the test center 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment time. You may be refused admission if you are late for your appointment.

Provide two forms of identification as directed in your testing confirmation email.

You will be provided with the following materials:

- Blank paper or whiteboards and appropriate writing instruments
- Computer to take the assessment

The following personal items are not permitted in testing rooms:

Cellular phones, hand-held computers/personal digital assistants (PDAs) or other electronic devices (including smartwatches and Fitbits), pagers, watches, wallets, purses, hats, bags, coats, books, and notes. These items must be left outside of the test center or stored in a secured area designated by the test center administrator.

Assessment-Taking Tips

- Relax before the assessment.
- Check out the test center location in advance.
- Arrive early.
- Keep a positive attitude throughout the entire assessment session.
- Trust your first impression.
- Read the entire question carefully.
- Do not overanalyze the questions or answers.
- Skip questions you are uncertain about and return to them later.
- Do not look for answer patterns.
- Do not select an answer just because of its length.
- Pace yourself.
- Use your time wisely.
- Answer all questions.

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Scoring APC Program Assessments

You must earn a score equal to or higher than the cut score to pass the assessment. Preliminary pass/fail results are provided on-screen once you complete your assessment and later in your MSC account history.

Feedback

After completing and submitting the assessment you will receive a feedback report including the following information:

1. Two scaled scores depicting your score and the designated passing score (performance threshold).
2. Your performance as related to the certification's topics and other candidates who passed and failed the assessment. This provides information on where you may improve; however, this feedback is not definitive. You should not rely solely on this information, but instead improve in all topic areas.

Assessment Security and Confidentiality

APC Program assessment questions and answers are not subject to public release.

To take the APC or DPAPC assessment, you signed a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and therefore accepted the terms and conditions for participating in the APC Program. You are not authorized to release any information about an APC Program assessment to peers, supervisors, study groups, or anyone else. Among other things, the NDA notice states:

> By accessing and participating in the SPēD Certifcation Program, you accept the responsibility to protect the integrity of these assessments by not disclosing, disseminating, copying, publishing, or transmitting any parts of the assessment in any form to any person, without prior written consent of the DoD SPēD Certifcation PMO.

APC Program assessments are proctored and delivered in secured environments. These measures are in place to protect the integrity of your results and the APC Program and to ensure consistent testing environments.

Except as described in this handbook, the personal information you provide and your assessment results are confidential and will not be disclosed without your written consent, unless when necessary to comply with a compulsory, legally-authorized demand or order of a court of competent jurisdiction. To allow DCSA to release your personal or assessment information to a third party other than as described in this handbook, you must authorize DCSA to do so in writing. Any such written authorization must state the specific information that may be released and specifically identify the third party to receive the information. Data gathered and distributed as part of assessment studies or reports will be aggregated and personal identifying information redacted.

After Your APC Program Assessment

Certification Conferral and Revocation

DoDM 3305.13-M, "DoD Security Accreditation and Certification," March 14, 2011, incorporating Change 1, April 26, 2018, authorizes the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) to accept and approve certification conferral recommendations made by the Director, DCSA, if you meet the eligibility requirements and required assessment scores. As the conferral official and upon recommendation from the Director, DCSA, the USD(I&S) is also the authority to revoke certification credentials.

Updating Personnel Records

For employees serviced by the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS), the SPēD Certification PMO transfers program achievements to the DCPDS, which then updates personnel records.

Note: Effective July 14, 2019, the SPēD Certification PMO will no longer transfer certification data to the DCPDS.

Digital Credentials

Digital credentials, also referred to as digital badges, are electronic representations of a certification or credential, traditionally acknowledged with a paper certificate. Digital credentials are awarded to individuals as proof the certificant has been conferred an APC Program certification or credential.

You will receive a digital badge within 48 duty hours after successfully passing and being conferred an APC Program certification or credential. Your digital credentials will be provided through Credly's Acclaim platform.

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Accepting Your Digital Badge

After successfully passing and being conferred an APC Program certification or credential, you will receive an email from Acclaim giving you access to your newly earned digital badge. Click the Accept button below the badge icon and you will be redirected to the Acclaim login page (https://www.youracclaim.com/earner/earned). Log in or create your Acclaim account to claim your digital badge. Once you claim your digital badge, you will have the option to make it viewable to the public or keep it private.

Sharing Your Digital Badge

Once you have accepted and claimed your digital badge, you will be redirected to the Share Badge screen. From here you can share your digital badge from Acclaim to your social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and via email. You can also download the badge visual, download a free printable version of your badge, and embed your digital badge on a personal website.

Printing Your Digital Badge

Note: Effective June 1, 2020, the SPēD Certifcation PMO will no longer mail certificates and lapel pins.

You have the option to purchase a printed copy of your APC or DPAPC certificate through American Registry, a third-party vendor. To print your certificate complete the following steps:

1. Log in to your Acclaim account (https://www.youracclaim.com/earner/earned).
2. After you receive a digital badge on the Acclaim platform, click the "Recommendation" link on your digital badge metadata page.
3. You will be redirected to the American Registry login page (http://www.americanregistry.com/dcsa). From this page, select which digital badge you would like to purchase a printed certificate for.
4. After your first visit to the American Registry website, you will be given a unique URL to directly order future earned badges. All future earned badges can be ordered using this unique URL or following the above steps again.

If at any time you have further questions or are experiencing issues with your Acclaim account, visit the Acclaim support forum (http://support.youracclaim.com/).

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Certification-Specific Information: APC

APC Policy Matrix

This certification policy matrix summarizes the essential characteristics and design requirements for the APC.

Adjudicator Professional Certification		
You will have two hours to complete the APC assessment.		
To attain the APC, you must:		**Waivers**
Prerequisites	• Be a DoD Personnel Security Adjudicator at an approved DoD CAF or DoD IC CAF • Be a Federal Agency Personnel Security Adjudicator at an approved federal agency • Complete CDSE training listed on the APC Training Requirements page of this handbook and internal CAF training, or equivalent as determined by CDSE on behalf of the Director, DCSA • Satisfy on-the-job requirements identified in the DoD Adjudicator Certification and Due Process Credential Experience Documentation Worksheet	None
Requirements	• Successfully meet the certification assessment's qualifying score	None
To maintain the APC, you must:		**Waivers**
Requirements	• Successfully complete, record, and submit 100 Professional Development Units (PDUs) to your supervisor and CAF Certification Representative (CCR) or organizational point of contact (POC) for approval, and submit your Certification Renewal Form (CRF) during your two-year certification maintenance cycle • Maintain an active and up-to-date MSC account	As specified in the Waiver's Guidelines section of this handbook
You will need to retest if:		**Waivers**
Conditions	• The ACGB concludes the content addressed by the certification's assessment modules is significantly out of date, regardless of your current certification maintenance • You fail to meet the certification maintenance requirements within your two-year certification maintenance cycle	As specified in Component's or Agency's Implementation Plan

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Areas of Expertise

The APC assessment provides the recognition and official record of an individual's demonstrated understanding and application of the occupational and technical knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to proficiently perform essential adjudicator tasks, with the exception of due process functions.

The assessment also presents typical cases you will handle in your day-to-day duties, along with several courses of action. You must review, ascertain, and select the most appropriate response to each scenario. These assessment items cover most adjudicative tasks in the adjudicator skill standards, with the exception of due process.

These cases give special emphasis to tasks in the following key activities:

- Reviewing adjudicative information for completeness
- Completing required administrative actions
- Reviewing all information and identifying conditions that could raise a security concern
- Analyzing security-related issues or other concerns against disqualifying and mitigating conditions
- Documenting recommendations or determinations

The Areas of Expertise specified in the following chart were identified during practice analysis as critical domains that should be addressed by the APC assessment. The weights indicated were derived from importance ratings provided by subject matter experts (SMEs) during the assessment development process.

Area of Expertise	
National Security & Personnel Security Program	**Exam Weight: 35%**
National Security & Personnel Security Program	Type and Scope of Investigations
Types of Information Sources	
Adjudication Process	**Exam Weight: 56%**
Adjudication Process Using the Whole Person Concept	Procedures for Due Process
Adjudicative Guidelines	Critical Terminologies
Personnel Security Process	**Exam Weight: 9%**
Pertinent Statutes, Executive Orders, and Regulations Governing the Personnel Security Process	Levels of Eligibility to Occupy a Sensitive Position and/or Access Classified Information

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Preparing for the APC Assessment

Preparing for the APC assessment by gaining additional training, education, or experience in the topic areas may prove beneficial. To take the APC assessment you must meet training, experience, and testing requirements for certification.

CPTs help you prepare for your APC assessment. The APC CPTs consist of a series of open-ended questions in each of the three security areas to assist you in increasing your proficiency.

Note: CPT questions are not found on the assessment.

You are invited to familiarize yourself with courses addressing the topics noted in the APC Areas of Expertise. CDSE provides diverse security courses and products to DoD personnel, DoD contractors, employees of other federal agencies, and selected foreign governments. Training is presented through a variety of learning platforms and is streamlined to meet performance requirements.

Before taking the APC assessment, you must first complete the following training courses provided by CDSE, or equivalent instruction as determined by CDSE on behalf of the Director, DCSA:

- Introduction to DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS001.18)
- DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS101.01)

To view available CDSE-offered training, visit https://www.cdse.edu/catalog/index.html.

CDSE has established a program of advanced and graduate-level courses designed specifically to broaden DoD security specialists' knowledge and understanding of the security profession and prepare them for leadership positions and responsibilities. All of the courses are tuition free and are offered in a virtual instructor-led environment.

To view available CDSE-offered training, visit https://www.cdse.edu/education/index.html.

Certification-Specific Information: DPAPC

DPAPC Policy Matrix

This certification policy matrix summarizes the essential characteristics and design requirements for the DPAPC.

Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential		
You will have two hours to complete the DPAPC assessment.		
To attain the DPAPC, you must:		**Waivers**
Prerequisites	• Be a DoD Personnel Security Adjudicator at an approved DoD CAF or DoD IC CAF • Be a Federal Agency Personnel Security Adjudicator at an approved federal agency • Meet APC requirements • Complete DoD Advanced Personnel Adjudication (PS301.10), or equivalent as determined by the ACGB • Satisfy on-the-job requirements identified in the DoD Adjudicator Certification and Due Process Credential Experience Documentation Worksheet	None
Requirements	• Successfully meet the certification assessment's qualifying score	None
To maintain the DPAPC, you must:		**Waivers**
Requirements	• Maintain your APC • Maintain an active and up-to-date MSC account	As specified in the Waiver's Guidelines section of this handbook
You will need to retest if:		**Waivers**
Conditions	• The ACGB concludes the content addressed by the certification's assessment modules is significantly out of date, regardless of your current certification maintenance • You fail to meet the APC maintenance requirements within your two-year certification maintenance cycle	As specified in Waiver's Guidelines section of this handbook

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Areas of Expertise

The DPAPC provides the recognition and official record of an individual's demonstrated understanding and application of occupational and technical knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to proficiently perform essential due process adjudicator tasks (i.e., writing SOR, evaluating SOR responses, recommending eligibility determinations or other functions following SOR response evaluations.

The Areas of Expertise specified in the following chart were identified during practice analysis as critical domains that should be addressed by the DPAPC assessment. The weights indicated were derived from importance ratings provided by SMEs during the assessment development process.

Area of Expertise	
Adjudication Process Using the Whole Person Concept (WPC)	Exam Weight: 57%
Procedures for Due Process	Exam Weight: 36%
Pertinent Statutes, Executive Orders, and Regulations Governing the Personnel Security Process	Exam Weight: 7%

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Preparing for the DPAPC Assessment

Preparing for the DPAPC assessment by gaining additional training, education, or experience in the topic areas may prove beneficial. To take the DPAPC assessment you must meet training, experience, and testing requirements for credentialing.

CPTs help you prepare for your DPAPC assessment. The DPAPC CPTs consists of a series of open-ended questions in each of the three security areas to assist you in increasing your proficiency.

Note: CPT questions are not found on the assessment.

You are invited to familiarize yourself with courses addressing the topics noted in the DPAPC Areas of Expertise. CDSE provides diverse security courses and products to DoD personnel, DoD contractors, employees of other federal agencies, and selected foreign governments. Training is presented through a variety of learning platforms and is streamlined to meet performance requirements.

Before taking the DPAPC assessment, you must first complete the following training courses provided by CDSE, or equivalent instruction as determined by CDSE on behalf of the Director, DCSA:

- Introduction to DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS001.18)
- DoD Personnel Security Adjudications (PS101.01)
- DoD Advanced Personnel Security Adjudications (PS301.10)

To view available CDSE-offered training, visit https://www.cdse.edu/catalog/index.html.

CDSE has established a program of advanced and graduate-level courses designed specifically to broaden DoD security specialists' knowledge and understanding of the security profession and prepare them for leadership positions and responsibilities. All of the courses are tuition free and are offered in a virtual instructor-led environment.

To view available CDSE-offered training, visit https://www.cdse.edu/education/index.html.

Certification and Credential Maintenance and Renewal Procedures

The Certification and Credential Maintenance and Renewal Program

Obtaining an APC Program certification or credential is a significant achievement in your career and indicates you possess the knowledge and skills associated with the competencies necessary to successfully carry out DoD-defined security functional tasks; however, passing the assessment is not the end of your professional development.

DoD has a professionalization goal of establishing a systematic approach for fostering learning and professional growth of the security workforce. Certification Maintenance and Renewal is the long-term strategy for meeting this goal.

This approach allows the DoD, the DoD Security Training Council (DSTC), the ACGB, and DCSA to meet both National Intelligence Strategy (NIS) Enterprise Objective (EO) 6 and USD(I&S) Human Capital Goals and Objectives for the security workforce. NIS EO 6 focuses on developing the workforce and strives to "attract, develop, and retain a diverse, results focused, and high-performing workforce capable of providing the technical expertise and exceptional leadership necessary to address our Nation's security challenges."

The Certification Maintenance and Renewal Program (https://www.cdse.edu/certification/maintain-sped.html) supports your ongoing educational and professional development. The PDU requirement provides opportunity for you to enhance job-related skills and knowledge as well as become familiar with new regulations and technological advances in related security areas to meet security objectives.

The purpose of the APC Program Certification Maintenance and Renewal Program is to:

- Enhance continuing subject matter competence
- Recognize and encourage learning opportunities
- Maintain and grow mastery-level knowledge of critical security skills
- Offer a standardized and objective mechanism for obtaining and recording professional development activities
- Sustain the global recognition and value of APC Program certifications and credentials

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Professional Development Units (PDUs)

To accrue PDUs you must successfully complete professional development activities that fall under approved professional development categories.

There is only one static expiration date for the APC and DPAPC. "Static expiration" means only one certification expiration date will exist for each certification holder. Certification expiration is based upon conferral date of their first certification (APC).

At least 50 of the 100 PDUs must be acquired through approved professional development activities focusing on security topic areas. The remaining PDUs do not need to be aligned with security; however, they must satisfy one or more of the allowed professional development categories.

Candidates must submit a CRF to renew each certification. A single CRF will be used to record all PDUs. A certification holder is responsible for submitting 100 accrued PDUs into a completed CRF before the end of their two-year maintenance cycle.

If you do not accrue 100 PDUs within your two-year certification maintenance cycle or fail to submit your CRF, your certification status will be deemed non-compliant and your APC and DPAPC will expire.

There are six ways to accrue PDUs to maintain your APC Program certification and/or credential:

1. **Complete Certification Programs**
   a. Renew a core SPēD certification

      You can receive 100 PDUs by successfully retesting your highest-level existing core SPēD certification Security Fundamentals Professional Certification (SFPC), Security Asset Protection Professional Certification (SAPPC), or Security Program Integration Professional Certification (SPIPC).

      You can receive 50 PDUs for achieving the DPAPC during your two-year certification maintenance cycle.

      A copy of supporting documentation indicating completion of the training, education, or certificate program must be uploaded as supporting documentation to receive PDUs in this category.

   b. Obtain a new SPēD certification

      You can receive 100 PDUs for being conferred a new SPēD certification during your two-year certification maintenance cycle.

      A copy of the conferral certificate or MSC account history detail, or any other documentation indicating a new SPēD certification was conferred must be upload as supporting documentation to receive PDUs in this category.

   c. Obtain a non-SPēD certification

You can receive 45 PDUs for each approved non-SPēD certification. All certifications must be security focused, nationally accredited, and gained during your two-year certification maintenance cycle.

A copy of your certificate must be uploaded as supporting documentation to receive PDUs in this category.

2. **Complete Security-related Training, Education, or Certificate Program and Security Higher Education**

   a. Complete a non-degree granting, security-related training, education, or certificate program that:

   - Consists of an organized series of planned learning experiences (e-Learning, instructor-led, instructor-facilitated online, self-paced, etc.) developed and delivered to aid participants in acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with a topic area or group of tasks that can be completed together
   - Is delivered by an accredited training or education institution or is facilitated in-house (i.e., an agency or organization delivers the training)
   - Awards a certificate of completion to individuals who attend and/or participate in the course.

   You can receive three PDUs for each hour associated with an approved non-credit bearing training/education course or certificate program. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

   A copy of your supporting documentation indicating completion of the training, education, or certificate program must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

   b. Complete security-related higher education that:

   - Consists of an organized series of planned learning experiences (e-Learning, instructor-led, instructor-facilitated online, self-paced, etc.) designed and developed to aid participants in acquiring knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with a coherent body of study within a discipline or set of related disciplines
   - Is delivered by a nationally-accredited academic institution
   - Results in academic credits granted and recognized by accredited academic institutions
   - Represents a required course in an academic degree program

   You can receive 15 PDUs in this category for each credit hour of an approved security-related, credit-bearing college or university course. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

A copy of your supporting documentation indicating completion of the higher education course must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category. Transcripts are preferred.

3. **Complete Non-security-related Training, Education, or Certificate Program and Higher Education**

   a. Complete non-security-related training, education, and/or certificate programs that:

   - Consists of an organized series of planned learning experiences (eLearning, instructor-led, instructor-facilitated online, self-paced, etc.) developed and delivered to aid participants in acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with a topic area or group of tasks that can be completed together
   - Is delivered by an accredited training or education institution or is facilitated in-house (i.e., an agency or organization delivers the training)
   - Awards a certificate of completion to individuals who attend and/or participate in the course

   You can receive three PDUs for each contact hour (or equivalent "seat time" hour) associated with an approved non-security-related training, education course, or certificate program. A maximum of 45 PDUs can be earned in this category. You cannot earn all 100 PDUs in this category.

   A copy of supporting documentation indicating completion of the training, education or certificate program must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

   b) Complete a non-security-related higher education credit-bearing course that:

   - Consists of an organized series of planned learning experiences (e-Learning, instructor-led, instructor-facilitated online, self-paced, etc.) designed and developed to aid participants in acquiring knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with a coherent body of study within a discipline or set of related disciplines
   - Is delivered by a nationally-accredited academic institution
   - Results in academic credits granted and recognized by accredited academic institutions
   - Represents a required course in an academic degree program

   You can receive 15 PDUs for each credit hour of an approved non-security-related, credit-bearing college or university course. A maximum of 45 PDUs can be earned in this category. You cannot earn all 100 PDUs in this category.

   A copy of supporting documentation indicating completion of the higher education course must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

4. **Attend Conferences and Workshops**

a. As a participant, you can receive eight PDUs for each full day (eight hours) and four PDUs for each half day (four hours) of participation in an approved conference or workshop. A maximum of 40 PDUs can be earned in a five-day event. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

b. As a presenter, you can receive an additional five PDUs for each presentation. A maximum of 25 PDUs can be earned for presenting at one event. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

A copy of supporting documentation indicating you presented at a conference or workshop (i.e., email confirmation, registration form, certificate attendance, roster, etc.) must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

5. **Complete APC Program and SPēD Certification Projects**

You can receive three PDUs per contact hour for each separate and distinct project. A maximum of 45 PDUs can be earned for each APC Program and/or SPēD certification project. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

A copy of supporting documentation indicating you participated in an APC Program and/or SPēD certification project (i.e., email confirmation, letter, etc.) must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

6. **Experience and Achievements**

a. Experience

You can receive one PDU for each contact hour associated with the security-related professional development experience. A maximum of 45 PDUs can be earned for each security-related professional development experience.

A copy of supporting documentation indicating you participated in the activity (i.e., email confirmation, registration form, certificate of attendance, email from supervisor, etc.) must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

b. Achievements

You can receive a defined number of PDUs for contributing work in specific professional publications. All 100 PDUs can be earned in this category.

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Publications	PDUs
Dissertation/Thesis, Author	50
Monograph/Scholarly Book, Author	45
Chapter of Book, Author	25
Article, Author	25
Book Review, Author	25
Newsletter, Editor	10
Newsletter Article, Author	5

A copy of supporting documentation indicating you earned relevant experience as defined or a copy of the publication must be uploaded to receive PDUs in this category.

Recertification/Retest Requirements

If you fail to complete the certification renewal requirements and your certification(s) expire you will need to retake and pass all certification assessments you choose to regain to be considered certified.

You will also be required to retest, regardless of your current certification maintenance status, if the ACGB concludes the content addressed by the prior certification's assessment modules has been superseded because the content is significantly out of date.

Appeals Process and Procedures

Grounds for Appeal

The APC Program appeals policy governs the process for reviewing decisions made about registration, eligibility, assessments, and other certification issues.

Appeals may be filed challenging the following:

- Examination results
- Candidate registration
- Test-taking protocols
- Eligibility decisions related to alleged cheating, alleged violation of professional rules of conduct or the law, or inaccurate information on the application form
- Certification maintenance and PDUs
- Certification disciplinary matters

Decisions Not Eligible for Appeal

Matters not described in the Grounds for Appeal section are not within the purview of the APC Program and are not appealable, such as the following DoD Component decisions:

- Employment policy
- Eligibility criteria for identifying billets or individuals for the APC or DPAPC
- DoD Component affiliation

Certification waiver decisions are not appealable to the SPēD Certification PMO, however, they are determined by the Component issuing or rejecting the waiver. Contact your Component APC Program POC with questions or appeals of decisions outside the purview of the APC Program.

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Appeal Submission

You have up to 90 calendar days from the date of receiving an appealable decision or after completing your assessment, whichever occurs first, to submit an appeal. All appeals must use the Appeal Request Form (https://www.cdse.edu/documents/sped/appeals_form.pdf) and be sent to the SPēD Certification PMO at dcsa.spedcert@mail.mil.

Appeal Review

The SPēD Certification PMO conducts a preliminary review of all appeals within 15 duty days of receipt to ensure the appeal is timely, contains all required and pertinent information, and is based on allowable grounds. Allowable appeals are forwarded to the Certification Appeals Board for a decision on the appeal.

- If your appeal is not received within the 90-day window or is not based on allowable grounds, your appeal will be dismissed without referral to the Certification Appeals Board, and you and your Component APC Program POC will be notified in writing of the dismissal.
- If your appeal package does not contain all required and pertinent information, you will be notified and you may resubmit an appeals package if you are still within the 90-calendar day window.

Allowable appeals are forwarded to the Certification Appeals Board for a decision on the appeal.

Appeal Decision and Notification

Certification Appeals Board decisions are made by majority vote. The Certification Appeals Board provides its decision to you, the SPēD Certification PMO, and your Component APC Program POC. The Certification Appeals Board is the final decision authority, and there are no further appeals.

Appeal Withdrawal

You may withdraw your appeals claim at any time before a Certification Appeals Board decision. You must do so in writing to the SPēD Certification PMO.

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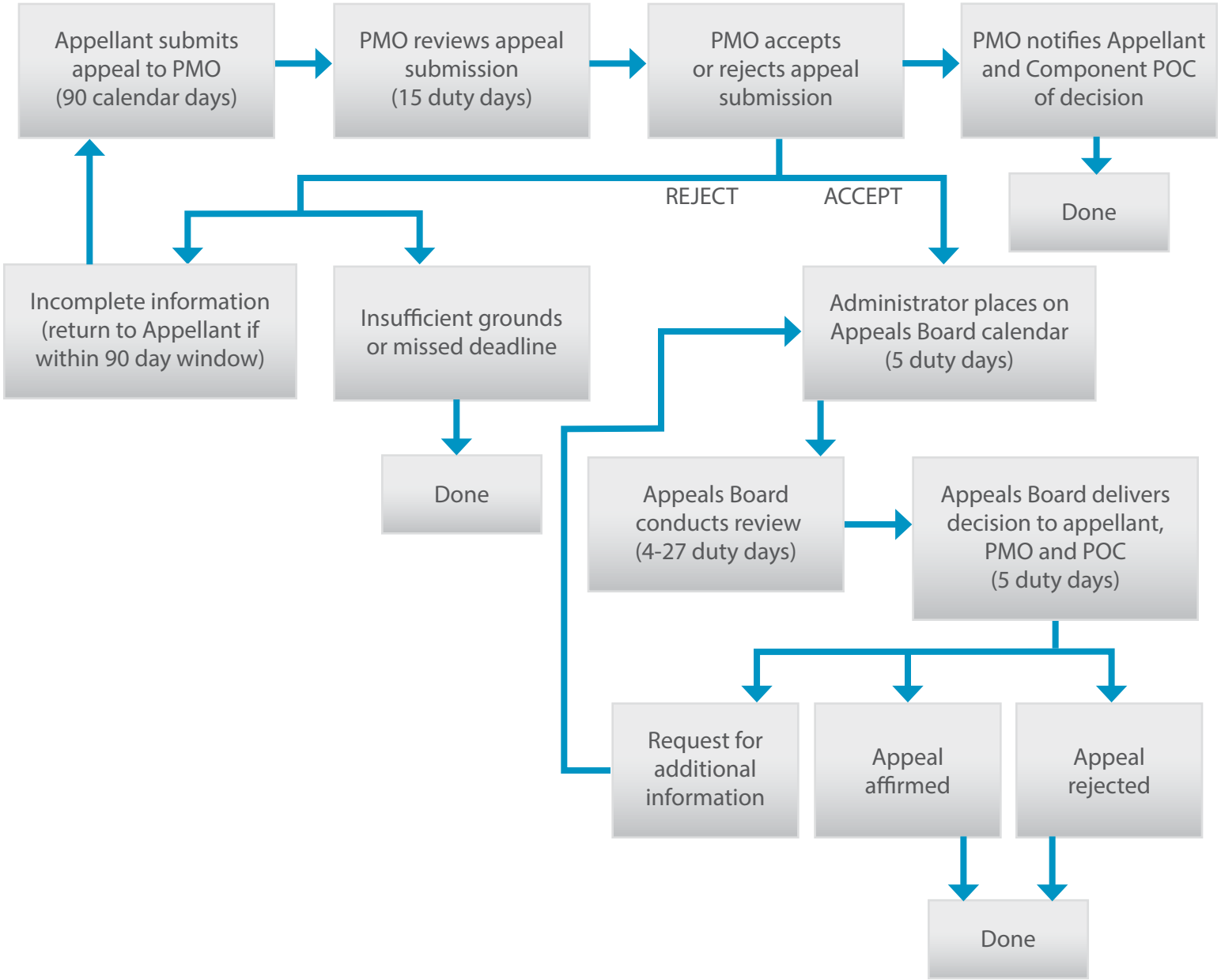
Appeals Process Flow



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Waiver Process and Procedures

Circumstances for Waiver

You may request a waiver for an extension due to reasons such as deployment, hospitalization/medical leave, and other extraordinary reasons prohibiting an individual from meeting APC Program maintenance requirements. There will be no waivers submitted, accepted, or approved after expiration.

Waiver Request Submission

All waiver requests must use the Waiver Request Form (https://www.cdse.edu/documents/sped/waiver_form.pdf) and be sent to your appropriate authority.

- If you are an employee or contractor for the DoD or one of its Components, agencies, or companies, submit the Waiver Request Form to your APC Program POC.
- If you are an employee or contractor for DCSA, Industry, or other participating agency without a APC Program POC, submit the Waiver Request Form to the SPēD Certification PMO at dcsa.spedcert@mail.mil.

Waiver Decision and Notification

You will receive notification of your waiver decision within 10 duty days of receipt of your waiver request by the appropriate authority.

Approved Waivers Timeframe

The amount of time given for approved waivers is determined by the specific circumstance. No waiver will exceed 180 days.

Disciplinary Process and Procedures

The ACGB is responsible for establishing and implementing standards of conduct, policies, and procedures governing disciplinary actions for the APC Program.

As an APC Progam certification applicant or certificant, you understand unethical or unprofessional behavior may result in:

- Denial of admission to the APC Program
- Suspension of involvement in the APC Program
- Invalidation of an assessment result
- Recommendation to the USD(I&S) to revoke a certification or credential

Grounds for APC Program disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following actions by a APC Program eligible applicant, candidate, or certificant:

- Falsifying information on any document needed to acquire an APC Program certification or credential
- Actions compromising the integrity of a APC assessment instrument, including, but not limited to:
  a. Willfully consulting a notebook, a textbook, or any other source of information not specifically authorized by the proctor during the assessment
  b. Willfully aiding or receiving aid, or attempting to aid or receive aid (e.g., giving answers to or requesting answers from other candidates before, during, or after an assessment)
  c. Obtaining or attempting to obtain copies of the assessment at any time
  d. Committing or attempting to commit any act with the intent of violating or circumventing the stated conditions of an assessment
- Request by your parent organization to revoke your certification for reasons including:
  a. Misconduct leading to revocation or denial of security clearance
  b. Non-compliance with U.S. Government standards of conduct
- Misrepresentation or false statements regarding conferral of an APC Program certification or credential when the certification or credential has not been conferred, or the certification or credential has not been renewed in accordance within the APC Program certification and credential maintenance guidelines

Anyone who observes or discovers misconduct related to the APC Program must report the details of the misconduct to the test proctor or SPēD Certification PMO within 15 business days of the incident. The complainant's and witnesses' names, along with other identifying information, and the content of the complaint will remain confidential unless law or regulation requires disclosure.

The SPēD Certification PMO conducts a review and inquiry into the allegations. Relevant facts and related documentation is compiled into a fact-finding report and delivered to the person cited, the employing Component, and the SPēD Certification Program Disciplinary Board.

The Disciplinary Board considers and responds to disciplinary matters objectively, without prejudgment, and in a manner consistent with the disciplinary processes, APC Program-related procedures, and any applicable DoD manuals, instructions, or policies.

The Disciplinary Board is only authorized to take the disciplinary actions described in this handbook. The person cited in the allegation and employing Component will be notified in writing of the Disciplinary Board's decision and, if appropriate, sanctions.

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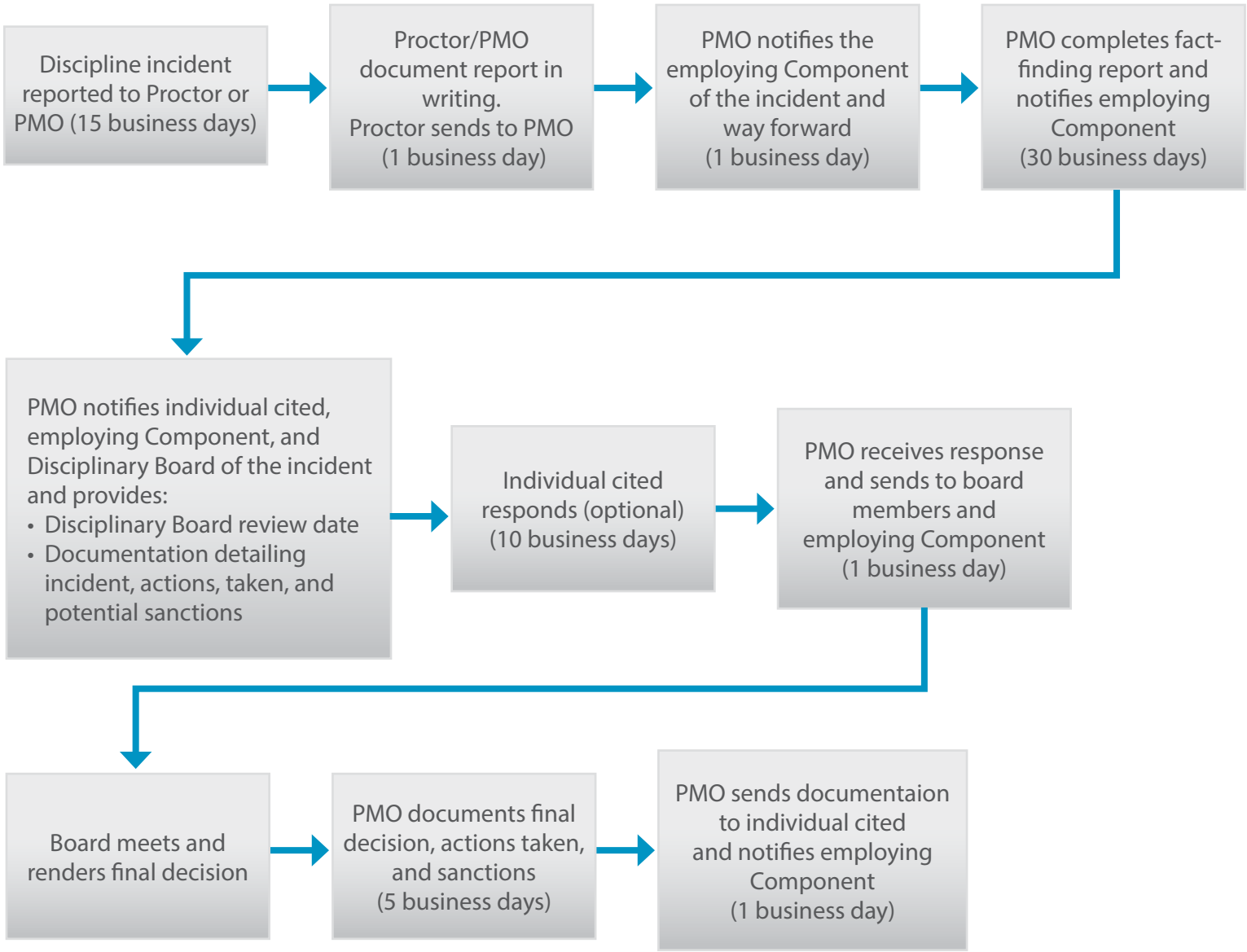
Disciplinary Process Flow



APC Program Background

Governance

DoD Instruction 5105.18, "DoD Intergovernmental and Intra-governmental Committee Management Program," establishes the ACGB as the advisory body for the APC Program. In addition to its advisory responsibility, the ACGB serves as the governance board for the APC Program. The ACGB is comprised of CDSE, DoD, and DoD IC CAF Directors or their designated representatives. Non-voting advisors to the ACGB include representatives from the Defense Personnel Security Research Center, Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals, and other members approved for inclusion by the ACGB. The ACGB represents the shared interests of the Defense Security Enterprise and the respective workforce in certification design, management, and maintenance.

Specifically regarding APC governance, the ACGB is responsible for:

- Coordination among adjudication facilities
- Certification administration oversight
- Technical development oversight
- Certification governance

Assessment Development

The initial step in developing a fair and objective assessment was to measure the ability to apply fundamental knowledge and skills required of DoD security professionals and other personnel assigned to security duties. A job/practice analysis was conducted to assure that the knowledge and skills identified were representative of those required by professionals across all of DoD, including tasks and functions performed by civilian, military, and contractor personnel. The job/practice analysis, divided into four phases, was designed and facilitated by technical experts under contract with DCSA, engaged DoD leaders, and SMEs from the uniformed services and multiple DoD agencies. These phases included a detailed review of previous studies, defining specific work performed and required knowledge and skills necessary to perform that work, verifying the results with SMEs, and approval by the appropriate governance board.

The job/practice analysis led to the creation of the DoD Security Skill Standards (DS3), which clarifies DoD expectations of what personnel security professionals must know and successfully perform to support DoD security functions. This information was then used to generate the certification test outline (blueprint) that specifies objectives associated with the knowledge and skill topics and sub-topics measured by each specific APC Program assessment.

The process used to develop the assessment questions employed (but was not limited to) the following steps:

1. Developing draft questions assessing mastery of selected and codified objectives based on knowledge and skill requirements
2. Facilitating senior SME review of draft assessment items for accuracy and relevance to each objective
3. Piloting the resulting assessment for effective and accurate measurement in order to generate the final version of the assessment

DCSA monitors change factors (e.g., policy changes, system changes) on a continuing basis to identify changes that could affect questions used within the certification assessment and that could result in adjustments as required. The questions themselves are also reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure they continue to function as intended. The review involves generating and reviewing question- and assessment-level statistics to gauge continued effectiveness.

Determining Passing Scores

The Angoff method is used to set the minimum passing score for the APC Program assessments. The Angoff method has a well-established history of determining credible passing standards for multiple-choice examinations and is easily adapted by the APC Program assessments.

The method involves two basic elements: conceptualization of a minimally competent examinee and using SMEs to estimate whether a minimally competent examinee will answer an item correctly or incorrectly. Minimally competent examinees demonstrate behaviors that are sometimes correct, but often not. They have a 50/50 probability of passing or failing the exam, which places them just at the cut-off score for an assessment. SMEs define the characteristics of a minimally competent examinee and then try to estimate if a minimally competent examinee is likely to successfully perform each item on the assessment.

A panel of SMEs made predictions for each item (represented as a percentage) and used the average of the ratings on the items to set the minimum passing score for the assessment. Results of the Angoff method inform the provisional cut score. The provisional cut score is then calibrated using data collected during the beta test phase.

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Non-Discrimination Policy

The APC Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy or childbirth), gender, religion, age (40 or over), disability (physical or mental), sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or genetic information.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Adjudicator Certification Governance Board (ACGB)	The authority for the governance and policy for the DoD APC Program rests with the USD(I&S). The ACGB serves as an advisory group for the USD(I&S). The ACGB is the sole authority for the APC Program and represents the interests of all parties concerned with the certification program design, management, and maintenance. The ACGB serves as the ultimate decision-making body for certification policy coordination and oversight of the APC Program.
Applicant	An individual with an established an up-to-date MSC account and is eligible to take an APC Program assessment.
Candidate	An individual scheduled to take an APC Program assessment.
Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE)	The nationally-accredited, award-winning directorate within DCSA providing security education, training, and certification products and services to a broad audience supporting the protection of National Security and professionalization of the DoD security enterprise.
Certificant	An individual who fulfilled conditions outlined in the policy matrix for certification and conferred by the USD(I&S).
Certification Renewal Form (CRF)	An online tool to record PDUs earned during a two-year certification maintenance and renewal cycle. Available through your MSC account (https://i7lp.integral7.com/dss/) under "Forms."
Competency Preparatory Tools (CPTs)	A suite of tools to help prepare for an APC Program assessment by delivering a means to gauge experience in and knowledge of security competencies tested in each assessment. Select CPTs are available via mobile app.

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Term	Definition
Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS)	A computer supported system designed to improve the accuracy, responsiveness, and usefulness of data required for civilian personnel management within the Army and the DoD. Contains current, projected, and historical position and employee personnel management data. Requires written authorization to release and upload records from DMDC to DCPDS.
Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC)	Collects and maintains an archive of automated manpower, personnel, training, and other databases for the DoD. APC Program information is automatically recorded in DMDC. *Effective July 14, 2019, information will no longer be automatically recorded in the DMDC.*
DoD Security Skill Standards (DS3)	States DoD expectations of what security professionals must know and successfully perform to support DoD security functions relative to each APC Program certification or credential. Provides certification test outlines (blueprints) specifying objectives associated with the knowledge and skill topics and sub-topics measured by each assessment.
DoD Security Training Council (DSTC)	A group of security professionals and senior managers representing DoD entities with security responsibilities, responsible for establishing and implementing standards of conduct, policies, and procedures governing disciplinary actions for the SPēD Certification Program. Serves as the advisory body and governance board for the SPēD Certification Program.
Eligible Applicant	An individual eligible to apply to take an APC Program assessment after gaining approval from their employing agency or the SPēD Certification PMO.
My SPēD Certification (MSC)	The gateway to APC Program testing and managing your APC Program certification and/or credential. The system of record for the APC Program. Must be active and up to date to register for or maintain APC Program certifications and credentials. (https://i7lp.integral7.com/dss/).
National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)	Ensures professional certification programs meet standards that ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the public and validates a program meets recognized industry standards for development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. The APC assessment is designed to align to NCCA standards, thereby making the certification eligible for NCCA accreditation.

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Term	Definition
Professional Development Units (PDUs)	Professional development activities falling under approved professional development categories. A certification holder is responsible for obtaining 100 PDUs before the end of their two-year maintenance cycle. At least 50 of the 100 PDUs must be acquired through approved security-related professional development activities.
Security Training, Education, and Professionalization Portal (STEPP)	STEPP is the learning management system where you are able to access our course catalog and view your course transcripts. These courses are intended for use by Department of Defense and other U.S. Government personnel and contractors within the National Industrial Security Program. (https://cdse.usalearning.gov/login/index.php). *Effective June 1, 2020, the SPēD Certification PMO will migrate account creation and profile management from the Security, Training, Education, and Professionalization Portal (STEPP) to MSC. MSC will be the only location for new and existing account creations.*
SPēD Certification Program Management Office (PMO)	Manages the APC Program. Establishes and implements policies and procedures to support the APC Program, including the application process, certification assessments and testing protocols, candidate record retention, the DS3, and national accreditation through the NCCA. POC for employees or contractors for DCSA, Industry, and other participating agencies without an APC Program POC. (dcsa.spedcert@mail.mil).

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Acronyms

Term	Definition	Term	Definition
ACGB	Adjudicator Certification Governance Board	DPAPC	Due Process Adjudicator Professional Credential
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	DS3	DoD Security Skill Standards
APC	Adjudicator Professional Certification	DSTC	DoD Security Training Council
CAF	Central Adjudication Facility	EO	Enterprise Objective
CCR	CAF Certification Representative	IC	Intelligence Community
CDSE	Center for Development of Security Excellence	MSC	My SPēD Certification
CPT	Competency Preparatory Tool	NCCA	National Commission for Certifying Agencies
CRF	Certification Renewal Form	NDA	Non-disclosure Agreement
CSR	Component Service Representative	NIS	National Intelligence Strategy
DCPDS	Defense Civilian Personnel Data System	NISP	National Industrial Security Program
DCSA	Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency	OPM	U.S. Office of Personnel Management
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center	PDU	Professional Development Unit
DoD	Department of Defense	PMO	Program Management Office
DoD CAF	DoD Consolidated Adjudication Facility	POC	Point of Contact
DoDM	DoD Manual	SAPPC	Security Asset Protection Professional Certification

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Term	Definition	Term	Definition
SFPC	Security Fundamentals Professional Certification	SPIPC	Security Program Integration Professional Certification
SME	Subject Matter Expert	SPSC	Special Program Security Certification
SOR	Statement of Reasons	STEPP	Security Training, Education, and Professionalization Portal
SPēD	Security Professional Education Development	USD(I&S)	Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security