



NCMS

Becoming an ISP®: Why & How

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Briefing Content



What is the Industrial Security Professional (ISP®) certification program?

Why should you become an ISP®?

What should you know about the ISP® exam?

How can you best prepare for the ISP® exam?



Question:

**What is the Industrial
Security Professional
Certification Program?**



Industrial Security Professional (ISP®)

The ISP® certification program was developed by NCMS in 2004 to meet the needs of Industrial Security professionals and their government counterparts.

ISP® certification focuses specifically on the requirements of the National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual (NISPOM) and other government regulations that address the protection of classified information.



Past Security Certification Landscape

Security certification universe prior to ISP®

- **No certifications focused on the National Industrial Security Program (NISP)**
- **Some certifications were too narrow in focus (ex. CISSP) while others too broad (ex. CPP)**
- **NCMS wanted a certification program that closely matched Facility Security Officer (FSO), Information System Security Manager/Officer (ISSM/ISSO) and other industrial security centric responsibilities**



Industrial Security Professional

- **Industrial Security Professional (ISP®) certification is....**
 - **For individuals involved in classified government contracts**
 - **Aimed at “journeyman” level professionals**
 - **407 currently certified world-wide**



ISP® Accreditation

- **“Accreditation”**

- **The ISP® was awarded formal “accreditation” by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in October 2013**
- **Reaccredited in 2019**
- **Rigorous process carefully defining standards, processes, etc.**
- **Requires extensive documentation**



ISP® Certification

- **ISP® Certification requirements**

- **5 years of experience in industrial security**
 - Can be part-time if >10% of duties
- **Recommendation by supervisor or NCMS National Director**
- **Pass the certification exam**
 - Held at Prometric testing center
 - Two hours long
 - 110 questions (100 “core”, plus 5 each on 2 electives chosen from 5 available)
 - Counterintelligence, COMSEC/TEMPEST, Intellectual Property, OPSEC, Special Access Programs
 - Note: Electives will be removed from the exam in the near future
- **Subscribe to high ethical standards**



ISP® Certification (Sample Functional Résumé)

Name

Contact Information (Complete Mailing Address, Phone, Email)

Objective

To demonstrate eligibility to test and become a certified Industrial Security Professional (ISP®).

**Security
Experience**

Describe your experience in managing/administering security tasks that are responsibilities of companies subject to the National Industrial Security Program (NISP) such as DOD, DOE, etc. Include job title

For each period, explicitly show that the security duties meet the required threshold of 4 hours per week (or 10% of a full time 40 hours week).

Note: your current job must meet the 4 hours/week requirement. If you are unemployed or in a job with no security management/administration responsibilities, you cannot become an ISP®.

**Employment
History**

Brief listing of all employers and locations by date (reverse chronological order).

Education

Optional.



ISP® Resume Template



ISP® Exam Resume

Exam pre-requisites: Candidates must have at least five years' cumulative experience in the Industrial Security (IS) field (i.e. Industrial security, industrial security management, cyber security, or information security). Military or police experience alone may not qualify.

Candidates must work or have worked in IS at least 10% of the time as part of their job description. In addition to your resume, a written recommendation from your supervisor, manager, or NCMS is required along with a signed affidavit from your proctor and full payment 30 days prior to the scheduled test date. Although this template is not mandatory, it is recommended to accelerate the review process. Replace the blue text with your information.

Note: By submitting this resume, you are attesting that it is accurate at the time of submittal.

Providing false information may be grounds for disqualification for the exam.

Submittal date:	
Name:	
E-mail address:	
Phone Number:	
Company:	
Title:	
Clearance level:	

Overview of Security Qualifications (Big picture overview)
For example, if you had (including, but not limited to) NISPOM, JAFAN, COMSEC, security supervisor, ISSM, ISSO, SSO, SAP, SCI, FGI, leadership responsibilities or were involved in personnel security, physical security, FOCI, quality control, force protection, visitor control, ISFD, JPAS, e-QIP, OPSEC, AIS, and/or Risk Management, include it here.
Professional Experience – Duties - Responsibilities:
This is not a typical resume delineating all your job duties to a potential employer...rather it is a security resume highlighting your security duties, responsibilities and training.



ISP® Certification: Experience Requirement

Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
Law enforcement (civilian or military) member involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning, executing, managing, or providing direct supervision for the security of classified programs/projects• Being responsible for the overall success of the security program that involves the protection of classified information	Law enforcement (civilian or military) member involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting resources (personnel, aircraft, munitions, ships, buildings, information etc.)• Providing gate/building/area entry/exit control• Conducting patrols• Conducting criminal investigations	The position must involve some aspect of security for classified material/programs so that the staff member is knowledgeable of NISPOM, JAFAN, and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified material.
Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
Administrative or clerical staff member involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting receptionist/visitor control duties for classified visitors/programs• Maintaining configuration management, document control & markings and conducting inventories of classified material• Processing personnel security clearances• Conducting locksmith duties for classified containers and areas	Administrative or clerical staff member involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting receptionist/visitor control duties• Maintaining configuration management, document control & markings and conducting inventories of unclassified material	The position must involve some aspect of security for classified material/programs so that the staff member is knowledgeable of NISPOM, JAFAN, and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified material.
Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
Cleared employee serving as FSO, Assistant FSO, ISSO, ISSM, Security Director, Security Manager, Security staff member involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning, executing, managing, or providing direct supervision/support for classified programs/projects• Being responsible for the overall success of the security program that involves the protection of classified information• Being responsible for the establishment and proper operation of information systems processing classified information• Assisting with DSS or customer inspections of the security program	Cleared employee involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participating/working on classified projects/applications• Using classified information systems and networks• Being the custodian of classified material	The cleared employee is simply responsible for following established security regulations and could be considered a participant in the security program. The Security staff member/leader conducts security oversight and ensures compliance with security guidelines; establishes local security guidelines; develops and provides security training; and provides/executes policies and procedures. The Security staff member/leader is knowledgeable of NISPOM, JAFAN, and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified material.



ISP® Certification: Experience Requirement

Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
COMSEC custodian or alternate custodian who is involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Managing a COMSEC accountAssisting with NSA, DSS, or customer inspections of the COMSEC security program	Cleared employee involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Using COMSEC equipment and CRYPTO systems	The cleared employee is simply responsible for following established security regulations and could be considered a participant in the security program. The COMSEC custodian or alternate conducts security oversight and ensures compliance with security guidelines; establishes and administers local security guidelines; develops and provides security training; and provides/executes policies and procedures. The COMSEC custodian or alternate is knowledgeable of NISPOM, JAFAN and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified material.
Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
Cleared military member or government employee involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Serving as Security Representative/Manager for a larger unit or classified program for which the security duties do comprise more than 10% of the total work hours (=>4 hours/week)	Cleared military member or government employee involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Serving as Security Representative/Manager for a small unit/company or classified program for which the security duties do not comprise at least 10% of the total work hours (<4 hours/week)	One of the requirements of the ISP® program is that security duties must comprise at least 10% of the candidate's work hours. Duties must not be limited to completing security forms, but must involve overseeing the security program and ensuring compliance with security guidelines. The cleared military member or government employee performing these duties must be knowledgeable of the NISPOM, JAFAN, and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified information.
Acceptable Experience	Unacceptable Experience	Rationale
	Private investigator, <u>polygrapher</u> involved with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Conducting investigations and interviewsAdministering polygraph examinations	Although an ISP® performs investigations and conducts interviews, it is unlikely that a private investigator or <u>polygrapher</u> would be knowledgeable of the NISPOM, JAFAN, and/or COMSEC Manual requirements for the protection of classified information.



ISP® Recertification

- **Recertification required every 3 years**
 - Shows continued professional development
 - Demonstrates that the ISP® has kept current on both threats and defenses
 - 60 CEUs required which can be accomplished by activities such as
 - Membership/leadership in security organizations (e.g. NCMS, ASIS)
 - Training class/seminar attendance
 - Authoring articles/presenting classes on security topics
- **Recertification process is online; submit artifacts electronically**
- **Don't wait until the last minute**



Why Certify?

Question:

**Why should you become
an Industrial Security
Professional?**



ISP® Certification: Why Certify?

- **The ISP® program provides a high-level baseline for the knowledge required of a FSO/Industrial Security specialist with at least five years of experience**
- **It certifies that the holder of the ISP® has the requisite knowledge of the NISPOM and other related directives used by the average FSO on a daily basis**
- **It demonstrates a degree of professionalism and willingness to go the extra mile to develop professionally**



ISP® Certification: Why Certify?

- **It demonstrates self-confidence and willingness to take a risk on yourself**
- **It demonstrates that the ISP® has the academic and intellectual skills to not only perform as an FSO, but to develop further as a security professional**
- **It puts a company that has ISP®'s on their staff in a stronger position for contract bids and re-bids in the area of security**
- **It provides a FSO with an ISP® added credibility when dealing with industry colleagues and government representatives**



ISP® Certification: Why Certify?

- **The ISP® certification qualifies for enhancement points during the DSS Vulnerability Assessment for “security staff professionalism” (Category 3)**
- **Other enhancement points (Category 5)**
 - **Active participation in security organizations (NCMS officer, board member, community member, etc.)**
 - **Membership/attendance in security community events**

Note: DSS may alter the Security Enhancement process at its discretion.



A couple of testimonials

- **Why did we become ISP®'s? How has it benefited us?**

Sheri Escobar, ISP®

Tanya Matthews, ISP®

- **Now... “Why do you want to become an ISP®?”**



Next Question:

**How to prepare for the
ISP® exam?**



- **ISP® website consolidates resources**
 - **Certification Booklet**
 - **Application Form**
 - **ISP® Code of Ethics**
 - **Test References & Sources**
 - **Frequently Asked Questions**
 - **List of Current ISP®s**
 - **ISP® Exam Preparation Program**



Apprehension

- **Applicants may be apprehensive about taking the exam**
 - I'm not good enough (or experienced enough).
 - I've been out of school for a long time. I don't test well.
 - I'm too busy (workload, personal challenges, etc.).
 - If I fail, I'll look bad in the eyes of supervisors, coworkers & colleagues.
 - If I fail, I'll be out several hundred dollars. (Some companies don't fund the exam until employee passes.)



Alleviating Apprehension

- **The two key methods for alleviating apprehension are:**
 - **Networking**
 - “I’m not good enough” dispelled by contact with colleagues
 - **Preparation**
 - Knowledge provides self-confidence
 - Some nervousness always remains for any “high stakes” test, but the adrenalin helps



Main Methods of Preparation

- **Self-study**
- **ISP® Exam Preparation Program (EPP)**
- **Company or NCMS Chapter Based Study Groups**



Self-Study

<http://www.ncms-ISP.org/StudyReferences.html>

- All of the source documents for the ISP® exam are unclassified and available on-line
- Now – the ISP® Exam Preparation Program (EPP) workbook can be purchased for self-study



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- *The ISP® Exam Preparation Program (EPP) is the only preparation program for the ISP® Certification that is developed and sanctioned by NCMS*
- **Group Preparation – began in 2005**
 - Candidates met telephonically to discuss “hard” chapters such as Chapter 8 on Information System Security and Chapter 10 on International Security Requirements
 - Expanded and formalized after the 41st Annual National Training Seminar in Seattle, WA
 - Current NCMS National sponsor for EPP is the Education & Training Committee



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- **Purpose of ISP® EPP**
 - **Develop better security professionals by conducting study group sessions led by subject matter experts on fundamentals like the NISPOM, ISLs, OPSEC, CI, etc.**
 - **Assist those who do not have local ISP®s to be their “mentors”**
 - **Encourage “unsure” candidates that they can prepare for the exam**
 - **“Cooperate & Graduate”**



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

● Overview

- Students obtain materials and study in advance of the telecons
- Telecons with mentors & other candidates to answer questions, help pace the preparation, etc.
 - Frequency: Once a week
 - Time: About 1 hour long each
 - Telecons are held 2 times weekly; candidates can pick the most convenient time to attend
 - Telecons are recorded



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- **EPP Materials**
 - Electronic copies of key references
 - Workbook to help candidates' review of NISPOM and other materials (cost: \$50.00 for NCMS members, \$100.00 for non-members)
 - 1 year free update policy protects you if new NISPOM/EPP Workbook released shortly after you sign up
 - Recordings of past sessions
 - Other tools...



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- **EPP Mentors and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)**
 - All are current ISP®s
 - 3-person Mentor teams provide a variety of experiences and viewpoints
- **Frequency**
 - Sessions held twice a year
 - The first session begins in Jan and finishes before the NCMS National Training Seminar and summer vacations. This allows perfect timing for those taking the exam at the seminar.
 - A second session begins shortly after the June seminar and ends before end of year holidays
 - To sign up or get more information, contact the EPP subcommittee at et-epp@classmgt.com



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- **Lesson strategy**

- **Call #1 - get started, go over "Test Tips" article for information/techniques/tips, evaluate class size, etc.**
- **Call #2 - #18 - covers about 10% of the NISPOM in each session**
 - **Also covers electives (i.e. CI, OPSEC)**
- **Lesson #19 - last minute questions and wrap-up**
- **Brown Bag covers Annotated NISPOM**



ISP® Exam Preparation Program

- **Lesson Strategy (continued)**
 - **Five optional calls; One for each of the five electives**
 - **COMSEC/TEMPEST**
 - **Counterintelligence (CI)**
 - **Intellectual Property**
 - **Operations Security (OPSEC)**
 - **Special Access Programs (SAP)**



Company & NCMS Chapter Based Study Groups

- **Company Sponsored Study Groups & Exam Sessions**
- **NCMS Chapters are conducting study groups as well**



BEFORE YOU TEST (Sample Test Questions)

- **10 “Sample Test” Questions in NCMS “Survey”**
 - Provides examples of type of questions and their difficulty
 - “Survey” style means all are available at a single link, not a question-by-question format used for on-line exams
 - Available 24/7 once you have the link
 - Email request to Sharon Tannahill at sharon@mmco1.com



Some Mechanics: Signing Up for the EPP

- **Question: How do I sign up for the ISP® Exam Preparation Program (EPP)?**
- **Answer: Send an email to et-epp@classmgmt.com**

The Mentor Team will send you instructions.



Some Mechanics: The ISP® Application

- **Key points:**

- The on-line application form is available at <http://www.ncms-ISP.org/documents/application.pdf>
- Fill it out completely and sign
- Include resume and supervisor recommendation
- Be sure to include your payment
- Submit all materials at least 30 days prior to scheduled exam date



Some Mechanics: The ISP® Application

<i>Item</i>	<i>Fee (Effective 3/31/2014)</i>
Exam Fee for NCMS Member	\$275.00
Exam Fee for Non-NCMS Member	\$400.00
Retest Fee for NCMS Member	\$140.00
Retest Fee for Non-NCMS Member	\$200.00
Recertification Fee for NCMS Member	\$75.00
Recertification Fee for Non-NCMS Member	\$125.00



Some Mechanics: The ISP® Application

- **If you cannot take the test as originally planned:**
 - Within 1yr approval window; notify NCMS HQ of your new date
 - Outside 1yr approval window: you must resubmit the application and supporting documents but you will be credited with the amount you previously paid
- **Prometric charges a cancellation/change**
 - 30+ days from scheduled test date – No Charge
 - 5-29 days - \$50
 - Less than 5 days - \$75
 - This is Prometric standard procedure



Some Mechanics: The ISP® Application

- **The résumé**
 - Critical for reviewers who verify you meet the 5-year experience requirement
 - It is not restricted to one page!
 - “Functional” format may be best since it allows you to combine industrial security experience from multiple jobs in one place
 - Explain clearly the work you did, especially when the position was not in a purely industrial security role for a NISP contractor
- **The ISP® Certification Subcommittee will review your résumé and provide feedback**
 - Note: A résumé template can be found on the ISP® website as previously referenced. Also review the experience conversion chart.



Some Mechanics: The ISP® Application

- **The recommendation letter**
 - Can be very short. One paragraph is enough.
 - Verifies supervisory relationship
 - Attests that you meet the 5-year security experience requirement
 - Attests that you are a person of good character
 - Recommends you for certification as an Industrial Security Professional
- **Template on the ISP® website**
- **Contact us if you don't have a supervisor**



The EXAM!

- **The exam is administered at Prometric Test Centers all around the US**
- **Once your application has been approved, you will be able to select your preferred testing site**
- **You will not be allowed to bring reference material to the test center, however...**



The EXAM!

- **References available on screen during test include:**
 - DoD Manual 5205.02, Nov. 3, 2008
 - CNSS Glossary, Apr. 6, 2015
 - DSS Assessment & Authorization Process Manual (DAAPM), Mar. 31, 2017
 - JAFAN 6/0, May 29, 2008
 - JCAVS User Guide, Nov. 2008
 - Marking Classified National Security, Jan. 2014
 - National Security Decision Directive No. 298
 - Annotated NISPOM, May 18, 2016
 - Uniform Trade Secrets Act, Feb. 11, 1986
- **Document versions will correspond with current exam questions and may not be most currently released version**



Turning “Not Pass” to “Pass”

- **Passing score is 75**
- **What you can do to dramatically increase your odds of passing**
 - **Prepare in advance** – on your own, independently with the EPP Workbook, or in a group (local, company, EPP/nationally)
 - **Don't test on a “really bad day”** – bad news, disaster at work, sickness (not just nerves)
 - **Pay attention to test discipline** – don't use references for any reason until you are done, 1 minute per question, answer all questions the first time (a blank answer is a guaranteed “wrong”)



Some Mechanics: Retesting

- **Should you not pass the exam the first time**
 - Don't panic or despair; it happens.
 - You must wait six months to take the test again.
 - If you are still within your 1-year approval window and no changes in application or supporting documents, notify NCMS and submit the retest fee.
 - If you are outside the 1-year approval window, you must submit a new application to along with the retest fee.



Final Comments on ISP® Exam

- **Prometric test centers**
 - ❖ **Arrive early**
 - ❖ **Know the do's and don'ts before you arrive**
- **Exam isn't easy but you will pass if you...**
 - **Prepare in advance**
 - **Don't test on a "really bad day"**
 - **Pay attention to test discipline (110 answers in 120 minutes)**



Contact Information

- **NCMS ISP® Certification Information**

http://www.ncms-isp.org/ISP_Certification/index.asp

- **ISP® Certification Subcommittee**

isp_cert@classmgmt.com



Questions?

