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# Earning CPEs for FITSI Certifications

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Guidance on how to  
Maintain FITSI  
Certifications with  
Continuing  
Professional  
Educational Units

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## 1. Executive Overview

Maintenance of Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) certifications is an important way of demonstrating that certification holders are keeping their knowledge, skills and abilities current in the ever-changing Federal IT security workspace. All FITSI certifications are valid for three years and require that certified professionals earn, report and document a minimum number of CPEs during the certification's lifetime. Payment of an annual maintenance fee (AMF) is also required and is meant to cover the cost of the tracking and documentation process.

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## 2. What is a CPE?

Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits are units obtained through the completion of activities that demonstrate growth and development of skills related to one's profession. Typically one CPE is equivalent to one hour of activity in pursuit of additional industry knowledge and/or experience.

***It is important to understand that CPEs are earned outside of one's day-to-day employment activities.*** Activities that are directly related to a job do not qualify as CPEs. If a FITSI certification holder conducts the activity during his or her 9-to-5 job, then that activity cannot be used to earn CPEs.

While the activities that demonstrate CPE need to be outside the scope of the individual's day-to-day work, this does not mean the activity must occur outside of work hours.

For example, a FITSI certification holder's employer may send the employee to a security-related conference that is conducted Monday-Friday from 9:00am-5:00pm. In this situation, the certification holder can use this as an opportunity to earn CPEs. While the activity is done during normal working hours, because it is outside the scope of normal employment and contributes to the professional development of that FITSI certified person, this activity can be used to earn CPEs.

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### 3. Requirements

Each certification holder must earn a minimum of 60 CPEs during each three-year cycle for each FITSI certification. A minimum of 20 CPEs must be earned each year. These CPEs must be earned and reported within 30 days of the anniversary of the original date of certification.

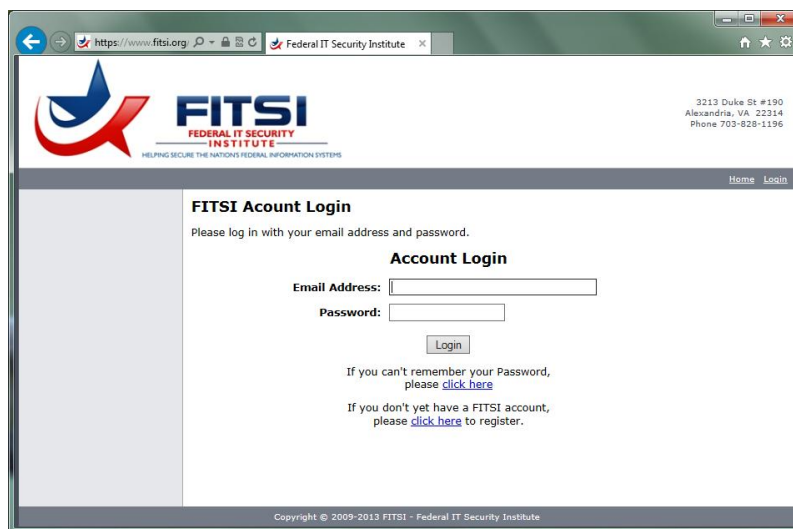
For example, if John Doe earned the FITSP-Manager credential on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, his certification will be valid until January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. He has until January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to earn and report 20 CPEs for year number 1, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013 year two, and January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 for year three.

## 4. Where to Log CPEs

CPEs are reported at the private FITSI member portal.

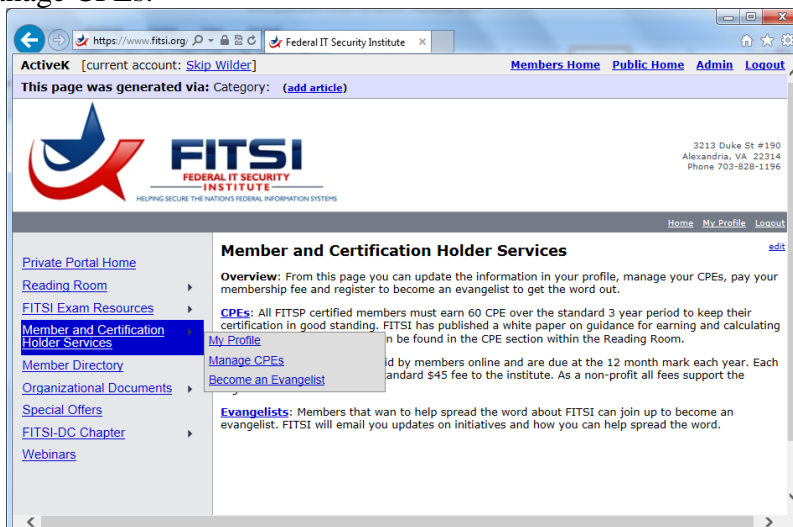
Each FITSI certification holder is provided with a username and password that is used to access the portal at <http://www.fitsi.org>. If a certification holder does not remember his or her password there is password recovery component from the FITSI member portal page. Additionally, if a certification holder does not have a username and password he or she should send an email to [contactus@fitsi.org](mailto:contactus@fitsi.org) to request access. Figure 1 is a screen shot of the portal login page:

Figure 1: Portal Login Page



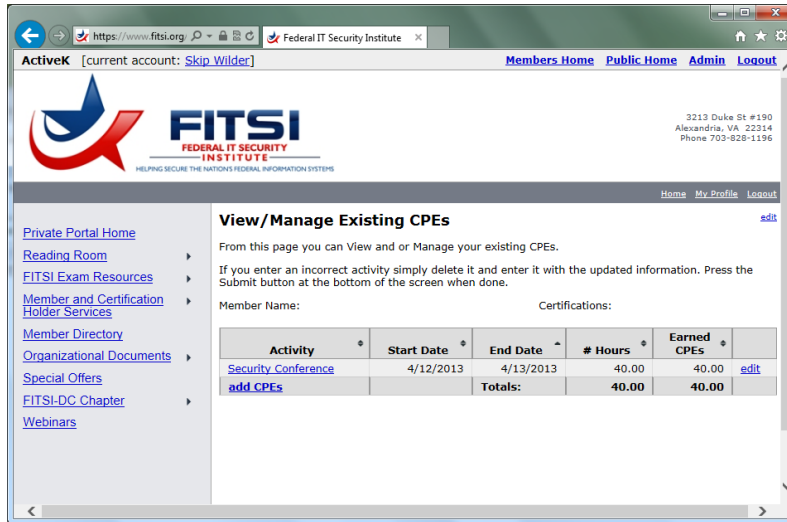
Under the “Member and Certification Holder Services” Section there is a link to “Manage CPEs.” Figure 2 illustrates this process.

Figure 2: Manage CPEs.



Using this interface, certification holders may perform CPE management actions. Figure 3 shows an overview of this interface. Reminder: **certification holders should plan on logging 20 CPEs per year through this interface to keep each FITSI certification current.**

Figure 3: CPE Management Page





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## 5. Qualifying Activities

Certification holders can pursue a wide range of activities to earn CPEs. All professional activities must be done outside of normal employment and must contribute to professional development in the IT security space.

One CPE can be earned for each hour of related activity.

Below is a list of activities that certification holders can use to qualify for CPEs:

- ▶ **Attend security conferences** - 1 CPE for each hour of IT security discussion covered in the conference
- ▶ **Attend security training classes** – 1 CPE for each hour of instruction. These classes can be instructor lead (ILT), online or computer based training modules (CBTs).
- ▶ **Publish security whitepapers** - 1 CPE for each hour writing a whitepaper not to exceed 5 CPE per published whitepaper
- ▶ **Publish security books** – 1 CPE for each hour writing a book not to exceed 30 CPEs per published book
- ▶ **Provide IT security training classes** – 3 hours of prep time for each hour of in-class time
- ▶ **Read IT security books** – 1 CPE for each hour of reading a book – not to exceed 5 CPEs per book
- ▶ **Provide NIST commentary on draft documents** – 1 CPE for each hour of working on submitting commentary – not to exceed 5 CPE per activity

Examples:

1. Example #1 – Attending a security conference. Conference time is broken down into the number of hours of the conference. For a 35-hour conference (5 day) the FITSI certification holder can report 35 CPEs for this activity.
2. Example #2 – Taking a college level course worth 4 credits – College level courses are based upon in-class time. If a semester class meets one day a week for 10 weeks and includes 1.5 hours of instruction, this would result in 15 CPEs ( $10 \times 1.5 = 15$ ).
3. Example #3 – Reading an IT security book – If a certification holder reads an IT security book he or she can report one CPE for each hour reading up to a maximum of 5 CPEs.

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## 6. Backup Documentation

FITSI certification holders should retain backup documentation proving the activity they reported at the FITSI member CPE site. It is important to retain a full set of documentation so that, should the certification holder's CPE be audited, he or she can substantiate the time and activities indicated. Below is a list of documents that should be retained for each type of activity:

### 1. Attend security conferences

- a. Receipt showing payment of conference and name of attendee
- b. Conference guide provided to attendee detailing speakers and topics discussed – should also include number of days and time spent in the conference sessions
- c. Conference completion certificate (if provided)

### 2. Attend security training classes

- a. Receipt showing payment for course and name of attendee (free classes need confirmation email or communication without receipt)
- b. Course name and description
- c. Course syllabus
- d. Document detailing number of hours spent in class
- e. Course completion certificate

### 3. Publish security whitepapers

- a. Whitepaper name
- b. Detailed log of time spent preparing the whitepaper
- c. A copy of the published whitepaper and reference for where it can be located (such as a website URL)

### 4. Publish security books

- a. Book name, author, publication date and ISBN number
- b. Detailed log of time spent writing and editing the book

### 5. Provide IT security training classes

- a. Course name and description
- b. Course syllabus
- c. Course timeline indicating time spent in class conducting class (CPEs are calculated based upon three times the total hours spent conducting class)

### 6. Read IT security books

- a. Book name, author, publication date and ISBN number
- b. Detailed log of time spent reading the book
- c. A summary of lessons-learned from the book related to the reader's FITSI certification area

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**7. Provide NIST commentary on draft IT security documents**

- a. List and title of draft document reviewed
- b. Copy of commentary provided to NIST via email
- c. Detailed log of time to complete analysis and write up

*These documents are not to be sent to FITSI but each certification holder should retain them for full accountability in the event of a CPE audit. Upon completion of the three-year cycle and recertification of qualifications by FITSI, the documentation for the previous three-year cycle need not be retained.*

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## **7. Documentation and Audits of CPEs**

The FITSI auditing team will conduct audits of reported CPEs as part of an oversight and validation program to ensure that reported CPEs are relevant to the industry and appropriately quantified. All certification holders must possess sufficient supporting documentation as discussed in section 6 to validate reported CPEs. Though all certification holders must retain this documentation, not all certified persons will be audited during any given certification cycle. Appropriate supporting documentation will enable the auditing team to quickly and efficiently complete their review.

When selected for an audit, the credential holder will be notified via email and asked to email or fax appropriate documentation for review. Upon successful completion of the CPE audit the FITSI certification holder will be notified of the findings. If additional documentation is necessary the auditor will solicit supporting documentation from the credential holder.

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## 8. Non-Compliance

Failure to report the requisite CPEs each year may result in revocation of a certification holder's certification(s). For this reason it is important that all FITSI certified persons submit at least 20 CPEs each year for each FITSI certification.

Additionally, if a certification holder is audited and unable to provide appropriate backup documentation for reported CPE activities this may also result in revocation of that certified person's certification(s).

When a certification holder is determined to be in a non-compliant state the certification holder is given 90 days to rectify the non-compliant state. Failure to rectify the non-compliant state after the 90 days will result in revocation of the certification. After the 90 days has passed FITSI will not re-instate the certification status even if the certified person is able, at that point, to achieve compliance. FITSI will make exceptions to this policy for documented hardship cases.

**FITSI will notify certification holders who enter a non-compliant state due to a failure to submit CPEs or non-payment of annual dues.**