Earning CPE Units for FITSI Certifications Handbook

Guidance for Continuing Professional Educational (CPE) Units Required to Maintain Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) Sponsored Certifications

Version 2.1

Published 07/30/25

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1. Overview

Maintaining a Federal IT Security Professional (FITSP) certification issued by the Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) demonstrates that Certification Holders keep their knowledge, skills, and abilities current in the ever-changing federal information technology (IT) security landscape. Each FITSP certification is valid for three years and requires holders to earn and report a minimum number of continuing professional education (CPE) units during the certification's lifetime. Certification Holders must also pay an annual maintenance fee (AMF), which covers the cost of tracking and documenting those CPE units.

2. Applicability

This handbook applies to all FITSP Certification Holders and provides pertinent information about the continuing professional education (CPE) requirements for maintaining their certifications. These requirements apply to each FITSP certification a Certification Holder possesses.

3. What is a CPE?

Continuing professional education (CPE) units are earned by completing activities that demonstrate professional growth and skill development. In general, one CPE unit equals one hour spent gaining additional industry knowledge or experience.

CPE units must be earned outside a holder's routine job duties. Activities that fall within normal work responsibilities do **not** qualify. If a FITSP Certification Holder performs an activity as part of their regular job, that activity cannot be claimed for CPE credit.

Although qualifying activities must be beyond day-to-day duties, they do **not** have to occur outside normal work hours. For example, attending a security-related conference during regular work hours still counts, because it lies outside the holder's routine responsibilities and contributes to professional development.

4. CPE Requirements

Certification Holders must earn and report **at least 60 CPE credits during every three year** cycle for each FITSP certification they hold. This is done through the FITSI private portal. There is no annual minimum; credits may be accumulated at any point within the cycle.

For example, if John Doe earns the **FITSP-Manager** credential on January 1, 2018, it remains valid until January 1, 2021. He must therefore must earn 60 CPE credits between January 1, 2018, and January 1, 2021.

5. Where to Log CPEs

CPE credits are reported in the **My Certifications and CPEs** section of the FITSI private portal.

Every FITSP Certification Holder receives portal credentials in the **Certification Welcome Packet** sent after the credential is awarded. The credentials are delivered to the e-mail address provided during exam registration. Certification Holders who do not receive this e-mail should contact FITSI at **contactus@fitsi.org** with **"PORTAL LOGIN"** in the subject line and include:

- Full name
- Mailing address used during registration
- FITSI ID and certification numbers (printed on the FITSI ID card)
- Preferred e-mail address for FITSI correspondence

With these credentials, holders can sign in through the **Account Login** section at https://www.fitsi.org. The login screen appears as follows:
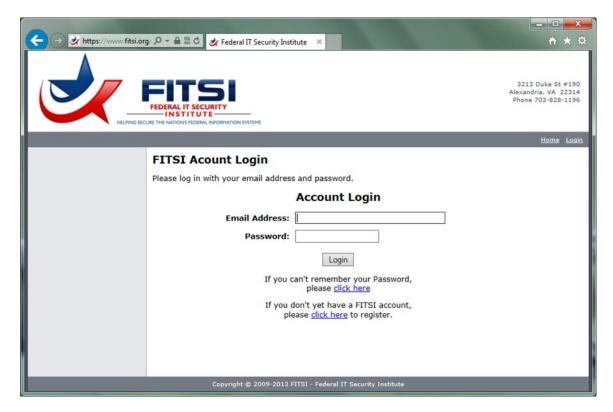

Figure 1: The FITSI Private Portal Login Screen

The **My Certifications & CPEs** function provides certification holders with an overview of their current FITSP certifications, including certification cycles, CPE credit requirements, and earned credits to date. Each FITSP certification requires the completion and reporting of 60 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits over a three-year cycle. Figure 2 below, illustrates this function.
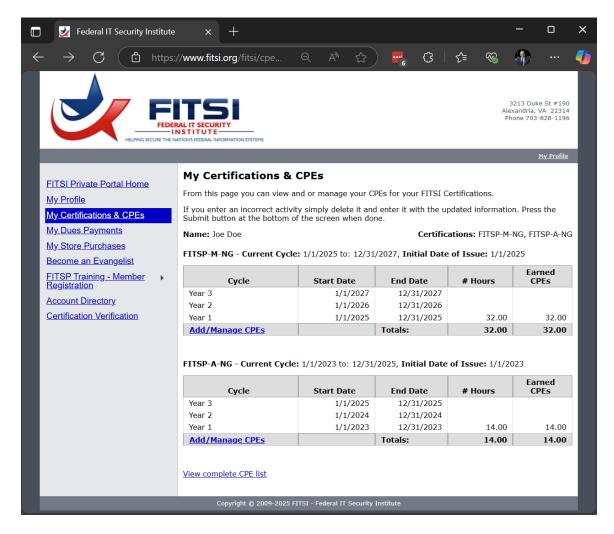

Figure 2: My Certifications & CPEs Function

The ***Add/Manage CPEs*** function allows certification holders to view, update, or add Continuing Professional Education (CPE) entries for a specific FITSP certification. This section displays all recorded CPE activities within the current three-year certification cycle, including the activity name, start and end dates, total hours submitted, and CPE credits earned. Figure 3 below shows an overview of this function.
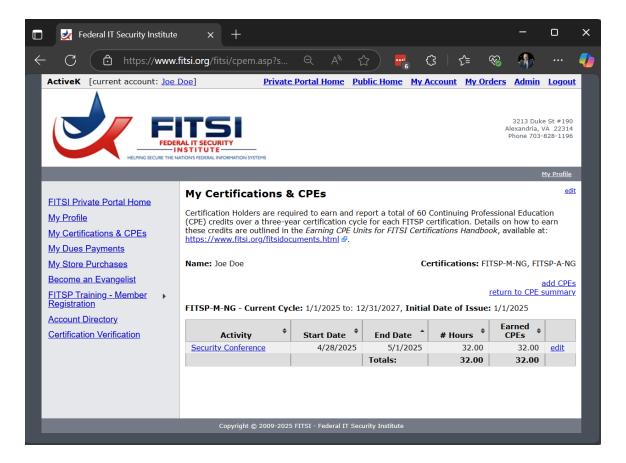

Figure 3: Add//Manage CPEs Function for a given Certification

The ***Add CPEs*** function is used to submit Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits for eligible professional development activities related to your FITSP

certification(s). You must enter each activity as a separate submission using the required fields. These include selecting the associated certification, identifying the activity type, providing a brief description, indicating the total number of hours earned, and specifying the activity's start and end dates. Additional comments may be added if needed. Before submitting, ensure all details are accurate and complete. FITSI may conduct audits, so retain all supporting documentation (e.g., agendas, certificates, proof of participation) for your records. Once the form is completed, click "Submit/Save Data" to add the CPE entry. Use "Return to CPE List" to go back without submitting. Figure 4 shows an overview of this function.
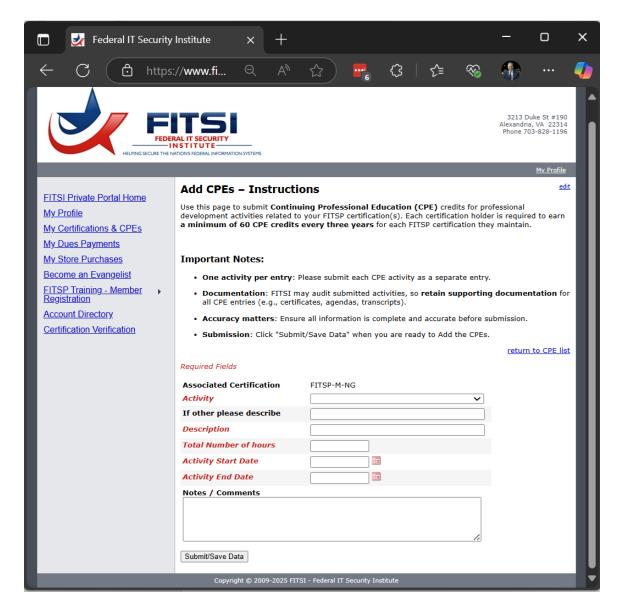

Figure 4: Add CPEs Function

The *Complete CPE List* function provides a comprehensive record of all Continuing Professional Education (CPE) entries submitted by the certification holder across all

FITSP certifications they maintain. It allows users to easily track and review their full CPE history over time. Figure 3 shows an overview of the Complete CPE List page.
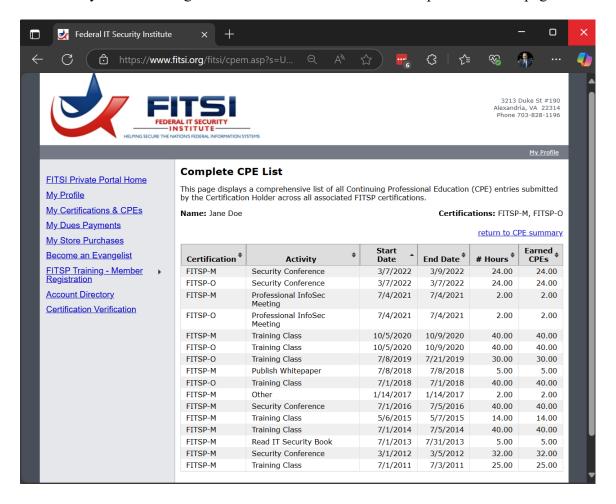

Figure 5: Complete CPE List Function

6. Qualifying Activities

Certification Holders may earn CPE credit through a variety of professional-development activities, provided the activities occur **outside routine job responsibilities** and advance their IT-security knowledge. One CPE unit is awarded for each hour spent on a qualifying activity.

Eligible activities
- Attend security conferences - 1 CPE per hour of security-related sessions attended.
- Attend security training classes -1 CPE per hour of instruction. Classes may be instructor-led, online, or computer-based.
- Publish security white papers - 1 CPE per hour spent writing, up to 5 CPEs per published paper.
- Publish security books - 1 CP- E per hour spent writing, up to 30 CPEs per published book.
- Teach IT-security training classes - 3 CPEs per hour of classroom instruction.
- Read IT-security books 1 CPE per hour of reading, up to 5 CPEs per book.
- Provide NIST commentary on draft documents - 1 CPE per hour preparing comments, up to 5 CPEs per submission.

Examples:
1. Conference attendance - A five-day (35-hour) security conference yields 35 CPEs.

2. College-level course - A class that meets once a week for 10 weeks, 1.5 hours per session, earns 15 CPEs ($10 \times 1.5 = 15$).

3. Reading a book - Five hours of reading an IT-security book earns the maximum 5 CPEs for that title.

7. CPE Documentation

FITSP Certification Holders must keep evidence demonstrating the completion of every activity claimed for CPE credit. The Audit Committee may request this documentation if a holder is selected for audit. Recommended records include:

1. Security conferences
– Receipt showing conference payment and attendee name
– Conference program/guide listing sessions attended and their durations
– Certificate of completion (if provided)

2. Security training classes
– Receipt (or confirmation e-mail for free courses) with attendee name
– Course title and description
– Course syllabus
– Record of hours spent in class
– Certificate of completion

3. Published security white papers
– Paper title
– Detailed log of time spent preparing the paper
– Copy of the published paper and reference (e.g., URL)

4. Published security books
– Book title, author, publication date, and ISBN
– Detailed log of time spent writing and editing

5. Teaching IT-security training classes
– Course title and description
– Course syllabus
– Class schedule showing hours taught (CPEs are calculated as three times the teaching hours)

6. Reading IT-security books
– Book title, author, publication date, and ISBN
– Log of time spent reading
– Summary of lessons learned relevant to the holder's FITSP certification area

7. NIST commentary on draft IT-security documents
– Titles of draft documents reviewed
– Copy of commentary submitted to NIST
– Log of time spent analysing the draft and preparing comments

Certification Holders should retain these records for the full three-year certification cycle in case of audit. After the cycle is complete and the certification is renewed, documentation from the previous cycle may be discarded.

8. Documentation and Audits of CPE Units

FITSI audits reported CPE credits as part of its oversight and validation program, ensuring that the credits are industry-relevant and properly quantified. Certification Holders must keep the supporting documentation described in Section 6 of this handbook to substantiate the credits they report. Although every Certification Holder must retain this documentation, not all will be audited in a given certification cycle. Complete records enable FITSI to conduct reviews quickly and efficiently.

Certification Holders selected for audit will be notified by e-mail and asked to submit the required documentation. After the audit is successfully completed, the holder will receive the findings. If additional information is needed, FITSI will request it.

9. Non-Compliance

A Certification Holder may be considered **non-compliant** if they fail to report the requisite CPE credits (within the 3 year cycle) or fail to pay the annual maintenance fee (AMF).

If, during an audit, a Certification Holder cannot provide adequate documentation for reported CPE activities, the related certification(s) may be suspended.

Certification Holders found to be non-compliant have **90 calendar days** to correct the deficiency. Failure to do so within that period will result in suspension of the affected certification. After another 90 days of suspension, FITSI will withdraw (revoke) the certification.

FITSI will notify Certification Holders deemed non-compliant because of unreported CPE credits or non-payment of the AMF.