Earning CPE Units for FITSI Certifications

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

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1. Overview

Maintenance of Federal IT Security Professional (FITSP) certifications issued by the Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) is an important way of demonstrating that certification holders are keeping their knowledge, skills, and abilities current in the ever-changing federal Information Technology (IT) security workspace. All FITSP certifications are valid for three years and require that certified professionals earn, document, and report a minimum number of continuing professional education (CPE) units during the certification's lifetime. Payment of an annual maintenance fee (AMF) is also required and covers the cost of the tracking and documentation process.

2. Applicability

This handbook applies to all FITSP Certification Holders and provides pertinent information regarding the CPE requirement for the maintenance of your FITSP certification.

3. What is a CPE?

CPE units are obtained through the completion of activities that demonstrate growth and development of skills related to one's profession. Typically, one CPE unit is equivalent to one hour of activity in pursuit of additional industry knowledge and experience.

It is important to understand that CPE units are earned outside of one's day-to-day employment activities. Activities that are directly related to a job do not qualify as CPE units. If a FITSP Certification Holder conducts the activity within the scope of normal job responsibilities, that activity cannot be used as CPE credit.

While the activities that qualify for CPE credit must be outside the scope of an individual's day-to-day work-related responsibilities, this does not mean the activity must occur outside of normal work hours to qualify as a CPE unit. For example, a FITSP Certification Holder may attend a security-related conference that is conducted during the certification holder's normal work hours. In this situation, the certification holder may use this as an opportunity to earn CPE credit. While the activity occurs during normal working hours, because it is outside the scope of normal work-related responsibilities and contributes to the professional development of the FITSP Certification Holder, this activity can be used to earn CPE credit.

4. CPE Requirements

Each certification holder must earn a minimum of 60 CPE credits during each three-year cycle for each FITSP certification held. A minimum of 20 CPE units must be earned each year. These CPE units must be reported within 30 calendar days of the anniversary of the original date of certification.

For example, if John Doe earned the FITSP-Manager credential on January 1, 2011, his certification is valid until January 1, 2014. He has until January 30, 2012 to earn and report 20 CPE units for year one, January 30, 2013 for year two, and January 30, 2011 for year three.

5. Where to Log CPEs

CPE units are reported at the private portal using the *Manage CPEs* interface in the *Member and Certification Holders Services* section.

Each FITSP Certification Holder has access to the FITSI private portal. Unique login information is provided around the time the Certification Packet welcome packet is received. The login information will be sent to the email address that was entered during exam registration. If you fail to receive this email, please contact FITSI at contactus@fitsi.org with the words PORTAL LOGIN in the subject area. You will need to provide the following information:
- Full Name
- Mailing address used for registration
- FITSI ID and Certification numbers (found on your FITSI ID card)
- Preferred email address for FITSI use

Using the private portal login information, you can access the FITSI private portal via the *Account Login* section of http://www.fitsi.org. The login screen will look like this:
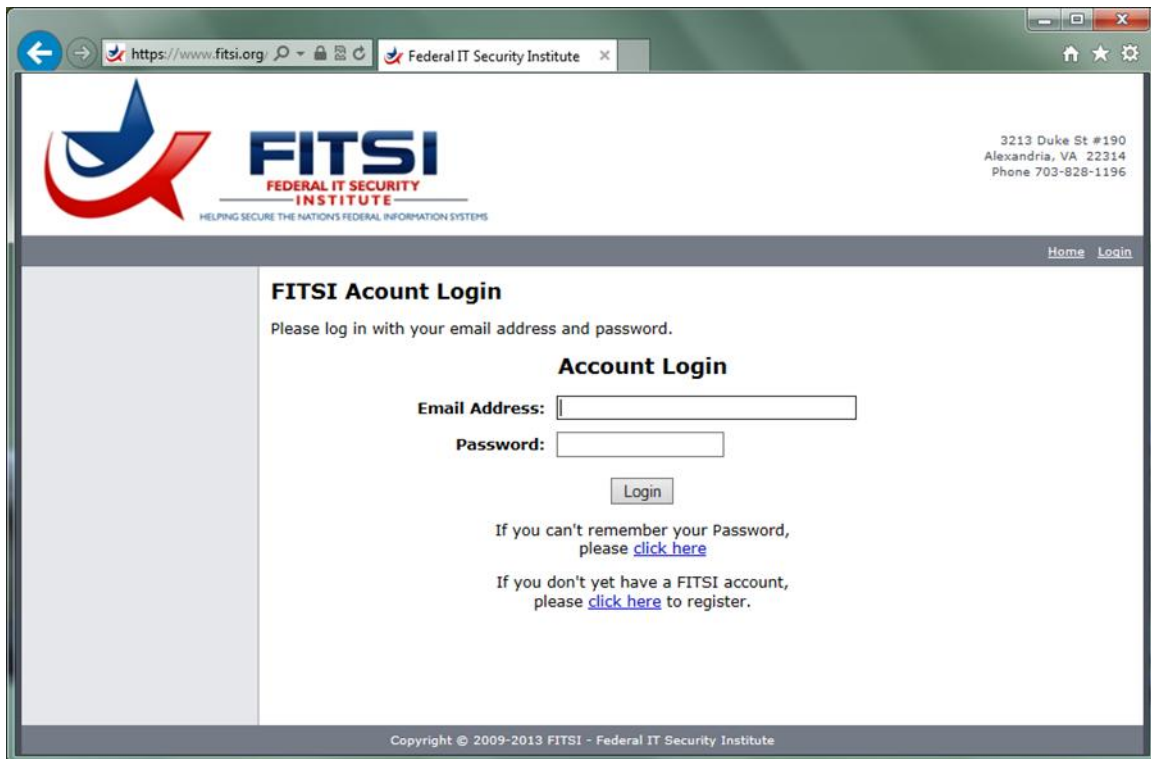

Figure 1: The FITSI Portal Login Screen

The *Member and Certification Holder Services* section allows the certification holders to Manage CPEs. Figure 2 illustrates this process.
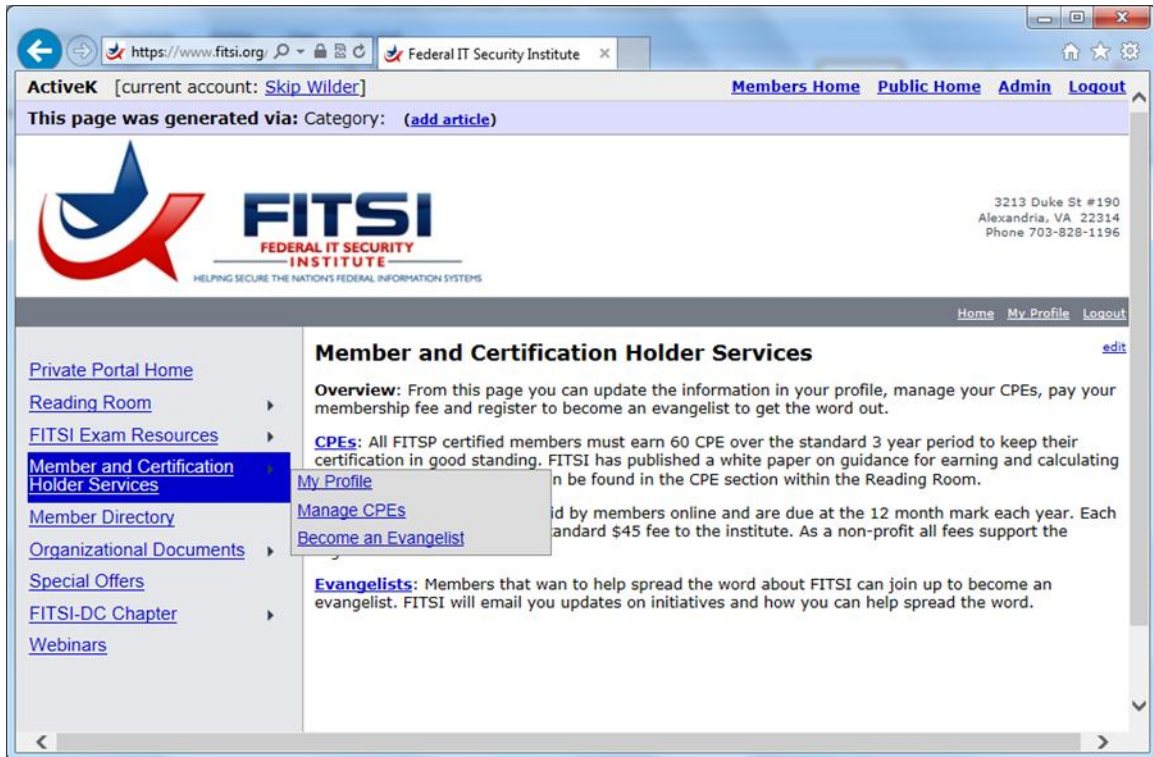
Figure 2: Reporting CPE Units Using the FITSI Portal

Using the *Manage CPEs* interface, certification holders perform CPE management actions. Figure 3 shows an overview of this interface. Reminder: *FITSP Certification Holders should plan on reporting 20 CPE units per year through this interface to keep each FITSP certification held current.*

Figure 3: CPE Management Page

5. Qualifying Activities

Certification holders may pursue a wide range of activities to earn CPE credit. All professional activities must be completed outside of normal job-related responsibilities and must contribute to professional development in IT security. One CPE unit can be earned for each hour of related activity.

Activities that certification holders can use to qualify for CPE units are listed below.

- Attend security conferences – One CPE unit for each hour of IT security discussion covered in the conference
- Attend security training classes – One CPE unit for each hour of instruction. These classes can be instructor lead, online, or computer based training modules.
- Publish security whitepapers – One CPE unit for each hour spent writing a whitepaper, not to exceed five CPE units per published whitepaper
- Publish security books – One CPE unit for each hour spent writing a book, not to exceed 30 CPE units per published book
- Teach IT security training classes – Three CPE units for each hour of in-class time
- Read IT security books – One CPE unit for each hour of reading a book, not to exceed five CPE units per book
- Provide National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) commentary on draft documents – One CPE unit for each hour spent working on submitting commentary, not to exceed five CPE units 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 (five days) the FITSP Certification Holder can report 35 CPE units for this activity.
2. Example #2 – Taking a college level course (college-level courses are based on in-class time): a class meets one day a week for 10 weeks and includes 1.5 hours of instruction, would result in 15 CPE units (10 X 1.5 = 15).
3. Example #3 – Reading an IT security book: a certification holder reading an IT security book can report one CPE unit for each hour of reading, up to five CPE units.

6. CPE Documentation

FITSP Certification Holders must retain documentation of completion of the activity being reported for CPE credit. This documentation may be requested by the Audit Committee if the certification holder is selected for audit. Documents that should be retained for each type of activity are:

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 the time the certification holder spent in 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 in lieu of receipt)
   b. Course name and description
   c. Course syllabus
   d. Document detailing number of hours the certification holder 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 International Standard Book Number (ISBN) number
   b. Detailed log of time spent writing and editing the book
5. Teach IT security training classes
   a. Course name and description
   b. Course syllabus
   c. Course timeline indicating time spent in class conducting class (CPE units are calculated as three times the total hours spent teaching 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 FITSP certification area
7. Provide NIST commentary on draft IT security documents
   a. List titles of draft document reviewed
   b. Copy of commentary provided to NIST
   c. Detailed log of time to complete analysis and draft commentary

The certification holder should retain this documentation for full accountability in the event of a CPE audit. Upon completion of the three-year cycle and recertification of

qualifications by FITSI, retention of the documentation for the previous three-year cycle is not required.

7. Documentation and Audits of CPE Units

The FITSI Audit Committee conducts audits of reported CPE units as part of an oversight and validation program to ensure that reported CPE units are relevant to the industry and are appropriately quantified. All certification holders must maintain sufficient supporting documentation as discussed in Section 6 of this handbook to validate reported CPE units. Though all certification holders must retain this documentation, not all certification holders will be audited during any given certification cycle. Appropriate supporting documentation enables the Audit Committee to quickly and efficiently complete their review.

Certification holders are notified by email and asked to email appropriate documentation for review when selected for an audit. Upon successful completion of the audit, the FITSP Certification Holder is notified of the findings. If additional documentation is necessary, the auditor will notify the certification holder.

8. Non-Compliance

A certification holder will be declared to be in a non-compliant state for failure to report the requisite CPE units each year or failure to pay the necessary AMF. For this reason, it is important that all FITSP Certification Holders report at least 20 CPE units each year for each FITSP certification held.

Additionally, in the event a certification holder is audited and is unable to provide appropriate documentation for reported CPE activities, the certification holder's related certification(s) may be revoked.

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

FITSI will notify certification holders who are determined to be in a non-compliant state due to a failure to report CPE units or non-payment of the AMF.