FITSI Certification Holder Handbook

Requirements for Maintenance and Recertification of Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) Sponsored Certifications

Version 2.4

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1. Overview

Congratulations on earning the Federal IT Security Professional (FITSP) Certification! We welcome all Certification Holders to the FITSP Certification Program. The Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) was founded in 2009 to help secure the nation's federal information systems by certifying that the federal workforce (civilian personnel, military, and contractors) understands and can apply appropriate federal Information Technology (IT) security standards. FITSI has many Certification Holders and members worldwide, and we are pleased you are a part of our organization.

The Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI) is a 501(c)(6) non-profit certification body accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) under ISO 17024:2012. FITSI manages and administers the FITSP Certification Program. FITSP stands for the Federal IT Security Professional and is broken into four individual IT security certification programs targeted at the federal workforce based on role. The four roles are Auditor, Designer, Manager, and Operator.

2. Applicability

This Handbook applies to all FITSP Certification Holders and provides pertinent information regarding the ongoing maintenance and recertification requirements of a FITSP certification.

FITSI has issued two different types of certifications since its inception in 2009. The original FITSP Certifications, identified by FITSP-Auditor, FITSP-Designer, FITSP-Manager, and FITSP-Operator, were issued up until 2020. In 2020, FITSP started issuing the Next Generation FITSP Certification certificates with an -NG extension.

Unless otherwise specified, the policies, procedures, and processes identified in this *FITSI Certification Holder Handbook* and any other FITSI Handbooks apply to both types of certification certificates discussed previously. Both types of certification certificates are collectively referred to as the "FITSP Certification Program."

The most up-to-date *FITSI Certification Holder Handbook* can be found at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

3. FITSP Certification Process

A. Overview

FITSI employs several processes to manage the FITSP Certification Program, including:

- An examination process
- An application process
- An assessment process
- A certification decision process
- A recertification process

The diagram below illustrates how these processes interconnect. Depending on their current stage in the process, an individual may be classified as a Certification Candidate, Certification Applicant, or Certification Holder.
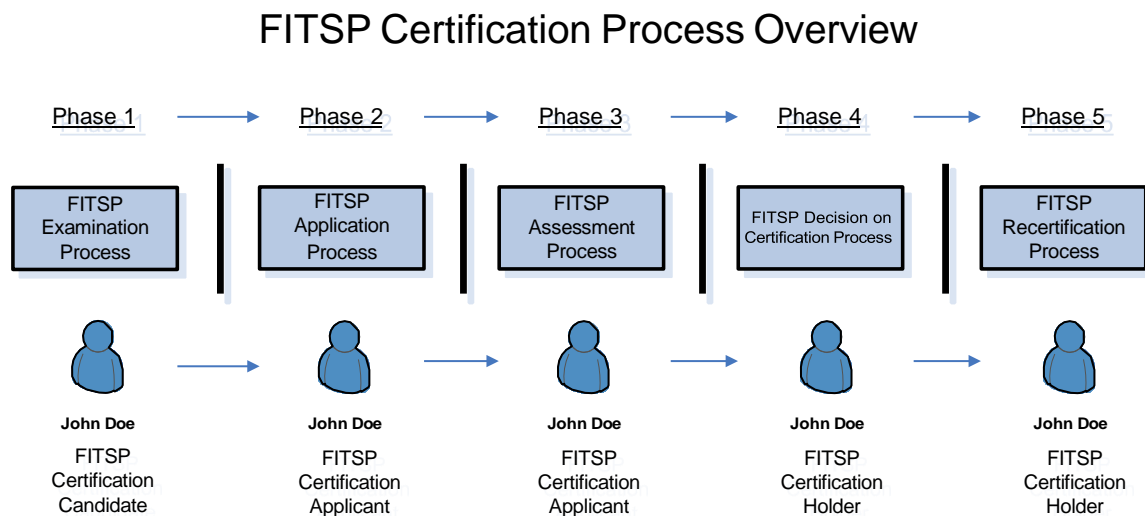
FITSP Certification Process Overview

Figure 1: FITSP Certification Process Overview

As part of earning a Federal IT Security Professional (FITSP) certification, Certification Candidates must successfully pass a certification exam (Phase 1) and submit a formal *FITSI Certification Application* along with supporting documentation (Phase 2). Once the FITSP Certification Application Package is submitted, FITSI conducts an assessment of all the items in the application (Phase 3) and makes a formal certification decision (Phase 4). During this phase, a determination is made regarding whether the FITSP certification will be granted. Certification Applicants who become Certification Holders in Phase 4 then move to Phase 5, where they must meet specific criteria to be recertified. This process is visually represented in Figure 1 above.

B. Certification Candidate vs. Certification Applicant vs. Certification Holder

This document uses three different terms to define individuals based on their stage in the FITSP Certification Program:

- Certification Candidate
- Certification Applicant
- Certification Holder

A Certification Candidate is an individual who is planning to take, has taken, or has passed a given FITSP examination but has not yet applied for or been granted a FITSP Certification.

A Certification Applicant is an individual who has taken and passed a FITSP examination and has either submitted their *FITSI Certification Application Package* or is in the process of having it assessed by FITSI. They have not been granted a FITSP Certification.

A Certification Holder is an individual who has progressed through all the steps as a Certification Candidate and Certification Applicant and has received formal notice that they have been granted the FITSP certification.

Below is a visual representation of how these terms are used:

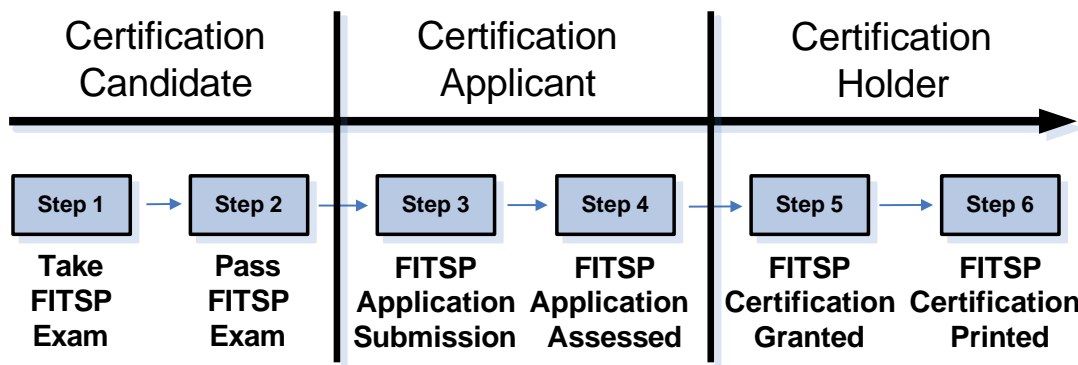| Certification Candidate		Certification Applicant		Certification Holder	
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Take FITSP Exam	Pass FITSP Exam	FITSP Application Submission	FITSP Application Assessed	FITSP Certification Granted	FITSP Certification Printed

Figure 2: Relationship between a Certification Candidate, a Certification Applicant, and a Certification Holder

4. Certification Maintenance Requirements

Maintaining a FITSP (Federal IT Security Professional) certification requires Certification Holders to engage in activities that uphold the necessary security standards for federal information systems. To retain their FITSP certification, Certification Holders must meet the following requirements:

- CPE Requirements - Certification Holders are required to earn a total of 60 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits over a three-year certification cycle, with at least 20 CPE credits earned annually. This ensures continuous learning and helps professionals stay current with the evolving challenges and developments in IT security.
- Annual Maintenance Fee (AMF) - Certification Holders must pay an annual maintenance fee, which supports the administration of the certification program and contributes to the development of educational materials and resources. Details about the fee are listed on the FITSI Fee Schedule, available at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsifees.html.
- Adherence to the FITSI Code of Ethics - All actions and professional behavior of Certification Holders should align with the FITSI Code of Ethics. Violations may result in the suspension or withdrawal (revocation) of the certification. The FITSI Code of Ethics can be accessed in the *FITSI Code of Ethics Handbook* at: https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

Each FITSP certification is valid for three years but may be suspended or withdrawn (revoked) by FITSI due to ethical violations or actions that compromise the professional standards expected of FITSP Certification Holders.

5. Verifying the Status of a FITSP Certification Holder

The process for verifying certification status is outlined in the *FITSI Certification Verification Handbook*, which can be found at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

Certification Holders can use the online tool listed in the *FITSI Certification Verification Handbook* to check their status or even allow third parties to verify their certification status.

Certification Holders control access to this tool in that they must provide their last name and their FITSI certification number to the person verifying the certification.

6. FITSI Code of Ethics

All FITSP Certification Holders must abide by the FITSI Code of Ethics, which is found in the *FITSI Code of Ethics Handbook* at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html. Violations of any tenet of the FITSI Code of Ethics may be grounds for the suspension or withdrawal (revocation) of a Certification Holder's FITSP certification(s) and/or FITSI membership (where applicable).

If a FITSP Certification Holder is believed to have violated the FITSI Code of Ethics, a complaint may be submitted to FITSI for review and possible disciplinary actions. Complaints are discussed later in this Handbook in Section 14. The Complaint Process.

7. Recertification Requirements

Due to the ever-evolving nature of federal standards, FITSP Certification Holders are required to keep their knowledge up to date. FITSP certifications are valid for three years, after which recertification is necessary. To remain certified, Certification Holders have two options for meeting recertification requirements:

- **Earn 60 CPE Credits** - Certification Holders can complete 60 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits through the FITSI private portal over the three-year certification period. Details on how to earn these credits are outlined in the *Earning CPE Units for FITSI Certifications Handbook*.
- **Retesting** - As an alternative to earning CPE credits, Certification Holders have the option to retest at the end of the three-year period. This is not mandatory but provides an alternative method to meet the recertification requirements.

In addition to these options, all Certification Holders must:

- **Abide by the FITSI Code of Ethics** - Maintaining ethical standards is crucial and any violations may lead to certification suspension or withdrawal (revocation).
- **Pay an Annual Maintenance Fee (AMF)** - This fee, which is detailed on the FITSI Fee Schedule at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsifees.html, supports the ongoing administration of the certification program.

Please note, starting from 06/01/24, retesting is not required for certification renewal of the -NG certifications. However, the option to retest remains available as an alternative to earning CPE credits. Regardless of the method chosen for recertification, Annual Maintenance Fees must still be paid throughout the three-year period.

8. Use of the FITSP Certification Logo and Mark

FITSI has published a policy on the usage requirements of FITSI Logos and Marks by FITSP Certification Holders and other FITSI stakeholders. This policy is documented in the *FITSI Logo and Mark Usage Requirements Handbook*.

This Handbook is published and accessible at the following FITSI location: https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

9. Request for Certification Certificate and ID Card Duplicates

A Certification Holder may request additional copies of a certification certificate or FITSI ID card. The FITSI Fee Schedule provides the most current fees for certification certificates and ID card duplicates. This schedule can be found at http://www.fitsi.org/fitsifees.html.

The procedure for requesting and obtaining duplicates is the following:
1. The Certification Holder should send an email to FITSI at contactus@fitsi.org, specifying the item for which they require a duplicate.
2. The Certification Holder should visit the following link and make payment for the item: http://www.fitsi.org/fitsifees.html.
3. Once the payment is complete, FITSI will generate the duplicate.
4. Requests for duplicates will be fulfilled within 30 calendar days of receipt.

10. Certification Suspension and Certification Withdrawal

FITSP Certification Holders must keep their certifications in good standing throughout the entire three-year cycle. The FITSP certification(s) can be suspended or withdrawn (revoked) due to non-compliance with the certification maintenance requirements or violations of the FITSI Code of Ethics.

FITSI uses the following definitions for suspension and withdrawal:

- **<u>Suspension:</u>** a temporary stop, delay, interruption, or cessation of a FITSP Certification Holder's certification issued by FITSI.

- **<u>Withdrawal:</u>** cancellation or revocation of a FITSP Certification Holder's certification issued by FITSI.

A certification may be put into a suspended state for the following reasons:
- Failure to stay current with AMF payments.
- Having an active complaint for violation of the FITSI Code of Ethics.

The suspension period can last for up to 90 days. During this time, the Certification Holder must refrain from promoting their certification. To lift the suspension, the Certification Holder must resolve the issue causing the suspension.

If the issue is not resolved within 90 days, the certification will be withdrawn (revoked).

Reasons for withdrawal (revocation) of the certification include:
- Continued failure to bring outstanding AMFs current after 90 days.
- Substantiated violation of the FITSI Code of Ethics as determined through the FITSI complaint process.

If a certification is withdrawn (revoked), the Certification Holder must discontinue all claims and references to the certification and discontinue the use of the FITSI Certification Logo.

Refer to Section 8: Use of the FITSP Certification Logo and Mark to learn how to access the *FITSI Logo and Mark Usage Requirements Handbook* for more details on how FITSI addresses certification logo and mark issues during a FITSP Certification suspension or withdrawal.

11. Certification Reinstatement

A withdrawn (revoked) certification can be reinstated up to 18 months from the withdrawal date by submitting a *FITSI Certification Reinstatement Application Form*. Additional fees and penalties apply. This form can be found at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

For example, an individual who has voluntarily allowed a certification to lapse (and, as a result, FITSI has withdrawn the certification) is not certified and may not use any FITSP certification designation (including the FITSP Certification Logo and/or Mark). The certified status may be reinstated with the following actions if the certification lapse is within 18 months of the date the certification was withdrawn:

- The Certification Holder can submit the *FITSI Certification Reinstatement Application* and pay any outstanding AMF fees.

Important Note: A Certification Holder who has had their certification withdrawn for a violation of the FITSI Code of Ethics cannot have their FITSI certification reinstated. FITSI permanently maintains records of those members and Certification Holders who have had a certification withdrawn (revoked) for violations of the FITSI Code of Ethics to ensure these individuals are barred from obtaining future FITSP certifications.

12. Resignation of Certification

A Certification Holder may resign their FITSP certification(s) by sending a notification email to contactus@fitsi.org, declaring in the email that they are resigning their certification(s) as of a specific date. The email declaring resignation must originate from the email address that FITSI has on file for the Certification Holder. Resignation does not relieve a Certification Holder of unpaid dues or previously incurred charges.

FITSI will respond to the email, notifying the Certification Holder that their resignation of certification as of a specific date has been accepted. FITSI will also acknowledge that the Certification Holder has been (or will be) removed from the certification records associated with that individual as of the specific date.

The Certification Holder must discontinue using the FITSP Certification Logo or FITSP Certification Text Mark as of the specific date once they are notified that FITSI has accepted their notification of certification resignation. The FITSP Certification Logo and FITSP Certification Text Mark must be removed from any stationery, websites, resumes, business cards, and other promotional materials associated with the resigning Certification Holder.

Any FITSP Certification Holder resigning their certification(s) may be required to return the FITSI ID card(s), FITSP challenge coin(s), and FITSP certification certificate(s).

13. The Appeals Process

Any decision rendered by a FITSI committee, FITSI Personnel (consultant, employee or volunteer) that impacts a FITSI member, Certification Candidate, Certification Applicant or Certification Holder may be appealed through the FITSI Appeals Committee. All appeals must be made within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the decision being appealed.

Appealable decisions include:
- Certification Denial
- Certification Revocation
- Refund Refusal
- Other decisions or issues

An appeal must be filed by submitting the *Appeals Form* in the *FITSI Appeals and Complaint Application* found at http://www.fitsi.org/documents.html. The completed form should be emailed to FITSI at contactus@fitsi.org.

Once an *Appeals Form* is received, FITSI will carry out the following steps:

1. Initial Appeal Acknowledgement. FITSI will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 30 calendar days of receipt. The email acknowledgment will include:
   - Explanation of the appeals process for the issue at hand
   - The point of contact for the appeal process
   - A timeline for response and decision by the Appeals Committee
2. Appeals Review. FITSI will commit to have a decision by the Appeals Committee within 60 days of submission unless additional information is required. In the event additional information is required, the Appeals Committee will render a decision within 60 calendar days of receipt of the required information. The decision will be provided via email to the appellant.
3. Appeals Decision/Response. The Appeals Committee's response will be either appeal accepted or appeal denied. All responses will include a detailed explanation of the decision.
4. Appeals Escalation. All decisions made by the Appeals Committee are considered final.

The appeal submission and subsequent investigation and decision shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.

14. The Complaint Process

The FITSI Appeals Committee oversees both Appeals and Complaints. Complaints can be lodged against FITSI for the following areas:

- Complaints regarding examination items
- Complaints regarding the examination process
- Complaints regarding specific exam circumstances
- Complaint against any FITSI committee, FITSI Personnel (consultant, employee, or volunteer), FITSI member, Certification Candidate, Certification Applicant, or Certification Holder whom the complainant feels is in violation of any FITSI policy
- Other issues

A complaint can be filed by submitting the *Complaint Form* in the *FITSI Appeals and Complaint Application Form*, found at https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html. The completed form should be emailed to FITSI at contactus@fitsi.org.

The Appeals Committee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 30 calendar days of receipt. The email acknowledgment will include the following:

- Explanation of the complaint process for the issue at hand
- The Appeals Committee member's point of contact
- A timeline for response and decision by the Appeals Committee

All complaints must be submitted with supporting information. The FITSI Appeals Committee will review the nature of the complaint and render a decision on the complaint within 60 calendar days of receipt. FITSI will provide the complainant with progress reports during the 60 calendar days and an outcome. Each complainant will receive the Appeals Committee's decision or recommendation.

The response from the Appeals Committee will be one of the following:
- Complaint denied
- Complaint accepted
- Request for more information

Responses may include a detailed explanation of the decision. All decisions made by the Appeals Committee are considered final.

In the event a complaint against a certified person is substantiated by the Appeals Committee, the Certification Director will send a memo notifying the subject of the complaint about the complaint within 30 days of the Appeals Committee's decision.

Any information provided to FITSI will be treated confidentially, and the complainant's identity will not be revealed to the accused without the prior permission of the complainant.

15. Using the FITSI Private Portal

A. Account Details
FITSP Certification Holders have access to the FITSI private portal. Unique login information for the portal is established when the Certification Holder signs up to take the FITSP Certification exam.

FITSI members are also provisioned an account for access when they sign up for membership.

FITSI uses an email address as the username and a unique password that must be at least six characters long with a minimum of one alphabetic character, one uppercase character, and one numeric character. Certification Holders can use special characters such as @ ! $ % #, but these are not a requirement.

B. Login
Once the Certification Holder receives their private portal login information, they can access the FITSI private portal via the Login section of http://www.fitsi.org. The login screen looks like this:

Figure 3: The FITSI Private Portal Login Screen

C. Login Lockout

If a Certification Holder mistypes their password too many times, their account will be locked out. The Private Portal will lock out accounts for 30 minutes, and after a 30-minute wait period, the account will be reactivated automatically.

D. Password Reset

If a Certification Holder forgets their password, they can use the Password Reset feature. This feature will send an email to the Certification Holder with a temporary password that must be used within 30 minutes. Also, a link is included in the email to make returning to the login screen easier.

Once the Certification Holder logs in with their temporary password, they will be presented with an Update Personal Info page where they can change their password to one that only they know. Certification Holders can also change additional personal information such as an address, phone number, etc.

E. Services

The *Member and Certification Holder Services* section allows Certification Holders to perform several useful self-service functions. These functions include, but are not limited to:

- Use the "My Profile" application to update profile information.
- Record CPE units (For all FITSP certifications).
- Register for Training Classes at a discounted rate.
- Join the FITSI Evangelist Program.

F. Paying Certification Holder Dues

Certification Holders will use the Private Portal to pay their Annual Maintenance Fees (AMF). Thirty days before the AMF due date, a red button will appear in the yellow account summary box in the upper right of the Private Portal home page. The Certification Holder uses this button to pay for one certification cycle. A visual of the red button is listed below:

If the Certification Holder is delinquent, they must follow this "Pay Annual Dues" link multiple times to bring the AMFs current. The system will automatically update the AMF Due Date value after each successful payment.

G. Account Directory

FITSI provides Certification Holders and members the option to include contact information in an online Account Directory via the FITSI private portal. The type and scope of information published are controlled by the Certification Holder or member through their online account profile. When a new online account is created, the default policy is "Not Published." The Certification Holder can control the type of information they wish published in the Directory from the following list:

- All personal information
- Hide email addresses
- Show name only
- Don't include me in the Directory

The option to select from the above list is found in the "My Profile" sub-option of the Member and Certification Holder Services feature on the FITSI Private Portal homepage.

H. Requesting Support

If a Certification Holder needs support in accessing the FITSI private portal or other issues, they should contact FITSI at contactus@fitsi.org with the words REQUESTING SUPPORT in the subject area. The Certification Holder will need to provide the following information:

- Full Name
- FITSI ID and Certification numbers (found on the Certification Holder's FITSI ID card)
- Preferred email address for FITSI use

Certification Holders should indicate the type and level of support they require in the body of the message. FITSI will endeavor to respond to all requests within two business days.

16. Forms

The most current version of the forms referenced in this Handbook can be downloaded from https://www.fitsi.org/fitsidocuments.html.

17. Appendix A, FITSI Contact Information

FITSI Mailing Address:
Federal IT Security Institute (FITSI)
3213 Duke St. #190
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 703-828-1196
Website: https://www.fitsi.org
General email: contactus@fitsi.org