

The Top Cybersecurity Certifications That You Need To Know

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Introduction

For the most part, we all know that the Cybersecurity Threat Landscape is constantly changing, almost on a minute by minute basis. But did you ever stop to think that there could be something that is a little bit more complex than this to understand?

Well, it is the world of Cybersecurity Certifications (also known as “Certs”). At one time, perhaps years ago, there just a few of them. So, it was easy to parse through the details of each one of them, and figure out which cert would be the best for you.

But today, there are so many of them it can give anybody literally a headache to figure out what is what, and how you should proceed for what will be the best for you and your career aspirations. In this whitepaper, we provide an overview into the top Cybersecurity certs to help you in in your decision-making process.

The Top 5 Certs

1) The CISSP:

This is an acronym that stands for the “Certified Information Security Systems Professional”. In fact, it is one of the oldest certs that are out there, but it is still one of the most highly regarded and well-respected ones that are out there. If you take a look at some of the Cybersecurity job boards, you will notice that many of the specialty types of positions require that you have the CISSP. This cert is offered through the [ISC2](#). In order to able to take the exam for the cert, you have the following requirements:

- At least of five years of professional work experience in Cybersecurity. This experience must be in at least two of the eight knowledge domains that the exam covers. However if you have degree (or even an advanced one), this will count as one year against the work requirement.
- If you do not have all of the work experience requirements, you can actually still take the exam, but you just won’t receive the actual CISSP quite yet after passing. Instead, you will become what is known as an “Associate of the ISC2”, and from there, you will have up to six years to gain the relevant experience. More information about this can be seen [here](#).

The knowledge domains that the CISSP exam covers can be seen in the following matrix:

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Body of Knowledge</i>
Domain 1	Security and Risk Management
Domain 2	Asset Security
Domain 3	Security Architecture and Engineering
Domain 4	Communication and Network Security
Domain 5	Identity and Access Management (IAM)
Domain 6	Security Assessment and Testing
Domain 7	Security Operations
Domain 8	Software Development Security

Here are some other exam details that you should be aware of:

- The length of the exam is 3 hours;
- It consists primarily of multiple-choice questions;
- A passing is deemed to be 700 points out of a possible total of 1,000 points;
- The exam can be taken at just about any ISC2 authorized or Pearson VUE testing centers;
- The cost of the exam is \$699.00.

More information about the domains can be seen [here](#), and a complete CISSP training guide can be downloaded at this [link](#).

After you have the passed the exam, you have to sign a document claiming that you will adhere to the ISC Code of ethics, and you will also have to have a CISSP professional vouch for and confirm your work experience. Once you have received the actual cert, there is a \$125.00 annual maintenance fee, and you must earn at least 40 Continuing Professional Education (CPEs) credits on an annual basis as well, for a three-year cycle.

2) The CompTIA Security+:

This particular cert has also been around for quite some time, and in fact, it is deemed to be the first security related one that most Cybersecurity professionals should obtain first before embarking upon other specialist certs. In fact, it is also compliant with the standards as set forth by the ISO 10724, and is even approved to meet the stringent requirements of the 8140/8570.01-M requirements as established by the Department of Defense (DoD).

Unlike the CISSP, there is no minimum work experience that is required to take the exam. But it is highly recommended that you have two years work experience, in IT Security (it does not necessarily have to be Cybersecurity per se). Here are some of the skills that you will be tested on by this cert:

- The ability to conduct a general type of security assessment and recommend the appropriate solutions;
- Your knowledge about Cloud based platforms; the Internet of Things (IoT); and Mobile Security;
- Awareness of the Federal Regulations (such as the GDPR, CCPA, HIPAA, etc.);
- Your ability to respond to and analyze certain types of Security related incidents.

The following matrix provides more of the exam particulars:

Total number of questions	90
Type of question asked	Multiple choice
Passing Score	Minimum of 750 (based upon a scale of 100 – 900)
Testing Venue	Any Pearson VUE Testing Centers
Cost of Exam	\$399.00
Renewal Requirements	Earning of at least 50 CPEs in a 3-year cycle

More details on how to prepare for the exam can be seen [here](#).

3) The CompTIA CySA+:

There are a lot of job openings out there which have the title of “Cybersecurity Analyst”. This is a very broad title, and there are a lot of candidates that apply for these kinds of positions. In order to separate yourself out from the rest of the crowd, you need a cert that will give you that differential advantage. One that will do the trick is known as the “Cybersecurity Analyst+”, and it is a relatively new one that is currently being offered by CompTIA.

It’s primary focus is to test your ability on how well you can capture network traffic data and analyze it in real time. It has as emphasis as well upon the usage of automation and threat hunting tools, and the compliance frameworks of the GDPR, CCPA, HIPAA, etc. There are also other skills as well that will be tested, and these include:

- The ability to properly position the various intelligence which are available today;
- Your knowledge of how to identify and react to certain types of threat vectors;
- How well you can advise the IT Security team to recover from various kinds of security breaches (this includes Incident Response, Disaster Recovery, and Business Continuity).

The following chart illustrate more specifics about the exam you need to take in order to this kind of cert:

Exam Code	CS0-002
Number of Questions	85 total questions
Question Type	Multiple choice and “Performance Based”
Time Limit For Test	165 minutes
Passing Score Needed	Minimum of 750 (based on a scale of 100 – 900)
Testing Centers	Pearson VUE
Cost of Exam	\$395.00

It should be noted that there is no mandatory work experience level that is required, but it is highly suggested that you have at least 3-4 years of relevant experience. The CySA+ has been designed to follow the Security+ cert, so it is also advised that you have obtained this first as well.

This cert also has a 3-year cycle like the Security+, and in order to keep it, you have to have a minimum of at least 60 CPEs during this timeframe. More details on how to prepare for the exam can be seen [here](#).

4) The CCSP:

This acronym stands for the “Certified Cloud Security Professional”, and it too is also offered by ISC2. This kind of cert is deemed to be much more of a technically oriented one, than when compared to the CISSP. It has been specifically designed for those individuals that want to further their careers in the area of Cloud Security. To take the exam for this cert, you must possess a minimum of at least 5 years of work experience, which is broken down as follows:

- 3 years in the realm of Information Security;
- 1 year in one of the six knowledge domains.

The matrix below illustrates these specific domains:

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Body Of Knowledge</i>
Domain 1	Cloud Concepts, Architecture and Design
Domain 2	Cloud Data Security
Domain 3	Cloud Platform & Infrastructure Security
Domain 4	Cloud Application Security
Domain 5	Cloud Security Operations
Domain 6	Legal, Risk and Compliance

Just like the CISSP, if you do not have enough work experience, you can become an Associate of the ISC2 until you gain it. More information about this can be seen [here](#). After you have passed the exam, your work experience must be vouched for by another professional that also has the CCSP cert, and you must also prescribe to and adhere to the ISC2 Code of Ethics.

The table below provides more details about the exam:

Type of Exam	Multiple Choice
Duration of the Exam	4 hours
Exam Questions	Total of 125
Exam Cost	\$599.00
Testing Centers	Any Pearson VUE center, Remote Testing is also available from your own home

In order to maintain your cert, you must earn a minimum of 90 CPEs throughout a 3-year cycle and pay a \$125 Annual Maintenance Fee (AMF). More detailed information about the CCSP can be downloaded at this [link](#).

5) The CISM:

This acronym stands for the “Certified Information Security Manager”. As its name implies, this cert is specifically for those individuals that want to eventually further their managerial position in the world of Cybersecurity. It is offered through an organization known as the “Information Systems Audit and Control Association”, or “ISACA” for short. In order to take this exam, you must possess at least five years of work-related experience. You must have this experience from within the last ten years since you first applied to take the exam.

There are circumstances in which waivers can be offered for a two year period, and more details about that can be found [here](#). There are four knowledge domains that are covered by the CISM, which are as follows:

- Information Security Governance;
- Information Risk Management;
- Information Security Program Development and Management;

➤ Information Security Incident Management.

The table below provides more details about the exam:

Type of Exam	Multiple Choice
Number of Questions	150 total
Duration of Exam	4 hours total
Passing Score Needed	450 points out of a total of 800 points
Cost of Exam	\$575.00 for ISACA members; \$760.00 for non-members
Testing Centers	Any PSI testing venue

Just like the other certs reviewed, the CISA credential is good for a three-year time period. In order to maintain this, you must earn at least 20 CPEs on an annual basis during this time span. Also, there is an annual maintenance fee of \$45.00 for ISACA members, and \$85.00 for nonmembers. Also, you must prescribe and adhere to the ISACA's Code of Professional Ethics.

Also, the ISACA offers a number of training tools that you can subscribe to in order to prepare for the exam, more information about it can be seen [here](#).

Conclusions

Overall, this whitepaper has reviewed the top five Cybersecurity certs. If you have any more questions, you can always visit the website of the vendor that offers the exam that you want to take. But in all honesty, the best way to get more information about these certs is to reach out to somebody who actually has it. If you do not know of anyone directly, you can always search Linked In for these cert groups, become a member, and post your question(s) on the respective forums.

Sources

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