

The Certification Outlook

Connecting you to credentialing resources

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Certification Spotlight

Captain Nicholas Payne, United States Marine Corps

How a Marine Corps Captain “stacks” certifications to continue learning and expanding his abilities

Many people view certification as a means to an end: getting specific certifications to better themselves for career advancement or a transition. For Nicholas Payne, certification is about continuous learning and applying new approaches to workplace challenges, which have motivated him to complete eight certifications while serving on active duty in the Marine Corps.



Captain Nicholas Payne,
United States Marine Corps

How long have you been in the Marine Corps, and what is your current rank and MOS?

I have been in the Marine Corps for nine years. I'm currently a Captain, and my MOS is 3404. I'm a financial management officer, but I've been on a utilization tour working IT for the past four or five years, after finishing two master's degrees in information technology management and business administration at the Naval Postgraduate School. My typical day revolves a lot around IT project management and systems.

What certifications do you have?

I got my Security+ certification from CompTIA right after grad school, when I got into the IT field in 2018. I am also a Certified Scrum Master (CSM), Project Management Professional (PMP®), Certified Knowledge Manager (CKM), and Advanced Scrum Master. Additionally, I have a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt certification from the American Society for Quality (ASQ). Finally, I am a Certified Defense Financial Manager with Acquisition (CDFM-A) and I have a Level 2 Department of Defense Financial Management (DoDFM) Certification.

What motivated you to get so many certifications?

I started with Security+ because it is somewhat of a requirement to get certain access to systems in the DoD. For the other certifications, I saw it as a continuation of learning because training for certifications broadens your experience and your ability. I try to do one every six to twelve months to keep my brain focused outside of work — and to “stack” certifications. A lot of certifications have continuing education units (CEUs) and fees that you have to pay, and I've been fortunate to have a command that has given me the financial support, as well as the time, to earn new certifications that qualify as CEUs for a previous certification. I don't know what I am going to take next, but I plan to continue getting certifications.

“Certifications are definitely achievable if you put in the time and effort studying and you have the support.”

– Nicholas Payne

Certification Spotlight

Describe some of the unique challenges that you faced attempting to get certified while on active duty.

The first thing is to determine how involved it will be and consider whether you have the time to train, study, and learn the material, because each certification is different. My command paid for 15 people to take the PMP course, and I might be the only one who actually ended up taking the certification and passing, because everyone else took time off from studying and lost focus. I hold myself accountable by scheduling the exam for two to three weeks after the training course. When I'm preparing for a certification, I need to study every day, even if it's only for a half an hour, to retain the material and expand my knowledge base. I've used a mobile app, flash cards, and audio files to study. It is difficult, but it becomes part of your routine, like working out.

What impact did funding have on your desire and ability to earn certifications?

I've been very lucky to get all of my certifications funded with Marine Corps dollars; otherwise, I don't think I would have as many. A lot of certifications require a certified training course, which ends up costing a lot more because you're paying for the training and the certification. The PM-ProLearn training was nice because they bundled the training and certification payments together. It's important for the military to provide funding, because a lot of people won't get the certification without it.

Do certifications help in your collaboration with the civilian community?

I work with several civilians who are SharePoint developers, and the certifications allow me to bridge the gap between the way that the Marine Corps thinks that things should be done and some of the IT best practices in the civilian sector. For example, I might suggest a facilitation approach that I learned through one of my certifications or explain agile and scrum methodology to colleagues, and they will tell me that they have never seen that approach before, but that they found it really useful. I would never have known how to explain those concepts if I hadn't taken the time to get those certifications.

What should Service members be prepared for as they think about an exam?

Having general test-taking skills to understand how these organizations ask questions is helpful, and a big part of that is knowing the material so you don't get caught up in tricky questions. Sometimes people think about these certifications like trying to climb a mountain, but many people have earned them in the past, so don't be intimidated about taking certifications. Go in and be confident with the exam. Certifications are definitely achievable if you put in the time and effort studying and you have support.



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Certification program updates

The following certification programs are now available CONUS and OCONUS at Pearson VUE test centers on U.S. military bases (indicated by ). Some testing programs are only available at Education Centers (indicated by ).




CrowdStrike: The CrowdStrike Falcon Certification Program (CFCP) is a multi-tiered cybersecurity certification program, covering three levels of CrowdStrike Falcon users: administrator, front-line analyst, and investigator/hunter. Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/Clients/CrowdStrike.aspx> for more information or to register for an exam. 




Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD): Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors is a non-profit, non-governmental professional organization dedicated to radiation protection. CRCPD offers three certification exams: RAM, XRAY, and Combo RAM and XRAY. Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/Clients/Conference-of-Radiation-Control-Program-Directors.aspx> for more information or to register for an exam. 




Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): The Air Traffic Skills Assessment (ATSA) is an entry-level employment aptitude assessment for FAA Air Traffic Control Trainee positions. Interested candidates must apply to an Air Traffic Control Trainee announcement on www.usajobs.gov. Only qualified candidates will be invited to complete the ATSA. Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/Clients/Federal-Aviation-Administration.aspx> for more information. 

Kansas Real Estate

Kansas Real Estate: Kansas Real Estate licensure exams are available at select base-sponsored Pearson VUE test centers, both within and outside the state of Kansas. Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/ks/realestate> for more information or to register for an exam. 



Wyoming Real Estate: Wyoming Real Estate licensure exams are available at select base-sponsored Pearson VUE test centers, both within and outside the state of Wyoming. Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/wy/realestate> for more information or to register for an exam. 

For a full list of available certifications, visit PearsonVUE.com/Military/Exams.

91%

*of survey respondents
said certification increased
their confidence.*



Access Pearson VUE's Technical Support Portal for self-service tips

The Pearson VUE Technical Support Portal provides multiple tools to keep your test center ready to serve your military community. Make [PearsonVUE.com/Help](https://www.pearsonvue.com/Help) your first stop to identify and fix common technical test delivery issues, helping maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of your test center. From the portal, you can:

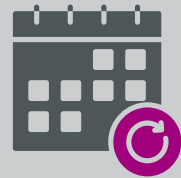
- Search the Knowledge Base for step-by-step instructions to common questions, such as "How to start a manual update" or what to do when there is an "authentication services error in Admissions Manager"
- Access support links to add new sites, add new hardware, or repair existing hardware
- Test connectivity and firewall bypass capabilities for various exam delivery formats

For assistance and remote support, contact us 24/7 using the country-specific phone numbers or the live chat functionality found in the portal.

Please take a moment to browse [PearsonVUE.com/Help](https://www.pearsonvue.com/Help) and let us know what additional resources you'd like to see in the portal. We look forward to your feedback.

86%

of survey respondents are likely to recertify in the next 12 months.



2021 Pearson VUE Value of Certification report.

Don't forget

COOL: Service members in all branches can find information on training, credentials, and licenses related to their military and civilian careers. Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) and the Army's Credentialing Assistance program help identify training gaps and define the paths needed to earn civilian and federal positions. Additionally, each COOL website features key information about funding, accreditations, and in-demand credentials. Visit [PearsonVUE.com/military/funding](https://www.pearsonvue.com/military/funding) to learn more about how COOL works in your branch.

mindhub™: Service members and government employees can receive 25% off training materials through mindhub, Pearson VUE's certification prep store. mindhub offers a variety of learning products designed to help test-takers prepare for industry-recognized certifications. To receive the discount, simply apply coupon code GOV25 to your shopping cart at checkout. Visit [mindhub.com/service-members](https://www.mindhub.com/service-members) for more information.

Help your military community succeed:

If you are interested in opening a Pearson VUE test center on your base, contact DoD@Pearson.com.

 [www.Linkedin.com/showcase/Pearson-VUE-Military](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/Pearson-VUE-Military)

 [www.Facebook.com/Pearson4USMilitary](https://www.facebook.com/Pearson4USMilitary)

