AIR FORCE COOL PROGRAM EXPLAINED
Air Force Credentialing Opportunities On-Line

Popular AF COOL Approved Programs

CompTIA certifications
- A+
- Network+
- Security+
- Cybersecurity Analyst (CySA)+
- PenTest+
- CASP+
- Linux+

(ISC)² certifications
- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)
- Information Systems Security Architecture Professional (ISSAP)
- Information Systems Security Engineering Professional (ISSEP)
- Information Systems Security Management Professional (ISSMP)
- Certified Authorization Professional (CAP)
- Certified Cloud Security Professional (CCSP)
- Certified Secure Software Lifecycle Professional (CSSLP)

ISACA certifications
- Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)
- Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT (CGEIT)
- Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer (CDPSE)

IAPP certifications
- Certified Information Privacy Professional/United States (CIPP/US)
- Certified Information Privacy Manager (CIPM)
- Certified Information Privacy Technologist (CIPT)

Other certifications
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- EC-Council Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)
- ITIL Foundations
- Microsoft Azure
- PMI Project Management Professional (PMP)
- Red Hat Certified System Administrator (RHCSA)

Program Overview

The AF COOL program provides a pathway for enlisted members to map any one of 642 professional and industry certifications and private licenses to the 190 Air Force specialty codes (AFSC). Once an education program is selected and approved, the Air Force covers all costs related to the learning experience, including study aids, training or tuition fees, licensing fees, exam fees and study preparation costs. However, funding is not to exceed a maximum of $4,500 per Airman or Space Professional throughout their career.

The goal of the program is, according to the Air Force, "to professionalize the enlisted force by providing up-to-date industry-recognized credentials in an Airman or Space Professional's job." The program also "provides a way for airmen to prepare for civilian life by ensuring that they are ready for work in the civilian sector." The courses are a supplement to the Space Professional Development program.

Credentialing has two purposes. First, it continues to professionalize the enlisted force by providing up-to-date industry-recognized credentials in an Airman or Space Professional's job. Second, it provides a way for airmen to prepare for civilian life by ensuring that they are ready for work in the civilian sector. There are many aspects to credentialing including certifications and licenses.

AF COOL Program Highlights

According to Air Force Instruction 36-2670, the AF COOL program is designed so Airmen and Space Professionals can use the funding toward training related to each of the following:

- Their primary Air Force specialty code
- An awarded academic degree
- A credential unrelated to their primary AFSC
- A leadership and management credential for E-7s and above

Airmen and Space professionals also need to be on active duty orders, known as Title 10 or Title 32.502(f) orders, during the complete process. This includes enlisted members of the regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard in an active capacity.

For Airmen and Space Professionals within 180 days of separation from Active Duty or retirement, these members have to pay for their credential costs on their own, and then they will be reimbursed by the AF COOL program once they can prove that they have completed their learning experience. On the other hand, if the individual fails to provide proof of completion of their training within 120 days of the end date, the Air Force COOL program will initiate the process to recoup the money.

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Eligibility Requirements

The first requirement for enlisted RegAF, ARES, and ANG component members is you must be on Title 10 or Title 32.502(f) orders during the complete process.

- Must ensure approval of funding before taking any actions that would obligate the expenditure of funds, to include registering for, scheduling or partaking in an exam or other credentialing expense.
- Submit request for payment not earlier than 60 days and not later than 30 days prior to the anticipated exam date.
- Submissions submitted after the start date will be the financial responsibility of the member.
- Member is required to submit exam results (pass or fail) within 30 days of course completion date.
- Member is required to review and understand credentialing agencies refund policy prior to taking an exam.
- Member will update personal email, contact number and address as well as the supervisor's email and phone number prior to submitting an educational goal or funding request.
- Payments will not be made for CEU/PEU, failed exam retakes, conference attendance, travel, hotel expenses, per diem, airfare, etc.
- If payments are required to be made through a student portal and not a public facing site, the Airmen must be provided a login and password to give the Purchasing Agent to make these payments on their behalf. Failing to do so will result in disapproval.

In addition, to utilize the Air Force Cool program you must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Enlisted, RegAF, ANG, AFRS (ANG and AFRS must be on title 10 or title 32 (502)f orders for entire duration of the certification. ANG/AFRS members must have a copy of their orders uploaded to their digital file folder by their local base education office and their Activated End Date updated prior to creating an educational goal.
- Possess a 5-skill level in the Airmen's assigned Primary Air Force Specialty Code to which credential is mapped.
- Must not have an Unfavorable Information File (UIF), a failed or overdue physical fitness test, a Referral Enlisted Performance Report (EPR), nor be on a control roster at the time of application for AF COOL.
- Must have a record in the Air Force Automated Education Management System with an approved credentialing goal.
- Must complete credential while in RegAF status, (with the exception of those who fall under the 180 day rule).

Where to Begin

When you log into the system and you see on the right hand side of your AFVEC screen under self-service actions, click "Start a Funding Request". If you can't find the exam center that you are looking for in the drop-down menu, select the hyperlink for "Find Exam Center". Type in the first word of the location you are looking for. Leave the State as All and hit Search. Next, put in the testing window. You have 60 days before the system pings you and tells you that you need to create a funding request for your exam. You can also create your exam request and the same time you do your study material request. Just know that the exam funding request will give you 120 days that you will be able to submit for in your window and study material gives you 60 days. So be sure to utilize all of that time frame.

AF COOL Approval Process

Once you've created a funding request for your AF COOL certification exam and study preparation it's going to go to your supervisor for approval. Once your supervisor approves, it comes to the CPO. If all the documentation is uploaded and good to go, and the right dates and the right goal are input and match your funding request, they will approve and send it to the purchasing agents. They will make the payment on your behalf. You will receive and email at each point of this. Do not proceed to a test or study material without receiving all three of the approval emails from supervisor, CPO, and purchasing agent.

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Steps to Success

STEP 1 – Identify an AF COOL credential

To begin, the member should create an AFVEC profile and identify a certification from one of the approved lists of AF COOL programs. Each credential listed will have certain criteria that should be met by the participant and discussed with their supervisor. These include:

- Summary
- Eligibility
- Comments
- Exams
- Other
- Related occupations

The participant should remember that the AF COOL program does not cover payments for continuing or professional education units (CEU/PEU), failed exam retakes, conference attendance, hotel expenses, per diem and travel costs.

STEP 2 – Obtain an eligibility letter

Once a participant has selected a program that they are eligible for, they should then fill out the Credentialing Eligibility Letter, which can be found on the AFVEC program page.

STEP 3 – Create an educational goal and upload documentation

Next, the participant creates an educational goal based on the selected credential and discusses their participation with their supervisor. Upon getting approval from their supervisor, they should then upload supporting documents, such as the itemized price quote and AF COOL Credentialing Agency Approval document under their educational goal in AFVEC.

STEP 4 – Begin a funding request

With all the prior steps completed, next, within the AFVEC account, select "Apply for Funding" within your AF COOL program goal. Clicking this button will provide the prompts to complete the funding request. The following types of information will be needed and selected:

- Exam center: This should be provided by the credentialing agency's website, such as Pearson VUE.
- Cost for the exam: The cost plus any administration fees.
- The testing window: Based on the program website, AF COOL has recently changed its testing window from 30 to 120 days.

Once these steps are complete, the participant's supervisor will approve or reject your funding request.

STEP 5 – Official program office funding approval

With supervisor approval, the funding request is then sent to the AF COOL program office. This office will make a payment on behalf of the participant.

STEP 6 – Study and complete the program exam

After the participant completes the exam and passes, the participant should provide a copy of the test results, or the Certificate of Completion, to the AF COOL program office at their email address: CCAF.DEAO.AFCOOL@US.AF.MIL. If the results are not provided, the participant will be required to reimburse the AF COOL program.

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Steps Detailed and Important Active Links

As listed in the previous steps, to apply for the Air Force COOL program, click into the Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC). If you meet the requirements, the first step is to search for approved, related credentials. Once you've chosen a credential that you want to pursue, you will need to create an educational goal.

While you are creating this process after your supervisor has approved your educational goal, you'll be able to go into AFVEC and start uploading your supporting documentation. It is the member's responsibility to do the research and find the information that they are wanting to pursue. The AF COOL program does not offer that for you directly. thinQtank Learning will assist in creating your education goal.

Click Here to Download the AF COOL Credentialing Eligibility Letter

- Select a certification under the approved AF COOL listing in AFVEC, and create an Educational Goal
- Member's Supervisor reviews to ensure member is eligible and has no factors limiting their ability to complete the certification.
- Member uploads supporting documents (at minimal itemized price quote and AF COOL Credentialing Agency Approval document) under their educational goal in AFVEC.
- Member creates two funding requests, if required, the first for study material and the second for exam(s).
- Funding Request will be reviewed by the AF COOL CPO, and if approved then sent to the Purchasing Agents for payment. Purchasing agent will notify the member that they are cleared to test.
- Member takes the test and uploads results under the supporting documents section of their educational goal
- Member emails AF COOL CPO to notify results have been uploaded (ccaf.deao.afcool@us.af.mil)
- AF COOL CPO verifies, post results, and close educational goal.

Frequently Asked Questions

I am interested in pursuing other credentials not listed on the AF COOL website. Can I pursue those credentials?

- Members may pursue credentials that are not identified as being AF COOL-funded at their own expense using the Montgomery G.I. Bill, Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, or other programs.

Am I eligible for another credential if I fail an exam for the AFSC-related credential?

- Member is still eligible for funding of additional credentials up to the $4,500 cap once the grade has been submitted for the previous exam. In addition, the member is still eligible for a leadership credential (E-7 through E-9).

Are AF Reservists authorized to use the AF COOL program?

- Reservists and Guardsmen on Title 10 or Title 32 (502f) orders will be authorized to use AF COOL funding. All requirements for the credential goal must be completed while in activated status.

AF COOL also has a Search Credentials section that allows Airmen to look at all credentials for all enlisted AFSCs. While Airmen can only receive tuition assistance on approved credentials, Airmen can view other occupations they may have an interest in for future planning. Search results will include the certifications and licenses related to those AFSCS and other information such as related civilian occupations. Airmen can also search by civilian career area, credential name, and credentialing agency name.

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