# ARMY COOL PROGRAM EXPLAINED
## Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line

**Popular Army 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 Army's COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line), also known as Credentialing Assistance (CA) helps soldiers find information on certifications and licenses related to their jobs. The program can pay for courses and exams that lead to industry-recognized civilian credentials in an occupational area of your choice. You may use this program to enhance your skills, either in your current MOS, or in an occupation you would like to pursue when you leave military service. You can request CA funding for any credential listed on Army COOL.

As part of the Army Credentialing Opportunities Online (Army COOL) service, The Army Credentialing Assistance (CA) program provides qualifying soldiers with up to $4,000 per fiscal year in career educational benefits. The CA program allows soldiers to earn industry-recognized professional and technical credentials.

This program creates new opportunities for soldiers to enhance their skills and professionalism while serving and increasing their overall employability upon transitioning from the Army.

The Department of Defense began the Army Credentialing Assistance Program in 2019 to help service members grow their skills. By offering financial assistance, the Army COOL Program allows soldiers to complete credentialing programs, such as home inspection training, to enhance their service career and to help them transition into civilian life.

## Army COOL Program Highlights

The goal of the Credentialing Assistance Program is to help Army service members get certifications and licenses. To be more specific, they would help these service members find:

- Credentials related to an Army Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)
- Credentials related to Civilian Occupations
- Credential requirements and potential gaps between Army training and civilian credentialing requirements
- Resources available to fill gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements

Getting classes and credentials by using Army CA is an optional perk of being in the Army.

"The Army supports civilian credentialing for active duty members because it improves the professionalism of Soldiers. In fact, if a credential is related to your duties, the Army may award promotion points for earning it." Promotion points are, as any soldier comes to know, very important.

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## Eligibility Requirements

The Army COOL program is available for all Regular Army Soldiers, Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldiers pursuant to Title 10 and Title 32, United States Army Reserve (USAR), and Army National Guard (ARNG) Soldiers in active drilling status with a designation as satisfactory participant.

The following are in addition to the baseline CA eligibility requirements:

- Soldiers must complete specified professional military education, and the required
- Military education level must be reflected in ArmyIgnitED before CA can be approved

Soldiers may use CA upon achieving their Military Occupational Specialty Qualification (MOSQ) as follows:

- Enlisted Soldiers who have graduated Advanced Individual Training
- Warrant officers who have graduated Warrant Officer Basic Course
- Officers who have graduated Basic Officer Leaders Course

**There are some exclusions**.

The following Soldiers are ineligible for CA:

- Contracted Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship cadets, including those receiving room and board benefits in lieu of tuition and fees. This restriction includes any period(s) of temporary suspension of scholarship benefits, leave of absence, and while school is out of session
- ROTC cadets contracted under the Green to Gold ROTC Program.
- Soldiers flagged under provisions of AR 600-8-2.
- Soldiers approved for voluntary separation, or who have received notice of involuntary separation, and do not have enough time remaining in service to complete the credentialing course or exam before separating from the Army
- Soldiers without sufficient time-in-service to complete the CA course or exam
- Soldiers assigned to the Individual Ready Reserve or the Inactive National Guard

## Special Information For Army Officers And Army Warrant Officers

Army Credentialing Assistance is offered to commissioned officers in the Army as well as Army Warrant Officers; however this program can be used for training only if these applicants agree to a Military Service Obligation (MSO) in accordance with the most current Army Tuition Assistance program requirements.

Note the emphasis on training in the paragraph above. Officers and Warrant Officers who are using CA funds for testing and/or recertification (as opposed to training) are NOT required to incur a new MSO.

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## Basic Eligibility and Sign-Up Rules

In order to apply for Army Credentialing Assistance program funds, you must complete a minimum amount of required PME. First-term soldiers may be eager to get started, but first, the following must be satisfied depending on the nature of your military service:

- **Enlisted Soldiers** must have graduated from Advanced Individual Training (AIT).
- **Warrant officers** must have graduated from Warrant Officer Basic Course.
- **Officers** must be graduates of the Basic Officer Leaders Course.

Once you have completed this PME requirement, you can begin using the Army Credentialing Assistance Program official site to search for credentials related to your career interests, select a program and vendor, and make your request.

There is one caveat—even if you have completed PME, if your military records aren't updated fully to reflect that, you will have to wait until the official record shows you are eligible to apply for Army CA. If you have recently completed PME, ask how long it may take for your records to update in order to use this program.

Army rules say that Credentialing Assistance Program funds can be used to pay for the following credentialing expenses:

- Classroom instruction
- Hands-on training
- Online/blended training
- Study guides
- Materials
- Textbooks
- Exams
- Recertification

What kinds of classes can be funded using Army CA? The official site has a search tool matching some 1,600 Army job skills with approved classes and/or credentialing opportunities. New users must create or use an existing ArmyIgnitED account in order to use the information they find via the search tool in their application form, but you can use a public-facing version of that search tool without accessing an account.

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## Steps Detailed and Important Active Links

### Step 1 – Learn About CA

You can work on any credential listed in Army COOL, concurrently or sequentially up to your TA/CA fiscal year limit of $4000. To find credentials related to your MOS, AOC or ASI, use the Decision Support Tool.

### Step 2 – Learn the Credential's Requirements

- Click on the **credential name** in the table to open up a Credential Snapshot page.
- **Review the Summary and Eligibility tabs** on the snapshot page to get an overview of what is required by the credentialing agency (on the Summary tab) and specific details (on the Eligibility tab), if applicable.
- **Contact the credentialing agency** to confirm licensure or certification requirements and request application forms and free exam preparation materials if available.
- **Determine if the Army training or experience you already have is accepted** by the credentialing agency.
- **Determine what additional training or education** you may need to earn the credential.
- **Review the list of eLearning products** that are available for free to help prepare for the credential exam. Credentials with associated eLearning products have an eLearning designation on COOL.
- **Research and select a vendor** if you need additional preparation to prepare for a credential.

### Step 3 – Complete a CA Request

Once you have selected a credential, complete a CA request in ArmyIgnitED. You must submit a separate CA request for each course and/or exam required for a credential at least thirty business days prior to the course or exam start date. The thirty business days begin when the Education Center or Office submits the request to the Army Credentialing and Continuing Education Services for Soldiers (ACCESS), Army University (ArmyU).

For detailed instructions on completing a CA request using ArmyIgnitED, download the Soldier CA Process Guide.

- Log into ArmyIgnitED. ArmyIgnitED is using login.gov to allow you to sign in to your account safely and securely. Create or log into your account and acknowledge the Soldier Statement of Understanding (SOU).
- Select the "MOS/ASI" option if you wish to pursue a credential aligned with your MOS/AOC/ASI, or the "Other" option if you wish to pursue a credential NOT aligned to your MOS/AOC/ASI.
- Select the credential you wish to pursue and submit.
- Once you have selected a credential, request CA funding.
- Select a vendor from the list that appears for your credential.
- Select the course/exam. Submit.
- Your CA request will route to ACCESS ArmyU who will review your request. You will be contacted if there are any issues or questions with your request. You will be notified via email once your CA request is approved. Most requests are processed no later than three days prior to your start date, so if you have not received a response prior to that, please submit a ServiceNow (SNOW) ticket. All books/materials that are approved for funding will be sent directly to you.

NOTE: You do not pay anything out of pocket. The Army does NOT reimburse any credentialing related expenses.

### Step 4 – Complete Training or Exam

Once ACCESS, ArmyU approves the CA request for training, exam, recertification and/or materials/books or recertification, you will be enrolled in the approved course and will receive required course materials (if applicable). If requesting an exam, ACCESS, ArmyU will provide you instructions to schedule the exam. The vendor is required to upload the completion certificate, grade report, transcript, or other official memorandum within ten business days upon completion to your ArmyIgnitED account. **NOTE**: If proof is not uploaded, recoupment for CA costs requested on the CA request will be initiated with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

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