



GIS Certification Institute

Becoming a GISP

*The Benefits of Certification in the
Geospatial Profession*



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GIS CERTIFICATION INSTITUTE

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THE GIS CERTIFICATION INSTITUTE

The GISCI is a not-for-profit organization that provides the geographic information systems (GIS) community with an internationally-recognized, complete certification program, a GISP® Certification.

Who is the GIS Certification Institute?

- The GIS Certification Institute (GISCI) is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization.
- Based in the United States but present worldwide.
- Born from the late 1990's, URISA survey of its membership. The overwhelming response was a desire for professional certification.

GISCI Member Organizations

GISCI is composed of a group of Member Organizations representing the broad range of the geospatial community.



**GISP – Elected
Board Member**



AAG

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
of GEOGRAPHERS



NSGIC

National States Geographic Information Council



asprs THE IMAGING & GEOSPATIAL
INFORMATION SOCIETY



University Consortium for
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE



GIS Certification Institute

GISP PROCESS

**Requirements & Costs for
New and Recertifying GISPs**

GISP Certification Requirements

Initial GISP: Portfolio + Exam

- Sign **Ethics Statement**
- Submit **Portfolio** Application online
 - Meet point requirements in Education, Experience, and Contributions to the Profession
 - Requires a minimum of 4 years of Geospatial Experience (employment)
- Pass GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge **Exam**

3 Year Certification Period

NOTE: You can complete the exam and portfolio in the order of your choosing.

Recertification: Portfolio Only

- Sign **Ethics Statement**
- Submit **Portfolio** Application online
 - Meet point requirements in Education and Contributions to the Profession (Experience Points optional)

3 Year Recertification Period

GISP Certification Costs

Initial GISP

- Portfolio Review Fee: \$200 (a one-time fee)
- Exam Fee: \$250 (\$300 if international)
- Annual Maintenance Fee: \$95/year

(starts in the 2nd year of initial certification period)

3 Year Certification Period

NOTE: If you do not pass the exam and need to retake, you will be charged the \$250 exam fee to retake but not the \$100 portfolio review fee.

Recertifying GISP

- Annual Maintenance Fee:
\$110/year or single payment of \$285

3 Year Recertification Period

GISP-E PROCESS

**Requirements & Costs for
Obtaining the Emerging GISP
Certification**

GISP-E Certification Requirements

Initial GISP-E: Exam Only

- Must meet the following:
 - Recent graduate
 - Beginning of career
 - Less than one year of experience
- Sign **Ethics Statement**
- Pass **GISCI PreGISP Exam**

3 Year Certification Period

Recertification: None

- Cannot recertify
- Only need 3 years of professional experience to become a GISP

GISP-E Certification Costs

Initial GISP-E

Exam Fee:

- \$125 – Individual
- \$100 – Group purchase

Annual Maintenance Fee: none

3 Year Certification Period

Recertifying GISP-E

- Not Applicable

Begin GISP Process

EXAM CREATION & PREPARATION

**Exam Creation, Content, and
Study Resources**

Why an Exam?

- Provides for a measurable competency level
- Provides increased visibility for GISP Professional Certification
- Builds upon the established, successful, recognized GISP Portfolio
- Industry shows increased use of GISP as a preferred credential in job descriptions
- Provides for increased participation for students and early career professionals
- Provides a basis for a move to more specialized certifications
- **It continues to advance and consolidate the profession**

GISP Exam Overview

Exam Creation:

- Written by GISPs for GISP Certification
- Composed at a 4 Year Experience Level
- Centered on Applied Knowledge
- Based on the jobs performed by the interviewed GISPs – 45 KSAs* were selected for exam coverage
- KSAs divided into 10 Content Areas

**Knowledge, Skills, Abilities*

Exam Process/Calendar:

- Two exam offerings each year in early June & December
- Exam can be taken at any time in a person's career
- Students can test at the time they graduate or before
- There is a 6-year window to complete all parts of the Certification process. The 6-year clock starts once you either pass the exam or get a Portfolio approved.

Selection of Exam Knowledge Areas

- Started with the GISP community
- Used a combination of job analysis, DACUMs, and focus groups to examine major tasks used in the GISP community
- The total number of GIS Knowledge areas exceeds 400+, as defined by the GIS&T Body of Knowledge
- GISCI found approximately 10% of total GIS knowledge areas relevant to a GISP professional across the range of GIS certified professionals
- 45 KSAs (knowledge, skills, abilities) were identified for exam coverage

GISP Exam Blueprint

10 Knowledge Categories

1. Conceptual Foundations	10%
2. Geospatial Data Fundamentals	15%
3. Cartography & Visualization	10%
4. Data Acquisition	11%
5. Data Manipulation	11%
6. Analytical Methods	11%
7. Database Design & Management	10%
8. Application Development	7%
9. Systems Design & Management	7%
10. Professional Practice	8%

Exam Environment

- The exam is taken at an official testing center (PSI)
- It is composed of 100 scored multiple choice or multiple response questions.
- Additional non-scored questions are on the exam to be tested for possible use on future exams. (generally, 50-60)
- You do not receive your results at the completion of the exam. You will receive your results from GISCI approximately 1 month later after our formal exam review.



BUILDING YOUR PORTFOLIO

**Your professional portfolio is one of three
pieces you need to become a GISP.**

Portfolio Review: Getting Started

- Register at www.gisci.org
- Log back in with your credentials to access the form
- Initial documentation needed:
 1. You will need a transcript of courses
 2. A signed Ethics Statement
 3. A letter from your current supervisor
- All will be uploaded to the application

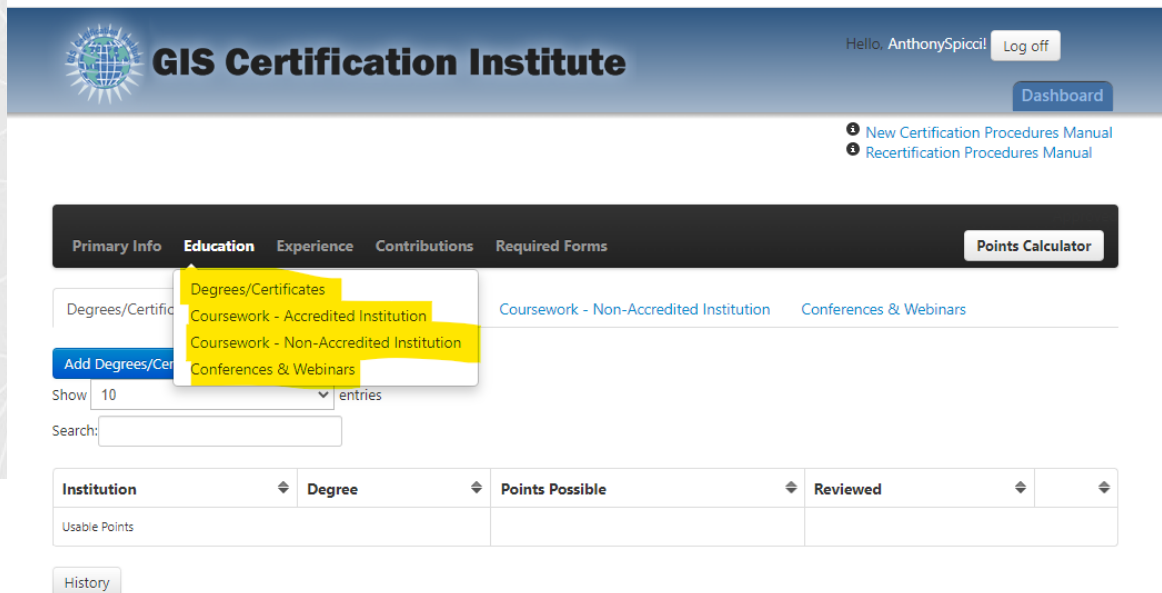


Steps to Complete Your Portfolio

- Register and Log in online – access the online form to reach:
 - The **Education** Section:
 - Degrees/Certificates
 - Coursework – Accredited Institution
 - Coursework- Non-Accredited Institution
 - Conferences & Webinars
 - The **Experience** Section
 - The **Contributions** Section

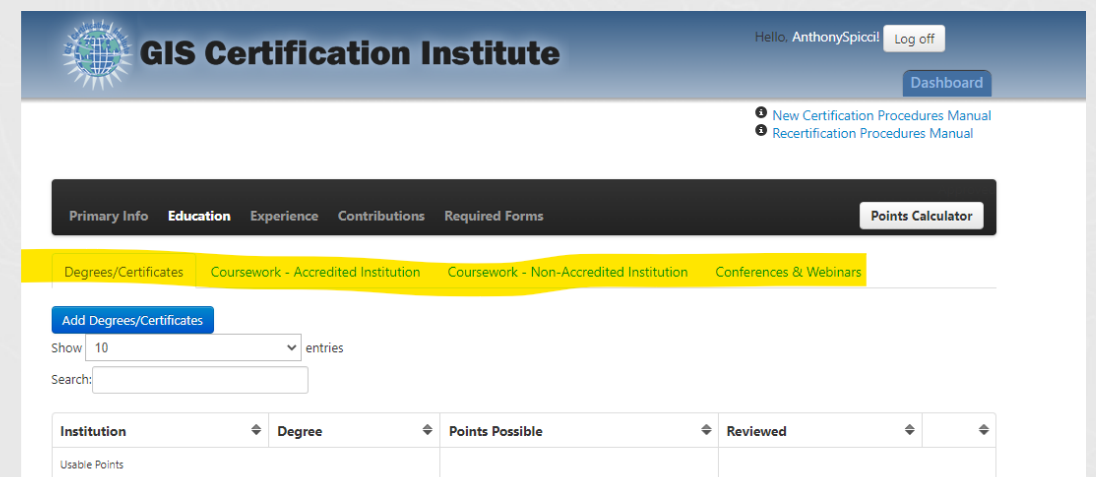
Education Point Schedule

- Credential (Degree/certificate) Points
- Accredited Course Points
- Non-Accredited Course Points
- Conference/Webinar Attendance Points



The screenshot shows the GIS Certification Institute dashboard. The user is logged in as Anthony Spicci. The dashboard has a navigation bar with links to New Certification Procedures Manual and Recertification Procedures Manual. The main content area has tabs for Primary Info, Education, Experience, Contributions, and Required Forms. The Education tab is selected, and a dropdown menu is open showing options: Degrees/Certificates, Coursework - Accredited Institution, Coursework - Non-Accredited Institution, and Conferences & Webinars. Below the dropdown, there is a search bar and a table with columns: Institution, Degree, Points Possible, Reviewed, and Usable Points. A History button is at the bottom left.

Institution	Degree	Points Possible	Reviewed	Usable Points



The screenshot shows the GIS Certification Institute dashboard. The user is logged in as Anthony Spicci. The dashboard has a navigation bar with links to New Certification Procedures Manual and Recertification Procedures Manual. The main content area has tabs for Primary Info, Education, Experience, Contributions, and Required Forms. The Education tab is selected, and a yellow highlight is present. Below the tabs, there is a search bar and a table with columns: Institution, Degree, Points Possible, Reviewed, and Usable Points. A History button is at the bottom left.

Institution	Degree	Points Possible	Reviewed	Usable Points

The Professional Experience Component

- The Applicant will need a minimum of 60.0 Professional Experience Points to satisfy this section.
- **NOTE:** If you have less than 4 years (48 months) of professional experience, you may not apply for GISCI Certification regardless of your point totals in this or any other category.
- This four-year minimum requirement can come at any of the three levels of technical complexity.

The Eight Categories of Contribution Points

- GIS Publications
- GIS Professional Association Involvement
- GIS Conference Participation
- GIS Workshop Instruction
- GIS Conference Presentation
- GIS Awards Received
- GIS Volunteer Efforts
- Other GIS Contributions

Certification Point Requirements

- A total of 150 points is required to become certified.
- The applicant will need the following minimums in the three achievement categories:

Educational Achievement	30.0
Professional Experience	60.0
Contributions to the Profession	8.0

- **Supplemental Points:** The candidates will also need an additional 52 points in any of the three categories. The web site will automatically assign surplus points in each category to the Supplemental category.
- **The Submit button will not appear until all category minimums are met.**

Required Forms

- Initial Portfolios must submit the following forms:
 - Ethics Statement
 - Employer Form

The screenshot shows the GIS Certification Institute dashboard. The top navigation bar includes the logo, the name 'GIS Certification Institute', a user greeting 'Hello, AnthonySpicci!', a 'Log off' button, and a 'Dashboard' link. Below this, a secondary navigation bar contains links for 'Primary Info', 'Education', 'Experience', 'Contributions', 'Required Forms' (which is highlighted), and a 'Points Calculator' button. On the right side of the dashboard, there are links for 'New Certification Procedures Manual' and 'Recertification Procedures Manual'. The main content area is titled 'Required Forms' and contains two sections. The first section, 'Ethics - Initial certification AND recertification', has a 'Choose File' button (highlighted with a red arrow), a status 'No file chosen', and an 'Uploaded file: Spicci ETHICS Form.pdf'. The second section, 'Employer Form: Initial certification ONLY', also has a 'Choose File' button (highlighted with a red arrow) and a status 'No file chosen'. Below these sections, there are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons. A third red arrow points to the 'Blank forms to download' section, which lists two links: 'ETHICS.pdf' and 'Employer Supervisor Letter.pdf'. At the bottom of the dashboard, there is an 'Instructions' section with a text editor toolbar and detailed instructions for all applicants, payment, first-time applicants, and renewing GISPs.

Required Forms

Ethics - Initial certification AND recertification
[Choose File](#) No file chosen Uploaded file: Spicci ETHICS Form.pdf

Employer Form: Initial certification ONLY
[Choose File](#) No file chosen

[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

Blank forms to download

- [ETHICS.pdf](#)
- [Employer Supervisor Letter.pdf](#)

Instructions

All Applicants: Forms will need to be uploaded into each location, above, in order to continue to the Submit Step. When the forms have been uploaded, and all minimum point requirements have been met, a 'Submit' button will appear.

PAYMENT: After you click on the Blue Application button you will go through a checkout process where you can either pay online with a credit card or have us send you payment instructions with different options.

First-Time Applicants: Please download, read, and sign the Ethics form, uploading it after signing. A letter from your current Supervisor is all that is required, as well. Previous employment letters are not needed.

Renewing GISPs: You need to sign and upload the Ethics form but not the Supervisor Letter to this page.

Steps Necessary to Complete Your Portfolio

Remember that a GISP requires:

- 4 years full-time geospatial experience
- Portfolio Review Approval (an online process)
- Taking and passing the GISCI Geospatial Technical Core Knowledge Exam (a separate signup; offered twice a year)
- A signed Ethics Statement

You can start the GISP process at any time in your career, but all must be met before the GISP will be awarded!

THE BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

Most professional industries have some form of professional certification. Certified professionals will likely see increased pay, better job prospects and new career opportunities.

Why certify?

- Professional certification is a process by which a person shows that she has acquired the knowledge, experience, and skills to perform a specific profession.
- How do we move from the birth of an industry to certification?



Defining a Profession

Criteria for professionalism:

- a self-awareness
- a unique body of knowledge
- a social ideal to unify the professionals
- a formal organization of its members
- a hall of fame
- a code of ethics

Pugh, D.L. Professionalism in Public Administration: Problems, Perspectives, and the Role of ASPA. Public Adm. Rev. 1989, 49, 1–8

Common Elements of a Certification

- Awarded by professional organizations.
- Confirmation that you possess specific knowledge or skills needed to do a job.
- Typically earned after completing education and/or experience gained.
- Certification involves meeting specific standards and usually passing an exam.
- Credential is usually valid for a limited time and must be renewed.

Why certify?

- Demonstrate a commitment to behaviors that enrich the profession
- Grow professional knowledge and skills
- Differentiate yourself from other professionals
- Establish professional credibility
- Increase your earning potential

Certification vs. Licensure

- **Certificates** indicates you finished a vocational or educational program's coursework. They are not academic degrees and do not certify you work in a particular occupation or industry.
- **Certification** is an official document that proves you have attained a certain level of knowledge or achievement that qualifies you for your line of work.
- **Licensure** is proof that you are licensed to work in your profession. Unlike certification, licensure is a legal designation, with a clear set of requirements for each vocation.

Certification vs. Licensure

- Over 1,600 types of certifications exist across a myriad of industries
- In 2019, approx. 17% of civilian, noninstitutional workers held a certification or license. *(Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019)*
- There are three certifications available to geospatial professionals:
 - Esri – Technical Certifications – ArcGIS products
 - ASPRS – Remote Sensing
 - **GISCI - GISP**

Who certifies?

- Since the addition of the exam, GISP demographics are changing:

Professional Sector	% of Exam Candidates
Consulting Firms	42%
Government (all levels)	44%
Academia (Faculty & Staff)	8%
Other (Tribal, Nonprofit)	5%
Students	< 1%

GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam

Next Testing Date: June 7 - 15, 2025

Deadline to Apply: Two Weeks Before Test Session Starts

Location: Worldwide at authorized Pearson VUE testing centers

- 1) Submit your exam application. Apply online at the GISCI website (www.gisci.org).
- 2) Pay the application and exam fees.
- 3) Schedule your specific exam date. After your payment is confirmed, Pearson VUE will send you an email with authorization to schedule your exam.
- 4) Take the exam at your scheduled test facility.

For more information, visit: **<https://www.gisci.org/Want-to-be-a-GISP/The-Exam/Practice-Exam>**

Closing Thoughts

- Becoming a GISP takes a long-term investment
- Maintaining your GISP also requires an investment
- GISPs are active in their profession leaders in their field

It reinforces behaviors that enrich the profession.

William F. Johnson - Carpe Geo Evangelist, Applied Geographics, Inc (AppGeo)



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Thank You!

Questions?

Contact Tony: tspicci@gisci.org