

# CCS<sup>®</sup> HANDBOOK

FOR CERTIFICATION  
CANDIDATES



The Certified Construction Specifier (CCS<sup>®</sup>) Handbook for Certification Candidates is a guide for understanding the application steps and deadlines, content outline, lists of reference materials and study resources, as well as CSI certification policies.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **CSI and the CCS®**

The Construction Specifications Institute, Inc. (“CSI”) is a national association of more than 7,000 industry professionals dedicated to advancing building information management and the education of project teams to improve facility performance. CSI members include specifiers, architects, engineers, contractors, facility managers, product representatives, manufacturers, owners and others who are experts in building construction and materials.

CSI owns, uses and licenses others to use several copyrighted works, including *MasterFormat*, *UniFormat*, *OmniClass*, *PPDFormat*, and *SectionFormat/PageFormat*, each of which present a standardized arrangement of construction information. CSI also owns, uses and licenses others to use several registered trademarks and service marks, including CSI, MASTERFORMAT®, UNIFORMAT®, OMNICLASS®, PPDFORMAT®, and SECTIONFORMAT/PAGEFORMAT®, and the certification marks CDT®, CCCA®, CCS®, and CCPR™.

CSI educates and certifies individuals in several construction and design-related areas. Through CSI's certification programs, you can develop and strengthen your understanding of the entire project delivery process and demonstrate your advanced skills in:

- Developing construction documentation;
- Administering construction documentation;
- Writing and enforcing construction specifications;
- Researching and sourcing construction products; and
- Communicating with construction designer and contractor teams.

Don't skip reading this Handbook. Why? Understanding the procedures involved in taking a certification exam is extremely important to increase your chances of success on your journey toward earning your *Certified Construction Specifier* (CCS®) in order to enhance your knowledge of specifying construction projects. By becoming a CCS, you will also:

- Encourage the elevation of the competence of construction specifiers
- Enhance the professional image of construction specifiers
- Encourage construction specifiers to become familiar with specifications principles as recommended by CSI

Earning your CCS credential demonstrates you have acquired and proven knowledge of CSI's recommended practices in the following defined bodies of knowledge:

- Planning, Development, & Organization;
- Coordination;
- Procurement, Contracting, & General Requirements;
- Research;
- Analysis & Evaluation; and
- Production.

To be certified, you must meet CSI's eligibility requirements, apply to take the CCS Certification Exam ("Exam"), pay the Exam fee and take the Exam. If you pass the Exam, CSI will allow you to use CSI's distinctive CCS certification mark with your name and credentials for a certain period of time. To continue to use the CCS certification mark, you must show that you are up to date with developments in CCS-related knowledge by fulfilling certain continuing education requirements.

## Candidate Profile

A Construction Specifier is defined as a skilled technical writer who researches, investigates, and identifies cost-effective, efficient materials and processes, and collaborates with the project team to convey construction solutions through the specifications.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	
<b>Experience and Job Training</b>	<p>If a CDT or CCCA: a minimum of two (2) years of industry experience in the preparation and coordination of specifications in construction.</p> <p>If not a CDT or CCCA: a minimum of five (5) years of industry experience, plus two (2) reference letters from industry professionals (employers/colleagues) attesting to the time you have worked in the construction industry.</p> <p>Professional experience preparing and coordinating either Division 00-Procurement and Contracting Requirements or Division 01-General Requirements.</p>
<b>Education</b>	High School Diploma or Equivalent
CAREER INFORMATION	
<b>Common Job Titles</b>	Architect, Engineer, Designer, Design-Builder, Assistant or Associate Designer, Field Engineer, Product Sales/Technical Representative, Commissioning Agent, Project Manager, Construction Manager, Specifier, or Construction Attorney.
<b>Related Experience</b>	Construction Field Experience, Development of Contract Documents, Performance of Contract Administration or Project Engineering, Project Management, Product Representation, A/E/C/O Office Experience, Construction Arbitration.



<b>Typical Education Paths</b>	Most qualified candidates will have a degree in architecture, engineering, interior design, construction management, or a related field.
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Membership in CSI is not required to sit for any CSI certification exams. However, CSI members access exam-related and other benefits, including reduced rates for exam registration, study material purchases, and CSI live event or online course registrations for required continuing education. For more information on membership, visit: [www.csiresources/membership](http://www.csiresources/membership).

## **EXAM APPLICATION**

### **How to Apply for and Schedule the Exam**

1. Check online at <https://www.csiresources.org/certification/ccs> for the dates that CSI offers the Exam during a certain period of time (each “Exam Cycle”).
2. If you will have availability during the exam cycle, complete an exam application online.
  - a. Log in to <https://www.csiresources.org/certification/mycertifications> with your username and password. If you are a new user, you will need to create an account. Be sure to use an email address you personally monitor carefully (not an [info@...](mailto:info@...)) to ensure that CSI can reach you.
  - b. Select “Get Certified” on the “My Certifications” page.
  - c. In the “Apply for New Certifications” box, select “Apply for Construction Specifier Certification.”
  - d. Select the CCS application.
  - e. Review and agree to the terms and conditions, then select “Continue.”
  - f. Enter the number of years of experience that you have in the AECO profession .
  - g. Pay the required application fee (“Application Fee”) by entering your credit card information and submit payment.
  - h. If you are not a CDT® or CCCA® holder, be sure to follow the instructions provided during the application process or your application will not be processed.

3. CSI will email you:
- A receipt showing the application fee paid; and
  - An Authorization To Test (“ATT”). If you do not receive an ATT within a week of completing your registration application, or if you misplace your ATT, contact CSI at [certification@csinet.org](mailto:certification@csinet.org).

**IMPORTANT: Check your spam folder for emails from CSI or Prometric. Add email addresses from Prometric (@prometric.com) or CSI domains (@csinet.org) to your safe senders list, especially [csi@csinet.org](mailto:csi@csinet.org) (the email address the ATT will be sent from).**

4. Upon receiving your ATT email, use Prometric’s online scheduling system, ProScheduler, to select the location, date and time you want to take the Exam by going to [www.prometric.com/CSI](http://www.prometric.com/CSI). You may also call Prometric at 1-800-813-6779 between 8 am and 5 pm Eastern time. You may choose to take the Exam:
- **In-person at a Prometric Test Center:** Select “Locate” under “Actions” or follow the instructions for Option 1, “To schedule your exam at a Prometric Testing Center”; or
  - **Remotely at your home or office:** Follow the instructions for Option 2, “To schedule a Remotely Proctored Exam.” Before scheduling a remote exam using the ProProctor™ application, you must complete the Computer and Network Systems check at <https://rpcandidate.prometric.com/Home/SystemCheck> and review this important information: <https://www.prometric.com/proproctorcandidate> (especially the ProProctor User Guide).

**IMPORTANT:**

- 1) Chrome is the required browser and Operating System: Windows 8.1 or above/ MacOS users should refer to the Prometric website for compatibility.
- 2) You must be in a walled room with no other individuals or pets.
- 3) Desk area should be clear of any items as well as writing instruments or paper.
- 4) Use a detachable camera (minimum of 640 X 480p) or be prepared to lift your laptop to show your workstation and surrounding area.
- 5) Dual monitors are not allowed.
- 6) Company computers and VPNs may contain firewalls; personal computers are recommended.

**\*\*\*Exam appointments may become scarce toward the end of the exam window. It is recommended that candidates sit for remote exams during the first two weeks of the exam window, in order to allow for potential rescheduling in the event of technical challenges.**

5. Keep a record of the Prometric-confirmed appointment number, date, time, and location for your Exam (“Exam Date”).

## Groups

If your firm/college/university/chapter study group is interested in group registration, please email [certification@csinet.org](mailto:certification@csinet.org) for information on CSI's bulk application process (minimum of 10 candidates required).

## ADA Accommodations

If you require accommodations as defined under the Americans With Disabilities Act, please review [CSI's Test Accommodations Guidelines](#) prior to scheduling your exam. Requests and supporting documentation must be emailed to [certification@csinet.org](mailto:certification@csinet.org) **at least 30 days prior to when you plan to take the exam and before you register**. If approved, you will be notified by CSI staff via email that you may proceed to register. After your accommodations are added to your eligibility record by CSI staff, you will be notified via email that you may schedule your appointment.

## Religious Accommodations

If your religious beliefs may prohibit you from abiding by any of the policies or procedures contained in this Handbook or in Prometric's test administration procedures, please notify CSI via email at [certification@csinet.org](mailto:certification@csinet.org) at least 30 days prior to when you plan to take the exam and before you register to determine if you need to request religious accommodations.

# EXAM FORMAT

## Exam Development

The CCS exam reflects the results of a professional Body of Knowledge Analysis (BoKA) which determined the subject matter areas (knowledge domains) that are important for a Certified Construction Specifier to master. The purpose of a BoKA is to thoroughly review and update the definition of the subject matter to be tested on the exam, so that it reflects the current state of the industry and evolving trends.

The CCS test forms represent a significant commitment by CSI to provide an examination that reflects current practice and evolving developments that affect construction specifying.

## Exam Specifications and Knowledge Domains

The CCS exam is a computer-based test that contains 170 multiple-choice questions. Candidates have four and a half (4.5) hours to complete the exam (this includes time to view tutorial screens and answer a short survey). The proportion of the exam dedicated to each Knowledge Domain is as follows:

CCS Knowledge Domains	% of exam
Planning, Development, & Organization	11%
Coordination	14%
Procurement, Contracting, & General Requirements	17%
Research	12%
Analysis & Evaluation	16%
Production	30%

## Exam Content Outline

### Domain 1: Planning, Development, & Organization

- 1A - Evaluate scope of project and identify anticipated specifications.
- 1B - Manage the specifications production schedule (e.g. format, timing).
- 1C - Develop and maintain project files (aka: product notebook) of systems, products, and materials proposed for work on the project.
- 1D - Maintain version control of specifications.
- 1E - Develop and maintain office master guide specifications

### Domain 2: Coordination

- 2A - Collect, track, and coordinate specification information
- 2B - Coordinate A/E team proposed choices to align with project requirements.
- 2C - Coordinate specification information with project team (e.g., owner, contractor, designer, product representatives).
- 2D - Obtain and verify owner procurement and contract requirements.
- 2E - Evaluate and verify the compatibility of products and materials.
- 2F - Coordinate the specifications across project team disciplines.
- 2G - Evaluate the specifications to confirm alignment with contract documents.
- 2H - Compile available project information into the project manual.
- 2I - Coordinate with project team to specify alternates.

### **Domain 3: Procurement, Contracting, & General Requirements**

- 3A - Edit specifications to conform to Owner procurement and contract requirements.
- 3B - Coordinate Division 01 General Requirements with all other specifications.
- 3C - Incorporate project-specific requirements into Division 01 sections.
- 3D - Specify the project measurement and payment procedures.
- 3E - Specify substitution requirements and procedures.
- 3F - Evaluate the acceptability of substitution request submittal.
- 3G - Specify RFI requirements and procedures.
- 3H - Evaluate and specify delegated design (e.g. application, scope, process).

### **Domain 4: Research**

- 4A - Conduct research on materials and systems for product selection.
- 4B - Research applicable code requirements.
- 4C - Evaluate product suitability for project conditions.
- 4D - Review key product selections with product representatives.
- 4E - Research applicable product standards.

### **Domain 5: Analysis & Evaluation**

- 5A - Align the specifications to project delivery method and schedule.
- 5B - Evaluate systems, assemblies, and materials being proposed for the project.
- 5C - Verify that systems, assemblies, and materials meet project requirements.
- 5D - Analyze drawings for systems, assemblies, and materials.
- 5E - Evaluate products for code requirements.
- 5F - Assess interior climate conditions for impact on materials and methods (e.g., pool, sauna, clean room).
- 5G - Assess environmental conditions for impact on materials and methods (e.g., weather, humidity, seismic).
- 5H - Evaluate products and systems for constructability and sequencing in project locale.
- 5I - Evaluate and select products for compliance with design intent (e.g., cost, quality, aesthetics).

- 5J - Obtain and evaluate standards and information from technical and professional societies.
- 5K - Review reference standards for appropriateness (e.g., ASTM, AWWA).
- 5L - Verify that necessary reference standards options have been selected.
- 5M - Review and incorporate results of value engineering decisions.
- 5N - Verify proposed construction meets the manufacturer's warranty requirements.

## **Domain 6: Production**

- 6A - Develop outline specifications and project manuals.
- 6B - Translate design narratives into specification (e.g. *Uniformat* to *MasterFormat*).
- 6C - Determine style of specifications for systems, assemblies, and materials (i.e., descriptive, reference standard, proprietary, performance).
- 6D - Translate graphic information presented in drawings into succinct written form.
- 6E - Review the procurement and contracting requirements.
- 6F - Determine what submittals are required to ensure quality installation and adequate project documentation (i.e. record documents).
- 6G - Specify preparation and finishing requirements for the product.
- 6H - Review and comment on specification sections written by others.
- 6I - Prepare and edit specifications sections.
- 6J - Organize project documents according to CSI formats.
- 6K - Prepare documents for publication and distribution.
- 6L - Archive electronic files for version control.

# **EXAM SOURCE MATERIALS**

The Exam is based solely on the documents below:

1. The following CSI works available in the CSI Bookstore: *Construction Specifications Practice Guide (CSPG, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, *Project Delivery Practice Guide (PDPG, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, *MasterFormat Numbers & Titles*, *UniFormat* and *SectionFormat/PageFormat*. The *PDPG, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.*, provides fundamental knowledge for the documentation, administration, and successful delivery of construction projects. You may download copies of *MasterFormat Numbers & Titles*, *UniFormat* and *SectionFormat/PageFormat* when you purchase any CSI Practice Guide. Once purchased, download links will be available on your CSI account dashboard, under My Digital Publications.
2. *A201 General Conditions of the Contract for Construction* by the American Institute of Architects.
3. *C-700 Standard General Conditions of the Construction Contract* by the Engineers Joint Contract Documents Committee.

# **EXAM STUDY RESOURCES**

- **CSI Virtual Peer-Led Study Community**

Candidates who register for the CCS exam have access to an online study community, hosted within the CSI website. This is a space for you to ask questions and learn from each other. Discussion threads and virtual study groups are candidate-driven, meaning they are led by peers who are preparing to sit for the exam during the same cycle. After registering, monitor your email for the invitation that will guide you to this virtual community of candidates preparing for the CCS exam. If you would like to serve as a leader for your study community, please reach out to [volunteer@csinet.org](mailto:volunteer@csinet.org).

- **CSI Specifying Practice Community**

CSI Members enjoy free access to the Specifying Practice Community, accessible under the “Community > All Communities” tab at [csiresources.org](https://www.csiresources.org) or by clicking here: <https://www.csiresources.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=2a83a24b-2704-4da8-860a-8552c3be4df3> (must log in to access). This community serves to bring together professionals from across the globe for the purpose of discussing current and future best practices, sharing questions and ideas, and helping to improve the overall practice of specification writing and building construction information. Community discussions and resources cover a broad range of topics from sharing daily tasks and asking for help, to preparing for CSI’s Certified Construction Specifier (CCS) exam, or peer-driven research on methods and future trends within the industry.

- **CSI Chapter Exam Preparation Offerings**

Some CSI chapters may offer CCS preparation programs and/or study groups. Visit <https://www.csiresources.org/certification/preparation-offerings> and contact your local chapter for information about their offerings or recommendation.



# **CERTIFICATION POLICIES**

Exam content is confidential and is not to be copied, distributed, or otherwise shared.

CSI exam application fees are non-transferable to another individual and are non-refundable. Candidates who do not request a deferral at least six days prior to their exam date or end of the exam cycle, who no-show or otherwise do not sit for the exam, will forfeit all fees. Candidates who then wish to sit for the next exam cycle must re-submit a new application and all required fees.

## **Rescheduling**

To reschedule within the current exam window, contact Prometric via [prometric.com/csi](https://prometric.com/csi) or 1-800-503-8991 to select your new exam date within the current testing window and to pay any applicable rescheduling fee.

# of Days Prior to Your Exam Appointment:	Prometric Rescheduling Fee:
30 days or more	No rescheduling fee
8 – 29 days	\$30 paid to Prometric
7 or fewer days	Rescheduling not permitted / no refund or credit

## **Deferral**

If you have a medical or significant personal emergency, you can consider submitting a request to defer for one cycle. **Deferred exams must be completed within the next exam cycle** (i.e. a spring candidate defers to the next fall exam, and a fall candidate defers to the next spring exam). If a deferred exam is not taken during that timeframe, no refund is provided, and a new application and registration fee will be required to sit for a future exam.

Submit the CSI Deferral Request Form to [csi@csinet.org](mailto:csi@csinet.org) after you have reviewed the policies, process, and fee schedule here: <https://www.csiresources.org/certification/cert-faq>. The Deferral Request Form is located on the above webpage as well.

If you have a scheduled appointment with Prometric, and if a deferral is approved by CSI, you must cancel directly through Prometric via [prometric.com/csi](https://prometric.com/csi) or 1-800-503-8991.

<b>Deferral Fee Schedule</b>		
If an emergency deferral is approved:	CSI Fee:	Prometric Fee:
Registered with no test date scheduled	\$200 CSI member \$275 CSI non-member	\$0 due to Prometric
6 - or more days prior to test date	\$200 CSI member \$275 CSI non-member	\$30 due to Prometric from the Candidate
a) 5 or fewer days before test date, or b) you are a "No Show" for a scheduled exam	Deferral not allowed - Must pay full exam fee for next cycle	

c) you are more than thirty (30) minutes late for the scheduled test start time and are refused admission to test	Deferral not allowed - Must pay full exam fee for next cycle
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## Cancellation

To cancel your exam registration, submit a written request to CSI using the request form. If you have scheduled an appointment at a Prometric Testing Center, it must be cancelled separately through Prometric via [www.prometric.com/csi](http://www.prometric.com/csi) or 1-800-503-8991. Fees may be due to both CSI and Prometric. Please reference the fee schedules below.

<b>Cancellation/Refund Fee Schedule</b>		
	CSI Refund Request:	Prometric Cancellation Fee:
8 or more days prior to test date*	Amount paid less 50% of CSI Exam Fee	\$30 due to Prometric from Candidate
Fewer than 8 days prior to test date	No refund or credit. Full CSI Exam Fee is forfeited.	

\*If no test date has been scheduled, applicant is eligible for a 50% refund if request is received at least 8 days prior to last day of exam window; no refund is provided for cancellations received fewer than 8 days prior to last day of exam window.

Please note: CSI cannot extend the exam cycle for individual candidates, due to the post-exam analysis and scoring process timeframe.

## Retesting

Those who are not successful in passing an exam may retest during the next available exam window. Candidates may not take the exam more than once within an exam window. Retests require a new application and registration fee.

## Results Distribution

Intermittently, all CSI exams will undertake a “passing score” analysis. This means the research to determine the “cut score” (to pass/fail) cannot be determined until after all candidates have taken the exam and the testing window has closed.

Exam items are individually evaluated and those questions (items) that did not perform as expected are analyzed to determine how to score, modify or eliminate. Items are reviewed by a confidential group of subject matter experts (SMEs), CSI members and staff facilitated by a psychometrician, a.k.a. test development specialist.

Once the review is completed, the cut score is set and status reports are sent to individual candidates.

\*\*\*The entire Standard Setting (review and scoring) process takes roughly **6-8 weeks**.

# **You Passed the CCS Exam! WHAT'S NEXT?**

**Celebrate!** CSI will post your name with others who passed the Exam on CSI's CCS Certification webpage. Celebrate with your study buddies and others who are certified!

## **Display the CCS® Certification Mark Digitally and Physically**

Now that you are CCS certified, you may use the CCS certification mark as an indicator of your current knowledge and expertise. After passing the Exam, CSI's digital badge provider, Credly, will email you an invitation to create an account to access your CCS certification digital badge ("CCS Badge") which you can use on your reports, promotions, social media, email signature and more! CSI's certificate and lapel pin provider, The Award Group, will also email you an invitation to claim your complimentary paper certificate and lapel pin.

## **Recertify to Maintain Your Certification**

Your CCS certification tells your colleagues, clients and potential clients that CSI verifies that your knowledge of each CCS Knowledge Domain is up to date. This means that, in order to maintain your CCS certification and to use the CCS certification mark, you must keep up with CCS Knowledge Domain developments.

**Your CCS certification is valid for three years** ("Certification Period") and maintaining your certification is easy:

1. During your Certification Period, participate in at least 24 hours of continuing education related to the CCS domains. This education may include educational seminars offered by CSI, CSI Chapters or Regions, AIA (and other industry associations) sponsored coursework or technical tours and meetings, each related to the AECO industry and CCS professional practice. CSI publishes a continuously-updated library of CSI-approved CCS educational courses in the CSI Learning Library at <https://www.csiresources.org/learning/library>. For each hour of CCS education that you complete, you'll earn a Learning Unit ("LU").
2. Log into your CSI account and record the details of each LU that you earn. If CSI requests, you may be required to provide attendance certificates or other documents that verify you earned that LU.
3. Check your CSI account periodically to ensure that you will have all 24 LUs before the end of your Certification Period.
4. Pay the CCS certification recertification fee online through your CSI account on or before the end of your Certification Period.

**If you do not follow these certification maintenance steps, your CCS certification will lapse and CSI will no longer allow you to use the CCS certification mark or the CCS badge.**

To learn more about maintenance of your CSI Credentials, Learning Unit Guidelines, and how to record your Learning Units, please visit: <https://www.csiresources.org/certification/recertification> and be sure to review all posted policies on the CSI website.

*If you have questions about information on the CSI website or in this Handbook, please contact [certification@csinet.org](mailto:certification@csinet.org).*

# CSI Certification Exam Candidate Checklist

## (Steps to a Successful Exam Experience)

### Before Registering

- ☐ Read the Certification Exam Candidate Handbook for your Exam

### 4 Months Out

- ☐ Register for your exam [on the CSI website](#)
- ☐ Watch for your Authorization To Test (ATT) email (coming from [csi@csinet.org](mailto:csi@csinet.org))
- ☐ Send CSI your [ADA](#) or religious accommodations request, if any
- ☐ [Schedule your exam appointment - https://www.prometric.com/csi](https://www.prometric.com/csi)
- ☐ Confirm your photo ID matches the name you enter upon scheduling
- ☐ Remote Exam? Complete the systems check
- ☐ Receive appointment confirmation email from [donotreply@prometric.com](mailto:donotreply@prometric.com)
- ☐ Engage in CSI's Peer Study Communities
- ☐ Schedule time to study and participate in study groups

### 1 day Before Exam

- ☐ [Confirm your exam appointment - https://proscheduler.prometric.com/scheduling/appointmentsearch](https://proscheduler.prometric.com/scheduling/appointmentsearch)

### Exam Day

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes prior to your appointment
- ☐ Receive notification of completion email from Prometric

\*You may also verify exam completion by visiting: <https://scorereports.prometric.com/>

### 6-8 Weeks After Exam Day

- ☐ Receive results from [ElectronicScoreReport@prometric.com](mailto:ElectronicScoreReport@prometric.com) or visit <https://scorereports.prometric.com/>