

# The Certification Outlook

Connecting you to credentialing resources



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## National Test Center program manager uses certification to increase education value and career opportunities for military community members

**Parker Nielsen – program manager for the National Test Centers and Live Streaming Programs with University of Maryland Global Campus Europe – explains how his test centers help Service members and their families fulfill their career potential by raising awareness of educational opportunities that lead to certification.**



Parker Nielsen, University of Maryland Global Campus Europe

Parker Nielsen had a fortuitous encounter with a professor years ago that changed his educational outlook. Today, he draws from that experience to give back to the military community that he grew up in.

### What attracted you to your current position?

One of the reasons I first took on this role almost two years ago is I wanted to be able to “serve those who serve” by providing opportunities for Service members to educate themselves. My dad worked for the Air Force, and I was a part of the military community growing up, but I wasn’t as focused on education, and because of that, there were times when I didn’t think that I was capable of college-level education.

My entire outlook changed when I went to a welcome night at the University of Maryland Global Campus Asia in Japan, where my family was stationed. During a ten-minute conversation with the professor, he made me believe in myself for the first time. He made me feel valuable, intelligent, and like I could educate myself. Education changed my life, and I want to give other people that opportunity.

### Describe a typical day in your position.

I work with a subject matter expert team that represents each of our five regions throughout Europe, North Africa,

and the Middle East to ensure that our test centers are equipped, that our proctors are certified, and that everything is compliant with our contracts. I also make sure that the people who work in our National Test Centers (NTCs) are fully versed on the list of available credentials because they’re going to be the ones answering the questions of Service members who come into the test center.

My driving force is to help our test centers find ways to market themselves to Service members and their families as an access point for educational opportunities, whether that is a degree program, training, or credentialing – anything that’s going to provide people with an opportunity to educate and better themselves. We do a lot of ground floor, person-to-person marketing, such as hosting a table at on-base bazaars. We put up posters and talk on the Armed Forces Network (AFN) radio to remind people we’re here on base. Our message is, “We’re here for you to help you educate yourself, and these are all the different options that you have to do it.”

## Certification Spotlight

### How do you incorporate certification into your broader educational mission and messaging?

We all need to look for opportunities to work together more in credentialing and educating, and we're excited to be here serving our Service members. Many people don't even know that certification is an option at an NTC. Most of the time, people think of NTCs as a place to take something like a CLEP exam that can work toward a degree – which we definitely support – but we're always trying to emphasize the credentialing part as well because the pairing of degrees and credentials is an advantage over just credentials or just a degree.

When you put those two together you've got a golden pathway. You get more job opportunities and promotion opportunities, both in and out of the military, because future employers will value the academia and rigor that comes from a degree, as well as the additional and continued specialization that comes from earning a certification. So, we show students how they can pair different credentials with their degree programs to benefit their careers. For example, when we're talking with units about relevant courses that we offer at UMGC, we'll also let them know that we've got a National Test Center where they can earn some credits or even a certification, which could possibly increase their promotion points.

### What should Service members be prepared for as their testing day approaches?

The first thing we tell everybody is to double-check their testing times because time zones vary across all our

different test centers. Then contact the NTC to confirm the registration has come through so that we can have their test station ready to go. They should visit the NTC in advance of exam day so they're familiar with the layout and how to get there. If no one else is testing, we'll even walk them through the test center so they know what to expect.

On exam day, we advise them to come in with a clear head and an awareness of what the exam is going to cover. I think a lot of times people think they're already an expert in a field and they underestimate the rigor of the exam, but that rigor is what adds legitimacy to the credential that they're getting. Finally, we always remind people of the nuances that come from testing on a military base. For example, they cannot have their duty phone in the testing room, so if they are on-call for duty that day, they need to reschedule their test.

### What recommendations or words of advice regarding credentialing would you have for transitioning or recently discharged Service members?

Do it. Anything people can do to prepare themselves – whether that is a degree or a credential – is incredibly valuable. A lot of Service members' entire job experience and adult life has been exclusively within the military. When they get out, it's a whole different world. The more that they have leveled up, by taking on degrees and credentials, the more prepared they're going to be, and the more likely they are to find jobs and be set up for success in a better way than they would have been otherwise.

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– Parker Nielsen

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## Certification program updates

The following certification programs are now available CONUS and OCONUS at Pearson VUE test centers located in your US military base education building.



**Alabama Real Estate:** Alabama Real Estate licensure exams are available at select base-sponsored Pearson VUE test centers, both within and outside the state of Alabama. Visit [PearsonVUE.com/AL/RealEstate](https://www.pearsonvue.com/AL/RealEstate) for more information or to register for an exam.



**Air Force Officer Qualification Test (AFOQT):** The AFOQT is a standardized test that is used to measure aptitudes among applicants for officer commissioning programs as well as for selection into specific training programs such as pilot and navigator training. Anyone interested in sitting for the AFOQT must first reach out directly to a recruiter, who will check for eligibility and – upon verification – schedule an exam date for the test-taker. The test is free of charge but is limited to two attempts (three attempts with an approved waiver). Visit [PearsonVUE.com/AFOQT](https://www.pearsonvue.com/AFOQT) for more information or to register for an exam.

### HCLSoftware

**HCL Software Academy:** HCLSoftware Certifications are role-based certifications that enable customers, partners, technology professionals, and enthusiasts to validate their expertise installing, deploying, customizing, developing, and supporting HCLSoftware products. Visit [PearsonVUE.com/HCLSoftwareAcademy](https://www.pearsonvue.com/HCLSoftwareAcademy) for more information or to register for an exam.



**Ping Identity:** Ping Identity Certifications are designed to ensure individuals understand the fundamentals of PingFederate, PingAccess, and PingDirectory, including installation, initial configuration, and other administrator-level tasks needed to successfully work with each. Visit [PearsonVUE.com/Ping](https://www.pearsonvue.com/Ping) for more information or to register for an exam.



**Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (TSBPE):** TSBPE licensure exams are available at select base-sponsored Pearson VUE test centers, both within and outside the state of Texas. Candidates must complete a TSBPE application at <https://vo.licensing.hpc.texas.gov/datamart/mainMenu.do> and receive an Authorization to Test email from Pearson VUE prior to scheduling their exam. Visit [PearsonVUE.com/TSBPE](https://www.pearsonvue.com/TSBPE) for more information or to register for an exam.



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

For a full list of available certifications, visit [PearsonVUE.com/Military/Exams](https://www.pearsonvue.com/Military/Exams).

# 88%

*of survey respondents said they would recommend certification to a friend or colleague.*



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# 67%

*of survey respondents received funding for their training courses.*



2023 Pearson VUE Value of Certification Federal Supplement.

## 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://PearsonVUE.com/military/funding) to learn more about how COOL works in your branch.

**Government Store:** Service members and government employees can shop for competitively priced certification vouchers and learning materials for leading certifications at Pearson VUE's Government Store. [GovStore.PearsonVUE.com](https://GovStore.PearsonVUE.com) offers multi-modal training and testing solutions featuring eLearning, study guides, practice tests, and certification vouchers to help students take the next step in their certification pathway. Visit [GovStore.PearsonVUE.com](https://GovStore.PearsonVUE.com) to see our full product suite of learning, testing, and procurement options.

## Help your military community succeed:

If you are interested in opening a Pearson VUE test center on your installation, contact [DoD@Pearson.com](mailto:DoD@Pearson.com).

**Are you PCSing?** Let us know who the new test center manager is so we can keep them updated on key events and information. Please email [Justin.Berndt@Pearson.com](mailto:Justin.Berndt@Pearson.com) and share details about our new point of contact.

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