

# Why CSCS or NSCA-CPT?

The NSCA Certification Commission® is the only fitness organization to be nationally accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) since 1993.

This means that an unbiased third party (NCCA) has reviewed our Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist® (CSCS®) and NSCA-Certified Personal Trainer® (NSCA-CPT®) certification programs and verified that they are valid and reliable and demonstrate key characteristics of competency requirements for personal trainers and strength and conditioning specialists.

[Click here for information on the NCCA and for an explanation of “accreditation” versus “certification”](#)

## NSCA CERTIFICATION COMMISSION®

The Certifying Body for the National Strength & Conditioning Association

Since the NSCA's inception in 1978, the organization has had a focus on strength training and conditioning. The certification exams focus on the “real-world” responsibilities of personal trainers and strength and conditioning professionals. The exams have been validated; this process signifies that individuals are tested over the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to be competent in their respective professional career areas.



The CSCS and NSCA-CPT credentials have gained the reputation among employers and industry experts as being the most respected and preferred fitness-related credentials.

The exams are considered to be the most difficult in the industry to earn, which is one of the reasons why they are highly respected and why those who have acquired these credentials display a great deal of pride in having earned them. The pass rate for the CSCS exam is 65.5%, and the pass rate for the NSCA-CPT exam is 54.9%.

# Why CSCS or NSCA-CPT?

Taking an exam that is challenging demonstrates your level of commitment to the industry and your career. Passing a challenging exam will help to substantiate to others your competency level and proves that you are indeed qualified to perform the tasks expected of you. Also, by obtaining a difficult-to-obtain credential, you gain instant credibility and gain an edge in the industry over personal trainers and strength and conditioning professionals who have earned a less challenging and less respected certification.

The CSCS and NSCA-CPT certifications are legally defensible. The Scope of Practice for a CSCS or an NSCA-CPT is a legal and professional description of the knowledge, skills and abilities of a CSCS or an NSCA-CPT.

[Click here for the CSCS  
Scope of Practice](#)

[Click here for the NSCA-CPT  
Scope of Practice](#)

The exam development process and exam administration for the CSCS and NSCA-CPT certifications are defensible in a court of law (i.e., the exams are valid and reliable and lack bias).

[Click here for more information about the exam development process](#)

These credentials are helping many professionals achieve their career goals in a number of ways. For example, thousands of athletic trainers, physical therapists, chiropractors, researchers, educators and sport coaches have earned the CSCS credential to highlight an additional or enhanced area of expertise. Also, the NSCA-CPT credential is highly valued and often required for employment at health and fitness facilities and corporate wellness centers throughout the country.

Credential holders have received invitations to write articles in research journals and industry publications, and they are often sought out as speakers at national and international professional conferences.

[Click here to see what some of our certificate holders have to say  
about the CSCS and NSCA-CPT certifications](#)

# Accreditation Versus Certification

## What is the difference between accreditation and certification?

The term “accreditation” usually refers to a measurement of a *program* or *organization’s* performance, while “certification” is usually applied to an evaluation of an *individual’s* competence.

Thus, because the NSCA Certification Commission’s credentials are accredited, a person holding one or both of its designations has the dual recognition of being competently certified as an individual by an organization that also has demonstrated credibility.

## Does having a certification assure competence?

Even the best certification program can only demonstrate that a candidate demonstrated competence at one point and time through an examination process. Maintaining competency is a lifelong challenge, and that is one reason why the NSCA Certification Commission requires that all certified individuals recertify every three years by accumulating and reporting continuing education units.

## Why should I seek a certification that is nationally accredited?

- With over 70 fitness organizations certifying professionals, it is difficult for the public and employers to recognize qualified professionals.
- Because of the growing number of fitness-related credentials, there are concerns that the value of quality credentials may be jeopardized.
- National accreditation is an excellent way to determine whether a certification organization has met nationally-recognized standards of operation.
- National accreditation also lets certificants, employers and the public know “who reviewed your certification” which may be asked by courts, employers and other members of the profession.

## What is the NCCA?



The NCCA is the accreditation body of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), a membership association of certification organizations providing technical and education information concerning certification practices. The NCCA accredits certification organizations that comply with its standards. Organizations have to apply for accreditation, and only those organizations that achieve this recognition are allowed to display the NCCA logo on their promotional material. The purpose of NCCA accreditation is to provide the public the means by which to identify certification programs that reflect competency.

## Is the NCCA an expert on health and fitness?

NCCA accreditation is limited to a review of the structure of a certification program and the process used to measure competency. The NCCA has no expertise in evaluating all of the professional concepts included in a profession’s examination and philosophy. NCCA relies upon a credentialing organization’s job analysis or role delineation to demonstrate an appropriate relationship to a core body of knowledge in a particular discipline. Refer to the “Exam Development” section for a description of the NSCA Certification Commission’s job analyses for the CSCS and NSCA-CPT exams.

**For more information, refer to the NOCA Web site at [www.noca.org](http://www.noca.org) and click on NCCA**

# Scope of Practice

## CSCS Scope of Practice



Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialists (CSCSs) are professionals who apply scientific knowledge to train athletes for the primary goal of improving athletic performance. They conduct sport-specific testing sessions, design and implement safe and effective strength training and conditioning programs and provide guidance regarding nutrition and injury prevention. Recognizing that their area of expertise is separate and distinct, CSCSs consult with and refer athletes to other professionals when appropriate.

## NSCA-CPT Scope of Practice



Personal trainers are health/fitness professionals who, using an individualized approach, assess, motivate, educate and train clients regarding their health and fitness needs. They design safe and effective exercise programs, provide the guidance to help clients achieve their personal health/fitness goals and respond appropriately in emergency situations. Recognizing their own area of expertise, personal trainers refer clients to other health care professionals when appropriate.

# CSCS and NSCA-CPT Exam Development and Administration Process

The NSCA Certification Commission and its independent testing service, Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP), analyzed the job requirements of strength and conditioning and personal training professionals. Through the efforts of the NSCA Certification Commission's Job Analysis Committees and in conjunction with national surveys of people in these professions, the framework for determining the exams' content and relative weighting of job-related content areas was established.

People who work as personal trainers and strength and conditioning professionals were surveyed to determine what they actually do and what they have to know to perform their respective jobs. It is important that the CSCS and NSCA-CPT examinations assess competency in these areas, not the memorization of a textbook or other review materials.

Respected content experts, with the assistance of AMP, prepare the examinations and are responsible for the rigorous nature that serves to discriminate between qualified and unqualified professionals. Each year, these individuals review every examination question and each answer option plus related statistics from every examination.

All of the exam questions pass through multiple reviews by these content experts in strength and conditioning (CSCS Examination Development Committee) and personal training (NSCA-CPT Examination Development Committee). Because of this level of scrutiny and "proofing," the time required for any given question from when it is first written until its first use on an exam is at least 18 months. Also, each exam question MUST have an academic and professional reference that identifies one certain answer as correct and defensible.

Also, after each examination, the comments made about each question are reviewed before the score reports are mailed out. All of these processes are very deliberate and costly. It is this approach to developing the CSCS and NSCA-CPT exams that enabled the NSCA Certification Commission to be accredited through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) for more than 10 years.

“ *In these times of information and education, the NSCA Certification Commission's credentials assure both – that is their real power. To be successful in the fitness industry, the CSCS and NSCA-CPT credentials should be the credentials of choice for every fitness professional.* ”

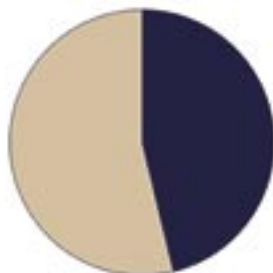
**Juan Carlos Santana, MEd, CSCS,\*D**  
Director, Institute for Human Performance

# What Do Our Certificants Have to Say About the CSCS and NSCA-CPT Credentials?

In an online survey conducted in 2002 where 2,442 individuals responded:



**84% of CSCS certified individuals believed that the CSCS credential helps improve their chances of being hired.**



**46% of CSCS certified individuals that responded believed that the CSCS credential provides greater job security.**



**89% of NSCA-CPT certified individuals believed that the NSCA-CPT credential helps improve their chances of being hired.**



**60% of NSCA-CPT certified individuals that responded believed that the NSCA-CPT credential provides greater job security.**

“*The NSCA credentials help to set you apart from the crowd and give you an edge when competing for a new position. Nowadays, many employers at universities, high schools and fitness centers are looking for the CSCS and NSCA-CPT certifications.*”

**Avery D. Faigenbaum, EdD, CSCS,\*D**  
Associate Professor, Health and Exercise Science  
The College of New Jersey

“*As an internationally recognized consultant, I convince every club owner and manager with whom I consult that the CSCS or the NSCA-CPT credential must be required for a personal trainer to be promoted to the senior level, which entitles them to a higher pay scale and the potential to be promoted to a management position within their organization.*”

**Bob Esquerre, NSCA-CPT**  
International Consulting Director