



# Microsoft Software & Systems Academy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Last updated 3/15/23

## Find your answers

### "I have questions about..."

- [General Program Information](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [MSSA's Technical Learning Paths](#)
- [The Application Process \(+Required Documentation\)](#)
- [Certification Prerequisite \(Pearson Vue IT Specialist\)](#)
- **For our** [SkillBridge/Career Skills Program \(CSP\) Coordinators](#)

### "Something else?"

- Microsoft Software & Systems Academy Asia-Pacific (MSSA-APAC)  
*Type in "[aka.ms/MSSA-APAC-FAQ](https://aka.ms/MSSA-APAC-FAQ)" into any browser address bar*
- Microsoft Software & Systems Academy Europe (MSSA-Europe)  
*Type in "[aka.ms/MSSA-Europe-FAQ](https://aka.ms/MSSA-Europe-FAQ)" into any browser address bar*
- Can't find your answers? Email [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com)

# Table of contents

## General Program Information

- [Is MSSA a full-time program?](#)
- [What are the program prerequisites?](#)
- [What is the Pearson Vue ITS exam?](#)
- [Is MSSA a VA-approved program? Is MSSA a DOD-approved SkillBridge program?](#)
- [Is MSSA paid and/or an internship?](#)
- [What is the cost of MSSA?](#)
- [Does Microsoft cover housing and any other living expenses?](#)
- [Can I use my GI Bill or BAH to cover additional expenses?](#)
- [Can I work/go to school full-time and do the program?](#)
- [Are evening, self-guided/paced, or part-time cohorts offered?](#)
- [I am currently working in IT. Will MSSA provide supplemental training for my job?](#)
- [What level of technical education or experience is needed for MSSA?](#)
- [What should I expect to learn while in the program? Who is this program right for?](#)
- [Does MSSA offer cohorts in different time zones?](#)

## Eligibility

- [Eligibility requirements for Active-Duty applicants](#)
- [Eligibility requirements for Veteran, Guard, or Reserve applicants](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) Do I have to be within 180-days of end of service to apply?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) Are there exceptions to the 180-day rule?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) Can I use my transitional/terminal leave to participate in the program?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) Do I have to be Active-Duty for the entirety of the cohort? What if my end of service/separation date is in the middle of my selected cohort dates?](#)
- [\(Veteran/Guard/Reserve\) Does the 180-day restriction apply to me?](#)
- [\(Veteran/Guard/Reserve\) To qualify, is there a time limitation to when I transitioned out of the service? Is there an age restriction to qualify for MSSA?](#)
- [I am fully disabled; will I qualify for MSSA?](#)
- [Do spouses, relatives, veteran caregivers, and military dependents qualify for MSSA?](#)
- [Do current or past government employees qualify for MSSA?](#)
- [\(Graduates\) As a MSSA graduate, can I apply and participate in another cohort?](#)

## MSSA's Technical Learning Paths

- [What is SCA? What is CSO? What is CAD?](#)
- [What specific topics are covered in each learning path?](#)
- [What careers do these learning paths lead to?](#)
- [Which learning path should I choose?](#)

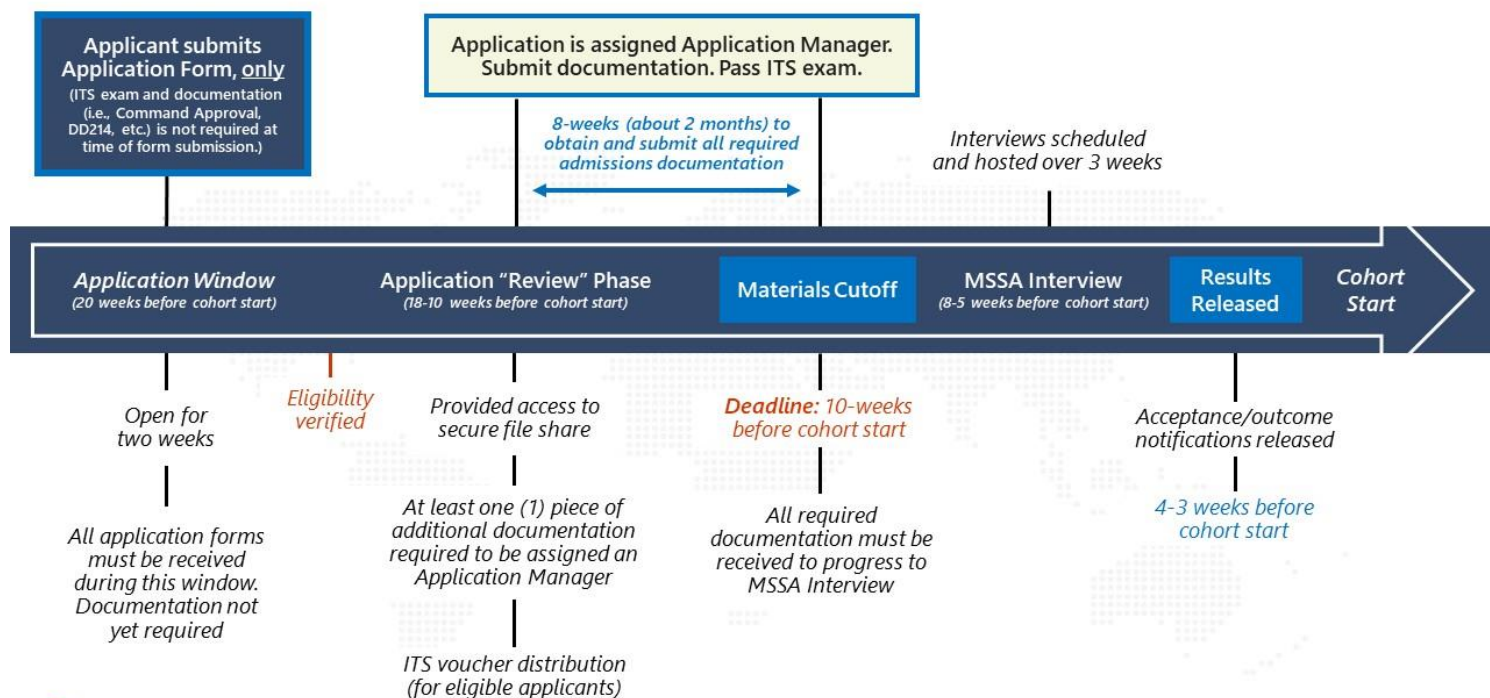
## The Application Process (+Required Documentation)

- [Required documentation by current military status \(Active-Duty, Veteran, Guard, Reserve\)](#)
- [How long does the application/admissions process take?](#)
- [How far in advance can I apply \(the "Application Window"\)? Where do I apply?](#)
- [May I apply to more than one offering at the same time?](#)
- [May I apply to more than one technical learning path for the same cycle?](#)
- [Where do I submit my required documentation? Can I send it via email?](#)
- [How long do I have to submit all my prerequisite documentation \("Materials Cutoff"\)?](#)
- [What do I do once I have all my documentation submitted?](#)
- [What should I expect from the MSSA interview? When are they scheduled?](#)
- [Are interviews conducted virtually or in person?](#)
- [Can you guarantee my spot in a specific cohort?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) How do I find my SkillBridge/Career Skills Program \(CSP\) coordinator?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) For command approval, what does my branch require?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) For command approval, I need a MSSA Point of Contact \(POC\). Who do I list?](#)
- [\(Active-Duty\) I need an acceptance letter for my command approval. How do I get that?](#)

For a larger view of the below graphic, refer to the [final pages](#) of this FAQ.

## The Admissions Process (20-weeks)

*\*All admissions timelines are an approximation and may be subject to adjustments as needed.*



## Certification Prerequisite (Pearson Vue IT Specialist)

**Announcement:** MSSA will be discontinuing use of the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) exam as a prerequisite certification effective with our July 2022 admissions cycle. The retired MTA exam will be replaced with the Pearson Vue ITS (Information Technology Specialist) exam.

- [What is the Pearson Vue ITS exam?](#)
- [How do I know which ITS exam to take?](#)
- [Will MSSA accept any other certification or degree in lieu of the ITS certification?](#)
- [Currently, I do not hold any IT certifications. Can I still apply?](#)
- [Will MSSA be providing an ITS voucher?](#)
- [Will MSSA be providing a CompTIA or MTA voucher?](#)
- [How do I schedule my ITS exam? Can I take it before the application process starts?](#)
- [What happens if I fail or miss my ITS exam? Can I get another voucher?](#)
- [Where can I find ITS study resources? How long should I be studying/prepping?](#)

## For our SkillBridge/Career Skills Program (CSP) Coordinators

- [Is MSSA a full-time program?](#)
- [What are the program prerequisites?](#)
- [Is MSSA a VA-approved program? Is MSSA a DOD-approved SkillBridge program?](#)
- [Is MSSA paid and/or an internship?](#)
- [What is the cost of MSSA?](#)
- [How can I access the MSSA National Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)?](#)
- [Where can I find the MSSA Training Plan?](#)
- [How far in advance can a service member apply? When does the application window open?](#)
- [What are the eligibility requirements for an Active-Duty Service Member?](#)
- [Are there exceptions to the 180-day rule?](#)
- [Can a service member use transitional/terminal leave when counting back their 180 days?](#)
- [Do spouses, veteran caregivers, and military dependents qualify for MSSA?](#)
- [What kind of command approval is appropriate per branch?](#)
- [In order to get command approval, my service member needs an acceptance letter.](#)
- [Where do service members submit their prerequisite documentation?](#)
- [How long do service members have to submit prerequisite documentation?](#)

- End of table of contents -

# Find your answers

## 1. Is MSSA a full-time program?

Yes, MSSA is a full-time program facilitated between the hours of 0800-1700, Monday through Friday. At this time, MSSA has offerings in Pacific or Central Time. Participants do not need to physically reside in the offered time zone to participate but must be able to commit to the time zone for the cohort duration. Self-guided and part-time offerings are not supported. Participants are required to attend class virtually, be attentive, and be available for open discussion, collaboration, and lab work. Some sessions may run later depending on class projects and assignments.

## 2. What are the program prerequisites and eligibility requirements?

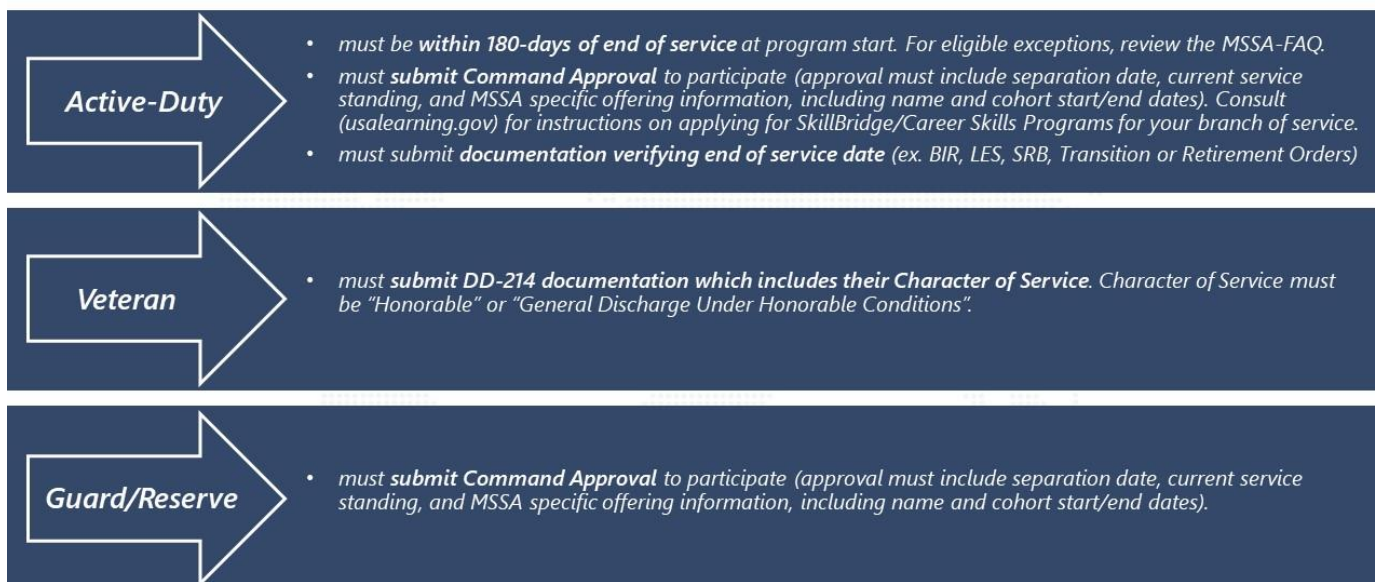
In addition to the graphic, below, please refer to pertinent information relevant to your current military status. Required documentation is based on an applicant's current military status at the time of application.

- [Active-Duty](#)
- [Veteran](#)
- [Guard/Reserve](#)

For a larger view of the below graphic, refer to the [final pages](#) of this FAQ.

### Program prerequisites and eligibility

All Applicants: a current, valid [Pearson Vue IT Specialist certification](#) aligned to their chosen learning path. [See additional details in FAQ.](#)





3. **Is MSSA a VA-approved program? Is MSSA a DOD-approved SkillBridge program?**  
Currently, MSSA is not a VA-approved program.

Yes, MSSA is a DoD-approved SkillBridge program. Our program credentials can be found by searching "MSSA" on the DoD SkillBridge website (<https://skillbridge.osd.mil/organizations.htm>). Further information on the general SkillBridge program can be found at this link (<https://skillbridge.osd.mil/>).

4. **Is MSSA paid and/or an internship?**

MSSA is not a paid training program, nor is it an internship.

5. **What is the cost of MSSA?**

Microsoft made the announcement in late January 2021 that it will be fully funding the MSSA program. Program costs are covered by Microsoft. There is no cost to the service member. For those accepted into the program, eBooks for the topics covered are provided at no cost to the participant. Additional supplemental study materials may be purchased as an out-of-pocket cost, but they are not required by the program.

6. **Does Microsoft cover housing and any other living expenses?**

No, Microsoft does not provide housing or cover costs related to housing and other living expenses while participants are enrolled in the program.

7. **Can I use my GI Bill or BAH to cover additional expenses?**

MSSA does not handle GI Bill and/or BAH release or deliverance. Please contact your local Veteran Affairs (VA) office to inquire about the availability of such benefits while enrolled in the MSSA program.

8. **Can I work/go to school full-time and do the program?**

MSSA is a full-time commitment over 17-weeks. It is highly advised that participants do not work or attend school full time during the cohort cycle (0800-1700, Monday-Friday, instructional time zone).

9. **Are evenings, self-guided/paced, or part-time cohorts offered?**

No. Self-guided, self-paced, evenings, and part-time offerings are not supported.

10. **I am currently working in IT. Will MSSA provide supplemental training for my job?**

MSSA is a training and employment program and is not appropriate to be used as supplemental on-the-job training.

11. **What level of technical education or experience is needed for MSSA?**

MSSA is an entry-level technical training program. Previous technical education or professional experience is not required for admissions consideration.

12. **What should I expect to learn while in the program? Who is this program right for?**

MSSA's learning paths are designed to instill a foundational level of knowledge in IT. MSSA is best suited to individuals looking to transition into the IT field from another profession, those with little knowledge but much passion about IT, and those coming back into the IT field after a long period of absence. MSSA is suitable for entry-level applicants as well as those with prior exposure to IT.

If MSSA does not seem like the right fit for you, we welcome you to check out these other Microsoft training opportunities: [Hiring Our Heroes Fellowships](#) | [LEAP Apprenticeships](#)

Student Veteran Recruiting – [aka.ms/studentveterancareers](https://aka.ms/studentveterancareers),  
[aka.ms/clearedapplications](https://aka.ms/clearedapplications)

Industry Professional Recruiting – [aka.ms/professionals](https://aka.ms/professionals)

13. **Does MSSA offer cohorts in different time zones?**

Yes. At this time, MSSA has offerings facilitated in Pacific or Central Time. Applicants do not need to physically reside in the instructional time zone to participate but must be able to commit to the instructional time zone for the cohort duration.

For information on our separate Asia-Pacific (MSSA-APAC) or Europe (MSSA-Europe) offerings, please type "[aka.ms/MSSA-APAC-FAQ](https://aka.ms/MSSA-APAC-FAQ)" or "[aka.ms/MSSA-Europe-FAQ](https://aka.ms/MSSA-Europe-FAQ)" into any browser address bar. MSSA-APAC is designed to facilitate instruction in a more favorable time zone for US service members serving in the Asia-Pacific region. MSSA-Europe is designed to do the same in the European region.

14. **(Active-Duty) Do I have to be within 180-days of end of service to apply?**

To participate in a DoD SkillBridge/Career Skills Program (CSP), an active-duty service member must be in their last 180 days of service at the program start. For example, if the program start date is July 1, then your end of service date may not be further than July 1 plus 180-days (December 28).

Permissible Exceptions: exceptions will be reviewed and, if verified, approved only if:

- an applicant is engaged in an active medical evaluation board. Applicants will be required to supply a memo from their command confirming their medical board status during the admissions process; or

- an applicant's end of service/separation date is no further than thirty (30) days beyond the 180-day cutoff (210 days from program start). Applicants will be required to supply command approval authorizing this extension beyond 180-days during the admissions process. Service members are allowed to leverage terminal/transitional leave to qualify for this exception (i.e., count back their separation date), however, will also be required to provide command approval authorizing the use of leave. In either case, the service member's actual or adjusted end of service/separation date must remain within the 210 days from program start offered by Microsoft Military Affairs.

If either exception applies to you, you will receive information on next steps and your required documentation during the application process. Please do not send sensitive documentation via email. You will receive instructions on how to provide additional documentation from a MSSA Program Team member.

If neither of these scenarios apply to you, we are unable to grant an exception. MSSA is unable to accept any other waivers or command approval for beyond the thirty (30) day extension already granted by Microsoft Military Affairs. This policy is in place to both be flexible for applying service members and veterans, and to best support the MSSA program's ultimate goal and mission: to get our graduates jobs at the completion of the program. Hiring teams and companies looking for candidates are often seeking immediate start dates after graduation. In order to offer both our graduates and our partners the best avenue for success, we have set our policy to extend no further than 210 days from program start.

15. **(Active-Duty) Do I have to be Active-Duty for the entirety of the cohort? What if my end of service/separation date is in the middle of my selected cohort dates?**

Active-Duty participants do not need to remain in active service for the entirety of the cohort duration unless stipulated by their chain of command (i.e., via mandatory contract extension). Microsoft Military Affairs and the MSSA Program Team are not involved in setting policy on this matter; if you have additional questions, please contact your chain of command, directly.

Many past graduates of MSSA have transitioned off of active service during the cohort cycle. However, please note that admissions requirements will be based on the applicant's military status at the time of application. For example, if you will transition off of active service during the cohort cycle, your admissions requirements and documentation requested will be based and processed on your active-duty status at the time of application, not your future status as separated during the cohort cycle.



**16. (Active-Duty) How do I find my SkillBridge/Career Skills Program (CSP) coordinator?**

Consult with your local Transition Office or Education Office for service specific SkillBridge/Career Skills Program (CSP) application and enrollment guidance. If you are deployed or at a remote installation and do not have a local coordinator, a request form can be submitted to SkillBridge for assistance.

MSSA program team members are not SkillBridge or CSP points of contact. Please do not list these team members as your SkillBridge or CSP representative on your application form or command approval documentation. This includes members of the MSSA admissions team, including, but not limited to:

- [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com) (our program's general alias)
- Eric zu Hone, Microsoft Military Affairs Sr. Program Manager
- Beth Jarvis, Microsoft Military Affairs Sr. Engagement Manager (East)
- Matt Brogdon, Microsoft Military Affairs Sr. Engagement Manager (West)
- Quynh Kennedy, Microsoft Military Affairs (admissions team)
- Members of the MSSA Career Development Manager (CDM) Community, such as: Douglas Woodruff, Jen Allison, and others.

**17. (Active-Duty) For command approval, what does my branch require?**

MSSA requires authorization from the appropriate level of command for an applicant to participate in the program. Our program title "Microsoft Software and Systems Academy" must be specifically stated. In addition, the correct cohort start, and end dates must be clearly outlined. Please note that MSSA is not an internship.

MSSA directs service members to check with their local Career Skills Program (CSP)/SkillBridge or Education Office to ensure they have the correct paperwork for their location. Many branches and locations have specific guidelines.

Some common command approval formats we have received include:

- Air Force: Vetting Checklist and/or SkillBridge packet
- Army: CSP Packet and/or Soldier Participation Memorandum
- Marines: SkillBridge Packet, to include vetting checklist
- Navy: CHIT, Special Request/Authorization form, or Command Memo

Please note: if the documentation states that something is attached or enclosed (such as a vetting checklist), the service member must ensure to upload all enclosures.

**18. (Active-Duty) For my command approval, I need a MSSA point of contact. Who do I**

**list?**

Company Name: Microsoft

Address: One Microsoft Way, Redmond, Washington, 98052

Point of Contact: Eric zu Hone

Email Address: [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com)

**19. (Active-Duty) I need an acceptance letter for my command approval. How do I get that?**

Microsoft and MSSA cannot supply an acceptance or offer letter until an applicant has been accepted. We understand some transition offices may be unwilling to sign off until an acceptance or offer letter is received. Should an active-duty applicant be offered a seat in the program, their full acceptance will be contingent on the completion of any signatures required on their Command Approval documentation.

We advise applicants to supply us with the portion of their Command Approval package with their command's signature. This can be in the form of a Command Memo on official letterhead stating that they are allowed to participate in MSSA should they be accepted. This memo must include our program name and the correct cohort dates signed off on by their chain of command.

Applicants will be able to continue in the admissions process with only their command signatures but completed documentation must be returned to the MSSA program team no later than 1 week after an Acceptance Letter is sent (if extended acceptance).

**20. (Veteran/Guard/Reserve) Does the 180-day restriction apply to me?**

No. The 180-day eligibility requirement and related information applies to Active-Duty program applicants, only.

**21. (Veteran/Guard/Reserve) To qualify, is there a time limitation to when I transitioned out of the service? Is there an age restriction to qualify for MSSA?**

No, there is no age restriction or limitation on how long an individual has been out of the service to qualify for MSSA.

**22. I am fully disabled; will I qualify for MSSA?**

Qualifications for disabled Active Duty, veterans, retired military, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserve members will be the same as the qualifications previously mentioned above. MSSA evaluates candidates equally based on the required documentation submitted and via an interview process. Reasonable accommodations and modifications can be made within the program's means. Accepted applicants are

encouraged to start accommodation requests prior to the cohort start date.

**23. Do spouses, relatives, veteran caregivers, and military dependents qualify for MSSA?**

No. MSSA is available to Active-Duty service members, veterans, retirees, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserve members, only. Military spouses, relatives, caregivers, and dependents do not qualify to apply for MSSA.

**24. Do current or past government employees qualify for MSSA?**

No. MSSA is available to Active-Duty service members, veterans, retirees, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserve members, only.

**25. (Graduates) As a MSSA graduate, can I apply and participate in another cohort?**

No. MSSA is excited to have you as a graduate of our program and would like to provide the same opportunity to others who are new to MSSA.

**26. What is SCA? What is CSO? What is CAD?**

SCA stands for "Server & Cloud Administration". CSO stands for "Cybersecurity Operations". CAD stands for "Cloud Application Development". Information on the MSSA technical learning paths can be found at

<https://military.microsoft.com/mssa/choose-your-learning-path/>

**27. What specific topics are covered in each learning path?**

Below are the general syllabi for our offered learning paths.

- Server & Cloud Administration (SCA)
  - PowerShell Scripting
  - Networking
  - Identity and Active Directory
  - Windows Server/Windows Server Hybrid administration
  - Azure Administration
  
- Cybersecurity Operations (CSO)
  - Windows and Linux Server Core Technologies
  - CompTIA Security+ and CySA+
  - Azure Security Fundamentals
  - Azure Administration
  - Azure Security Technologies
  - Security Operations

- Cloud Application Development (CAD)
  - Programming in C#
  - Transact-SQL
  - HTML5/CSS3/JavaScript programming
  - ASP.NET Core MVC application development
  - Azure development

28. **What careers do these learning paths lead to?**

MSSA graduates have been hired into a variety of IT roles including software developer, service engineer, support engineer, IT/helpdesk, program manager, and more. We encourage you to explore the Microsoft Careers page to learn about various professions available to job seekers in tech (<https://careers.microsoft.com/professionals/us/en>).

29. **Which learning path should I choose?**

Career needs and personal interests are unique to every individual. We recommend that you research the topics and career potential for each learning path before deciding CAD, SCA or CSO. Some aspects to consider are personal interests, job availability, experience required, location, salary, promotion potential, and job flexibility.

30. **What is the Pearson Vue ITS exam?**

**Announcement:** MSSA will be discontinuing use of the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) exam as a prerequisite certification effective with our July 2022 admissions cycle. The retired MTA exam will be replaced with the Pearson Vue ITS (Information Technology Specialist) exam.

The Pearson VUE Information Technology Specialist (ITS) certification is an entry-level credential that validates fundamental technology skills and knowledge among students and job seekers who are pursuing a career in technology. All applicants must provide a current, valid Pearson Vue IT Specialist certification aligned to their chosen learning path.

31. **How do I know which ITS exam to take?**

Each MSSA technical learning path requires a specific ITS exam or certification. Below are the approved corresponding certifications:

- Server & Cloud Administration – Pearson VUE ITS-[Networking](#)
- Cybersecurity Operations – Pearson VUE ITS-[Networking](#)
- Cloud Application Development – Pearson VUE ITS-[Software Development](#)

**32. Will MSSA accept any other certification or degree in lieu of the ITS certification?**

To keep equity amongst our candidates, it is required that each candidate take the corresponding ITS exam to their desired learning path (or) currently hold one of the certifications on the approved list, below, in correspondence with their desired technical learning path. Microsoft and MSSA do not issue exam vouchers for the below certifications.

- For SCA, alternative certifications accepted:
  - CompTIA Net+ or CompTIA Sec+
  - MTA 98-366: Networking Fundamentals
  
- For CSO, alternative certification accepted:
  - CompTIA Net+ or CompTIA Sec+
  - MTA 98-366: Networking Fundamentals
  
- For CAD, alternative certification accepted:
  - MTA 98-361: Software Development Fundamentals

The Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) is retiring as a certification exam but will still be honored as an approved alternate certification to meet the MSSA prerequisite (as defined by learning path) if already held. MSSA no longer issues vouchers for this certification exam, nor are vouchers still publicly available for purchase.

**33. Currently, I do not hold any IT certifications. Can I still apply?**

Yes. MSSA will provide eligible applicants who have applied to a specific MSSA program offering and who are engaged with an Application Manager with training material to help you prepare for your Pearson VUE ITS exam.

**34. Will MSSA be providing an ITS voucher?**

Yes. Eligible applicants who have applied to a specific MSSA program offering and are engaged with an Application Manager will receive one (1) Pearson VUE ITS exam voucher and one (1) ITS exam training key for exam preparation. Eligible applicants are those who do not already hold an alternate certification accepted as part of the program prerequisites.

**35. Will MSSA provide vouchers for CompTIA or MTA certifications?**

No. Microsoft and MSSA do not issue exam vouchers for these certifications.



36. **How do I schedule my ITS exam? Can I take it before the application process starts?**  
Eligible applicants who have already applied to a specific MSSA program offering and are engaged with an Application Manager will receive exam scheduling instructions along with your ITS voucher and training materials. Eligible applicants are those who do not already hold an alternate certification accepted as part of the program prerequisites.

If a prospective applicant wants to prepare and schedule their IT Specialist exam before the MSSA Application window opens, they can go to the Pearson Vue website to purchase the ITS learning courseware and purchase and schedule their ITS exam. Service members and veterans may be eligible for Pearson Vue ITS exam voucher through VA or Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) programs. For more information, visit (<https://home.pearsonvue.com/Military/Test-takers.aspx>).

37. **What happens if I fail or miss my ITS exam? Can I get another voucher?**  
The ITS voucher is limited to one (1) per person through MSSA and Microsoft Military Affairs. Expired, lost, or stolen exam vouchers will not be replaced. Applicants may choose to purchase a second voucher at their own expense.

38. **Where can I find ITS study resources? How long should I be studying/prepping?**  
Prospective applicants may go to the Pearson Vue website to purchase the ITS learning courseware. If you choose not to purchase ITS learning courseware, you can view the exam objectives by going to the following links and search for training resources online:

- Server & Cloud Administration – Pearson Vue ITS-[Networking](#)
- Cybersecurity Operations – Pearson VUE ITS-[Networking](#)
- Cloud Application Development – Pearson Vue ITS-[Software Development](#)

Everyone's individual learning pace and style is different. There is no set study timeframe that works for everyone. On average, plan for 30-50 hours of preparation to successfully pass the exam. Actual hours depend on your current knowledge of the technology and your personal pace to learn and retain new material. Begin studying as soon as possible and learn the material to best of your own abilities. Please note, the resources alone do not guarantee a passing score, and it is highly recommended that you find additional study aids that work best for your learning style.

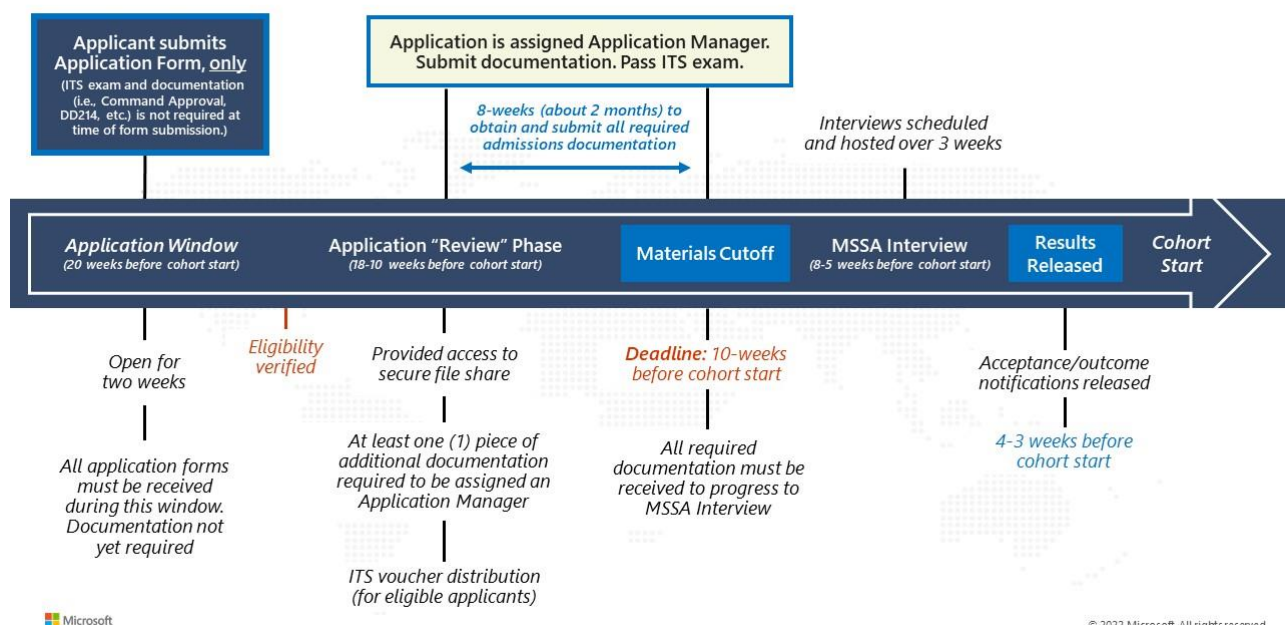
39. **How long does the application/admissions process take?**  
The admissions process, from start to finish, spans 20 weeks (roughly 5 months). This involves the following milestones, also visualized in the graphic, below.

- 20 weeks before cohort start – *Application window opens*
- 18 weeks before cohort start – *Application window closes*
- 18-10 weeks before cohort start – *Applications are reviewed/processed*
- 10 weeks before cohort start – *Documentation deadline (“Materials Cutoff”)*
- 8-5 weeks before cohort start – *MSSA interviews scheduled and hosted*
- 4-3 weeks before cohort start – *Acceptance/outcome notifications released*
- 0 weeks before cohort start – *Program orientation for accepted enrollees*
- **Cohort starts.**

For a larger view of the below graphic, refer to the [final pages](#) of this FAQ.

### The Admissions Process (20-weeks)

*\*All admissions timelines are an approximation and may be subject to adjustments as needed.*



40. **How far in advance can I apply (the “Application Window”)? Where do I apply?**  
 The application form for a MSSA program offering opens approximately 20 weeks (roughly 5 months) before the cohort start date. This is known as the “Application Window”. The application window remains open for 2 weeks, only. All application forms for that unique program offering must be received within those 2 weeks. Early or late submissions outside of this window are not accepted.

During the Application Window, applicants may reach the application form by typing in “aka.ms/MSSAapplication” into any browser address bar. When there is no active application window open for an MSSA program offering, this site will prompt you to check back when the next application window is scheduled to open for an upcoming offering.

During the application window, the MSSA application form is the only element required for submission. Additional required documentation will be requested for upload via a secure file share location in the weeks that follow the end of the application window. Please do not send additional and sensitive documentation via email to [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com) or via a personal file share platform (OneDrive, Google Docs, etc.). Please only submit additional documentation via the secure file share location as directed by an Application Manager after the application window has closed.

**41. May I apply to more than one offering at the same time?**

Yes. An applicant may apply to more than one program start season (“offering”) at the same time (ex. July 2022 and October 2022 in parallel). Should an applicant be extended an offer of acceptance into an offering, they will be requested to elect to claim their acceptance, closing any other parallel applications, or deny their acceptance, which would allow other parallel applications to remain in process.

Each program’s start season represents a unique application process, meaning a separate application form must be submitted during the relevant application window. Applicants may not roll their submission over between application windows automatically, nor are their applications given priority consideration.

Applicants who have applied to multiple offerings in parallel must ensure they are aware of offering specific timelines and milestones. Submissions will be considered unique and reviewed individually against the specific timelines and requirements for each offering.

**(Active Duty)** For Active-Duty applicants applying to more than one offering in parallel, a unique Command Approval packet must be submitted for each program offering; the same documentation will not be accepted for both processes. The Command Approval memo must include your date of separation, current service standing, correct program dates (unique to specific offering), and the unique MSSA offering name (i.e., MSSA July 2022, MSSA October 2022).

**42. May I apply to more than one technical learning path for the same cycle?**

No. Applicants may not apply to multiple technical learning paths within the same program offering admissions cycle. Applicants must elect their chosen pathway at the time of submitting their application form.

**43. Where do I submit my required documentation? Can I send it via email?**

Additional required documentation will be requested for upload via a secure file share location in the weeks that follow the end of the application window. Please do not send additional and sensitive documentation via email to [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com) or via a personal file share platform (OneDrive, Google Docs, etc.). Please only submit additional documentation via the secure file share location as directed by an Application Manager after the application window has closed.

**44. How long do I have to submit all my prerequisite documentation (“Materials Cutoff”)?**

All documentation, including (if applicable) Command Approval, DD-214, Pearson Vue ITS certification, or other requested information, must be received no later than 10 weeks before cohort start. This is known as the “Materials Cutoff” deadline. If all required documentation is not received by this date, the application will be closed, and the applicant will not be progressed to the MSSA interview.

The documentation deadline cannot be extended. We strongly encourage applicants to upload documentation as they have it available, not to wait to upload everything at once. Documentation received too close to Materials Cutoff may not have enough time for processing, especially if further applicant action is required. Applications will not be assigned an Application Manager until at least 1 piece of documentation has been provided.

**45. What do I do once I have all my documentation submitted?**

After all additional documentation has been validated, the next step is the MSSA interview. Interviews will be scheduled and hosted after Materials Cutoff, roughly 5-8 weeks before cohort start. Your application manager will confirm your eligibility and readiness to progress to interview via email during the admissions review process. If you have submitted your documentation and received eligibility verification from your application manager well in advance of Materials Cutoff, sit tight – you will be reached out to with further information on interview scheduling after the documentation deadline passes.

**46. What should I expect from the MSSA interview? When are they scheduled?**

The interview is an opportunity for MSSA team members to get to know you. It is not a technical interview, nor do interviewees need to prepare to answer technical questions. Questions are geared to determine if you are the right candidate for the program and to learn about your interests and passions (including for IT). The interview is also your chance to see if the program is a good fit for you, so feel free to ask questions during

it, as well.

MSSA interviews are scheduled and hosted roughly 5-8 weeks before cohort start. For detailed information on the admissions milestones and timeline, refer to our [informational graphic](#).

**47. Are interviews conducted virtually or in person?**

Interviews are 100% virtual, hosted on Microsoft Teams.

**48. Can you guarantee my spot in a specific cohort?**

No. An application does not guarantee acceptance into any MSSA program offering. Your application will be considered equally amongst the pool of applicants for each unique offering. Your preferences (such as instructional time zone) will be considered but cannot be guaranteed. If you are extended and claim an offer of acceptance, you will be expected to commit to the live instructional schedule outlined in your acceptance notification.

**49. How can I access the MSSA National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?**

The MSSA National MOU is not something the Microsoft Military Affairs team can distribute. As a Career Skills Program (CSP)/SkillBridge Coordinator, you should be able to access this document through the DoD SkillBridge site. Please visit: DoD SkillBridge - Authorized SkillBridge Organizations ([uslearning.gov](https://uslearning.gov)) and search for "MSSA."

**50. Where can I find the MSSA Training Plan?**

A high-level training plan can be provided to the service member through our [MSSAops@microsoft.com](mailto:MSSAops@microsoft.com) email. If you, as the Career Skills Program (CSP)/SkillBridge Coordinator, need a more specific and detailed resource, please email us directly to receive the Microsoft Confidential MSSA Lesson Plan. Detailed training plans cannot be given directly to service members as acceptance is not guaranteed at the time of application.

- End -