

MANEUVERING THE MADNESS OF CYBER AND ESI EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

Step one: Get the basics quickly, and stay ahead of the curve professionally.

BY JARED COSEGLIA

Education, and re-education, will be a critical consideration and expenditure for mobilizing a career and retaining staff in e-discovery and cybersecurity over the next several years. Many hiring managers who have precious little training budget but who boast an ambitious, eager-to-grow staff find themselves unsure which certification training to invest in.

There are many factors to consider, both as an individual or a company, when examining certification programs and plotting professional development tracks. Variables like pass/fail rates, preparation to completion time, local versus virtual learning centers, product knowledge versus process knowledge and outplacement success stories all come into play in an attempt to unify the radical divergences in educational opportunities available in today's cyber/ESI landscapes.

Getting the basics and getting them quickly to stay competitive and relevant in either e-discovery or cybersecurity can be done. Three certifying bodies stand out as both educational (process) and vocational (product) outliers that categorically qualify as industry-standard certifications and ones that can be achieved within a year's time or less: CEDS (Certified E-Discovery Specialist), GIAC (Global Information Assurance Certification) and RCA (Relativity Certified Administrator) programs.

CEDS

ACEDS (the Association of Certified E-Discovery Specialists), a BARBRI professional association, is a non-tool-specific educational certification program and widely accepted as the only e-discovery educational foundation. "The core purpose of ACEDS is to educate and elevate those desiring

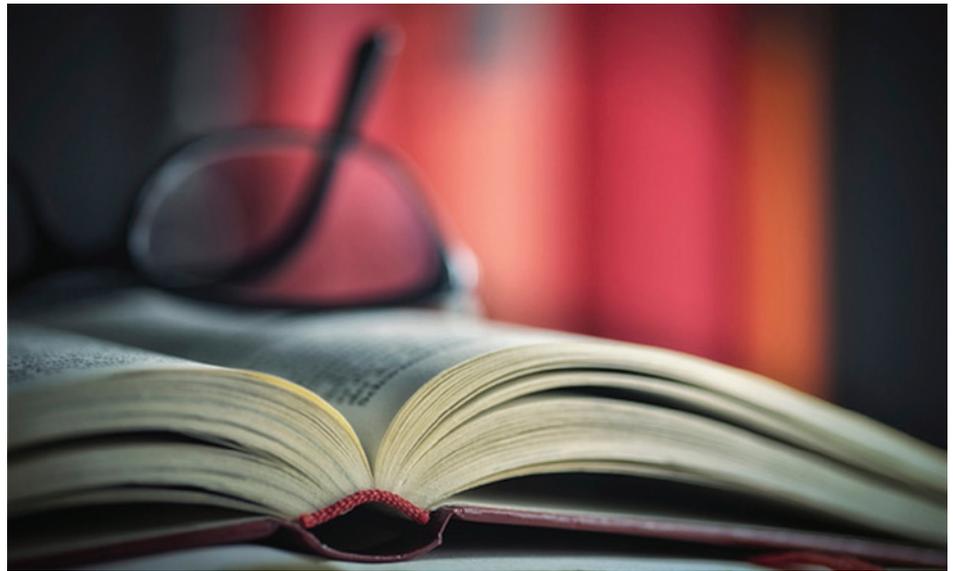


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to validate their skills and knowledge in the e-discovery space," says Mary Mack, executive director of ACEDS. The success of this mission statement is validated in testimony from Xavier Paredes, CEDS holder, who states, "Before I earned my CEDS certification, I frequently relied on my manager for advice on the best approach for completing the attorneys' requests."

The CEDS program requires a biannual recertification, which is aimed at keeping everyone current and also connected. Mack continues, “We work diligently to unite our e-discovery community—both members and affiliate partners—and provide ongoing education, mentoring and networking through our local chapters, which can be found globally.” ACEDS’ mission is not just education, but also social networking and professionalization of a community. Participation in ACEDS is meant to be ongoing and intended to cultivate careers over long periods of time by providing timely resources for professional development.

One example of such a resource is a monthly webinar hosted by Kaylee Walstad, director of strategic partnerships at ACEDS, the last Thursday of each month entitled “**Ask The Expert: Burning Career Questions.**” Each webinar features four polls that then inspire questions and answers from its attendees, who range from 80 to 200 listeners on any given day. One of the questions always centers on certifications. When the question was asked on May 25 what certification program participants were pursuing, 42.9 percent of attendees marked RCA while 28.6 percent marked ACEDS. On April 27, 58.9 percent responded ACEDS while 23.6 percent answered



RCA and 11.7 percent answered CISSP.

SANS/GIAC

While the **CISSP** (Certified Information Systems Security Professional) is considered by many to be the “gold standard” in cybersecurity certification, it requires five years of relevant work history for accreditation. For the purposes of a speedier transfer of knowledge, and for options that provide more nuanced education within the cyber continuum of study, the body of **GIAC certifications** are the logical, most voluminous and most widely accepted accreditations in the world.

The GIAC community boasts over 30 (soon to be 34+) cybersecurity certifications based on the thinking that “broad, general InfoSec certifications are no longer enough.” Its vast portfolio of certs include specialization in penetration testing (GCIH, GPEN), incident

response (GCFA, GCFE, GNFA) and even advanced smartphone forensics (GASF) and the law of data security (GLEG). In the future, expect SOC (Security Operation Center) management training and certifications from SANS and GIAC. For professionals looking for a road map of GIAC certs and how to navigate where they fit in the ecosystem, check out **this infographic** from the SANS Institute.

SANS is the exclusive training resource responsible for grooming talent toward any and all GIAC certifications. Scott Cassity, who has been managing director at SANS for half a decade, recognizes “the complexity of navigating the GIAC certification options” but also believes firmly “that’s the way the market is headed—cyber specialization” and that SANS training and GIAC certifications “mirrors the rapidly changing and increasingly nuanced

educational needs of cyber professionals.”

For those interested in training through SANS, expect to roll up your sleeves. Cassity states that “one of the hallmarks of SANS is the very deep hands-on training.” SANS and GIAC are considered more broadly educational than product-specific. They focus on “using open source technology,” though they have some product-specific certifications like the GCWN (Certified Windows Security Administrator).

SANS and GIAC have focused on the technical practitioners needs but has seen significant uptick in companies (law firms, corporations, and service providers developing workforce training and certification programs for their staff in various disciplines, many of these companies start their programs with the GSEC (GIAC Security Essentials) and GCIH (GIAC Incident Handling), which, according to Cassity, are two of the “most popular and widely attained certifications in the GIAC family.”

kCura’s Relativity Certifications

Five years ago, having the RCA (Relativity Certified Administrator) credential meant an instant increase in compensation. Now, it is quickly becoming the baseline certification for consideration when changing jobs or looking

for vertical mobility within your current employer. It is the only vocational, tool-specific certification that holds such unquestionable value in the e-discovery community. (EnCE, aka Guidance’s forensic EnCase Certification, is likely a close second and something discussed in a future article.)

It can be argued that Relativity’s tool dominance in the space is directly attributable to the quality and caliber of its certification program. George Orr, vice president of customer success and support at kCura, states, “We invest significantly in our Relativity certification programs because we want them to have real meaning for our users, and we continuously update the programs to keep them challenging.” Many professionals in the space have confessed that they did not pass their RCA exam on the first try! Orr goes on to admit that “the percentage of users who pass the Relativity Certified Administrator (RCA) program on their first try isn’t very high, but those who do pass it are able to prove that they fully understand Relativity’s capabilities” and have unequivocally demonstrated “the technical aptitude, experience and training required to maximize the software’s flexibility.”

Orr remarks that the RCA is “a mark of distinction” and that “by achieving the RCA, users stand out in their field and make their organizations more competitive.” It’s true—but there are more and more professionals saturating the marketplace each day with the RCA and the future mark of distinction in this vertical will be in the more nuanced **advanced certifications** offered by kCura. Of particularly increasing value for job seekers and service providers are the Relativity Analytics Specialist (RAS), the Relativity Infrastructure Specialist (RIS) and soon the Relativity Processing Specialist (RPS).

In the future, one might expect a certification around kCura’s cloud offering, RelativityOne. Additionally, kCura and Guidance Software recently announced a strategic partnership creating a “connector” between EnCase and RelativityOne. Among other things, the connector promises to “eliminate the creation of loadfiles, [allow for] stealth collection and enable mapping and transfer of native files and metadata seamlessly into Relativity workspaces.” This partnership will give professionals with dual EnCE and RCA a significant advantage if adopted widely in the e-discovery community.