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The Exam

The ISP exam has 110 questions that much be answered in 120 minutes. There are 100 mandatory questions that form the core of the exam. All Candidates complete those questions. An additional 10 questions are on electives, with 4 elective areas available, which are COMSEC/TEMPEST, Counterintelligence, Intellectual Property, and OPSEC. Two electives must be chosen, 5 questions each.

The ISP exam has a coverage which is highly extensive - in fact so extensive that I wouldn't recommend taking the exam until you are fully drilled on the relevant topics. A major focus of the exam is on the NISPOM (National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual). There are many terms and definitions covered by this manual that are unknown to those hands-on security practitioners.

Many ISP candidates are experienced professional who have been in the field of security for years, that they know most of the practical how-tos, and all they need is to learn the principles, concepts and science that are behind the essential security techniques. Going through all the reference material officially listed would be quite overwhelming for these busy professionals.

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