Cisco Master Security Specialization

Q. **What is a Master Specialization?**

A. A Cisco® Master Specialization recognizes partners with the greatest capability in a given technology area or architecture (Collaboration, Security, or Data Center). To achieve a Master Specialization, your company must:

- Achieve the Advanced-level architecture specialization in that technology

- Meet stringent requirements that demonstrate Master-level capabilities

- Establish a customer success track record in the following areas: selling skills and personnel investments, training, a demonstration of your company's capabilities, and customer references to prove you have a reputable practice

As a Master Specialized Partner, you must have effective IT service management processes across the Cisco lifecycle phases (prepare, plan, design, implement, operate, and optimize) and follow Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) best practice guidelines. You must also comply with an onsite audit requirement to validate your technical and services capabilities.

Master Specialized Partners are preferred partners because of their proven skills and established practice.

Q. **What is the Master Security Specialization?**

A. The Master Security Specialization recognizes in-depth security technology skills. You will need to demonstrate customer success in selling, deploying, and providing services for more sophisticated, value-added Cisco security solutions. You can achieve a Master Security Specialization regardless of certification level and qualify for additional financial incentives, such as Cisco Value Incentive Program (VIP) rebates.

Q. **Why should my company apply for the Master Security Specialization?**

A. Master Security Specialized Partners are recognized as the go-to experts in the security space. Additionally, there are financial benefits and go-to-market support to help enhance your company's profitability.

Cisco Master Security Specialization

Q. How does the Master Security Specialization differentiate me from other partners that specialize in security?

A. The Master Security Specialization goes beyond just the offerings in the security portfolio. It indicates that you have the highest level of Cisco security knowledge and expertise and is validated by a more vigorous assessment of your capabilities. Master Security Specialized Partners receive benefits such as VIP and Teaming Incentive Program (TIP) incentives that are not available outside the specialization framework.

Q. What are the requirements for the Master Security Specialization?

A. Master Security Specialized Partners must meet a number of prerequisites and requirements that verify their depth of knowledge and established security practices. These include relationships with technology ecosystem partners and practices with security industry leaders. In addition, you will need to have customer references and pass an onsite internal audit. You can find details about accepted technology ecosystem partners and certification levels on the Master Security Specialization website at www.cisco.com/go/mastersecurity.

Q. What's involved in the Master Security Specialization audit?

A. A partner who meets specific requirements and successfully participates in a third-party audit can attain one or more of the Master Specializations.

The audit is based on industry-standard ITIL requirements. Partners need to demonstrate their ability to address customer-specific business problems with Cisco solutions. The product demonstrations are meant to support the overall business solution and are part of the grading criteria for success.

Q. How do I get details about the prerequisites for the Master Security Specialization?

A. You will find the full requirements and details for application at www.cisco.com/go/mastersecurity.

Q. How do I provide evidence of third-party certifications, specializations, and relationships with my company or personnel?

A. As part of the Certification and Specialization Application tool (CSApp) application process, your company is asked to upload a copy of any relevant third-party certifications or specializations. Evidence can be provided in formats such as Microsoft Word, PDF, etc. and can be for individuals or the company, depending on the specific requirement.

Q. Where do I go to apply for the Master Security Specialization?

A. You can find the online application in CSApp at www.cisco.com/go/csapp.

Q. Are Master Security Specialized Partners allowed to use dCloud for their demonstration during the audit?

A. Cisco dCloud, the Cisco next-generation demonstration platform, has been approved for the Master Security Specialization only. To get information on other architectures, please contact your Cisco partner account manager (PAM) or representative. For more information on dCloud, visit www.dcloud.cisco.com.

Q. What are the entry and exit criteria for VIP eligibility?

A. The Master Security Specialization will qualify as an "exit only" criterion. Future VIP periods have not yet been defined but will be evaluated based on the ongoing partner application and audit scheduling process to determine if the "exit only" criterion will be extended.

Q. I have technical questions regarding the requirements for the Master Security Specialization, such as the demonstration checklist, practice areas, proof of value, etc. Where do I get help?

A. For questions regarding technical requirements, please send an email to master-security@cisco.com.

CISCO

Q. I am unable to access the CSApp tool. What should I do?

A. To get access to the CSApp tool, you must be a registered Cisco.com user and your name must be associated with your partner company.

Q. I am having difficulties with CSApp and/or my application process. Where do I get help?

A. For questions regarding requirements or program details, please work with your PAM. For technical problems related to applications or renewals through CSApp, please contact Cisco's Customer Service Team at www.cisco.com/go/CS.

Q. Can a partner be both a Cisco Gold Certified Partner and a Cisco Master Specialized Partner at the same time? How would a company benefit by qualifying for both?

A. Investment in the Gold Certification and a Master Specialization demonstrates both your broad and deep knowledge in selling and deploying Cisco solutions. The Gold Certification demonstrates breadth across multiple technologies, while a Master Specialization recognizes deep knowledge of a specific technology. Partners who invest in a Master Specialization can participate in Cisco partner incentive programs. A Master Specialized Partner has the ability to earn additional incentives based on specific participation criteria.

Q. How long does it typically take for a company to become a Cisco Master Specialized Partner?

A. From the time you submit an application, it generally takes anywhere from 30 to 60 days to complete the full cycle. The time frame can vary depending on the schedule of your resources, as well as the auditor's availability.

Q. There are three Cisco Master Specializations: Collaboration, Security, and Cloud Builder. Are the qualification requirements the same for each? If not, how do they differ?

A. The ITIL foundation is core across all three Master Specializations, yet each one has its own specific set of requirements.