

# NCSO<sup>®</sup> FAQ



## 1. What are the benefits of the NCSO<sup>®</sup> certification?

Many employers recognize the NCSO<sup>®</sup> Certificate as a value-added asset associated with someone who has an interest in pursuing a career in health and safety within the construction industry.

- Meeting the requirements of the NCSO<sup>®</sup> Certificate demonstrates a person's skill level, education, and work effort. The NCSO<sup>®</sup> will be recognized province-to-province as having met the requirements of a National Standard.
- An NCSO<sup>®</sup> is qualified to serve as COR<sup>®</sup> Internal Auditors and certified Construction Health & Safety Representative.
- The certification will make an NCSO<sup>®</sup> more marketable to potential employers.
- Remaining current and up-to-date with industry trends and professional development will make the NCSO<sup>®</sup> more effective at their jobs.

## 2. What is required to become an NCSO<sup>®</sup> (after January 1, 2025)?

The requirements for this program are a combination of practical health and safety experience and successful completion of the following courses:

- WHMIS
- Working at Heights – Fundamentals of Fall Prevention (as of April 1, 2015)
- JHSC Certification Part One (formerly *Construction Health & Safety Rep*)
- JHSC Certification Part Two: Construction (formerly *Sector-Specific* and *Simulated Hazard Analysis*)
- Basics of Supervising
- Basic Auditing Principles
- Standard First Aid/CPR
- COR<sup>®</sup> Essentials
- COR<sup>®</sup> Internal Auditor
- Introduction to Hazard and Risk Management
- Defensive Driving General
- Preventative Maintenance on-demand webinar
- Health and Safety Program, Policies, Procedures, and Practices on-demand webinar
- Investigating and Reporting Incidents
- Submit a minimum of two previously completed safety talks, demonstrating the applicant's ability to communicate specific hazard information in an established form
- Submit one workplace inspection completed by the applicant, demonstrating the applicant's ability to inspect workplaces, identify hazards and recommend controls.

- Completion of a COR® Internal Audit within the last 12 months or an NCSO® COR® audit at a construction workplace.

\*All training records must be valid for six months from the date of application.

If you are missing your IHSA record of training, you can obtain a copy by completing a request at [https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa\\_request\\_form\\_certificate\\_reprint](https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa_request_form_certificate_reprint)

Applicants must also successfully complete:

- A “code of ethics” criteria
- A knowledge verification examination – National exam, Provincial exam, and simulated workplace assessment
- Eight hours of professional development on a three-year renewal cycle.

### **3. What happens with the courses that have an expiry date?**

Courses with an expiry date must be valid and have at least six months of validity left at the time of application to the NCSO® program and should not expire through the application process.

Up-to-date certificates will need to be supplied every three years for the maintenance portion of the certificate. All renewals of courses that contain an expiry date must be done in a timely fashion and evidence of their validity must be provided. Failure to do so will result in NCSO® status becoming inactive. IHSA will also accept records of training or transcripts. Transcripts for IHSA courses can be requested [through our website](#).

### **4. Will applicants receive equivalency for courses taken elsewhere?**

**Course credits** will be decided by the NCSO® Committee. A completed course credit request form and documentation must be supplied by the applicant and must include:

- A course description including total duration that meets or exceeds current IHSA requirements.
- Proof of course completion within a period of five (5) years from date of application for course credit.
- Verification that the course was taken from a recognized institution, including but not limited to a college, university, trade school, or safety association.

Course credit request forms can be located on our [NCSO® webpage](#).

### **5. What is the administrative process?**

The NCSO® administrative process includes the following:

- Applications will be approved by the NCSO® Committee.
- Applicants will be able to contact a designated administrator for questions related to the NCSO® application process: [NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca](mailto:NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca)
- Applicants will be required to complete all required courses.
- Applicants will be required to complete the NCSO® application. The form is located [on our website](#) via the portal.
- Applicants will be required to provide a résumé outlining proof of practical field construction experience.
- Applicants will be required to provide proof of certificate renewals or transcripts or equivalent for relevant courses.

- Applicants will be required to complete a National exam, Provincial exam, and simulated workplace assessment.
- Applicants will be required to sign a code of ethics.
- There will be a complaints and appeals process as well as an application renewal process.

## **6. What is the new portal and why do I have to use AuditSoft?**

IHSA has partnered with the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance to launch a new application portal in early 2025. This portal will allow applicants to:

- Access real-time updates on their application status
- Easily communicate with approvers through the dedicated platform
- Complete the process faster with a more user-friendly interface
- Make easy and secure online payments

The portal will also enable all exams to be scheduled weekly and conducted online through a Learning Management System saving you time and travel. This system will use a tool that improves the integrity of the online learning and testing process. Webinars on how to use the portal will be available on the IHSA website by February 3, 2025.

### **COR® audit requirement**

To meet the updated requirements under IHSA's memorandum of understanding with the CFCSA, NCSO® applicants will be required to complete a COR® audit using AuditSoft. For those who are not currently participating in the COR® program, there will be a \$75 fee for NCSOs to use AuditSoft in order to complete the COR® audit requirement every three years. AuditSoft is a leading provider of audit and data analytics software that is trusted by more than 20 safety associations across Canada. Their innovative solutions are designed to streamline audit processes, improve accuracy, and enhance overall safety standards in various industries. The cost per use (i.e., every three years) will be \$75 that is paid directly to AuditSoft.

## **7. Why is there an exam component?**

An exam is required to align our program with the National Standard. All participants will be expected to complete a National exam, a Provincial exam, and a simulated workplace assessment as part of the NCSO® process.

Existing out-of-province applicants who have previously completed the National Exam created by CFCSA (after January 1, 2017) must provide proof of completion and provincial requirements prior to taking the Provincial Exam. Valid documentation must be supplied by the provincial agency.

## **8. What happens if someone does not pass the knowledge verification exams?**

The pass requirement will be a minimum of 75 per cent. If someone does not pass the exam, they will have to re-challenge after a 14-day waiting period. If they are not successful after three tries, they must start the application process all over again. However, it is important to note there will be a six-month waiting period after the third unsuccessful attempt. The applicant must successfully complete the exams within 12 months of the application date. It is important to note there will be a minimum of a six-month waiting period after the third unsuccessful attempt to reapply, and it is recommended to retake all training programs.

#### **9. Is there a fee to re-write the exam?**

Each exam re-write is subject to a fee.

#### **10. Where and when can applicants write the exams?**

Once applications are completed and approved, applicants will be notified through the NCSO®/NHSA™ portal. Applicants will be provided with the opportunity to register for the upcoming exams.

#### **11. Why does the applicant need to sign a code of ethics?**

Many safety professional recognition certifications adhere to a professional code of conduct as a way to uphold the integrity of the performance and expectations of an individual who achieves NCSO® Certification. Any breach of the code of ethics may result in a formal review and subsequent suspension or termination of the NCSO® designation may occur.

The code of ethics must be included in the application submission or the application will not be approved. It can be found in this package or on the [NCSO® webpage](#).

#### **12. Where can we direct specific questions?**

- The [IHSA.ca](#) website has a dedicated web page for NSCOs: [www.ihsa.ca/NCSO®](http://www.ihsa.ca/NCSO®)
- Specific inquiries can be sent via email to [NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca](mailto:NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca)

#### **13. How long does the process take?**

The process involves the successful completion of 12 required programs and two webinars, the submission of at a minimum, two previously completed safety talks, demonstrating the applicant's ability to communicate specific hazard information in an established form, a documented workplace inspection, the completion of a COR® audit, the submission of a completed application with supporting documents, two proctored examinations, and completion of the application with supporting documentation. The duration is dependent on the applicant's ability to meet the requirements specified by the certificate at the time of application and the applicant's ability to schedule their time to attend and successfully complete the required courses and administrative tasks. Incomplete applications may require reapplication and additional costs if required documents are not submitted to IHSA within 3 months.

#### **14. What is the total cost?**

The cost is dependent on fees that are subject to change at the discretion of IHSA. Visit our website at [www.ihsa.ca](http://www.ihsa.ca) for details on current pricing.

#### **15. Why are some of the required courses related to the Certificate of Recognition (COR®) program?**

The COR® program is an evidence-based audit tool used to assess a firm's health and safety management system (HSMS) for compliance and continuous improvement. The NCSO® plays an important role in ensuring that the HSMS is properly implemented, communicated, and measured to meet industry standards of performance. By completing the COR® courses, the NCSO® enhances their understanding and knowledge base of health and safety practices and leading indicators.

#### **16. Is there an appeal process if a course credit is not granted?**

Yes. Visit our website to review the [process for an appeal](#).

**17. Are there situations where an applicant's NCSO® status can be taken away?**

A person's NCSO® status can be revoked by IHSA upon findings as the result of an investigation from a written complaint, failure to abide by the requirements specified in the program, or a violation of conduct associated with professional ethics. Your NCSO® status would also fail to be valid if you do not keep up with the maintenance requirements.

**17. How does the applicant get equivalent NCSO® status from one province to another?**

There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between members of the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA) that participate in the NCSO® program. This MOU means that applicants who have received their NCSO® status in another province and have successfully written and passed the National exam after January 1, 2017, in another province, are only required to complete the items listed below to receive their NCSO® status in Ontario.

- a. Complete NCSO® Provincial equivalency application with proof of NCSO® status in another province.
- b. Provide valid training records for Ontario's provincial standard Working at Heights
- c. Provide valid training records for Ontario's Provincial standard Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) Part 1 and Part 2 Construction
- d. Provide valid training records for Ontario's COR® Internal Auditor program (eLearning or in-class)
- e. The applicant will be required to challenge the Ontario Provincial exam and Workplace Assessment

**18. I have already taken Construction Health and Safety Rep and/or Sector Simulated. Do I have to take the new Certification Programs (JHSC Certification Part One & Part Two)?**

No, you do not. These legacy programs are acceptable; however, exam questions are based on material in the current certification program created after March 1, 2016.

**19. I took my JHSC Certification Part Two in an area other than construction (mining, aggregates, transportation, etc.). Will it be accepted?**

No, you need to take sector-specific JHSC Certification Part Two: Construction which includes the following ten hazards:

- Falls from heights
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)
- Electrical Hazards and Failure to Lockout
- Caught in, or between equipment
- Physical hazards
- Hoisting and rigging
- Material handling
- Confined space entry
- Toxic and Designated Substance

**20. My courses were previously approved for the CHSO program as equivalent. Why are they no longer approved?**

As part of the overall effort to create a nationally recognized program, the equivalencies for the NCSO® program are generally more stringent than what was previously acceptable under the CHSO program.

**21. I am currently not a member of IHSA, but I am working in the construction industry. Can I receive training at a member rate?**

Please contact the NCSO® administrator at [ncsoadministrator@ihsa.ca](mailto:ncsoadministrator@ihsa.ca) for consideration.

**22. I want to make sure my application will pass the approval stage. Will you look at it before I pay the application fee?**

No. IHSA staff will not review any applications until the fee is paid. There will be no review of applications prior to this. Please refer to IHSA's application submission checklist and video on how to complete your application prior to submission. **Submit only documentation which is relevant to the NCSO® program.**

**23. What is the passing requirement on the exam?**

Participants must achieve a score of 75 per cent in order to pass the exams.

**24. One of the required courses is Defensive Driving General. Can I just show my current G-class licence that I drive with daily?**

Simply showing your current G-class licence is not acceptable. You must complete the **Defensive Driving General** course or provide appropriate proof of an equivalent program. This course is available in class or via eLearning.

**25. I have many years of driving experience. Why should I take a defensive driving course?**

Driving-related hazards are a leading cause of fatalities and injuries in the construction sector. IHSA believes that this is an important component of the NCSO® program. Continuing education in order to improve skills and eliminate bad habits is the cornerstone of IHSA's training philosophy. IHSA believes that everyone can benefit from additional driver training, regardless of their experience level. That is why this course is now a requirement of the NCSO® program.

**26. Do the courses for the NCSO® have to be completed in any specific order?**

Some courses must be taken in a specific order to meet pre-requisite requirements. Please review IHSA's course descriptions for additional information.

**27. I am a Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP). Does this exempt me from any of your criteria?**

No. While the CRSP is a health and safety designation, the NCSO® is intended to demonstrate specific health and safety knowledge and experience in the construction industry.

**28. What can I do to prepare for the exam? Is a study guide available?**

Yes, a study guide is available. Visit the NCSO® webpage to download the [study guide](#). You should also keep your participant workbooks from the IHSA training programs and use them to study from. IHSA also offers an NCSO®/NHSA™ exam prep webinar which is strongly recommended.

**29. I have sent my application to IHSA. How long should I expect to wait before I get notified of the status of my application?**

IHSA is working as best as possible to process them as quickly as possible within two weeks of receipt of arrival. Your application must be absolutely complete, containing all supporting documentation listed in the application guide.

If you are missing information, this will delay the processing and approval of your application and subsequently, the scheduling of exams. For a copy of your IHSA training transcript please review and submit this online form: [https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa\\_request\\_form\\_certificate\\_reprint](https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa_request_form_certificate_reprint)

**30. How quickly after I successfully complete the exams, will I receive notification of my successful NCSO® status?**

We anticipate your results, and your certificate of successful completion will be processed within two working days from the exam date.

**31. What happens if I register to write the exams and I have to change or cancel?**

No refunds will be made after that time. Applicants must write the exams within one year from the date of the application. Once this year has passed, applications must be re-submitted including the application fee. Applicants may only attempt this process three times in one year from the time the administrator has informed the applicant that their application has been approved.

**32. I am having issues with the online application portal form accepting my application, what should I do?**

Check to ensure all mandatory fields are completed. Review your attachment size. If issues continue, please contact the NCSO® administrator.