



**CERTIFICATION HANDBOOK**  
**for**  
**Certified Exercise Science Specialist (CESS)**

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*Effective May 1, unless superseded by a revision. Current version can be downloaded from [www.infs.co.in/certificationhandbook](http://www.infs.co.in/certificationhandbook)*



INFS has written this handbook to inform candidates about Institute of Nutrition and Fitness Science and its certification course - Certified Exercise Science Specialist (CESS). This handbook includes:

Certification Scheme Details including:

- Scope of certification
- Job and task description
- Required competence
- Abilities Prerequisites and Code of conduct.

The processes followed for the Certification Scheme including:

- Criteria for initial certification and recertification
- Assessment methods for initial certification and recertification
- Surveillance methods and criteria
- Criteria for suspending and withdrawing certification

Appeals Process Complaints

Process

Security and Record Keeping Process

## Table of Contents

<b>INFS Vision and Mission Statement</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>About INFS Certification Board (CB)</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>INFS Policy on Impartiality</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>INFS Policy on Non-Discrimination</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Contact Details</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b><i>INFS Certification Programs</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>INFS Certified Exercise Science Specialist (CESS)</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Scope of Certification .....	6
Job, Task Responsibilities, Required Competence and Abilities .....	6
Eligibility .....	6
Code of Conduct .....	6



Study Resources and Aids.....	7
<b>Suggested Readings.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Mode of Study.....	9
Leave of Absence.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Financial Aid.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Refund Policy.....	9
<b>Development of INFS Certification Exam.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Exam Development Process.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Role of INFS Certification Board (CB).....	10
Objectivity in Exam Development.....	11
Scoring and Pass (%).....	11
<b>Exam Administration and Conduct.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Before the exam.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Registration Process.....	11
Rescheduling an exam.....	12
Failure to appear for an Exam.....	12
<b>Administering Examination.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Taking the Exam.....	12
Rules of conduct during the exam.....	12
Exam Results.....	14
Disclosure of Marks to Candidates.....	14
Re-taking the exam.....	14
Re-scoring requests and Appeals.....	15
<b>Certification Credentials.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Awarding credentials.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Credentials Use.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Verification of Certification Status.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Continuing Education Credits.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Recertification.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Restoring certification.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Suspending or Withdrawing Certifications.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Privacy and Retention of Records.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Retention of Candidate Records.....	17
<b>Candidate Support.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Exam Support.....	18
Career Support.....	18
<b>Appeals and Exception Process.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Appeal handling process.....	18



Appeal for Denied Eligibility .....	19
Appeal for Reassessment.....	19
Appeal for Denied Recertification.....	19
Appeal for Suspension or Withdrawal of Certification .....	19
Exception to Refunds Policy.....	20
<b>Registering Complaints.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Complaints handling process .....	20
How to Register Complaints .....	20
<b>Annexure 1: Section-wise Exam Outline for CESS Exam .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## Introduction

## About INFS

### INFS Vision and Mission Statement

INFS Vision is

*‘To shape our students into world class fitness professionals who are knowledgeable, inspiring and compassionate. We, along with our students, will serve our communities to make health education available to all. ‘*

INFS developed its mission statement to realise its vision by:

Delivering superior evidence-backed knowledge to our students while shaping them into socially responsible professionals.

Striving to raise the level of health education amongst the masses by understanding and delivering to their needs.

Creating sustainable value for our stakeholders.

### About INFS Certification Board (CB)

INFS Certification process is governed and guided by an independent board of 3 members. The purpose of INFS CB is to approve standards, policies and processes for development and administration of certification programs by INFS CAD (Certification Assessment Division). Under



guidance by INFS CB, credentials are awarded to candidates who demonstrate the criteria for award of the credential and for certified individuals that fill the recertification requirements. Currently, the certification activities are for the INFS Certified Exercise Science Specialist (CESS) Certification Program. Others may be added in the future.

## INFS Policy on Impartiality

INFS will ensure that its employees, act impartially and fairly in relation to applicants, candidates, and certified persons. They will observe the following with relation to Impartiality: ● Do not restrict certification on the grounds of undue financial or other limiting conditions, such as membership in an association or group.

- Do not unfairly impede or inhibit access to certification by applicants and candidates.
- Do not allow commercial, financial, or other pressures to compromise impartiality.
- Make decisions according to policies and procedures.
- Make public policies and procedures affecting applicants, candidates, and certified persons.
- Understand, identify, and minimize threats to impartiality.
- Understand and minimizes threats associated with related bodies.

## INFS Policy on Non-Discrimination

INFS will ensure that its employees observe the following with relation to non-discrimination: 'Do not discriminate in the participation in its Certification Program(s) and prohibit discrimination against its applicants, candidates, certified persons, employees, and volunteers on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, or sexual orientation.'

## Contact Details

Institute of Nutrition and Fitness Science (INFS)

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Above Shriniwas Restaurant,  
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Maharashtra, India

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support@infs.co.in



# INFS Certification Programs

## INFS Certified Exercise Science Specialist (CESS)

### Scope of Certification

INFS CESS is created for health professionals providing exercise and fitness counselling to help individuals who are healthy or have medical clearance for exercise.

### Job, Task Responsibilities, Required Competence and Abilities

INFS CESS Certification will allow these Professionals to provide structured fitness and training programs to help clients achieve their goals. The goal of the clients seeking counselling may be to improve fitness, weight management and or overall wellness. The professionals should be able to fulfil their role of a guide and consultant to their clients either in one-on-one meetings or through online virtual meetings and calls.

Candidates who meet the defined award criteria for the INFS ESS Program, and those certified individuals who fulfil recertification requirements, will be awarded INFS CESS Certification.

### Eligibility

A candidate seeking CESS does not require any previous professional qualification. Only candidates above 18 years of age are eligible to apply for this professional certification.

For information regarding appeals for denied eligibility, refer to the section on 'Appeals and Exception Process'

### Code of Conduct

INFS expects certified persons (i.e. those who receive CESS certification) to maintain professionalism when working with clients, public and other health and fitness professionals. Every candidate and applicant is expected to uphold INFS Code of Ethics, stated below, throughout the exam process and as a certified professional, once they earn their INFS certification.

#### INFS Code of Ethics

Each candidate and Certified Professional promises to:



- maintain the highest standards of professional conduct towards clients, public and other health and fitness professionals.
- will not be involved in acts of dishonesty, fraud or misrepresentation.
- provide a safe environment and effective instruction to all clients.
- only provide consultation to clients with a diagnosed health condition if they are also receiving consultation from a relevant medically licensed physician for their condition, unless the Certified Professional is specifically trained and licensed to do so.
- not provide any medical advice, medication recommendation or suggest any change in medication to its clients, unless the Certified Professional is specifically trained and licensed to do so.
- not begin to train a client prior to reviewing the latest medical history received from the client.
- refer the client to a medical practitioner, when the Certified Professional becomes aware of a clients deteriorating health status, undiagnosed illness, injury, pain or discomfort.
- maintain the confidentiality of all client information including in conversations, advertisement or in any other circumstance unless otherwise agreed with the client in writing prior to the disclosure or when legally required.
- respect and obey all applicable regulations, laws and professional rules.
- provide all clients with impartial, fair and equal treatment.
- stay updated with latest health and fitness research and understand its application in their practice.

By appearing for their exam, candidates are confirming to abide by the INFS Code of Ethics throughout the certification process and in their professional capacity, once they are awarded their certification.

## Study Resources and Aids

INFS produces books and associated study materials for each INFS certification program. You will have the lifetime access.

The books are created with an intent to assist candidates and help them prepare to be professionals in the health and fitness industry. While these materials also help candidates prepare for the corresponding INFS certification exam, the candidate is advised to view these as helpful resources rather than a sole and exclusive resource for a particular profession or examination.

INFS also has Faculty assigned from its Training Division to help candidates should they chose, with questions as they prepare for their CESS certification examination. They have no involvement in the development or delivery of INFS certification examinations; however, they are Professionals who have experience working in the field and can help candidates navigate the exam content outline for the specific certification program, and help them to prepare for careers in health and fitness.



## Suggested Readings

INFS Exercise Science Specialist Course Book (1st Edition)

This book is created in collaboration with international experts in Exercise and Fitness and cover a wide range of topics relevant to the CESS certification. This book is available for sale and an applicant can email INFS Support team ([support@infs.co.in](mailto:support@infs.co.in)) should they wish to purchase these books even without enrolling into any course.

The retail price is INR 3,000. Prices are inclusive of domestic shipping charges and all applicable taxes.





## Mode of Study

Below mentioned is the mode of study available to a candidate and they can choose their mode depending on their preference.

Mode of Study	Inclusions	Cost*	Duration	Recommended for
<b>Expert Exam</b>	CESS Exam + INFS ESS Course Study + Forum Access (QnA) + 2 Days Extensive Workshop	INR 8,900 + INR 4,000 (workshop)	9 weeks or less  (CESS exams are conducted every month. On enrolling, candidate can select the next available exam date)	Those with significant experience in planning, exercise and training programs, have a strong grasp of all concepts outlines in the Exam (see Annexure 2)

*\*Cost includes Exam Fees (and where applicable ESS course book, domestic shipping and handling charges, tuition charges) and all applicable taxes.*

*\*\*International Shipping and Handling charges are charged additionally at INR 3,500 per delivery*

No particular mode of study gives the candidate advantage as the exam set for all the modes is the same. Also the training division and certificate assessment division (CAD) within INFS operate as separate entities. The training division creates course content on the basis of the Section-wise Exam Outline released by CAD and are not involved in the exam development or setting the exam questions.

## Refund Policy

INFS has a no-refunds policy. Also see the section on 'Appeals and Exception Process', as applicable.



# Development of INFS Certification Exam

## Exam Development Process

The exam development process starts with Role Analysis Study which is conducted on a rotating basis every 6 years. The outcome of the study determines the knowledge and skills important for an individual to be successful in the respective role for which certification is being awarded. This is mandatory to ensure the certification examination assesses the candidate's preparedness for success in their role in practice.

The identified knowledge and skills are detailed into topics which are clustered into Sections\*. Each section has a predetermined weightage in the exam based on their rated importance in the Role Analysis Study. The current 'Exam Weightage by Section' is available in the Annexure 2 for the CESS certification.

A list of questions is generated and shared with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who rate the relevance of the question to the related role and practice. A single question is graded by 3 SMEs and only if its average score is more than 3.5 (out of 5), is it included in the exam. This ensures that the overall relevance of the questions to the role remains high and the candidate is assessed across all sections of required competence.

*\*Note: A particular section (or skill) might be best evaluated using modes of assessment other than a multiple choice exam. In this case, the Certification Assessment Division (CAD) implements an alternative assessment module while ensuring impartial and fair evaluation for all candidates. In this case, the relevant certifications would have additional modules which would need to be cleared in addition to the final examination to be eligible for award of certification.*

## Role of INFS Certification Board (CB)

INFS CB reviews the results of the Role Analysis Study and signs off on the Skills and Knowledge required for the scope identified for the relevant certification program. The process of Exam Development is completed under the purview of the CB. An exam audit is conducted regularly to ensure that the exam sets are comparable and consistent. CB oversees CAD's review of question(s) exposure assessment to ensure that question bank is refreshed periodically to keep the exposure low.



## Objectivity in Exam Development

Multiple choice questions in the final exam have a clear correct answer where the other choices are detractors. The scores can be determined objectively by independent third parties if the answer key is provided to them and so there is no subjectivity in the final exam.

If the certification award requires clearing any other module, CB will review the assessment criteria and methods to minimise subjectivity.

## Scoring and Pass (%)

Cut scores for each assessment are determined through standard setting by a panel of independent Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) using Angoff Method of cut-scoring. The SMEs do this by evaluating if a minimally qualified candidate would be able to correctly answer to each item. Each item is reviewed and rated by 5 or more SME.

# Exam Administration and Conduct

## Before the exam

### Registration Process

Applicants will register for the exam on [www.infs.co.in](http://www.infs.co.in). The details taken at the time of registration create a profile of the candidate in the system. The details provided at the time of registration have to be current and updated at all times:

**Name:** Applicant should provide full name as given in their government issued identification. Certificates and credentials will be issued under the name mentioned in their profiles on the platform. If the name changes, due to change in marital status or any other reason, it is the candidate's responsibility to change their name by logging into their profile. The uploaded government approved identification document should reflect the name in the profile.

**Contact Information:** Mailing address, email and phone number need to be updated by the candidate to be current at all times. Email address is set at the time of registration and applicants are advised to use personal email address instead of using one associated with their company or school or institution.

Finally, **by appearing for the exam the candidate agrees to all the policies and attestations detailed in this Candidate Handbook.**



Exam dates are visible on the INFS website after enrolment is complete. Once an exam date is selected and exam link is opened, the candidate has to answer all questions and complete the exam in that sitting. If the candidate closes the window without completing the exam or due to a technical glitch the exam window closes, the recorded answers before the window is closed, will be graded.

## Rescheduling an exam

Process for rescheduling an exam is not applicable as the exam is attempted on the day of choosing by the candidate from the dates available in the system.

## Failure to appear for an Exam

The candidate start their exam by logging in on the date set for the examination. If they miss a date, they can view the next available date and attempt the exam then.

## Administering Examination

### Taking the Exam

INFS will conduct the final exam online. The exam is conducted on Mettl, an online skills assessment platform contracted by INFS for development, scoring, validation and security of all INFS certification exams. The exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions which have been reviewed and cleared by atleast 3 SMEs during the exam development process. The question will have three incorrect answers and one clearly correct answer.

The section-wise exam outline has been shared in Annexure 2 and developed based on the Role Analysis Study. This is updated every 6 years to ensure the certification scheme and assessment is relevant and current to the practice and role being certified.

The candidate needs to have access to a computer with good internet connection, any internet browser and a working web camera.

### Rules of conduct during the exam

INFS has a strict policy for those found indulging in cheating or misconduct during the exam. Any activity or conduct that jeopardize the security or integrity of its exams will also not be tolerated.



Disciplinary actions can include debarring the candidate from appearing in any exams conducted by INFS, invalidation of exam score, revoking the credentials or as INFS may deem fit.

All candidates need to provide true information and not misrepresent any information or documents when registering for the examination and courses at INFS. Candidates and Certified persons will follow the code of conduct below with respect to the exams and also agree to adhere to the INFS Code of Ethics detailed earlier in this handbook.

The certification examination will be closed book, which means the candidate CANNOT refer to any notes, books, online search like google or anything similar.

The candidate is not allowed to move away from the screen or their computer at any point during the exam. Their face should be clearly visible with no obstruction between the camera and their face throughout the exam.

Candidate should give the exam in a well lit room with no distractions either electronic or physical in their vicinity for the duration of the exam. If the candidate focus is away from the screen for an unusual period of time or frequency, regardless of the source of distraction, the exam attempt will be invalidated.

Candidate will NOT attempt to retain exam content for use after completing the exam. This includes attempts to copy, memorise, photograph or record the exam content by any means as it will be considered as breach of trust and breach of INFS Code of Ethics.

The exam software monitors the candidates' on-screen activity and the webcam records live activity during the test. Any suspicious activity is reviewed by the assessors and if found guilty of not adhering to the rules, the test attempt is discredited.

Recording a candidate's activity live during the test is to ensure that exam policies and procedures are being followed. By appearing for the examination, candidate gives INFS and Mettl their explicit consent to record the candidate's onscreen and live activities during the test and also keep it on their records for as long as they deem fit.

## Cheating and other violations

If the candidate is found guilty of not adhering to the rules of the examination or misrepresentation of their eligibility, their test attempt will be invalidated. Candidates indulging in activities that compromise the security and integrity of INFS certification exam will be subject to disciplinary action.



The candidate will be informed about their disqualification within 10 working days of their exam attempt. They will receive only one warning and given another chance to appear for the exam but only after paying the retest fee.

If a candidate is found guilty of cheating a second time, they will be barred from appearing for any certification exam by INFS, indefinitely.

If such cases are highlighted after certification award. The candidate's certification will be suspended and post investigation might be permanently withdrawn. The candidate will also be barred from appearing for any certification exam by INFS, indefinitely.

A candidate can follow the appeals process for review of their cases of cheating. The procedure for the same is mentioned in Appeals Section of this Handbook.

## Exam Results

Exam results will be shared with the candidate immediately once the exam is complete. The candidate will receive their INFS certification within 6 weeks of their exam. Until then, their results are *'provisional' and are not made official*. The assessors will review the exam recordings for each candidate to determine if any unfair means were adhered to while giving the exam. All results data will also be analysed to confirm no administrative errors, technical errors or misconduct occurred during the exam.

INFS reserves the right to re-conduct the exam if due to an administrative error, technical error or any misconduct it concludes that scores of all candidates might have been affected.

## Disclosure of Marks to Candidates

INFS does not disclose how much marks the candidate scored in the exam with candidates who have passed their examination. Only those who have failed to clear the examination will receive a breakup of scores by section. Scores will not be revealed over the phone and only provided over emails. This is to help candidates determine which section they need to focus on when preparing for the exam again.

## Re-taking the exam

Candidates who do not meet the cut off for the test and have failed their exam can apply for a retest after paying a nominal retest fee. This is currently set at INR 350 (inclusive of all taxes).



The candidate can make the payment for retest from their student dashboard after 3 business days of their exam attempt.

On making the payment, the next exam date for the course will be visible on their dashboard and they can attempt the exam again. The candidate needs to write in to [support@infs.co.in](mailto:support@infs.co.in) if they wish to receive a section-wise breakup of the scores. A candidate can attempt retests, except when a candidate has been found guilty of not following the rules of examination and debarred on indefinitely.

## Re-scoring requests and Appeals

Hand scoring can be requested after paying a nominal fee. Appeals section below details the procedure to be followed to file for a re-scoring request.

# Certification Credentials

## Awarding credentials

Only candidates who pass the certification exam are eligible for using the certification program credentials. INFS will issue a hard copy of the certificate to individuals who earn their certification and will be referred to as Certified Professionals. The validity of Certificate is 3 years from date of issue and mentioned in the certificate.

## Credentials Use

Candidates can use their certification credential “CESS” behind their name and the title “Certified Exercise Science Specialist”. The utilization of the credentials ought to be in a context and using media consistent with demonstrating professional credentialing, including but not limited to: office signage, resumes, websites, business cards, presentations, introductions, and electronic signatures. INFS credentials may not be used to endorse any product, service, or company; or as a company, product, or brand name.

## Verification of Certification Status

Anyone member of public can search for validation of a Certified person on the infs website through either the certificate id or the certified person name.



## Continuing Education Credits

INFS certified persons need to keep updating their knowledge on exercise and fitness. INFS offers specialization that can be used towards continuing education credits.

## Recertification

INFS Certified Professionals can willfully keep the status of certification active by fulfilling continuing education requirements every three (3) years. This is referred to as “recertification”. The purpose of recertification is to ensure that the certified persons credentials stay current with best practices in the fitness and nutrition industry and demonstrate a continued investment in the field of interest.

Certified persons need to complete 2.0 continuing education credits (CECs), every 3 years, to complete the requirements for recertification.

Once an INFS certified person’s certification is nearing expiration, the candidate is asked to restore their certification no later than three months of expiry of the existing certification. The candidate can submit their continuing education credits (2 credits) along with the recertification amount to INFS and or if applicable a late fee for the delay.

Failure to do file for recertification before the expiry of the awarded certificate would require them to retake the certification exam in order to maintain their certification.

## Restoring certification

Candidates will not be able to renew their certification after completion of one year from the date of expiry. Once the certification is lapsed the candidate will no longer be allowed to use CESS in any of their signatures or electronic signatures, introductions, resumes, websites, business cards, office signage, or presentations given.

## Suspending or Withdrawing Certifications

INFS holds full rights to suspend or withdraw certification if the candidate is found breaching the INFS - Code of Ethics. A candidate is understood to have accepted this condition when they appear for the CESS certification exam.





## Privacy and Retention of Records

INFS has strict non-confidentiality policy in place which protects the applicants, candidates and certified persons records and private information. All information will be safeguarded and there are legal agreements in place with the employees, vendors and other service providers to ensure confidentiality is maintained. Only certified persons certificate details include date of award, expiry and certificate award, will be shared with the public on being searched through the INFS website as part of the certificate validation service provided by INFS.

### Retention of Candidate Records

Candidate **application documents** will be maintained for 2 years from date of application while **academic records including exam results** will be maintained for 5 years.



# Candidate Support

## Exam Support

All exams conducted by INFS CB are by third party assessment and examination service providers. INFS ensures that all exams are being conducted on time and proper functioning of the third party service providers.

## Career Support

INFS continuously tries to supports all the certified person in terms of career opportunity by allowing several fitness organizations to interview the candidates and connecting them to the outside job market.

# Appeals and Exception Process

## Appeal handling process

Whenever a candidate is enrolled under any INFS course, disagrees or fails to abide by the “INFS - Code of Ethics” and a disciplinary or legal action is imposed or any candidate who is not in agreement with the results, can file a request for an appeal by submitting the “INFS -Appeals Form” to the Support team which is then directed to the Appeals Committee.

The committee will then consider and review all information provided by the candidate and the board and will either change or stay with the earlier decision. The Committee will provide a written reasoning of why the decision had been made. If the candidate is still not in agreement with the decision, then an appeal could be made to review the Committee’s findings to the Certification Board (CB).

The Board would then review the appeal during the board meeting and the decision by the CB will be considered final. The Board meetings are typically once a year and all decisions by the board will be communicated in writing only. The candidate can fill out an Appeal by using the Contact Us form on the INFS website and selecting the category as ‘Appeal’.



## Appeal for Denied Eligibility

Whenever a candidate is denied eligibility, the candidate reserves all rights to file a request for an appeal by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as 'Appeals' to understand why the decision was made. The appeals committee will provide a decision in writing. If the candidate is still not in agreement with the decision then the candidate can file a request for review of the decision made to the Certification Board as mentioned in the "Appeal Handling Process"

## Appeal for Reassessment

Whenever a candidate is not in agreement with the results, the candidate reserves all rights to file a request for an appeal by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as 'Appeals' to get a break down from the Assessment team of the marks scored in each section with comments by the assessor on what basis the grading was made.

If the candidate is still not in agreement with the results, then the candidate can file a request for review of the decision to the Certification Board as mentioned in the "Appeal Handling Process"

## Appeal for Denied Recertification

Whenever a candidate is denied re-certification, the candidate reserves all rights to file a request for an appeal by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as 'Appeals' to understand why the decision was made. The appeals committee will provide a decision in writing.

If the candidate is still not in agreement with the decision made, then the candidate can file a request for review of the decision to the Certification Board as mentioned in the "Appeal Handling Process"

## Appeal for Suspension or Withdrawal of Certification

Whenever a candidate's certification is suspended or withdrawn, the candidate reserves all rights to file a request for an appeal by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as 'Appeals' to understand why the decision was made. The appeals committee will provide a decision in writing.



If the candidate is still not in agreement with the decision made, then the candidate can file a request for review of the decision to the Certification Board as mentioned in the “Appeal Handling Process”

## Exception to Refunds Policy

While INFS does not provide any refunds whatsoever, if the candidate files an exception request by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as ‘Appeals’, the Appeals Committee and Certification Board holds all rights to approve or deny the refund requested.

## Registering Complaints

### Complaints handling process

INFS Support team ensures that all complaints via emails or phone calls are acknowledged within 24 hours and solved at the earliest possible.

### How to Register Complaints

Candidates registered for INFS courses can register complaints by filling out the Contact Us form on INFS website and selecting the category as ‘Complaints’ or by directly calling the customer support helpline number.



Annexure 1: Section-wise Exam Outline for CESS Exam

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Sections</b>	<b>Exam Outline (% distribution)*</b>
1	Basics Of Human Anatomy and The Joints	12%
2	The Big Three	8%
3	Muscle Specific Exercises	8%
4	Periodization	16%
5	Injury Prevention and Management	16%
6	Designing a Training Program	20%
7	Gender Specific Training	16%
8	Client Handling	4%
	Total	100%

Detailed List of Topics for each section

- **Basic of Human Anatomy and The Joints**
  - Basic of Human Anatomy
  - The Joints
  
- **The Big Three**
  - Deadlift – Setup and Execution
  - Bench Press – Setup and Execution
  - Squats – Setup and Execution
  - Case Study
  
- **Muscle Specific Exercises**
  - Exercises for Back
  - Exercises for Chest
  - Exercises for Legs
  - Exercises for Shoulder
  - Exercises for Biceps
  - Exercises for Triceps
  
- **Periodization**
  - Periodization Cycles
  - Linear Periodization
  - Non-Linear / Undulating Periodization
  - Block Periodization
  - Case Study
  
- **Injury Prevention and Management**
  - Principle of Injury Prevention
  - Rehabilitation
  - Common Injuries in the Gym
  
- **Designing a Training Plan**
  - Risk Assessment and Fitness testing
  - Training Variables
  - Training Volume
  - Training Intensity
  - Inter-Set Rest

- Training Frequency
- Training Velocity
  
- **Gender Specific Training**
  - Gender Programming: Biological or Societal
  - Anatomical Differences
  - Influence of Hormones
  - Muscle Potential and Fibre Type Differences
  - Rethink the Training Variables
  - Metabolic Differences; Nutrition Implications
  - Case Study
  
- **Client Handling**
  - Definition
  - General Guidelines
  - Approach towards New Client
  - Approach towards Ongoing Client
  - Approach towards Potential Client
  - Approach towards Past Client
  - Risk Assessment Sheet