GISP Study Group Handbook

*Preparing for the GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam®

Purpose of This Document

This resource serves as a *foundational template* for launching and sustaining effective study groups focused on passing the **GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam** — a key requirement for obtaining the **GISP®** (GIS Professional) certification. It's designed to:

- Provide structure and best practices
- Clarify leadership and group roles
- Suggest timelines and resources
- Offer a framework that can be adapted locally or globally

1. Why a GISP Study Group Matters

Study groups help learners:

- Understand and master the ten core exam categories collaboratively
- Share diverse industry experience and perspectives
- Maintain motivation and accountability
- Fill gaps in knowledge and preparation strategies

The **GISCI exam** covers ten content areas, including Conceptual Foundations, Data Fundamentals, Cartography & Visualization, Systems Design, and Professional Practice — all weighted and described in the official exam blueprint.

2. Core Components of the Exam (For Group Focus)

Use the **Official GISCI Exam Blueprint** to organize content areas for study sessions:

Knowledge Area	% Weight on Exam
Conceptual Foundations	10%
Geospatial Data Fundamentals	15%

Knowledge Area	% Weight on Exam
Cartography & Visualization	10%
Data Acquisition	11%
Data Manipulation	11%
Analytical Methods	11%
Database Design & Management	10%
Application Development	7%
Systems Design & Management	7%
Professional Practice	8%

(Total = 100% of exam content)

These will guide topic breakdown in your study schedule.

3. Leadership & Group Roles

Strong leadership is essential for group success. Suggested roles include:

Study Coordinator

- Organizes meetings and sets agendas
- Tracks progress and group milestones

Content Leads (per topic area)

- Facilitates deep dives into assigned knowledge area
- Prepares discussion prompts and mini-lessons

Resource Curator

- Collects links, readings, videos, and practice questions
- Maintains a shared document repository

Accountability Partner(s)

- Checks in regularly with participants
- Helps keep members on track with study timelines

Tip: Rotate roles monthly to distribute responsibility and encourage leadership development.

4. Getting Started — Group Setup Checklist

☐ Define group goals (e.g., pass the exam by specific quarter/year)
☐ Recruit members (via local GIS associations, LinkedIn, university GIS programs)
☐ Choose a group communication channel (Slack, Teams, WhatsApp)
☐ Set a regular meeting cadence (weekly/biweekly)
☐ Assign initial roles (see above)
☐ Review the *Exam Blueprint* together early on

5. Suggested Study Timeline

A structured timeline helps keep pacing effective and prevents burnout.

Phase 1 — Orientation (Weeks 1–2)

- Introductions & goal setting
- Review exam format and blueprint
- Take official practice exam (baseline assessment)
- Identify strengths and weaknesses

Phase 2 — Deep Content Review (Weeks 3–10)

- Assign study topics by week based on Blueprint weights
- Rotate content leads
- Use group sessions for discussion, debate, and practice questions

Phase 3 — Practice & Reinforcement (Weeks 11–14)

- Use practice exams and quizzes
- Review challenging topics
- Conduct mock study sessions with time limits

Flexible Tip: Adjust based on group size, member availability, and exam window.

6. Core Study Materials & Resources

Official Resources

- **GISCI Official Study Guide** — outlines exam focus & learning recommendations.
- **Exam Blueprint** — defines all tested knowledge areas and weighting.
- **Official Practice Exam** — practice questions and performance benchmarking.

Community & Supplemental Resources

- Interactive practice sets & flashcards
- GIS & cartography textbooks
- GIS&T Body of Knowledge (UCGIS)
- Video tutorials / webinars

Note: GISCI does *not endorse* specific third-party materials; participants should cross-reference additional content with the official exam blueprint and study guide.

7. Study Group Session Blueprint

For each session, include:

1. **Opening Check-In (5 min)**
   - Progress since last meeting
   - Questions or roadblocks
2. **Topic Review (30–45 min)**
   - Short overview by content lead
   - Group discussion
3. **Practice Challenges (20 min)**
   - Sample questions or case scenarios
4. **Action Items (10 min)**
   - Assign tasks for next session
5. **Closing Accountability Check**

Optional: Invite a guest speaker (experienced GISP, faculty, or industry mentor) to present a topic or provide tips.

8. Tips for Success

Study Smart

- Start with the official practice exam to assess needs.
- Review areas where multiple members struggle first.
- Use peer teaching — explaining concepts helps retention.

Be Consistent

Meet regularly, even if informal, to maintain momentum.

Leverage Diversity

Different backgrounds (cartography, database, analytical methods) enrich group learning.

Celebrate Wins

Recognize progress — complete practice set, improve group average scores, etc.

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9. Continuous Improvement

This document is a *working framework*. After completing a study group cycle:

- Conduct a **retrospective** with members
- Update timelines, resources, and roles
- Add new materials collected for future cohorts

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10. Acknowledgements

This template draws from the **official GISCI exam blueprint and study guide** and is designed to help individuals and communities around the world collaborate effectively in GISP exam preparation.