



Certification Handbook  
GACA/GACP  
March 30, 2017

# Green Advantage® Certification Handbook

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## Introduction

Welcome! The Green Advantage® Team is glad that you want to demonstrate your green building knowledge and skill by achieving Green Advantage Certification. Working “greener” (more sustainably) is important for your health and safety, your career, your company, your customers, and the planet.

As you know, demand for greener products and a service continues to rise. Building owners and occupants want greater energy efficiency. They also want healthier, more environmentally friendly buildings. As the green building industry grows, so does the market for certified building practitioners. Green Advantage (GA), a non-profit organization, is helping to meet this demand by providing nationally recognized, independent certifications for personnel in the construction industry.

We would like to hear from you. If you have feedback about the clarity, understandability, or thoroughness of the Certification Handbook, please contact us at [ces@greenadvantage.org](mailto:ces@greenadvantage.org).

We are delighted that you want to become Green Advantage Certified. We wish you success during the exam, and look forward to your joining the Green Advantage community.

-----*The Green Advantage® Team*

## 1. Green Advantage Certification Basics

### GA CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE™ (GACA)

#### Focus of Exam:

- The GACA Certification exam focuses on green building construction means, methods, materials, and over 200 best practices.

#### Ideal for:

- Tradespeople
- Individuals with construction experience interested in a “first level” green certification
- Apprentices
- Entry level construction workers
- Vocational Students
- Pre-Apprentices

#### Green Advantage Certified Associate (GACA) candidate must:

- Be at least 16 years of age. Parent or guardian permission is required for youth 16 or 17 years old.
- Pay the exam fee, or have the fee paid by a third party on your behalf
- Sign the GACA Registration Agreement
- Pass the GACA written exam with a score of at least 70%
- Maintain your GACA certification.

#### Duration of GACA Certification

- 3 years

GA CERTIFIED PRACTITIONER™ (GACP)

**Focus of Exam:**

- The GACA Certification exam focuses on green building construction means, methods, materials, and over 600 best practices for supervisory personnel.

**Ideal for:**

- Contractor & Subcontractor Supervisory Personnel
  - Experienced Tradespeople
  - Other Experienced Field Personnel
  - Advanced Students Interested in a Supervisory Role

**Green Advantage Certified Practitioner (GACP) candidate must:**

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Pay the exam fee, or have the fee paid by a third party on your behalf
- Sign the GACP Registration Agreement
- Pass the GACP written exam with a score of at least 60%
- Maintain your GACP certification
- Note: GACA certification is NOT required as a prerequisite.

**Duration of GACP Certification**

- 5 years if certified after January 1, 2013
- 3 years if certified before January 1, 2013

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

**Non-Discrimination**

Green Advantage is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for attainment of credentials and training. GA prohibits discrimination against and harassment of any applicant, training and/or exam candidate, or certificiant because of race; color; national or ethnic origin; age; religion; disability; sex; sexual orientation; gender; gender identity and expression; including a transgender identity; genetics; veteran status; retaliation; and any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law, herein called "protected categories." GA expects all GA employees, volunteers, and affiliates to join with and uphold this commitment.

**Exclusive Right of issuance**

Green Advantage, Inc. maintains the exclusive right to issue Green Advantage Associate (GACA) and Green Advantage Practitioner (GACP) certificates. Each certificate is uniquely numbered to correspond with GA records of issuance. Numbers are maintained indefinitely.

**2. About the Exams & Testing Conditions**

FEES

The fee for each written exam and Study Guide is \$175 for initial certification and \$125 for those eligible for the certification renewal rate. GA Exam® fees are non-refundable. Retake exam fees (in case of failure) correspond with the type of registration (initial or renewal).

Exam fees include proctoring services *unless* a GA Exam is taken in an “other-network” testing center, in which case the examinee pays the proctoring fee set by the testing center. This type of testing arrangement is the exception and is only used when the examinee lives at a significant distance from any in-network testing center.

Green Advantage reserves the right to modify its exam fees.

#### PROCTORED CLOSED BOOK WRITTEN EXAMS

All Green Advantage® Exams are administered by qualified proctors. The GA proctor assures that admission to the testing area is limited to examinees only. The GA proctor also assures that test taker’s personal items, including cell phones, wallets, purses, etc., are not accessible during the exam. The GA proctor remains in the room during the full length of the testing time.

All GA Exams are administered in a closed book setting.

#### EXAM FORMAT & TESTING TIME

GA written exams consist of 60 multiple-choice questions. You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam.

A small number of “pilot” exam questions may be part of your exam. Your answers to these questions will not count towards your score. Green Advantage pilots exam questions to ensure their quality. You will not know whether any pilot questions are part of your exam. It is essential that you assume every question counts toward your score.

#### TWO WAYS TO TAKE A WRITTEN EXAM

##### **Computerized Exam**

Computerized exams are given at authorized testing facilities. As an exam candidate, you schedule your own testing time and date and take the test individually at a testing center most convenient to you.

##### **Paper/Pencil Exam**

Paper-pencil exams are given in groups, often following group training. Group exams are administered by GA proctors at a time and place set by the host or training organization.

#### TESTING ACCOMMODATION FOR AN INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITY

Any Exam Candidate who requires testing accommodation(s) should contact [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org) immediately after registering for the exam. If your disability is documented by a licensed psychologist or physician, Green Advantage will work with you to identify how to accommodate your needs appropriately while maintaining the overall fairness of exam testing conditions. Green Advantage reserves the right to request documentation of your disability from your psychologist or physician.

### **3. Exam Registration, Scheduling, & Rescheduling**

#### REGISTERING FOR A COMPUTERIZED EXAM

- **Step 1:** Go to the Green Advantage website, and click on Register. If you have a GA account, log in and complete the registration process. If you do not have a GA account, create one by clicking on Register. Then click on Create New Account (upper right hand corner of screen), then complete the registration process.

- Step 2: Select the computerized version of the exam you wish to take. Select a testing site, then select a date and time.
- Step 3: Read the Registration Agreement, and click to acknowledge that you have read and understand it.
- Step 4: Checkout by paying for your exam. You can pay with a credit card or, if your employer or host has sent you a voucher code, you can enter your voucher code.

**REGISTERING FOR A PAPER/PENCIL GROUP EXAM**

Sometimes an employer, training organization, or other host arranges for a group exam. This involves a different registration process than the one listed above. If you are part of such a group, you will receive instructions from your exam host. Follow those instructions to register. If you have questions about this process, ask your exam host, or contact [Info@greenadvantage.org](mailto:Info@greenadvantage.org).

**REGISTRATION EXPIRATION**

All GA Exam registrations expire after one year. If you do not take the exam within one year of registering, you forfeit your exam fee. GA Exam® fees are non-refundable. To take the exam after one year, you will need to re-register and repay.

**RESCHEDULING A COMPUTERIZED EXAM**

You may reschedule your exam at any time during the year that your Registration remains active. How to reschedule depends upon the type of exam you registered to take and when you reschedule.

1. If you have registered online for a computerized exam and are rescheduling **more than 72 hours in advance** of your scheduled test time, log-in to the Green Advantage® account and reschedule.
2. If you have registered online for a computerized exam and are rescheduling **less than 72 hours in advance** of your scheduled test time, contact [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org). A \$75 rescheduling fee applies.

**RESCHEDULING FOR A CANDIDATE WHO IS REGISTERED FOR A GROUP EXAM**

If you are registered for a group exam but cannot make it, you may convert that registration to take a computerized exam at a testing center; contact [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org) to apply your exam fee to a computerized exam. No extra charge.

**4. Registration Agreement**

All exam candidates are required to read and sign a GA Exam® Registration Agreement before they may take a Green Advantage (GA) Exam. Below is a copy of the GA Exam Registration Agreement with specifics for each exam.

**Green Advantage® Exam Registration Agreement:**

*This Registration Agreement is made between Green Advantage, Inc. and the candidate for certification whose name and signature appear below. It is written to clarify the terms and conditions related to Green Advantage (GA) Certification.*

I understand that my signature below also signifies my consent and approval to these terms and conditions and that signing this agreement is a condition of my taking the GA Exam®:

- 1) If I pass the exam, Green Advantage® will contact me by email periodically concerning information and benefits related to the certification.

- 2) If I fail the exam, I understand that I may retake the exam by registering and paying to retake the exam via the Green Advantage website, [www.greenadvantage.org](http://www.greenadvantage.org), and that there is no limit to the number of times I can retake the exam.
- 3) If I pass the exam, I agree to use the Green Advantage logo and marks only in the manner described in the GA Trademark & Website Terms of Usage Guide.
- 4) Training in preparation for the Green Advantage Exam is not offered, endorsed, or sponsored by Green Advantage. Green Advantage will not be responsible or liable for any loss or damage of any sort incurred as the result of any dealings with organizations or persons providing training or materials related to training in preparation for the exam.
- 5) Green Advantage® exams, website, study guides, and other materials, protocols and processes are continually being improved and are subject to change. My input is encouraged and welcomed.
- 6) Green Advantage® Certification exams and study guides are generally based upon North American standards and might not be applicable to cultural norms or standards of other areas.
- 7) In order to test proposed questions toward improving the reliability of the exam, some of the questions in the exam may not be counted towards my score.
- 8) The results of my exam will be released only to me, unless Green Advantage receives a written statement signed by me authorizing this release to another party or unless my exam fee was paid by a third party. I understand and agree to the following: in the event that my employer or a third party, such as a governmental agency, has paid for my exam, my results in pass-fail terms may be released to that entity. Green Advantage may also disclose my account information if compelled by a governmental authority or required under applicable law or if required by an accrediting body. I understand that if Green Advantage is required by law to release account information, I will, unless prohibited by law, be notified by Green Advantage as to what information is provided.
- 9) Green Advantage Certification is not to be construed as an endorsement or representation of the ability or capability of any certificants to perform work on a satisfactory basis. Instead, Green Advantage represents that individuals who become certified have met the requirements for Green Advantage Certification by successfully passing a qualifying examination that demonstrates knowledge and skill related to "green building" means, methods, materials, and best practices.
- 10) My being listed in the Green Advantage online directory of certified personnel should not be construed as a recommendation or endorsement by Green Advantage.
- 11) If I pass the Green Advantage Exam and do not wish to have my name or contact information displayed in the Green Advantage Online Directory, I may request in writing to Green Advantage that my contact information not be displayed in the Directory.
- 12) I agree to indemnify and hold harmless Green Advantage, its affiliates, advisory board, certification board, officers, suppliers, co-branders or other partners, agents and employees, from any claim or demand, including reasonable attorneys' fees, due to or arising out of my taking a Green Advantage Exam or becoming Green Advantage Certified.
- 13) To help improve its services to me, Green Advantage may, from time-to-time, make collective customer information available to selected third-parties, but only in the aggregate. Other than as described in the #8 above, Green Advantage will not release any of my personal identifiable information.
- 14) Green Advantage Exam fees are non-refundable.
- 15) This Agreement shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland.
- 16) I agree not to cheat on this exam and I agree not to share the contents of this exam with anyone else.



17) I understand that cheating or disclosure of the contents of this exam with anyone else, or misuse of the Green Advantage logo, trademark, or signifier may result in withdrawal of my certification, as well as civil and/or criminal prosecution at the discretion of Green Advantage. In the case of suspension or withdrawal of my certification, I agree to return any printed certificate to Green Advantage.

**Only for candidates taking the Green Advantage Certified Associate (GACA) Exam:**

18) If I pass the exam, I will be Green Advantage® Certified for 3 years. After this period I will need to become recertified.

19) I understand that I must be 18 years old to be GACA certified (or at least 16 with a parental consent form). By signing below, I am affirming that I am at least 18 years old or that I have submitted a parental consent form.

**Only for candidates taking the Green Advantage Certified Practitioner (GACP) Exam:**

18) If I pass the exam, I will be Green Advantage® Certified for 5 years. After this period I will need to become recertified.

19) I understand that I must be 18 years old to be GACP certified. By signing below, I am affirming that I am at least 18 years old.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (personal) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (work) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Tips for Preparing to Take an Exam**

**USE GREEN ADVANTAGE EXAM PREPARATION MATERIALS**

Green Advantage offers the following exam preparation materials for each exam:

**Exam Overviews**

This important preparation resource is posted on [www.greenadvantage.org](http://www.greenadvantage.org). The purpose of each Exam Overview is to acquaint you with the topics that are covered on each exam. Each Overview also has sample questions for that exam. The overviews can also help you decide which exam is right for you.

**Study Guides**

Green Advantage publishes a Study Guide for each exam. The associated Study Guide is made available to you when you register for the exam, the cost of which is included in the exam fee. Exam questions are drawn from this Study Guide, so it is a very important document for you to read and thoroughly review.

The Study Guide is not designed to replace training, but it will assist you in preparing for your certification exam. If you register online, you receive the associated Study Guide attached to your registration confirmation email. If you do not register online, you should receive a Study Guide through the organization that is registering on your behalf well in advance of your exam date. If your exam date is approaching, and you have not received your Study Guide, please contact Green Advantage for assistance at [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org).

**For AIA Members, Green Advantage Certification Exam Preparation 1 (GACEP2) Workbook**

Members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) who are interested in earning eight Health Safety Welfare (HSW) Learning Units can refer to the Green Advantage Certification Exam Preparation 1 (GACEP2) Workbook for complete program details.

### LEARN THE STUDY GUIDE

Read, recite, and review your Study Guide thoroughly. Use this technique over and over again with all of your reference materials.

### JOIN A STUDY GROUP

Some candidates form study groups with other candidates. This approach can be a highly effective way to prepare for a GA Exam®.

### PRACTICE WITH SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Read over Sample Questions provided within the Exam Overview posted on the Green Advantage website to become familiar with the exam format.

### STAGGER YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

Stagger your study time to review what you have learned, identify gaps, and revisit materials.

### SHOP SMART: TIPS FOR FINDING AN EXAM PREPARATION TRAINING

Candidates for GA® Certification are not required to take training. However, Green Advantage recommends training in preparation for the exam.

Green Advantage (GA) is a certifying body. In order to maintain the highest standard of integrity, GA does not provide, endorse, or sponsor trainings. Instead, GA focuses its energies on maintaining the integrity and relevance of Green Advantage Certification and on providing useful benefits to those certified.

Some third-party training organizations choose to list their trainings on the GA website. Visit [www.greenadvantage.org](http://www.greenadvantage.org) for more information on trainings.

When considering training offerings, keep the following shopping tips in mind:

#### **Match the Training with the Exam**

Be sure that the training you select is designed to prepare you for the specific type of GA Exam you plan to take.

#### **Consider the Faculty**

Check the trainer's qualifications. Make sure the trainer is a certified Green Advantage Practitioner. These trainers have demonstrated their personal ability to pass a Green Advantage Exam. In addition, learn whether your trainer has relevant construction experience. The quality of your training experience may relate to the trainer's experience as an educator. Be proactive, ask about the trainer's educational experience and if they have other qualifying credentials.

#### **Ask about Pass Rates**

Trainers may have offered training in preparation for Green Advantage exams in the past. If so, the Exam pass rates of those past classes may relate to the quality of training. If applicable, request information from the trainer you are considering. Ask about pass rates of earlier trainees.

#### **Reputation**

Determine whether the training course is offered or sponsored by a reputable organization.

**Advice from Other Trainees**

Seek the advice of others who have taken the training you are considering.

**MAINTAIN YOUR FOCUS DURING TRAINING**

While taking training, do not multi-task. Instead, focus entirely on the training material. Be an active participant; ask questions and engage actively in the experience.

**6. Tips for Exam Day****BE PHYSICALLY READY**

Get plenty of sleep the night before exam day. Many studies have demonstrated the link between sleep and test performance. In addition to a good night's sleep, know that some people do not test as well on an empty stomach. Avoid alcohol and any other substance that might compromise your clear mind.

**WHAT TO BRING****Identification**

You must present **two forms of identification** (ID) to the exam proctor. One must be a valid photo ID: only a valid driver's license, passport, state ID card, student ID card, or military ID card will be accepted.

**In addition, for computerized exam**

Test Taker Authorization Code (computerized tests only), included in your confirmation email

**WHAT NOT TO BRING**

These materials are **NOT** allowed in the exam room.

- Mobile phone
- PDA
- Camera
- Calculator
- Laptop computer or other electronic equipment
- Materials prohibited by the testing center. These might include food, gum, or other items.

**DEAL WITH DISTRACTIONS**

GA Exams require your absolute attention. If another test-taker bothers or distracts you during the exam, inform the proctor.

**USE CAREFUL TESTING PRACTICES**

When you take the exam, you will have an average of 1 ½ minutes for each answer. While you need to keep an eye on the clock, you should not feel overly rushed.

Read each question fully before you decide which answer is correct. When a question prompts you to identify an answer, remember that there might be more than one option that seems correct. Your task is to identify which option is **most correct** and **most complete**.

**Do not mark more than one answer. Marking more than one answer** will result in a wrong answer for that question.

When presented with a multiple-choice question, eliminate obvious wrong answers first. Next, consider the remaining options. A question with no answer is counted the same as one with an incorrect answer. Therefore, if you are unsure of the answer, take your best guess.

If you think that you are spending too much time on one question, you may want to skip it and come back to it later. Always make sure you are filling in the right space for the question you are answering. If there is time remaining after you have finished, you can return to any questions you skipped and try them again. If you have answered every question and time remains, do not turn in your test right away. Take this opportunity to check your work at least once.

## 7. After the Exam

### RESULTS & CONFIDENTIALITY

An exam score will be released only to the test taker, unless Green Advantage receives a written, signed statement authorizing the release to another party, or unless the exam fee was paid by a third party. In the event that an employer or another third party, such as a governmental agency, has paid for your exam, the results in pass-fail terms may be released to that entity. Green Advantage may also disclose an examinee's account information if compelled by a governmental authority or required under applicable law or if required by an accrediting body. If Green Advantage is required by law to release account information, unless prohibited by law, Green Advantage will notify the examinee as to what information is released.

### RETESTING UPON EXAM FAILURE

If you fail a GA® Exam, you can retake the exam as many times as is necessary to pass. To retake the exam you must reregister and pay the exam fee. Any questions about retesting can be addressed to [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org).

### PRINTING YOUR CERTIFICATE

You can print your Green Advantage Certificate by entering your last name along with the number that you received in the results email from Green Advantage stating that you passed the exam. This attractive certificate displays your name, the certificate issuance date, expiration date, and your unique certificate number. You can print your certificate on cardstock or high quality paper for framing. In the case of suspension or withdrawal of certification, any printed certificate should be returned to Green Advantage. Email [ces@greenadvantage.org](mailto:ces@greenadvantage.org) if you have questions about your certificate access.

### LISTING ON THE GA CERTIFIED PERSONNEL DIRECTORY

The Online Directory displays selected information of those who are currently certified. Directory listings include name, certification expiration date, and business contact information. Within 1 week of passing the exam, your contact information can be viewed in the Online Directory. If you prefer not to have your name and contact information displayed in the Online Directory, you can send this preference in an email to [directory@greenadvantage.org](mailto:directory@greenadvantage.org). Likewise, any updates or corrections may be sent to [directory@greenadvantage.org](mailto:directory@greenadvantage.org). Green Advantage never sells candidate or certificant information.

## USING THE GA LOGO, SIGNIFIER, & TRADEMARK

Green Advantage® trademarks, service marks, trade names, and trade dress are valuable assets protected under Copyright and Intellectual Property Law. GA certified personnel are expected to use them properly. Proper use and display of all Green Advantage marks is explained in the [GA Trademark & Website Terms of Usage Guide](#) available on the Green Advantage website. Individuals and organizations wishing to use trademark protected and/or copyrighted material should refer to this helpful guide. Green Advantage reserves the right to modify posted documents as well as original works.

Green Advantage randomly audits past and present Certificants for compliance with Green Advantage Trademark policy. Unauthorized use of Green Advantage Corporate or Certification specific logos or marks may result in loss of certification, as well as other legal consequences.

## CHANGING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

To update your contact information, send your request to [directory@greenadvantage.org](mailto:directory@greenadvantage.org).

You may update any of the following information:

- Name (first and last)
- Company Name
- Company Street Address
- City, State, Zip
- Work Phone
- Work Email (to be used for Green Advantage official correspondence)
- Work Website
- Non-English languages spoken

## FILING COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES, & APPEALS

Green Advantage strives to maintain the integrity of its certifications by assuring fair conditions and providing a timely response to complaints and grievances. If you have a complaint or grievance, you may submit it in writing to Green Advantage at the address below, or email us at [exams@greenadvantage.org](mailto:exams@greenadvantage.org). Please be specific about the problem. GA reviews the matter internally and responds to your communication within two weeks by letter or email.

Mail to: Green Advantage, Inc.

P.O. Box 3170  
Frederick, MD 21705-3170

## 8. Recertification

The green building field is changing rapidly. For this reason, you must pass an updated exam after your initial certification expires. You will pay a lower price for your recertification exam if you take the exam within 30 days of your expiration date. Individuals who do not maintain their certification are expected to remove all references to their individual certification from their websites, business cards, email signature, and marketing materials. Certificates must be removed from public view.

## 9. Green Advantage Contact Information

Green Advantage, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3170  
Frederick, MD 21705-3170

General Questions  
[info@greenadvantage.org](mailto:info@greenadvantage.org)  
540-822-9449