



# **Certification Handbook**

## **GACA®/GACP®**

### **March 1, 2020**

# Green Advantage<sup>®</sup> 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 increased building performance – energy efficiency, water efficiency, durability, disaster resilience and more. 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 internationally 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

### GREEN ADVANTAGE CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE (GACA)

#### Focus of Exam:

- The GACA Certification exam focuses on green building construction means, methods, materials, and over 300 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

- 5 years

**GREEN ADVANTAGE CERTIFIED PRACTITIONER (GACP)**

**Focus of Exam:**

- The GACP Certification exam focuses on green building construction means, methods, materials, and over 800 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

**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**

Fees for certification registration, exam retakes, credential maintenance and reinstatement can be found [here](#).

Green Advantage reserves the right to modify its 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

Every individual who registers for a credential through the Green Advantage website, as well as Green Advantage credential holders and former credential holders – GACP Certification, GACA Certification or PCRA/ICRA Certificate – has a dashboard. Your password-protected dashboard includes has many user-friendly features. You can learn more about your dashboard by clicking [here](#).

### 4. 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](#) and completing the registration process for the GACA or GACP exam.

- **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.

## 5. Registration Agreement

A copy of the registration agreement can be seen by clicking [here](#).

## 6. 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).

### 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.

## 7. 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.

## 8. 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 through your [dashboard](#). 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 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, go to the profile info link in your [dashboard](#).

## 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

## 9. Credential Maintenance Program

The green building field is changing rapidly. For this reason, it is important that you need to adequately keep up with these changes to remain certified. There are two methods for maintaining your GACA or GACP certification:

- 1) take and pass the most current version of the certification exam, or
- 2) renew your certification by taking approved courses.

You can learn more details about the CMP by clicking [here](#).

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.

## 10. Reinstatement

If your ANSI-accredited certification has lapsed and you wish to be reinstated, there are two alternatives:

- 1) take and pass the most current version of the certification exam, or
- 2) renew your certification by taking approved courses.

You can learn more details about the Reinstatement by clicking [here](#).

## 11. 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