



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) LEED Credentials: What Existing LEED APs Need to Know

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Recent changes to LEED professional credentials

Who now administers the LEED Professional Credential program?

The Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) is now responsible for providing third party administration and verification of all LEED credentials. CaGBC no longer maintains any records of LEED AP credentials; all Canadian records were turned over to GBCI last year unless individuals requested otherwise.

How has a LEED AP credential changed?

The LEED AP credential is now associated with one or more specialties: Building Design and Construction, Operations and Maintenance, Interior Design and Construction, Neighborhood Development, or Homes. All LEED APs with specialty must maintain their credential by earning 30 continuing education (CE) hours every two year reporting period, as specified by the [Credential Maintenance Program](#) (CMP) guide.



Overview of options for LEED APs without specialty

What are the options to earn the LEED AP with specialty credential?

GBCI has developed a special, one-time process for earning the LEED AP with specialty credential called enrollment. Enrollment windows begin expiring on August 1, and we urge you to contact the GBCI if you have yet heard from them. When you enroll you can earn the new LEED AP with specialty credential by choosing to complete prescriptive credential maintenance or passing a specialty exam before the end of your first two year cycle; which begins the day you enroll. Prescriptive continuing education allows you to earn one of the following specialties: Building Design and Construction, Interior Design and Construction, or Operations and Maintenance. If you retest, you have your choice of those three specialties as well as Neighborhood Development or Homes.

Why earn the LEED AP with specialty credential?

Having a LEED AP with specialty credential differentiates you by identifying you have a robust knowledge of green building principles and practices. It shows you have specialized knowledge and expertise in a particular LEED rating system. It also proves your expertise is current and relevant by identifying that you have committed to continued education in order to keep your knowledge and skills current.

Does it cost anything to upgrade?

Enrolling through prescriptive credential maintenance is free; enrolling through testing requires paying the application and exam fees. There may be costs associated with completing credential maintenance hours. The application fee for the specialty exam is \$100 and the exam fee is \$150 for members and \$250 for non-members.

Does it matter when I upgrade?

You must enroll before your enrollment window closes; this could be as early as August 1, 2011. If you do not know your enrollment window, contact the GBCI immediately. If you enroll after your enrollment window closes, you can only become a LEED AP with specialty by meeting the eligibility requirements, and writing the new appropriate exams.

What if I want to change my specialty from the exam track I originally took?

If you enroll through testing, you can choose any of the five specialties. If you enroll through prescriptive credential maintenance, you can choose to switch your specialty to any of BD+C, ID+C or O+M, however you must accept the default specialty in the system and contact GBCI to do so.

If I don't earn the new credential, can I still work on LEED projects and get a LEED credit?

Currently, all Canadian and U.S. LEED rating systems give a LEED credit for having a LEED AP on a project team and no specialty is required. The USGBC is proposing to change this credit in future iterations of the LEED rating systems, however these versions must still go through a period of public comment.



If I don't earn the new credential, do I have to do any credential maintenance?

For LEED AP's without specialty, no credential maintenance is required.

Can I change my LEED AP without specialty to a Green Associate credential?

A LEED AP without specialty cannot enroll into a Green Associate Credential. To become a LEED Green Associate, you must apply and pass the LEED Green Associate exam and pay all applicable fees. A LEED AP with specialty credential shows more extensive knowledge than a LEED Green Associate; we encourage you to earn the LEED AP with specialty credential to show the depth of your knowledge and skills.

What happens if I earn the LEED AP with specialty credential but don't maintain it? Will I lose my credential?

You will no longer be a LEED AP with specialty, but you can never lose your LEED AP without specialty credential.

If I enroll, when can I start calling myself LEED AP with specialty?

You can use the title or logo as soon as you either pass the exam or agree to prescriptive credential maintenance. You do not need to earn all or any of the 30 CE hours, you just need to commit to doing it.



How do I show the LEED AP with specialty credential on a business card?

Write LEED AP followed by your specialty either written out or abbreviated (e.g., LEED AP Operations + Maintenance or LEED AP O+M). While LEED is a registered trademark, USGBC and GBCI do not require LEED APs to use the '®' or 'TM' symbols in email signatures or on business cards.

What should I do if I'm not sure whether I want to upgrade?

We encourage all LEED AP's without specialty to enroll before their enrollment windows close. There are no fees to do so (providing you choose prescriptive credential maintenance), and you then have two years to decide whether you want to earn the new specialty credential. If you decide not to earn the hours, at the end of the two years you will revert to a LEED AP without specialty. If you wait until after your enrollment window closes, and then decide you want the LEED AP with specialty credential, your only option will be to write both the Green Associate and specialty exam(s).

What happens if I don't upgrade my credential?

You retain your LEED AP without specialty credential in perpetuity. You can use this designation and logo and will be listed in the LEED Professional Directory.



Enroll through testing

What is involved in upgrading through retesting?

You must meet the eligibility requirement for the specialty exam, which stipulates that you must be able to document personal involvement with a project registered for LEED certification in the last three years. Then, you must write and pass the specialty exam. **You must write the specialty exam before your enrollment window closes. Enrollment windows begin to close on August 1, please contact the GBCI if you do not know when your deadline is.**

What do I do for eligibility if my office does not work on LEED projects?

If you do not have the required LEED project experience, then unfortunately you are not eligible to write the specialty exam. In this situation, we suggest you enroll in prescriptive continuing education.

If I choose this option, am I committed to retesting every two years?

No, once you have earned the LEED AP with specialty credential, you follow the Credential Maintenance Program, and can choose to earn CE hours or retest every two years.

How do I enroll to upgrade through retesting?

On the GBCI website, click on My Credentials in the top right hand corner. Then select “Enroll through testing” and complete the steps. Once your application is approved you can register for the exam.

What does writing the specialty exam cost?

The application fee is \$100 and the exam fee is \$150 for members and \$250 for non-members.

What should I study for the specialty exam?

Refer to the appropriate Candidate Handbook for the particular details. The specialty exams are currently based on the USGBC’s LEED Rating Systems.

What is the difference between the combined exam and specialty exam?

The combined exam includes both the LEED Green Associate exam and the LEED specialty exam.



Enroll through prescriptive credential maintenance

What is involved in enrolling through prescriptive credential maintenance?

With prescriptive credential maintenance, you must earn 30 Continuing Education (CE) hours over a two year period. The 30 CE hours must be distributed across a number of GBCI categories, with minimum numbers in each category. In addition, 6 hours must be LEED-specific and directly related to your specialty.

Can I change my specialty from my original exam track?

Yes, you can choose one of three specialties: BD+C, ID+C, and O+M. When you enroll, the default specialty in GBCI's system will correspond to the exam track you originally took. If you want to switch it, contact GBCI.

How can I get continuing education (CE) hours?

You can obtain CE hours in many different ways, ranging from taking courses or doing self-study, making presentations or developing content for courses, authoring books or articles, working on LEED projects or volunteering on committees, or obtaining additional qualifications related to the green building field.

Can one (1) CE hour be counted in multiple GBCI categories?

No, each CE hour can only be submitted once.

Can one (1) CE hour be counted for multiple specialties?

No, each CE hour can only be used once. An additional 6 LEED-specific hours must be earned for each additional specialty.

How is prescriptive education different than the regular Credential Maintenance Program?

Prescriptive credential maintenance requires that a minimum numbers of hours be earned in different GBCI categories, as well as 6 being LEED specific. The regular Credential Maintenance Program allows the 30 CE hours to be earned in any category, as long as 6 of those hours are LEED specific.

Once the first two years are over, do I still need to complete the required CE hours in each GBCI category?

No, after the first (2) two years are over, you no longer have to do prescriptive education. You would follow the CMP, and don't have to worry about the minimum number of hours.



How do I enroll in prescriptive continuing education?

On GBCI's website, click on My Credentials in the top right corner. Then select "Enroll through prescriptive credential maintenance" and agree to complete prescriptive credential maintenance as well as the disciplinary policy and CMP requirements.

When will I find out if I am selected for audit?

The selection of individuals for audit is only made when you renew your credential at the end of each two-year reporting period.



Earn CE hours from courses/training or self-study

What topics/courses count for CE hours?

Courses and self-study topics related to green building can count for CE Hours. For specific information see the [CMP Guide](#).

What topics/courses don't count for CE hours?

Education must build your skills and knowledge of green building in order to earn CE hours. Workshops or seminars related to programs and policies, such as membership or credentialing, do not count for CE hours.

Does the type or level of a course affect the CE hours that you can report?

The course type determines whether the number of hours you can report is limited or not. CE hours for courses approved by USGBC (GBCI's Education Reviewing Body) and college and university courses that are part of a degree-granting program are unlimited. Live presentations and self-study are limited – see the CMP guide. The level of a course does not have any effect on CE hours.

For a full-day course that covers a range of topics, how do I break down the hours according to GBCI categories?

If it was a CaGBC course, we have a chart on our website that shows how the hours should be broken down. For other courses, contact the provider to ask if they can break down these hours for you. You can also review the content of the course and come up with your own estimates, based on how the topics covered in the course correspond to the GBCI categories, and how much time was spent on each.

Where can I get education from and how much will it cost?

We advise Canadians to look carefully at the source of the education they sign up for. Training being sold by US based companies may have little relevance to the Canadian market. The CaGBC is significantly expanding its education program, so we would encourage you to start with us! If you don't see content you would like, consider working with our new Education Exchange program to make it available across Canada! You can be sure that your education dollars will stay in Canada to help us achieve our objectives and build the green building market. The cost of training can vary, depending where you get your education from, and whether it is in class or online.

How can I find college courses with approved CE hours?

Our website lists the colleges and universities that offer CaGBC courses with CaGBC approved instructors. For other courses, contact institutions directly.

Are there any courses offered in smaller communities across Canada?

CaGBC is trying to expand our course offerings to smaller communities. We are also focusing on developing on-demand courses that can be accessed over the internet whenever is convenient for you.



What courses qualify for LEED-specific CE hours?

Any courses that are approved and designated as LEED-specific CE hours qualify.

Does the CaGBC website list approved courses?

We have information on the courses we offer, and provide links to colleges and universities that also offer our courses. We do not list courses offered by other providers. The USGBC, as an Education Reviewing Body for GBCI, has a comprehensive list of courses that have been approved for CE hours.

What CE hours are provided by CaGBC courses?

Our website has a chart that summarizes the CE hours provided by CaGBC courses, broken down into the various GBCI categories.

Are CE hours for CaGBC courses tracked internally by CaGBC or do LEED professionals have to track them themselves?

CaGBC does not track CE hours earned, although we issue certificates to attendees of our educational programs. CE hours must be self-tracked, and self-reported to GBCI.

Can I report CE hours from courses that I took before I enrolled?

If you became a LEED AP in Canada and enrolled in 2010, you are allowed to use all CE hours from 2010 activities, regardless of whether they occurred before your enrollment date. If you enrolled in 2011 you can only report hours within your reporting period.

Can I carry over CE hours if I have over 30 hours in my current reporting period?

No.



Earn other types of CE hours

Do you have to be a project administrator to earn CE hours for project work?

No, anyone involved in the implementation of LEED credit requirements and documentation of performance on a project that is registered for LEED certification can claim CE hours for this work.

Does LEED project work count as LEED specific hours?

Yes.

A private American firm gives the option to obtain CE hours by assisting on LEED projects. Is this acceptable to GBCI?

Yes, any work (paid or unpaid) on a LEED project can count, as long as you are involved in the implementation of LEED credit requirements and documentation of performance on a project that is registered for LEED certification.

For a project started in 2010 and continuing to the present, can I earn CE hours?

CE hours must be earned within your reporting period.

Can I earn hours from any version of a LEED Rating System?

Yes.

Can I earn CE hours from licenses obtained before my enrollment date?

No. All hours must be earned within your reporting period.

Which qualifications earn CE hours?

Any certificate, professional license or credential related to green building.

Does exam writing/preparation time qualify for CE hours?

Yes, if it involves study of green building principles, but you will need to report these CE hours under the applicable activity type, such as ERB approved activities, live presentations or self-study courses.

For authorship, what topics count for CE hours? When are the hours LEED-specific?

Anything related to green building, green technology or LEED that is relevant to your specialty. CE hours are considered LEED specific if they are relevant to the intents, requirements, and strategies found in any current LEED rating system, AND are relevant to your specialty.



How to get assistance or more information

How do I obtain help in the following situations?

- I don't know what my enrollment window is
- I don't know how to login to my GBCI account
- My GBCI password doesn't work
- I want to switch my default specialty
- I am having trouble reporting my CE hours
- I have questions on the LEED AP upgrade process, or on earning CE hours

Contact GBCI on their [website](#).

What help can CaGBC provide?

For additional assistance, contact CaGBC Customer Service at info@cagbc.org or toll-free at 1-866-941-1184.