



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 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).

Why has the LEED AP credential changed?

GBCI received feedback from practicing LEED APs that it was important that a LEED AP credential was associated with specialized knowledge of a particular type of LEED project. They also felt it was important to commit to continuing education to keep knowledge and skills up to date.

How will green building clients know that a LEED AP with specialty is different than LEED AP without specialty?

GBCI and CaGBC are working together to communicate the changes in LEED credentials to the green building industry.



Overview of upgrade options for LEED APs without specialty

Why upgrade my 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 type of LEED project. 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.

What are the options to upgrade my credential?

GBCI has developed a special, one-time process for upgrading your credential. You can upgrade your credential by either enrolling in prescriptive continuing education or passing your specialty exam before October 27, 2011. 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. With prescriptive continuing education you must earn 30 Continuing Education (CE) hours in the first two year reporting period with minimum hours in each subject category.

Does it cost anything to upgrade?

No, enrolling with GBCI to upgrade your credential is free. The special upgrade process also waives the first renewal fee in two years time, so that you will not need to pay a renewal fee until four years has passed. However, there are costs associated with either writing the specialty exam or earning Continuing Education (CE) hours. The application fee for the specialty exam is \$100 and the exam fee is \$150 for members and \$250 for non-members. The cost of earning CE hours varies with the type of activity.

Does it matter when I upgrade?

The special upgrade process is only available until October 27, 2011. As soon as you pass the specialty exam or enroll in prescriptive continuing education, you can use the specialty designation and logo. In addition, you can start to report CE hours for any activities you are involved in. CE hours from before your exam or enrollment date cannot be used.



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

If you upgrade by rewriting a specialty exam, you can choose any of the five specialties. If you upgrade with prescriptive continuing education, you can choose to switch your specialty to any of BD+C, ID+C or O+M. When you enroll with GBCI, accept the default specialty in the system and then contact GBCI to let them know you wish to change it.

If I don't upgrade my 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. There are no current plans to change this in the Canadian rating systems, but this situation may change. The latest draft version of the New Construction rating system in the U.S. no longer gives a LEED credit to LEED APs without specialty. Final decision on the draft version will be made in 2012.

If I don't upgrade my credential, do I have to do any credential maintenance?

No, CE hours are required.

What do you recommend for those LEED APs who need general knowledge of green building but do not work directly in the green building industry? Can I change my LEED AP without specialty to a Green Associate credential?

A LEED AP credential shows more extensive knowledge than a Green Associate. We encourage you to upgrade your LEED AP credential to show the depth of your knowledge and skills. However, if a LEED AP credential is not required in your profession, you can contact GBCI to switch your credential to Green Associate.

What happens if I upgrade my credential to LEED AP with specialty and then don't maintain it with CE hours? Will I lose my LEED AP without specialty credential?

No, you revert to LEED AP without specialty if you do not maintain your LEED AP with specialty.

If I upgrade, 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 enroll in prescriptive continuing education. 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.

If I have both Canadian and US LEED AP designations, can I use the same CE credits to meet the requirements for both?

If the designations were based on the same exam track, GBCI would normally consider you to have just one LEED AP designation. In that case, you only need to worry about CE hours for one specialty. If you wish to have two different designations, contact GBCI to discuss your particular situation.

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

In order to not miss out on the special upgrade process, we suggest that you enroll in prescriptive education before October 27, 2011. Then you have two years to decide whether you want the upgraded credential and to earn the CE hours. If you decide not to earn the hours, at the end of the two years you will revert to a LEED AP and you won't have lost anything. If you wait until after October 27, 2011 and then decide you want LEED AP with specialty, your only option will be to write both the Green Associate and specialty exams like any new green building professional.

What happens if I don't upgrade my credential?

You retain your LEED AP credential in perpetuity. You can use this designation and logo and will be listed in the LEED Professional Directory.



Upgrade by writing specialty exam

What is involved in upgrading through retesting?

First of all, you must meet the eligibility requirement for the specialty exam, which stipulates that you must have been personally involved with a project registered for LEED certification in the last three years. You must have contributed to the project through active participation and responsibility, and be able to show that you were exposed to the LEED process and have knowledge of the project. You can have worked in a variety of roles that are linked to the project. Then, you must write and pass the specialty exam. For the special upgrade program, LEED APs who wrote the Canadian LEED AP exam have until October 27, 2011, to pass the specialty exam.

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 written the exam, you follow the Credential Maintenance Program, and you 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 Professional Exams and Log into My Credentials. Then select “Enroll through testing” and agree to follow GBCI policies and the CMP. Once you have enrolled, you then need to apply for and pass the specialty exam before October 27, 2011.

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 Candidate Handbook for the particular specialty for details. The specialty exams are currently based on the US LEED rating systems although they are in the process of being internationalized.

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

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



Upgrade through prescriptive education

What is involved in upgrading through prescriptive continuing education?

With prescriptive education, 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, a CE hour can only be submitted once.

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

No, a 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 education requires that 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.



How can I earn LEED-specific hours?

LEED-specific hours must be directly related to your specialty in order to count. LEED-specific hours can be obtained by taking courses approved for this type of hour, or some college or university courses if 75% of the content is related to LEED. Self-study can be LEED specific if you are reviewing a LEED reference guide or a standard related to the LEED rating systems. LEED project work qualifies for LEED-specific hours if the project matches your specialty. You can also get CE hours for additional qualifications that relate to the LEED rating systems.

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 Professional Exams and Log into My Credentials. Then select "Enroll through prescriptive credential maintenance" and agree to follow GBCI policies and the prescriptive education program. Once you have done that, you are enrolled and are considered a LEED AP with specialty.

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 the first two-year reporting period.



Earn CE hours from courses/training or self-study

What topics/courses count for CE hours?

Any course or self-study on topics related to green building can count for CE hours. However, keep in mind that you must earn minimum CE hours in a range of categories, and 6 of the 30 hours earned must be LEED specific. These restrictions mean that you may need to choose your courses carefully so that you are able to use all of the CE hours.

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. All other types of courses 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, how much will it cost and what are the program options?

The cost can vary, depending where you get your education from, and whether it is in class or online. Also, keep in mind that you can get CE hours from other activities such as committee or volunteer work, LEED project work or self-study, not just from taking courses.

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 have approved LEED-specific CE hours qualify. Courses that are part of a college or university program and earn credit hours towards a degree qualify if 75% of the course content is directly related to current versions of the LEED rating systems, the LEED certification process, and or LEED Online. Any other courses do not qualify as LEED specific. Note: LEED-specific hours must be relevant to your specialty. Self-study can also count as LEED specific if the content is directly related to LEED or the standards referenced in LEED.

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 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 tracked by each person, and reported to GBCI in order to renew your credential.

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

If you enrolled in 2010 you are allowed to use all CE hours from 2010 activities, regardless of whether they occurred before your enrollment date. Anyone enrolled in 2011 does not have the option of reporting backdated hours; hours must be earned after the enrollment date in order to count.

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

No, carryover of CE hours is not allowed. CE hours must be earned in the reporting period.



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?

Generally yes, but the project type must match your specialty to count as LEED specific. If it doesn't, the project work can earn CE hours, as long as it was relevant to your specialty, but it doesn't count as LEED specific. See the CMP Guide Appendix C for topics that are relevant to each specialty.

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 after your enrollment date or the date when you wrote your specialty exam. In order to claim the project CE hours, you must be able to show that the bulk of the work was completed after that date.

Does it matter what version of LEED is being used?

No, the project can use any current LEED rating system.

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

No. Backdating of CE hours is not allowed.

Which qualifications earn CE hours?

Any qualification for an industry or profession related to green building. Appendix D of the CMP guide has examples of qualifications as a guideline, but the list is not exhaustive. If you were audited you would need to demonstrate how your qualification relates to green building and specialty topics.



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 self-study category, not under certificates, professional licenses, and credentials. You can earn 1 CE hour for the first hour, and 0.5 CE hours for each additional full half hour. You need to specify the document studied, page numbers, and the topics covered. You can submit a maximum of 5 CE hours of self study.

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 how to login to my GBCI account
- My GBCI password doesn't work
- I want to switch my default specialty or change my credential to Green Associate
- I am having trouble reporting my CE hours
- I have questions on the LEED AP upgrade process, or on earning CE hours

Contact GBCI using their website. Click on Contact, and select Exams & Credentialing. Fill out the form as appropriate, and submit it.

What help can CaGBC provide?

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