

## PART I

# RAMPING UP

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# CHAPTER 1

## UNDERSTANDING THE CREDENTIALING PROCESS

**BEFORE DIVING INTO THE EFFORT OF STUDYING** and preparing for the LEED® Green Associate™ exam, there are quite a few things to review. Whenever I teach an exam prep course, this topic is not typically addressed until the end of the class, as it is easier to digest at that point; but it is important to present this information here in the first chapter, to make sure the test is applicable and appropriate for you. This chapter will provide the important concepts of the tiered credentialing system to ensure that the components and the exam registration process are understood.

This initial information begins with the credentialing system for LEED accreditation, as it involves three tiers:

1. LEED Green Associate
2. LEED Accredited Professional (AP) with Specialty
3. LEED Fellow

### THE TIERS OF THE CREDENTIALING PROCESS

The first step of comprehending the credentialing process begins with a brief understanding of the basics of LEED. LEED is the acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, signifying a green building rating system designed to evaluate projects and award them certification based on their performance. The U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC®) website indicates that LEED is a “nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.”<sup>1</sup> USGBC created the LEED Green Building Rating System™ back in the 1990s as a tool for the public and private commercial real estate markets to help evaluate the performance of the built environment. It now has become “the most widely recognized and widely used green building program across the globe.”<sup>2</sup>

#### TIP

**Study:** Notice the LEED acronym does **not** contain an “S” at the end. Therefore, please note this first lesson: when referring to LEED, please do not say “LEEDS,” as it is quite important to refer to the acronym correctly.

### LEED Green Associate

The **LEED Green Associate** tier is applicable for individuals with a basic understanding of green building systems and technologies. These individuals have been tested on the key components of the different LEED green building rating systems and the certification process. This level of credentialing is the first step to becoming a LEED Accredited Professional.



Use white index cards to create flashcards to remember the acronyms for USGBC and LEED.

The LEED Green Associate exam is geared toward all persons involved in the world of sustainable design, construction, and operations, beyond just the typical architecture and engineering design students and professionals. Therefore, the exam is available for lawyers, accountants, contractors, owners, and developers as well. Any person interested in the field of sustainable design and green building is eligible to sit for the exam, especially those with LEED project experience. For those who wish to sit without LEED project experience or are not employed in the field, it is recommended to attend an educational course focused in sustainable design.

## LEED Accredited Professional with Specialty

The second tier, **LEED AP™ with Specialty**, is divided into five types (of specialties):

1. *LEED AP Building Design + Construction (BD+C)*. This exam includes concepts related to new construction and major renovations in the commercial, residential, educational, and healthcare sectors. The project types include new construction, core and shell, schools, retail, hospitality, data centers, warehouses and distribution centers, healthcare, homes, and midrise multi-family residential structures.
2. *LEED AP Interior Design + Construction (ID+C)*. This exam contains questions related to tenant improvement and fit-out project knowledge for commercial interior, retail, and hospitality professionals.
3. *LEED AP Operations + Maintenance (O+M)*. This exam covers existing building project knowledge specific to operations and maintenance issues of commercial facilities, schools, retail facilities, hospitality facilities, data centers, and warehouses and distribution centers.
4. *LEED AP Homes*. This exam applies to professionals practicing in the residential market.
5. *LEED AP Neighborhood Development (ND)*. This exam tests whole or partial neighborhood development project knowledge.

Because the LEED Green Associate credentialing tier is the first step to obtaining LEED AP status, the LEED AP exams are thought of in a two-part exam process beginning with the LEED Green Associate exam. You have the option to decide whether you wish to take both exams in one day or break the exam into two different testing appointments. The exams are quite challenging and mind intensive, and can be exhausting, so bear this in mind when deciding on which option to pursue.

LEED project experience is no longer required in order to be able to sit for any of the LEED AP specialty exams. These exams cover more in-depth knowledge of each of the prerequisites and credits of the LEED Rating Systems, the requirements to comply including documentation and calculations, and the technologies involved with the corresponding rating system. These exams are therefore applicable for those professionals working on LEED registered projects or those who worked on projects that have earned certification.

### TIP

While there is an additional application fee to separate the LEED AP exam into two different test dates, it is highly recommended to take the LEED Green Associate exam one day and take the AP specialty exam on another.

## LEED Fellow

Finally, the third tier of the credentialing system, **LEED Fellow**, is the highest level of credentialing. It is meant to signify a demonstration of accomplishments,

experience, and proficiency within the sustainable design and construction community. These individuals are considered to be “the most exceptional professionals in the green building industry” because they have made a significant contribution to green building and sustainability at a regional, national or global level.”<sup>3</sup> These professionals have established extraordinary achievement in the following:

- Technical knowledge and skill.
- A history of exemplary leadership in green building significant contributions in teaching, mentoring, or research with proven outcomes.
- A history of highly impactful commitment, service, and advocacy for green building and sustainability.<sup>4</sup>

## LEED Professional Certificates™

LEED Professional Certificates are available to individuals interested in the residential market and are seeking the LEED for Homes Green Rater credential. The Green Classroom Professional certificate is available to individuals eager to create green schools in which to work and teach.

## THE EXAM REGISTRATION PROCESS

Now that there is an understanding about the three tiers of the credentialing system and whom each tier is geared for, it is time to review the process for registering for the exam. The first step involves visiting the USGBC website at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) and downloading the *LEED Green Associate Candidate Handbook* found in the LEED Credentials section of the website.

*Each of the candidate handbooks details the following information:*

- Study materials—including exam format, timing, references, and sample questions.
- How to register for the exam—including the registration period, eligibility requirements, and exam fees.
- How to schedule your exam—including confirmation, canceling, and rescheduling your test date.
- A pre-exam checklist.
- What to expect on the day of your exam—including name requirements, scoring, and testing center regulations.
- What to do after your exam—including the Credentialing Maintenance Program (i.e., continuing education requirements) and certificates.

Although the intention of this exam prep book is to consolidate all of the information needed to prepare for the LEED Green Associate exam, some of the references are updated from time to time. Therefore, this book contains similar information as found in the handbooks to add efficiency, but it is best advised to reference the latest version of the handbook appropriate to the LEED Green Associate credentialing tier for the most recent exam information.

Once the handbook is downloaded and reviewed, the next step includes establishing an account with the USGBC website if you have not already done so. To set up a new account, go to [www.usgbc.org/registration/create-user](http://www.usgbc.org/registration/create-user). It

### TIP

**Study:** USGBC updates the candidate handbooks for each of the exam types at the beginning of each month, so make sure to have the most current version.

### TIP

The exam is offered in English but translation is available to non-native English speakers. Refer to the *LEED Green Associate Candidate Handbook* for more information.

**TIP**

**Study:** It is not only important to refer to LEED correctly, but also to the projects and professionals involved. Remember buildings are **certified** and people are **accredited**. People will never be able to become LEED certified professionals—remember, there are LEED APs and not LEED CPs.

Additionally, LEED **certification** is meant for projects and buildings, not products. Not only will a LEED certified professional not be found, but also neither will a LEED certified chair, air-conditioning unit, appliance, paint, or glue.

**TIP**

If you work for a member organization of USGBC, be sure to connect your USGBC account in order to take advantage of the member discount available for the exam fee.

**TIP**

Remember, employees of USGBC member companies and full-time students can take advantage of reduced exam fees.

**TIP**

To reschedule or cancel an exam date, please consult the *LEED Green Associate Candidate Handbook* for explicit instructions. They are quite meticulous about the procedure, so it is advised to be aware of the details to avoid risking a loss in fees paid.

is critical to sign up and create the account with USGBC consistent with the account holder's name as it appears on the identification to be used to check in at the testing center. If they do not match on the day of the exam, exam fees may be lost, and the opportunity to take the exam may be forfeited. If your existing account with USGBC is not consistent with your identification, refer to the LEED Green Associate Handbook for instructions.

## REGISTER!

Once an account is established with USGBC, the next step is to register for the exam. It is advised not to register for the exam any longer than one month prior to your desired exam date. To register for the exam, visit [www.usgbc.org/leed/credentials](http://www.usgbc.org/leed/credentials), click on “Register for the Exam,” input the required information, and pay the exam fee. An approved registration is valid for up to one year, once the exam fees are paid. After the fee has been paid, you will be redirected to Prometric to schedule your exam.

## SCHEDULE!

The next step is scheduling an appointment to take the exam at a Prometric testing center. As stated previously, it is advised to hold off from selecting an exam date until further along in the preparation for the exam. In the introduction of this exam prep book, a study and reading schedule is suggested. It is best recommended to start studying and determine the level of knowledge of the test content before scheduling an exam date.

When ready to schedule an exam date, please visit [www.prometric.com/gbci](http://www.prometric.com/gbci) or, if signed into your account at the USGBC website, follow the links to the Prometric website to schedule a day to take the exam, from the “Credentials” section. After an exam date is scheduled, a confirmation code is displayed on the screen. Keep this code! This code will be needed should the selected exam date need to be canceled, confirmed, or rescheduled with Prometric. A confirmation email will be sent from Prometric shortly after scheduling.

In addition, it is important to remember that candidates will have three allowed testing attempts per one-year registration period. In the event that a retake is necessary (even though this is not the plan!), test-takers will need to pay an additional fee for the exam. Refer to the *Green Associate Candidate Handbook* for more information on this rule.

## WHY EARN LEED CREDENTIALS?

Just like green buildings are evaluated based on triple bottom criteria (social, economic, and environmental), deciding whether to earn LEED credentials can be approached in the same fashion, as there are individual, employer, and industry benefits to examine. From an individualistic standpoint, earning the LEED Green Associate credential will grant a professional with a differentiator to market to a potential employer or client, provide them with exposure on the USGBC website database of LEED professionals, and earn them a certificate to display and recognition as a professional on the LEED certification process. An employer

would also benefit by earning the eligibility to participate on LEED projects, as more projects are requiring LEED credentials for team members; building the firm's credentials when responding to requests for proposals (RFPs) and requests for qualifications (RFQs); and having the opportunity to encourage other staff members to aim for the same credential to help the firm to evolve. Finally, the market would also benefit as more professionals earn the LEED Green Associate credential by helping the built environment to become more sustainable and the market to evolve, transform, and grow.

## QUIZ TIME!

*These questions are formatted just as they would be on the exam. Notice the question indicates how many answers to select. The proper number of correct answers is required on the exam, as partial credit is **not** awarded.*

*In an effort to present information to you in multiple ways and help you learn, you may find questions asking about information that is new to you, that you did not read about throughout the book.*

- Q1.1 How many types of credentials for LEED AP with Specialty are available? (Choose one)
- A. 5
  - B. 6
  - C. 3
  - D. 4
  - E. 2
- Q1.2 Is it possible to sit for the LEED Green Associate exam and the LEED AP ID+C exam in one day?
- A. Yes
  - B. No
- Q1.3 Is LEED project experience needed in order to sit for the LEED AP O+M exam?
- A. Yes
  - B. No
- Q1.4 How long is the exam registration period valid? (Choose one)
- A. One week
  - B. One month
  - C. 3 months
  - D. One year
  - E. It never expires
- Q1.5 What does LEED stand for? (Choose one)
- A. Leadership in Energy Efficient Design
  - B. Leadership in Efficient and Effective Design

- C. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
- D. Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Access information about the available credentials and certificates at [www.usgbc.org/leed/credentials#certificates](http://www.usgbc.org/leed/credentials#certificates).

Create a USGBC account at [www.usgbc.org/registration/create-user](http://www.usgbc.org/registration/create-user).

Register for the LEED Green Associate exam at [www.usgbc.org/exam-registration/exam?exam=2773636](http://www.usgbc.org/exam-registration/exam?exam=2773636).

Schedule your exam at [www.prometric.com/gbci](http://www.prometric.com/gbci).

## NOTES

1. USGBC website, [www.usgbc.org/Docs/Archive/General/Docs3330.pdf](http://www.usgbc.org/Docs/Archive/General/Docs3330.pdf).
2. USGBC website, [www.usgbc.org/about](http://www.usgbc.org/about).
3. USGBC website, [www.usgbc.org/articles/learn-how-become-leed-fellow](http://www.usgbc.org/articles/learn-how-become-leed-fellow).
4. Ibid.