

**SITES**

**AP**

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# CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

**SITES® AP**

Updated July 2017

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# REGISTERING FOR YOUR EXAM

## Registration

1. Log in to your [SITES® Online account](#) using your existing USGBC® site user account or [creating a new account](#) if you do not have one.
2. Verify that the name you enter in matches the name on the ID you will present at the test center. If it does not match, please update your name in your [site user account](#) “settings.” This may be of special concern to candidates who use more than one name (e.g., individuals who use a nickname or those who use different names in different regions). Please update your name with GBCI® at least 5 days prior to your exam. [Contact GBCI](#) if you experience issues updating your name.\*
3. Select the SITES AP exam under the credentials section and follow the instructions on the screen to complete the application.
4. You will be redirected to [prometric.com/gbci](https://prometric.com/gbci) to schedule your exam date and location.
5. When the exam appointment is scheduled, you will receive a confirmation number onscreen and from Prometric through an email.
6. Record your confirmation number. You will need this confirmation number to confirm, cancel or reschedule your appointment through the Prometric website, [prometric.com/gbci](https://prometric.com/gbci).
7. Once you have scheduled an exam, please print your confirmation notice from Prometric. Keep your confirmation notice for any communication with Prometric about your exam.

Once you register and pay for your exam, you have one year to schedule your exam session. Upon taking your exam, if your attempt was unsuccessful you may register again in the same way as initial registration. After three unsuccessful attempts, however, you must wait 90 days before submitting a new registration to GBCI. Candidates must pay the registration fee for each exam attempt.

Learn about [GBCI's exam refund/rescheduling policy](#).

To schedule five or more candidates at one time, [contact customer service](#).

\*If your native language utilizes non-Roman characters, be sure to enter your name in Roman characters when you register for the exam. Make sure to bring identification, such as a passport that includes your name in Roman characters, to the test center.

## Eligibility Requirements

GBCI recommends that candidates taking the SITES AP exam have exposure to SITES concepts through educational courses, volunteering or work experience prior to testing.

Candidates must be 18 years of age or older and prior SITES project experience is strongly recommended.

Practitioner experience is critical to the SITES AP designation and, as such, project proficiency will be tested objectively within the SITES AP exam itself.

All candidates must also agree to the [Disciplinary and Exam Appeals Policy](#) and credentialing maintenance requirements, and, if audited, must be willing to provide requested information.

## Audits

GBCI reserves the right to conduct an audit at any time (including prior to application submission and after credential has been granted) of all current and past exam applications. Any information contained in your [SITES Online account](#) may be audited and a request for further documentation of any information or claims submitted by the SITES professional may be made at any time. GBCI further reserves the right to take disciplinary or legal action—including but not limited to revocation of credential(s)—in the event that any conduct discovered during such an audit violates the SITES professional [Disciplinary and Exam Appeals Policy](#), GBCI policy and/or law.

## Special Testing Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that would prevent you from taking the SITES AP exam under normal testing conditions, you may request accommodations. GBCI complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the ADA, entities that administer standardized examinations must offer the examinations in a place and manner that is accessible to candidates with disabilities. This may require reasonable modifications to the manner in which the test is administered. Prometric, GBCI's test delivery company, will provide candidates reasonable auxiliary aids and services, except where it may fundamentally alter the validity of the exam results. Available accommodations include, but are not limited to, a reader, a scribe and extended testing time.

If you require special accommodations, you must indicate this during your registration process by checking the box that says “Yes, I need special accommodations. To request accommodations, you and your health care provider will each need to complete one form, the [Candidate Form](#) and the [Provider Form](#), to document the disability and the need for accommodation. There is no additional charge for special accommodations. Each request will be evaluated individually.

GBCI will review this documentation and, if approved, will alert Prometric of the necessary accommodations. Once you have requested special accommodations, you will not be able to schedule an appointment with Prometric until your request is approved. You will be contacted by email regarding the approval status of your special testing accommodations request.

## Exam Fees

See the [exam](#) page on the SITES website for pricing. Your paid exam fee is good for only one exam attempt.

# THE EXAM

## Exam Development

A SITES AP is an individual who possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to support the SITES certification process, including participating in the design and development process, supporting and encouraging integrated design, managing the application and certification process and providing advocacy and education for the adoption of SITES. The development of a valid exam begins with a clear and concise definition of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed in order to successfully perform the job of a SITES AP. The SITES AP exam is developed by a global network of Subject Matter Experts and meet the specifications of a job analysis. The test specifications are subject to rigorous validation by these experts, which ensures that the exam is valid, measuring what it is intended to measure. Once the exam is launched the test questions are regularly monitored to ensure continued reliability.

The exam assesses candidates' abilities at three cognitive levels: Recall, Application and Analysis.

- **Recall Items:** These items assess a candidate's ability to recall factual material that is presented in a similar context to the exam references.
- **Application Items:** These items provide the candidate with a novel problem or scenario that the candidate can solve using familiar principles or procedures described in the exam references.
- **Analysis Items:** These items assess a candidate's ability to break the problem down into its components to create a solution. The candidate must not only recognize the different elements of the problem, but must also evaluate the relationship or interactions of these elements.

## Exam Format

The SITES AP exam contains 100 randomly delivered multiple choice questions and must be completed in 2 hours.

The exam has both scored and unscored items. All items are delivered randomly throughout the exam and candidates are not informed of an item's status, so candidates should respond to all the items on the exam. Unscored items are used to gather performance data to inform whether the item should be scored on future exams.

The exam is computer-based. Exam questions and answer options are displayed on screen. The computer records your responses and times your exam. You are able to change your answers, skip questions and flag questions for later review.

While taking your exam, you may come across test items on which you would like to leave comments. Please make sure to add your comments during the exam by clicking on the comment button located in the navigation bar on the screen. Be sure to [inform GBCI](#) that you have left comments on your exam, including the email address that you used when you signed up for the exam and the date that you took your exam.

Be prepared to commit 2 hours 20 minutes for the exam. Total exam time is broken out as follows:

- An optional 10 minute tutorial, the 2 hour exam and an optional 10 minute exit survey.
- Be aware that if a candidate exits the exam session before completing the exam, the exam cannot be restarted and the exam session and fee are forfeited.

## Exam Language

The SITES AP exam is currently only available in English.

## Exam Maintenance

Each year, the SITES AP exam goes through a maintenance process where the questions are evaluated based on performance; poorly performing questions are removed and replaced. This is done to ensure that the exam remains statistically reliable and valid.

In order to accommodate deployment of the maintenance process at test centers globally, exams are not offered from June 15-June 30 of each year.

# PRE-EXAM CHECKLIST

## Are You Ready?

### One Month Before Your Exam

Ensure that your given name (first name) and surname (last name) in your [SITES Online account](#) matches the given name and surname on the identification you will present at the test center. (See next page.) **If the names do not match, you will not be allowed to test and you will forfeit the exam fee.**

### One Week Before Your Exam

Confirm that the date, time and location of your exam is correct. If it is not, please visit [SITES Online](#) for information about rescheduling or canceling your exam.

## Test Security

To ensure the integrity of the SITES AP exam, you will be required to review and accept a nondisclosure agreement that prohibits any disclosure of exam content:

- Test questions and answers are the exclusive property of GBCI.
- The exam and the items (questions and answers) are protected by copyright law. The exam may not be copied or reproduced in part or in whole, by any means whatsoever, including memorization.
- Future discussion or disclosure of the content of the exam, orally or in writing, or by any other means, is prohibited.
- Theft or attempted theft of exam items is punishable to the fullest extent of the law.
- Failure to comply with the agreement will prevent you from testing.

## What to Expect at the Test Center

It is recommended that you arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled exam appointment. Candidates who arrive at the test site after their scheduled exam time will lose their seat.

You will be escorted to a workstation by test center staff. You must remain in your seat during the exam except when authorized to leave by test center staff. Raise your hand to notify test center staff if:

- You experience problems with your computer
- An error message appears on the computer screen (do not clear the message)
- You need to take a break (testing time will NOT be suspended)
- You need the test center staff for any other reason

## Identification Requirements

Candidates must provide a valid, unexpired ID with a signature, a photograph that looks like the candidate and an expiration date. Acceptable examples include:

- Current government-issued photo ID with signature
- Current credit card photo ID with signature
- Current photo ID without signature plus 1 credit card with signature—first and last names must match on both

Examples of acceptable forms of unexpired photo ID include, but are not limited to:

- Driver's license
- Passport
- Military ID
- Alien ID/Resident Alien Card\*

*\*If the ID has a picture but no signature, it must be provided with a form of signature ID (e.g., a credit card) in the same name.*

See [Prometric's website](#) for more information.

Unacceptable forms of ID include, but are not limited to, an expired ID, an ID without an expiration date and a Social Security Card.

## Test Center Regulations

You must abide by Prometric's security rules while at the test center. See [Prometric's FAQs](#) for more information.

## Grounds for Dismissal from the Test Center

Any candidate who engages in misconduct or does not comply with the test proctor's warning to discontinue inappropriate behavior may be dismissed from the test site, have exam results invalidated or be subject to other sanctions. Fraud, deceit, dishonesty or other irregular behavior in connection with taking the exam is strictly prohibited.

GBCI will make a ruling based on the consideration of both the candidate's report and Prometric's report of the incident. To appeal GBCI's ruling, [send an email](#) of your formal appeal to GBCI. At this stage, the Credentialing Steering Committee will review and make a final ruling on the case.



# AFTER YOUR EXAM

## Exam Results

The SITES AP exam is scored between 125 and 200. **A score of 170 or higher is required to pass.** Your exam score will be displayed on screen at the end of the exam and you will receive a copy of your results via email.

Within 72 hours of your appointment, your exam results will be processed your [SITES Online account](#) will be updated.

## Passing the Exam

### Designating Your Credential

As soon as you have passed the SITES AP exam, you can use the title “SITES® AP” and/or the logo.

Please review the [GBCI Trademark Policy and Branding Guidelines](#) for additional guidance.

### Certificates

Once your exam results have been processed, you can download a copy of your certificate through your [SITES Online account](#).

### Credential Maintenance Program

For information on credential maintenance, see the [CMP Guide](#).

## Exam Content Appeals

Following completion of the exam candidates may [submit comments](#) on any question(s) they believe to contain technical errors in content. In your correspondence include your contact information, test date, the specific concerns about the question, as well as an indication of any comments left on the question during the exam. GBCI will review the questions and you will be notified of the findings.

Because of the need for test security, GBCI will not release exam questions or answers to candidates. GBCI does not respond to complaints or challenges received more than 10 days after the test date and does not respond to complaints sent to organizations other than GBCI.

GBCI does not modify exam scores under any conditions. In the event of a successful exam content appeal, you will be given the opportunity to retest; your score will not be changed. The only way to earn the SITES AP credential is to earn a 170 on the exam.

## Candidate Confidentiality

GBCI recognizes your rights to control personal information. GBCI policy is designed to safeguard this information from unauthorized disclosure. You can change your preference to be contacted by updating your personal preferences in your [SITES Online account](#).

To protect your rights to control score distribution, exam scores are released only to you, the test taker, and authorized GBCI staff. GBCI does not release test scores except for use in research studies that preserve your anonymity. Candidates' scores will always remain confidential unless released with written consent of a candidate.

Official statistics regarding the SITES AP exam, including all item performance data, individual data and demographic data, will be considered confidential; however, GBCI may publish aggregate, non-identifying information based on such data.

# EXAM SPECIFICATIONS

## Specifications

The following outline provides a general description of exam content areas for the SITES AP exam.

Knowledge domains reflect the SITES rating systems' credit categories and what one needs to know.

## SITES AP Exam

### Knowledge Domains

#### 1. Advocacy and Education for Adoption of SITES (7 Questions)

- A. Importance of ecosystem services from a global and local perspective (economic, social and environment benefits)
- B. Impacts of nature on human health and well-being
- C. Connection between landscape design and ecosystem services
- D. Importance of conserving and restoring healthy, functioning ecosystems
- E. Impacts of landscapes on water usage (e.g., irrigation), regional water supplies and energy consumption (e.g., treating, pumping and delivering water)
- F. Impacts of landscape construction and maintenance practices on local and regional priorities and issues (e.g., water quality)
- G. Importance of prioritizing the site/landscape early in design process
- H. Difference between conventional and integrative design process and the benefits of the integrated process
- I. Uniqueness of SITES approach/foundation when compared to LEED and other metrics
- J. Benefits of pursuing SITES certification (including cost/benefit analysis to project)

#### 2. SITES Basis/Foundation (10 Questions)

- A. SITES framework and connection to ecosystem services
- B. SITES Guiding Principles, Decision-Making Hierarchy and four Goals
- C. Process for rating system development (e.g., interdisciplinary, multi-year consensus based, inclusive of multiple stakeholders/advisors, public comment periods, field-

testing via pilot program)

- D. Similarities and differences between SITES and LEED in terms of framework, development process, etc.
- E. Difference between prescriptive- and performance-based approach
- F. Sustainable design, construction and maintenance resources, including resources for project precedents (e.g., case studies)
- G. Integrated systems (e.g., water-energy, site water, soil, vegetation, ecosystems)
- H. Approaches to landscape performance planning, measurement, evaluation and documentation

### **3. SITES Process, Credit Connections and Synergies (11 Questions)**

- A. Sustainability and program goals/benchmarks and how they relate to SITES credits
- B. SITES review and certification process
  - i. Strategies for creating contract documents and navigating the bid process to ensure SITES remains included throughout design and construction
  - ii. Team members and expertise needed to complete the certification submittal process
  - iii. SITES credits/prerequisites structure and documentation requirements (e.g., worksheets, calculators)
  - iv. Relationship or connection between related credits
- C. Benefits of integrative design team involvement throughout all stages of development
- D. Relationship between local codes and SITES credits
- E. Project eligibility requirements for SITES certification

### **4. Site Context and Pre-Design (14 Questions)**

- A. Site Assessment and Planning
  - i. Importance of conducting a pre-design site assessment with the integrated design team
  - ii. Sources of regional ecosystem information and climate conditions
  - iii. Local priorities and issues (e.g., drought, CSOs, economic stress, social needs, regulations and laws) and how they relate to credits
  - iv. Impact project may have on larger regional context (e.g., watershed, flyways, habitat)

- v. Site assessment process, including important features like identifying the reference soil and its connection to the rest of the SITES rating system
  - vi. Vegetation and Soil Protection Zones (VSPZ) concept, including what is/is not allowed in a VSPZ and what is meant by minimal site impact development
- B. Integrative Design Process
- i. Disciplines and expertise an integrative project team would be comprised of and how to coordinate project team activities
  - ii. Communication system and strategies that promotes integrative design process
  - iii. Performance-based goal development (e.g., identifying what ecosystem services to protect and restore)
- C. Engage Users and Stakeholders
- i. Importance of engaging the larger community
  - ii. Process for identifying user groups and stakeholders
  - iii. Relevance and implications of the project for the community and user groups
  - iv. Obtaining local demographics and understanding how demographics can influence the site design (e.g., census, interviews, GIS, crowd sourcing)
  - v. Strategies for engaging the community

## 5. Site Design (21 Questions)

- A. Water
- i. Importance of conserving water resources and restoring ecosystems
  - ii. Percentile precipitation event and related calculations
  - iii. EPA WaterSense Water Budget tool and how to use it
  - iv. Strategies for retaining precipitation onsite versus treatment
  - v. Site water budget, including all water generated on site
  - vi. Sources of stormwater pollutants found in landscapes and their impacts on aquatic ecosystems and human health
  - vii. Identifying aquatic ecosystems and restoration strategies
  - viii. Expressing water systems as site amenities
- B. Soil and Vegetation
- i. Importance of conserving and restoring soil and vegetation
  - ii. Reference soil and how to identify and use for soil restoration

- iii. Plants that are native, adapted or invasive
  - iv. Difference between native plant and native plant community (including restoration and conservation issues)
  - v. Using vegetation to improve site conditions (e.g., heat islands, building energy load, fire risk)
  - vi. Cultural/historical benefits of vegetation (e.g., special status vegetation)
  - vii. Relationship of soil management plan to soil restoration during construction
  - viii. Attributes of invasive species management plans
  - ix. Impacts of landscape construction and maintenance practices on soil and vegetation health and productivity
  - x. Concept of optimizing biomass
- C. Materials and Selection
- i. Importance of material/resource use and management in creating a sustainable landscape
  - ii. Material life cycle and associated benefits and strategies
  - iii. Conservation and reuse strategies
  - iv. Purchasing and declarations strategies (e.g., eliminate use of threatened and endangered species, purchase recycled, regional and sustainably produced materials)
  - v. Resource recovery strategies (e.g., design for disassembly, reuse and salvage materials)
  - vi. Materials that protect air/water quality
  - vii. Connection between site assessment, construction and maintenance plan
- D. Human Health and Well-Being
- i. Benefits of being in natural environments/open-space, having views
  - ii. Protection and maintenance of cultural and historic places
  - iii. Strategies to promote safety, accessibility and wayfinding
  - iv. Strategies to promote mental restoration, social interaction, physical activity
  - v. Strategies to promote social equity
  - vi. Onsite food production and its connection to other credits (e.g., public health, irrigation)
  - vii. Strategies to reduce light pollution

- viii. Strategies to promote use of fuel efficient and multimodal transportation access
- ix. Strategies to minimize exposure to air pollution, (e.g., tobacco smoke, automobile exhaust)

## **6. Construction (13 Questions)**

- A. Construction and contractor's role in ensuring sustainability of project
- B. Construction punch list and relationship to other credits
- C. Construction management process
  - i. Construction specifications
  - ii. Construction operations as critical path and documentation
- D. Methods for controlling erosion, sedimentation and potential pollutants from construction
- E. Soils restoration criteria (e.g., organic matter, compaction, infiltration, soil chemical characteristics, soil biological function)
- F. Compliance with testing and specifications
- G. Exceptions to soil restoration requirements
- H. Waste stream study
- I. Recycling/composting plan and opportunities both on and offsite (e.g., vegetation, rocks and soils, hardscape)
- J. Components and ingredients of construction materials
- K. Air quality protection measures in construction documents

## **7. Post-Construction Plans and Commitments (9 Questions)**

- A. Operations + Maintenance
  - i. Importance of maintenance and maintenance perspective to ensuring long term positive impacts
  - ii. Impacts of landscape maintenance on human health and well-being, resource conservation and pollution reduction
  - iii. Connection to site assessment and integrative design process (having maintenance expert early on in process)
  - iv. Components of site maintenance plan and its relationship with other credits
  - v. On and off-site recycling/composting plans (e.g., vegetation, rocks and soils, hardscape)
  - vi. Difference between integrated pest management (IPM) and plant health care (PHC)

- B. Performance Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
  - i. Importance of post-construction performance monitoring data
  - ii. Components and criteria of a monitoring program/plan
  - iii. Strategies for collaboration (e.g., partnership scenarios with university)
  - iv. Performance evaluation process
  - v. Landscape performance measurements (e.g., basic tools, measuring techniques, data types and sources)
- C. Education
  - i. Strategies and formats for communicating and educating about landscape sustainability on and off site to diverse audiences (e.g., interactive displays, tours, program)
  - ii. Relationship to other credits (e.g., education about sustainable processes and features on the site)
  - iii. Components and composition of a case study
  - iv. Strategies for communicating case study to wider audience

**The exam contains 15 unscored questions.**

## References

The primary source for the SITES AP exam is the SITES Reference Guide. The following list of references is not meant to be comprehensive. When combined with the test specifications, the candidate has the material from which the exam is based.

### References

- *SITES v2 Rating System: For Sustainable Land Design and Development*. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center of The University of Texas at Austin, the U.S. Botanic Garden, and the American Society of Landscape Architects, 2014. [Print and Digital versions available.](#)
- *SITES v2 Reference Guide: For Sustainable Land Design and Development*. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center of The University of Texas at Austin, the U.S. Botanic Garden, and the American Society of Landscape Architects, 2014. [Print and Digital versions available.](#)



# Sample Questions

**Disclaimer:** The exam questions (referred to as “items”) listed here were discarded in the process of creating items for the exam.

The items are provided for your convenience to allow you to better familiarize yourself with the format and general content of items on exams.

The content of these items, while representative of the type of questions you can expect, does not necessarily mirror the content that will appear on the actual exams.

Furthermore, your ability to correctly answer these sample items does not in any way predict or guarantee your ability to successfully answer questions on the actual exams.

## SITES AP Sample Questions

**1. A city is redeveloping an existing paved parking lot into a pocket park that meets the needs of neighboring residents. The site will include shade trees, a community food garden, and a nature-based playground. The project team plans to pursue C4.7: Optimize biomass. According to this credit, what does the team use as the baseline condition from which to measure site improvements?**

- A. Pre-Columbian condition
- B. Existing site condition (i.e., paved parking lot)**
- C. Same size park within 5 miles (8 kilometers)
- D. Closest greenfield/undeveloped site

*This question represents Domain 5: Site Design and Knowledge Statement B.x: Concept of optimizing biomass.*

**2. In P7.3: Restore soils disturbed during construction, which of the following applications is required to comply with soil restoration criteria that is guided by a site’s reference soil?**

- A. Lawn and open space**
- B. Trails and bike paths
- C. Preserved natural forest
- D. Mulch-covered playground

*This question represents Domain 6: Construction and Knowledge Statement G: Exceptions to soil restoration requirements.*

# CONTACT

## Prometric

1501 South Clinton Street, Canton Crossing Tower, 14th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21224

[prometric.com/gbci](http://prometric.com/gbci)

Prometric’s website is available for scheduling, rescheduling, cancelling and confirming exam appointments 24 hours per day. To schedule an exam, you will need to have first applied and registered with GBCI. To reschedule, cancel or confirm an exam appointment, you will need your Prometric-issued 16 digit confirmation number.

### Prometric Call Centers

<b>North America</b>	
Customer service: To schedule, reschedule, cancel and confirm appointments or for general testing information (Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 20:00 PM ET [GMT -5])	888 215 4154
Candidate care: For any problems encountered during your experience with Prometric (Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 21:00 ET; Saturday, 9:00 to 17:00 PM ET [GMT -5])	800 853 6769
Bulk Registration (five or more candidates)	800 774 1292
Special Conditions (Candidates with disabilities)	800 967 1139
Fax	800 853 6781
<b>Latin America</b>	
To schedule, reschedule, cancel and confirm appointments or for general testing information	+1 443 751 4995
<b>Asia/Pacific</b>	
China (Monday - Friday, 8:30 to 19:00 GMT +10:00)	+86 10 62799911
India (Monday - Friday, 9:00 to 17:30 GMT +05:30)	91 124 4147700
Japan (Monday - Friday, 8:30 to 19:00 GMT +10:00)	0120 347737
Korea (Monday - Friday, 8:30 to 19:00 GMT +10:00)	1566 0990
Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and all other Asia/Pacific countries (Monday - Friday, 8:00 to 20:00 GMT +08:00)	603 7628 3333
<b>Europe, Middle East, Africa:</b>	
Europe	31 320 239 540
Middle East (Sunday to Thursday)	31 320 239 530
North Africa (Sunday to Thursday)	31 320 239 530
Sub-Sahara Africa	31 320 239 593

## Green Business Certification Inc.

2101 L Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20037 | [gbc.org](https://gbc.org)

The Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES) website is available 24 hours per day for exam application and registration, information regarding the SITES AP exam and access to your account.

**Call Center:** 1-800-795-1746 (within the US) or +1-202-828-1145 (outside the US)

GBCI's call center is available Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 19:00 ET for questions regarding exam registration and other SITES AP exam-related inquiries.

**Exam Department:** [gbc.org/contact](https://gbc.org/contact)

GBCI staff are available for questions, comments and concerns regarding certificates, SITES AP exam records, exam content appeals, exam development, exam scoring, exam format and all other exam policies and procedures.