International Society of Arboriculture

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ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist®

PROGRAM GUIDE

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What is the Value in Becoming an ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist®?

ISA Certification is a voluntary program that tests and certifies your achievement of a professional level of knowledge and skill in the field of arboriculture. When a professional becomes an ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist®, they should be recognized by their peers and the public as a tree care professional who has attained a fundamental level of knowledge in core areas of the arboriculture practice within an urban forest context and management of trees as a community providing societal benefits. Areas of knowledge measured include urban forest management, arboricultural practices, communication and public education, and administration, policy and planning.

Additionally, as a voluntary program, earning this credential shows a professional's commitment to a professional code of ethics, internationally-accepted best practices, and continuing education. Presenting your ISA credential to potential employers makes you more competitive in the job market and, for employers, encouraging ISA Certification is a crucial tool in the hiring, training, and retention processes.

Which Areas of Knowledge Will the ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® Exam Cover?

The certification examination is developed by a panel of industry experts representing all aspects of utility vegetation management. Questions are derived from a job task analysis survey filled out by arborists from around the world. Questions are continually analyzed by the ISA Certification Test Committee using the latest test statistics, and new questions are always being developed and tested for satisfactory performance. Updated examinations are created on a regular basis.

The written exam content for the ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® is divided into five areas of knowledge, and the percentage next to each area below reflects the percentage of questions associated with that area. These are subject to change when a new job task analysis is completed for the exam.

1. Electric Utility Pruning—20%
2. Program Management—13%
3. Integrated Vegetation Management—18%
4. Electrical Knowledge—29%
5. Customer Relations—20%

What Are the Objectives of the ISA Certification Program?

ISA's objectives for offering professional credentials are to:

- Continually improve the level of technical competency of personnel in the tree care profession. Recertification through continuing education provides incentives for individuals to improve their level of technical competency. It creates a greater opportunity for practitioners to write, publish and speak on technical issues. It creates a translatable practical application stemming from research projects.
- Provide a measurable assessment of the knowledge and competence required to render high quality, professional service.
- Help the employer both in training personnel, selecting new employees and assisting with professional development.
- Give individuals incentives to improve their level of knowledge and demonstrate professional accomplishments to clients, supervisors and the public. The program establishes a uniform standard by which professionals can measure themselves.
- Provide a means for individual recognition among peers.
- Encourage those in the profession to be aware of the profession's performance standards.

Who Is Eligible to Apply for the ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® Exam?

The ISA Credentialing Council requires a candidate to be an ISA Certified Arborist® and have at least 2,000 hours of verifiable work experience directly within electric utility vegetation management over the past two years or one of the following:

- Full-time employment as an electric utility arborist, forester, or vegetation manager for at least 36 cumulative months during the past 10 years; or
- Full-time employment on a project as an electric utility vegetation management contract employee/consultant for at least 36 cumulative months during the past 10 years.

Documentation of work experience is required with submittal of application. Letter(s) of reference from your current or previous employer(s) is acceptable. If you are self-employed or own your own company, you will be required to submit three letters of reference with your application. References may be in the form of copies of invoices, contracts, and/or business licenses. The documentation provided must include details of practical experience relevant to the content assessed in the examination and outline the dates of work required for eligibility. Please contact ISA for other possible forms of verification.

Examples of acceptable experience include, but are not limited to, the following:

- system forester
- vegetation management inspector, planner, or specialist
- transmission/distribution forester
- vegetation management instructor or researcher
- municipal employee performing relevant tasks
- vegetation management consultant
- division, district, or regional forester
- utility contractor supervisor or manager
- utility contractor or technical support service employee
- utility arborist

By submitting your application, you authorize ISA to contact the practical experience reference(s) named on your application to substantiate your eligibility.

What Is the Process to Apply for the Exam?

EXAM DATES AND LOCATIONS

ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® exams are sponsored by an ISA Certification Partner organization or offered through a Pearson VUE testing center. Candidates with a valid and approved application are able to view, search, and enroll for available examination events. For more information on local examination events, please contact your local ISA Certification Partner. To find out if a Pearson VUE testing center is close to you, visit https://www.pearsonvue.com/isa/locate/.

FEES

Candidates who are members of ISA and/or a current ISA credential holder receive a standard 20% discount on exam application and enrollment fees. The application fee is $40 USD for ISA members and/or credential holders and $50 USD for all others.

The exam enrollment fee is $295 USD for ISA members and/or credential holders and $369 USD for all other candidates with an approved application. The exam enrollment fee is independent of the examination environment selected by the candidate.

ISA CODE OF ETHICS AND THE CREDENTIALING AGREEMENT AND RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

All applicants are required to review and accept the ISA Code of Ethics as well as the Credentialing Agreement and Release Authorization.

Please review the ISA Code of Ethics and the Credentialing Agreement and Release Authorization. Your review, agreement, and acceptance of both documents is required to complete and submit your application.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The first step in earning an ISA certification is submitting an application. An application can be submitted by those who believe they have met eligibility requirements for the program. If you are an ISA member and/or credential holder or if you have purchased any ISA products in the past, you have an online account with ISA.

Simply log in at credentialing.isa-arbor.com and look for the ISA credential you are interested in applying for and click 'Apply Now' to start the process.

Only fully completed applications can be submitted for review. Submitted applications will be reviewed within five (5) US business days. You will be notified by ISA of your application approval by email. If our team requires more information for approval, you will also be notified by email. You may review application status at any time through ISA's credentialing management system. You will only be able to enroll for an examination once you have an approved application in the system for the program.

ISA has the right to contact any person or organization as part of the review of your application. By applying, you authorize the release of any information requested by ISA for the purpose of reviewing your application. ISA has the right to notify appropriate organizations if your application contains false information.

EXAM ENROLLMENT

Once your application has been approved, you will be eligible to enroll for an examination. Paper-based exams are offered through local ISA Certification Partners and computer-based examinations are offered through Pearson VUE testing centers. You can find the closest

Pearson VUE testing center by visiting https://www.pearsonvue.com/isa/locate/.

Enrollment will include the processing of applicable exam fees. The exam enrollment fee is independent of the examination environment selected by the candidate. **ISA does not provide refunds for exam enrollments.**

Onsite registration is not available for ISA exams, only candidates enrolled and confirmed for an examination will be able to sit for the exam on a given examination site, date, and location.

For computer-based exams held through Pearson VUE, you will receive a 120-day authorization period to schedule and take the exam.

RESCHEDULING EXAM OR ADDITIONAL 120-DAY AUTHORIZATION PERIOD REQUESTS

If circumstances change after you have enrolled for a computer-based examination, you may be able to reschedule your exam or request an additional 120-day authorization period. You may reschedule an existing exam appointment, at no additional cost, within your 120-authorization period at any time at least one (1) US business day in anticipation of an existing appointment. If you would like to rescheduled the examination appointment on a date outside your 120-day authorization period, a fee of $50 USD will apply to make the change. Additional 120-day, computer-based authorization requests must be received within the candidate's current 120-day authorization period.

Requests to reschedule paper-based examination enrollments sponsored by ISA Certification Partners must be received at least 16 days in anticipation of the examination date and a fee of $50 USD will apply to make the change.

If the request is not received by ISA at the relevant deadlines as described, the candidate fails to schedule an exam within the 120-day authorization period, or the candidate does not take the examination at the scheduled appointment, the candidate will be considered a no-show and all exam fees will be forfeited.

Registrations are not transferrable to another person.

FAILURE TO ATTEND EXAMINATION OR SCHEDULE WITHIN A 120-DAY AUTHORIZATION PERIOD

No refunds or discounts will be issued if you do not attend or complete the examination or you are removed from the test site due to inappropriate conduct. There are no exceptions. If you do not reschedule your appointment or request an additional 120-day authorization period, or you do not show up to take the exam at your scheduled time and location, you will be considered a no-show and the exam taken. This will result in forfeiting any enrollment fees associated with the exam you missed.

If this happens, you will have to pay a retake fee of $120 USD to re-enroll in another exam.

ISA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CANCEL A PAPER-BASED EXAM

ISA reserves the right to cancel any paper-based examination event that does not meet the minimum enrollment requirement or for other reasons. If your paper-based exam is cancelled by ISA, you will be notified by email, and your enrollment will be moved to pending status. You may elect to have your pending exam enrollment status moved to any other paper-based examination event available or you may request to enroll in a computer-based exam for no additional charge.

What Is the Format of the ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® Exam?

The examination is made up of 115 multiple-choice questions. Each question has four possible answers listed, only one of which is correct. You will have two hours (120 minutes) to complete the written exam. You must pass the exam to obtain the certification.

PRETESTING OF EXAM QUESTIONS

Within the written exam, there will be 15 new questions that have not been used on previous exams. Responses to these questions are not used in determining individual exam scores. These 15 questions are not identified and are scattered throughout the exam so that candidates will answer them with the same care as the questions that make up the scored portion of the exam. This methodology assures candidates that their scores are the result of sound measurement practices and that scored questions reflect current practice.

What Are the Onsite Rules and Conduct Expectations During the Exam?

ADMISSION

- Arrive at the testing site 30 minutes before the start time of the exam and have your identity confirmed by providing two forms of valid identification—a valid photo identification card and an identification card displaying your signature. Please log in to ISA Credentialing to view your exam appointment date, time, and location.
- The exam host will check your photo ID. If you do not have a photo ID with you at the check-in time of the exam, you will not be allowed to sit for the exam and will be considered a no-show.
- There may be audio and video taping at the testing centers. If you are not prepared to be taped, you may not be allowed to test at the facility.

SITE RULES

- Dress appropriately. While every attempt is made to provide a comfortable classroom atmosphere, indoor temperatures and outdoor weather conditions may vary.
- Visitors are not permitted in the exam area.
- Books, papers, and other reference material will not be allowed in the testing area.
- No cell phones or other mobile devices will be allowed in the testing area.
- No food or beverages may be taken into the exam.
- No smoking or vaping will be allowed in the testing area.
- You will be permitted to take restroom breaks on an individual basis. Time spent on breaks will be considered part of the time permitted for completing the exam.
- Writing on the test booklet is not allowed during the exam.
- If you are caught looking at another individual's exam or talking during the exam, your score may be invalidated or exam materials confiscated.
- Applicants who are impaired by the use of alcoholic beverages or other drugs, or use them at the examination site, may immediately be disqualified from taking the exam.
- It is of utmost importance that you carefully follow all directions and regulations. Listen carefully to all instructions given by the exam administrator and follow the directions completely.

INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION AND EXAM CONDUCT

ISA intends that participation in its certification programs will be a professionally relevant, informative, and rewarding experience for all candidates. All participants in ISA certification exams are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner and to refrain from any objectionable, improper, or unprofessional conduct. To ensure fairness in an examination environment, the following policy and rules apply:

- When an ISA or ISA-designated representative finds that a candidate has engaged in inappropriate conduct or behavior, ISA reserves the right to respond with actions including, but not limited to:
  - Rejecting an application for certification
  - Preventing or precluding a person from participating in an examination, including removing a person from the testing site
  - Invalidating or nullifying examination results
  - Issuing and enforcing any other lesser response or action determined to be appropriate or necessary
- Inappropriate conduct or behavior includes, but is not limited to, misrepresentation; failure to disclose requested information; cheating; unauthorized possession, use, or distribution of copyrighted or legally-protected material; verbal or physical disturbances of the examination; failure to pay fees in a timely manner; and any other objectionable, improper, or unprofessional actions by a person participating in the ISA certification process.
- By submitting an application for certification, candidates acknowledge their understanding and agreement to the terms of this policy.

What is the Process for Attaining Certification?

COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

To obtain ISA certification, you must achieve the required passing score for the examination. The current passing score is 75 percent. Please note that when a job task analysis of the exam is performed, the overall passing score is subject to change .

When you receive your exam results, please remember that the domains are weighted, and the average of the domains will not be equal to the overall score. If you do not achieve an overall passing score, you must retake the exam until an overall passing score is achieved.

Once certified, you will receive the designation of ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist®. Your certification is personal to you and may not be transferred or assigned to any other individual, organization, or entity. When publicizing your credential, you must comply with the requirements of the ISA Branding and Style Guide.

EXAM SCORING

The computer-based exams are graded by Pearson VUE, the testing vendor. Paper- and skills-based exam events sponsored by ISA Certification Partners are graded by ISA Headquarters. ISA will notify you via email when your results are available and they can be viewed by logging into your account in ISA's credentialing management system.

EXAMINATION RESULTS AND NOTIFICATION OF CERTIFICATION

Computer-based exams provide result notification immediately upon completion of the exam. Your formal results will be posted on your web account within four weeks of your examination date. You will be notified via email when your results are available on your dashboard. Those who pass will receive access to a digital certificate, as well as a mailed package containing a congratulatory letter, certificate, identification card, hard-hat decal, and patch. Your results are confidential.
If you have questions concerning your exam results, direct them in writing to the ISA Credentialing Department at certops@isa-arbor.com.

Because of the need to maintain test security, exam questions and answers cannot be made available for review, and the ISA Credentialing Department does not provide a list of questions that were answered correctly or incorrectly.

The only information available regarding your performance on the exam is provided in your score report (for computer-based examinations) and web account.

REQUEST FOR REGRADING EXAM

You may request to have an exam regraded. A fee of $50 USD applies for each hand-graded score report. Requests for regrading may take up to six weeks for completion. If you request to have your exam regraded, you may not schedule another exam until after you receive the regrading results. If you wish to have your exam regraded after receiving your initial score report, please contact certops@isa-arbor.com.

RETAKING THE EXAMINATION

If you do not pass the exam, you will receive a notification via email to access your web account with the results.

You will be able to retake the examination thirty (30) days after your most recent exam attempt. A retake fee of $120 USD will apply for scheduling each retake attempt, regardless of examination environment (i.e., paper or computer-based).

Additional Information About ISA Certification

WHAT DOES ISA CERTIFICATION REPRESENT AND REQUIRE?

By passing the exam, holders of ISA certifications have demonstrated a broad knowledge base in the area in which they are certified. No other conclusions may be drawn concerning certification holders. ISA certifications do not represent licensure, registration, or other authorization to practice or to conduct business activities for a fee or otherwise.

The ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® credential is subject to ongoing requirements, such as participation in continuing education activities and abiding by the Credentialing Agreement and Release Authorization.

EXPIRATION AND RECERTIFICATION

ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® certification is valid for three years. To retain certification after each three-year period, an ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist® must be a current ISA Certified Arborist® and recertify. Notify ISA promptly if your contact information changes. We are not responsible for undeliverable recertification notices.

The ISA Certification Program offers two methods of recertification. The first method is to retake and re-pass the certification exam. The second option is to accumulate at least 6 continuing education units (CEUs) over the three-year certification period that are related to the five tested domains on the exam and pay the recertification fee.

The recertification fee is $95 USD. You will be required to agree once again to the ISA Code of Ethics and Credentialing Agreement and Release Authorization at the time of recertification.

IMPARTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

ISA commits itself to impartiality in its certification activities and understands how critical impartiality is to carrying out its certification activities. ISA manages conflict of interest and ensures the objectivity of all certification activities. All persons involved in certification activities, including ISA Headquarters staff and member volunteers, accomplish this through compliance with ISA's structure, policies, and procedures related to certification activities.

ISA is an accredited certification body for compliance with international standards (ISO/IEC 17024). Earning and maintaining this accreditation provides assurances to applicants, candidates, credential holders, regulators, and the public that the certification process is impartial, fair, valid, and reliable.

NONDISCRIMINATION

The ISA Certification Program does not discriminate in determining eligibility on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

DENIAL, REVOCATION, AND DECERTIFICATION

Your certification may be denied or revoked for any of the following reasons:

- Falsification of application
- Violation of testing procedures
- Misrepresentation of your identity or other information

In the event that your ISA certification is denied or revoked or you otherwise become decertified, you must immediately stop using and/or displaying the ISA certification mark, credential, and any other designation indicating an affiliation with the ISA Certification Program. You must comply with any additional directives of the ISA Certification Program.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the intent of ISA to provide accessibility to ISA exams to any qualified participant with a documented disability or condition upon reasonable notice. If you have a special need and require an accommodation for an exam, please complete the Special Accommodations Request Form and submit the form with each enrollment request. Your request for accommodation will be reviewed, and you will be notified of a determination and/or if additional information is required. In certain situations, ISA cannot provide a requested accommodation to participants with a disability if it is determined that the accommodation fundamentally alters what the exam is intended to measure, risks exam security or causes undue hardship to ISA or the testing center. ISA will work with you to identify alternative accommodations that are reasonable and effective.

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

Appeals and complaints are accepted and resolved in accordance with the ISA Credentialing Appeals and Complaints policy.

ISA RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

ISA recognizes the need to maintain books and records that facilitate operations and comply with record retention needs for its certification program, while also acknowledging the adverse impact excessive records and record keeping duties can have on the organization.

Please note that the following record retention policies apply to records retained by ISA concerning applications, continuing education unit (CEU), and special accommodations records:

- Pending application records: 1 year following processing
- Approved Continuing Education Unit (CEU) attendance records received: 5 years
- Examination sheets: 5 years
- Special accommodation records: 2 years

PRIVACY

By applying for an ISA certification, you authorize ISA to make your contact information available to your local ISA Certification Partner (if any) and ISA professional affiliates so they can share information with you about educational seminars and other relevant educational events. ISA may also share other relevant information concerning your credential with local ISA Certification Partners (e.g., customer ID number, certification ID number, certificate issue and expiration dates, and CEU information). Your name, ISA credentials and related digital certificates will be available to members of the public on the ISA Spotlight Directory.

Credential holders may update and include more information associated with their profiles by logging into their account with our digital badge provider. Those who do not wish to be listed in the ISA Spotlight Directory and have their digital certificates available publicly can also choose to make their account and/or certificate(s) private. ISA maintains the right and responsibility to verify a credential holder's certification status to the public or to other interested parties.

You will be notified of whether or not you passed the certification examination, but your score will not be disclosed to any third party except vendors and subcontractors that are part of the certification process and have signed confidentiality, conflict of interest, and impartiality agreements. Your status as a certification holder, past or present, and dates of certification may be disclosed to third parties.

Our Mission

Through research, technology, and education we promote the professional practice of arboriculture and foster a greater worldwide awareness of the benefits of trees.

ISA
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Arboriculture

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