ISA Board Certified Master Arborist®
Application Guide

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ISA®
International Society of Arboriculture

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Contents

What is the Value in Becoming an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist®? **3**

Which Areas of Knowledge Will the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam Cover? **3**

What Are the Objectives of the ISA Certification Program? **3**

Who Is Eligible to Apply for the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam? **4**

What Is the Process to Apply for the Exam? **4**

Exam Dates and Locations
Fees
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics/Certification Agreement and Release Authorization
Application Submission
Enrollment Confirmation
Rescheduling Exam or Additional 90-Day Authorization Period Requests
Failure to Attend Examination or Schedule within a 90-Day Authorization Period

What Is the Format of the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam? **5**

Pretesting of Exam Questions

How Should I Prepare for the Exam? **6**

What Are the Onsite Rules and Conduct Expectations During the Exam? **7**

Admission
Site Rules
Inappropriate Application and Examination Conduct

What Is the Process for Attaining Certification? **7**

Completion Requirements
Exam Scoring
Examination Results and Notification of Certification
Request for Regrading Exam
Retaking the Examination

Additional Information About ISA Certification **8**

What Does ISA Certification Represent and Require?
Expiration and Recertification
Denial, Revocation, and Decertification
Impartiality and Conflict of Interest
Nondiscrimination
Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities
Appeals and Complaints
Privacy

What is the Value in Becoming an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist®?

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 you become an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® (BCMA), you are recognized by your peers and the public as having reached the highest level of certification offered by ISA. By studying for and passing the BCMA exam, you demonstrate a thorough knowledge of and dedication to correct arboriculture practices. Hiring a BCMA provides tree owners and government decision makers the opportunity to become better informed about proper tree care and their selection of services based on the expertise represented by your credential.

Achieving the highest level of ISA Certification also builds your self-image. The process of accomplishing and maintaining this designation provides personal incentive to further advance your professional development. Presenting your ISA credential to potential employers and customers makes you more competitive in the job market, and for employers, encouraging ISA Certification is a tool to assist in training their existing tree care personnel.

Which Areas of Knowledge Will the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam Cover?

The certification examination is developed by a panel of industry experts representing all aspects of arboriculture. Questions are derived from a job task analysis survey filled out by arborists from around the world. Questions are continually analyzed by the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Certification Test Committee using the latest test statistics, and new questions are always being developed. Updated examinations are created on a regular basis.

The written exam content is divided into 19 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.

Science—27%

1. Abiotic Disorders—5%
2. Biology—6%
3. Biotic Disorders—5%
4. Plant Identification and Selection—5%
5. Soil Science—6%

Practice—38%

6. Climbing, Rigging, and Removal—4%
7. Diagnostic Process—6%
8. Installation Practices—6%
9. Plant Health Care—5%
10. Pruning—6%
11. Soil Treatment—5%
12. Support and Protection—2%
13. Water Relations and Irrigation—4%

Management—35%

14. Business Relations—5%
15. Inventory and Management Plans—4%
16. Plant Appraisal—4%
17. Risk Assessment—8%
18. Safety—7%
19. Tree Preservation—7%

What Are the Objectives of the ISA Certification Program?

ISA's objectives for offering professional credentials are to:

- Advance the knowledge and application of safe work practices in all arboricultural operations;
- Improve technical competency of personnel in the tree care industry;
- Create incentives for individuals to continue their professional development;
- Provide the public and those in government with a means to identify professionals who have demonstrated by passing a professionally-developed exam that they have thorough knowledge and skill in tree care practices

Who Is Eligible to Apply for the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam?

The ISA Certification Board requires a candidate to be an ISA Certified Arborist® in good standing and have obtained a total of eight points from any or all of the four categories below that include measurable experience, formal education, related credentials, or professional experience. The point values are listed as follows:

Categories	*Points*
Category A – ISA Certification Program	
*ISA Certified Arborist®	1
*1 point for each year certified	
ISA Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist®	1
ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist®	1
ISA Certified Tree Worker Climber Specialist®	1
ISA Certified Tree Worker Aerial Lift Specialist®	1
ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified	1
*ISA Continuing Education	1
*1 point for every 60 CEUs over the required 30 every three years	
Category B – Formal Education: Based on highest level of degree obtained in arboriculture or related field	
Two-year associate degree or equivalent	1
Four-year undergraduate degree or equivalent	2
Master's or equivalent terminal degree	3
Ph.D. or equivalent graduate degree	4
Category C – Verifiable Related Credentials	
ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist	3
SAF Certified Forester	1
State license or certification in arboriculture or urban forestry	1
European Certified Tree Worker	1
TCIA Tree Care Academy® Tree Care Specialist™ program completion	1
Category D – Professional Work Experience	
*Years of experience in arboriculture	1
*1 point for every six years of verifiable work experience	

Proof of the above must be in writing, such as a copy of a certificate and original transcripts or letter from a certifying agency, letter(s) of reference from your current or previous employer(s). If self-employed, references may be in the form of copies of invoices, contracts, and/or business licenses. The documentation provided must include the practical experience and outline the dates of work required for eligibility. These must be submitted with your application for approval.

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 Board Certified Master Arborist® exams are offered at Pearson VUE testing centers. To find out if a Pearson VUE testing center is close to you, visit http://www.pearsonvue.com/isa/locate/.

Fees

Candidates who are members of ISA and an ISA chapter or associate organization receive an exam discount. The fee is $495 USD for members and $605 USD for nonmembers. To be eligible for the discounted rate, a candidate must be a current member of ISA and a current member of an ISA chapter or associate organization. In the event that a local chapter or associate organization does not exist where you reside, you may receive member pricing by being a current member of ISA only. ISA certification fees are separate and distinct from ISA membership dues and ISA chapter or associate organization dues.

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics and the Certification Agreement and Release Authorization

All applicants are required to review and accept the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics as well as the Certification Agreement and Release Authorization.

Please review the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics and the Certification Agreement and Release Authorization, found at the end of the application. Your signature confirming review and acceptance of both documents is required for certification.

Application Submission

Becoming a candidate for an ISA certification is a two-step process through your MyISA Dashboard.

1. First, apply online or submit a completed application.
2. When you receive notice that your application is approved, you may then enroll through your website account to take an exam.

If you do not have an ISA website account, you may create one at the MyISA Sign-In page.

A completed application must be submitted by going to MyISA Apply for an ISA Certification and then by selecting Create Application. Once your completed application has been reviewed, you will be notified by ISA of your application approval or denial by email. You may Review Application Status at any time to determine your status or Review Old Applications. If denied, you will not be able to enroll into an exam until you provide additional documentation demonstrating that you meet the eligibility criteria.

Once approved, you may enroll into the exam by selecting either the enrollment link within the approval email or go to the Enroll to Take Exam web page. Enrollment will include the processing of applicable exam fees. **ISA does not provide refunds for exam enrollments. There are no exceptions to this policy.** If you have questions or difficulties with the application or enrollment process, contact ISA. Due to the complexity of the application process, onsite registration is not available for ISA exams.

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.

Enrollment Confirmation

You will be notified when your enrollment has been processed. After you have been successfully enrolled, you will receive instructions via email on how to schedule a date and time with the computer-based testing vendor. The vendor will then send you a confirmation including the location, date, and time of the exam. You are provided a 90-day authorization period to schedule and take the exam.

Rescheduling Exam or Additional 90-Day Authorization Period Requests

If circumstances change after you have applied for the examination, you may be able to reschedule your exam or request an additional 90-day, computer-based authorization period. If your request is approved by ISA, a fee of $50 USD will apply to make the change. If you are requesting to reschedule a computer-based exam within your current 90-day authorization period, you will not be subject to the fee.
Additional 90-day, computer-based authorization requests must be received within the candidate's current 90-day authorization period. If the request is not received by ISA before the ISA chapter's or associate organization's exam deadline date, or is beyond the 90-day authorization period, or the candidate fails to schedule an exam within the 90-day authorization period, the candidate will be considered a no-show and all exam fees will be forfeited. If the scheduled date that was missed was your free retake, your free retake will be forfeited.

If you need to reschedule an exam date within your current 90-day authorization period with the computer-based testing vendor, you may do so by contacting Pearson VUE via phone or through the Pearson VUE website. If rescheduling during the weekend, you must do so directly through the website. Requests must be received no later than one business day prior to the scheduled exam date. If contact is less than one business day, you 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 90-Day Authorization Period

No refunds or discounts will be issued if you do not attend or complete the examination. There are no exceptions. If you do not reschedule your appointment or request an additional 90-day authorization period, and 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 surrendered, as well as any exam fees. If this happens, you will have to re-enroll along with paying the required retake fees.

You will have only one year from the first scheduled exam date to retake the exam at the retake fee of $300 USD. Once you have exceeded the one year, you will be required to pay the full exam fee.

What Is the Format of the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Exam?

The examination is made up of 165, multiple-choice questions. Pictures and descriptive information may be included with exam questions when necessary to further explain the scenarios being tested. Each question is multiple choice and has four possible answers listed, only one of which is correct. You will have 4 hours (240 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. Inclusion of these questions allows for collection of meaningful data about development of new exam questions. 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.

How Should I Prepare for the Exam?

Recommended Study Resources	Domain
A Consultant's Guide to Writing Effective Reports	Business Relations
A Photographic Guide to the Evaluation of Hazard Trees in Urban Areas	Risk Assessment
Abiotic Disorders of Landscape Plants - A Diagnostic Guide	Abiotic Disorders; Diagnostic Process; Plant Health Care
An Illustrated Guide to Pruning	Pruning
ANSI A300	*All applicable domains*
ANSI Safety Standards or Standards Applicable in Other Areas	Climbing, Rigging, and Removal; Safety; Water Relations and Irrigation
Best Management Practices Series (BMP)	*All applicable domains*
Diseases of Trees and Shrubs	Diagnostic Process; Biotic Disorders; Plant Health Care
Guide for Plant Appraisal	Business Relations; Plant Appraisal
Guide to a Professional Consulting Practice	Business Relations; Diagnostic Process; Inventory Management Plans; Plant Appraisal; Plant Health Care; Risk Assessment
Insects That Feed on Trees and Shrubs	Biotic Disorders
Introduction to Arboriculture: Plant Health Care CD-ROM and Online Courses	Plant Health Care
Introduction to Arboriculture: Soil and Water CD-ROM and Online Courses	Water Relations and Irrigation
Manual of Woody Landscape Plants	Plant Identification and Selection
*Municipal Specialist Certification Study Gui*de	Business Relations; Installation Practices; Inventory Management Plans; Risk Assessment
*Plant Health Care for Woody Ornament*als	Diagnostic Process; Biotic Disorders; Plant Health Care
*Principles and Practices of Planting Trees and Sh*rubs	Installation Practices
Stupsi Explains the Tree: A Hedgehog Teaches the Body Language of Trees	Biology; Risk Assessment; Abiotic Disorders
The Art and Science of Practical Rigging	Climbing, Rigging, and Removal; Safety
The Tree Climber's Companion	Climbing, Rigging, and Removal
To Fell a Tree	Climbing, Rigging, and Removal; Safety
Tree Risk Assessor Qualification Manual	Risk Assessment
Trees and Development: A Technical Guide to Preservation of Trees During Land Development	Tree Preservation
Up by Roots	Installation Practices; Soil Science; Soil Treatment
Wood Decay Fungi	Diagnostic Process; Biotic Disorders; Plant Health Care; Risk Assessment

The publications referred to above can be purchased from ISA in the ISA web store or by calling 1.678.367.0981 and also through your local ISA chapter or associate organization.

Note: These ISA publications should **NOT** be considered the sole source of information for the certification examination.

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. (See your exam confirmation packet for exact time, date, and location of the course.)
- 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 will be audio and video taping at the testing centers. If you are not prepared to be taped, you will 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 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 illegal drugs, or use them at the examination site, will 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 Examination 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, each participant acknowledges that he/she understands and agrees to the terms of this policy.

What is the Process for Attaining Certification?

Completion Requirements

To obtain the BCMA credential, you must achieve the required passing score for the examination. The current passing score is 70 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 Board Certified Master Arborist®. 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 in the ISA Branding and Style Guide.

Exam Scoring

The computer-based exams are graded by Pearson VUE. ISA will notify you of your detailed results.
You may access a brief overview of your results by logging into MyISA on the ISA website and selecting My CEUs.

Examination Results and Notification of Certification

Computer-based exams provide result notification immediately upon completion of the exam. Your formal results will be sent approximately six weeks after your exam date. You will be notified of your pass/fail result; percentage scores will be provided for each domain for your information. Those who pass will receive a congratulatory letter, score sheet, certificate, identification card, hard-hat decal, and patch. Your results are confidential. Results cannot be obtained over the phone or by fax.

If you have questions concerning your exam results, direct them in writing to the ISA Credentialing Department at isa@isa-arbor.com. Because of the need to maintain test security, exam booklets cannot be made available for review of the questions and answers, 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 on your score report.

Request for Regrading of Examination

If you believe that an error was made in the grading of your exam, you may request to have your exam regraded. A fee of $35 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 isa@isa-arbor.com.

Retaking the Examination

If you do not pass the exam, you will receive a failure notification and details for retaking the exam. You may re-enroll by logging into MyISA on the ISA website and returning to the Enroll to Take Exam web page. You will be charged a $300 USD fee per retake up to one year from the original date that you took the exam. If you do not attain a passing score within one year of the original exam date, you will be required to pay the full fee amount.

Additional Information About ISA Certification

What Does ISA Certification Represent and Require?

By passing the exam, holders of ISA certifications have demonstrated a broad base of knowledge 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 Board Certified Master Arborist® credential is subject to ongoing requirements, such as participation in continuing education activities and abiding by the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics and Certification Agreement and Release Authorization.

Expiration and Recertification

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® certification is valid for three years. To retain certification after each three-year period, an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® must 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 60 continuing education units (CEUs) that relate to the 19 tested domains on the exam with at least 10 CEUs in each of the three areas of science, practice, and management over the three-year period and pay the recertification fee. Candidates who are members of both ISA and their local chapter or associate organization receive a discount on their recertification fees. The non-member recertification fee is $380 USD. For members, the recertification fee is $270 USD. Your signed ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics and the Certification Agreement and Release Authorization must be on file in the ISA office prior to your recertification fee being accepted. Additionally, a condition of recertification is to report any unethical conduct as it relates to the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics.

You have the option of tracking the CEUs you have earned online via the ISA website. To obtain a username and password to access to your CEU report, please email ISA at isa@isa-arbor.com.

CEUs and proper payment must be received in the ISA office in a timely manner. Allow four to six weeks for processing and posting to your account.

Please visit the ISA website for detailed information on maintaining your credential. You may contact ISA at isa@isa-arbor.com if you need further clarification.

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.

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.

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.

Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities

It is the intent of ISA to provide accessibility to ISA exams to any qualified participant with a documented disability upon reasonable notice and without requiring ISA to take action which would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the exam or an undue financial burden to ISA.

If you have a special need and require an accommodation for an exam, please complete the Special Accommodations Request Form and submit it with each enrollment request. Your request will be reviewed, and you will be notified of a determination. Approved accommodations are provided through our computer-based vendor at no additional charge to you.

Appeals and Complaints

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

Privacy

By applying for an ISA certification, you authorize ISA to make your contact information available to your local chapter or associate organization and our professional affiliates so they can share information with you about educational seminars and other events. ISA shares your contact information, pass/fail exam result, expiration date, and other relevant details with your ISA chapter or associate organization so that they may monitor your credential status and administer credential-related services. Your name, city location, and credential will be available to members of the public on the ISA and TreesAreGood™ websites.

Some credential holders do not wish their names to be distributed to the public or to other interested parties (vendors, potential employers, etc.). If you do not wish to have your name included on the ISA and TreesAreGood™ websites or on distribution lists, contact the ISA Credentialing Department at isa@isa-arbor.com. 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 as noted above. Your status as a certification holder, past or present, and dates of certification may be disclosed to third parties.

Reference Links:

ISA Events Calendar *https://www.isa-arbor.com/certification/becomeCertified/examDatesAndLocations?mode=exams*

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® Code of Ethics
https://www.isa-arbor.com/Portals/0/Assets/PDF/Certification/Ethics-BCMA-Code-of-Ethics.pdf

Certification Agreement and Release Authorization
https://www.isa-arbor.com/Portals/0/Assets/PDF/Certification/BCMA-Certification-Agrmnt-and-Release-Auth.pdf

Create an ISA Website Account *https://www.isa-arbor.com/MyAccount/createAccount*

Apply for an ISA Certification *https://www.isa-arbor.com/myaccount/myprofile/CAPS*

MyISA Sign-In/Dashboard *https://www.isa-arbor.com/mydashboard/*

Review Application Status *https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Apply-Now/Review-Application-Status*

Enroll to Take an Exam *https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Apply-Now/Enroll-to-Take-Exam*

Pearson Vue Testing Center *http://www.pearsonvue.com/isa/locate/* or *http://www.pearsonvue.com/isa/contact/*

ISA Web Store *https://www.isa-arbor.com/store*

ISA Branding and Style Guide *http://www.isa-arbor.com/BrandingGuide*

Maintaining Your Credentials *https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Maintaining-Credentials*

Special Accommodations Request Form *http://www.isa-arbor.com/Accommodations*

ISA Credentialing Appeals and Complaints *http://www.isa-arbor.com/Credential-Appeals*

Verify an ISA Credential *https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/verify*

Paper Application *https://www.isa-arbor.com/Portals/0/Assets/PDF/Certification-Applications/cert-Application-BCMA-F.pdf*

Learn more about educational opportunities at www.isa-arbor.com

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