

Professional Certification

For Golf Course Superintendents—Professional Certification by Palmer Maples, JR. Many Professions have a certification programme to measure the performance of their “practitioners” and the general success of their activities.

Whether it is a certification programme for physicians and lawyers or for other professions and service groups, the person being awarded this “seal of approval” received it from his peers—those who are in the same field and who, from their own experiences know the problems and standards of performance associated with that particular profession.

And so it is with the newly-announced certification programme of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America which was introduced in June.

A “blue-ribbon” nine-man committee, made up of golf course superintendents, has formulated the programme, in which those superintendents vying for the title of “Certified Golf Course Superintendent” will be judged by their colleagues. The committee has worked with Dr. Paul M. Alexander, Director of Education of GCSAA, in planning and implementing this programme.

What does the GCSAA certification programme entail?

The focus of the programme is a written examination, divided into six parts, with each part dealing with the major areas of the experienced superintendent’s job.

The six areas are:

1. Knowledge of the Golf Course Superintendent’s Association of America, including the history, purpose and ethics of the Association, and the profession of golf course superintendency;
2. Knowledge of the game of golf, including the official rules of the game;
3. Turf-management procedures (consideration of practical problems in the major areas of irrigation, fertilisation, equipment calibration, soil facts, cost analysis, drainage systems, etc.);
4. Pesticides—comprehensive questions on the selection, usage, safety precautions, and limitations of contemporary plant protectant chemicals are included. This will indicate to local, state or federal pest control licensing agencies that the superintendent who passes this examination is fully proficient and capable of handling and supervising the use of such materials;
5. Business Administration—techniques of record-keeping and application of such information, budget preparation and presentation, etc.;
6. Management: people relationships, recruiting, training, and supervising crews; public relations (officials, members, club department heads, community, etc.).

Members of the GCSAA who have held the Class A classification for three years, and who have been employed as golf course superintendents for that period of time, are eligible to take this examination. In addition, those members who have been employed as golf course superintendents for 20 years or more while enjoying Class A status will be certified without examination if they apply before September 1, 1973.

Applications and examination papers are coded to maintain confidentiality, and these are obtained through the GCSAA headquarters (in the first month following announcement of the Certification Programme, GCSAA received more than 450 requests for applications!). The superintendent may take as much time as he desires to prepare for the examination. When he is ready, a date mutually agreeable to him and to an official monitor in his area is arranged. The examination material, identified only with the code number, is then sent to the monitor in a sealed packet and opened only in the presence of the applicant. When the examination is completed, the material is resealed in the presence of the applicant and mailed back to GCSAA headquarters.

A maximum of six hours, all in the same day, is allowed for the superintendent to complete all parts of the examination. Each of the six parts is graded separately, and a passing grade in every part is required for certification. If the superintendent fails any one or more parts of the examination, he will need to be re-examined only in those parts which were failed. The applicant can repeat the failed portions as many times as he desires, but if the failed parts are not successfully completed within one year of the original examination date, he must repeat the entire examination.

One time is not enough for certification.

The certification programme must keep pace with progress in agronomy, equipment and technology—and so must the golf course superintendent. Therefore, the certified golf course superintendent will be required to take another examination within five years of being certified. He must also maintain his membership in GCSAA and remain actively employed as a golf course superintendent. Other requirements for re-examination are completion of one regional GCSAA workshop or successful completion of a GCSAA-approved correspondence course of study.

Other aspects of the certification programme deal with those superintendents who leave the profession for several years and their mandatory re-examination if they return to golf course superintendency.

The GCSAA certification programme climaxes 30 years of discussion and planning, and the benefits of certification will undoubtedly show that this careful planning has been well worth the time and effort involved.

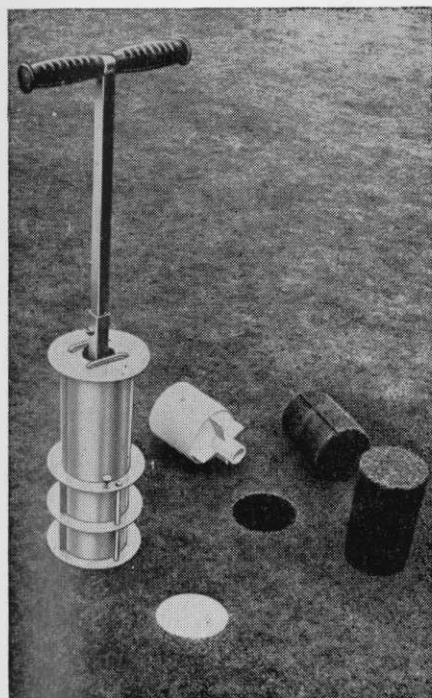
Certification should also attract many young people into the profession of golf course superintendency, now that they know that there is some way of measuring their achievements in the profession.

Hopefully, certification will also lead to standardisation of curricula in the schools offering turf management programmes.

With certification, the role of the superintendent will not only receive greater emphasis through all who are associated with him on the golf course, but it will enhance his stature in the community as well. Because of today's great stress on ecology, the expertise that the golf course superintendent has attained in turf management and plant protectant chemicals should make him a recognised authority on these environmental factors within the community.

To summarise then, the GCSAA Certification programme is not only beneficial to the superintendent. This programme has inherent and potential benefits to club owners, club officials and members, golfers, other agencies concerned with golfing, and the public at large through the certified superintendent's involvement with the community.

With acknowledgements to Golf Superintendent.



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