

# School-Based Agricultural Education Industry Certifications: Part 2—Getting Started<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Industry certifications are designed for students to showcase their understanding of a technical area, as well as demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of industry standards and procedures. Since these exams are recognized statewide, individual schools are not responsible for creating industry certification exams. Instead, state-approved entities create, monitor, and manage the industry certification exams. Different organizations and entities have specific criteria and rules for their industry certification exams. (See EDIS Publication #AEC776, “[Introduction to Industry Certifications](#).”) This publication will serve as an overview for the industry certification exams available for school-based agricultural education (SBAE) programs.

## Where to Start

Before registering students, educators must hold the same certification as the one they will distribute. Multiple organizations host school-based industry certification exams. Two of the most common organizations or entities used are FNGLA and AEST. These websites offer multiple certifications. The Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) website provides certification exams such as Certified Landscape Technician, Certified Landscape

Maintenance, and Certified Landscape Designer (FNGLA, n.d.-a). Agriculture Education Services and Technology Inc. (AEST) provides forestry and landscape certifications, as well as more specific ones like Agriculture Associate, Agritechnology Specialist, Natural Resource Specialist, and more (AEST, n.d.-a). Both websites have different registration processes, so it is important to familiarize yourself with each one and their registration steps.

The other testing providers/platforms that are recognized in the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) pathway are the Florida Aquaculture Association, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Veterinary Medical Association, American Meat Science Association, Ducks Unlimited, and Elanco. (See EDIS Publication #AEC776, “[Introduction to Industry Certifications](#).”) All providers have a website available to access information regarding certifications. The next section of this publication will cover some of the steps and tips to keep in mind when registering for exams on these testing platforms.

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## Registration Steps and Tips

### FNGLA

For example, if a teacher wishes to give the Certified Landscape Technician certification exam to their students, the teacher must first take and pass the same exam before being allowed to distribute exams to students. FNGLA requires students to be registered prior to taking their industry certification exam (FNGLA, n.d.-a).

The exams given through FNGLA do not generate automatically, so teachers need to communicate with their CTE testing coordinator to develop a testing schedule and avoid “last-minute” or forgotten test plans. Improper registration can result in the voiding of the tests and their corresponding incentives, as well as repercussions for the educator. Since the registration system for FNGLA is also not automatic, once the organization collects reported student registration information, FNGLA will begin to put students in groups by school. After grouping students, FNGLA will generate and distribute login information for students and exam proctors (FNGLA, n.d.-a). Except in rare cases, teachers are prohibited from proctoring their own students during an industry certification test. Proctors can be other teachers, administrators, and school officials (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

### AEST

Teachers, proctors, and students using the AEST testing platform will have a more automated registration and testing system. Students and proctors will automatically receive login information after registering on the [AEST website](#) (AEST, 2023.) Scores compute automatically; however, it is at the educator’s discretion to communicate pass/fails to supervisors, department heads, and all necessary parties.

Teachers are not allowed in the room while their students are testing when using either platform. Teachers must select proctors and get approval by the selected testing platform. This is to ensure a safe and fair testing environment for all school districts that may have different procedures for reporting exam results, so it is important for agricultural educators to build a relationship with their district supervisors and department heads (AEST, 2023).

Both testing platforms offer information about the cost of exams and retake exams. Find the AEST estimate cost sheet at the following link: <https://fbaest.com/Home/ExamSessionPriceWorksheet/1>. To find the cost for FNGLA certifications, as well as a framework, use the following

document: <https://www.fngla.org/professional-development/overview/teach-horticulture>. The cost of exams can be steep, so ensuring your students’ eventual success should mean instructing with the right content in your classroom. This will be covered in the third publication of the series: EDIS publication #AEC775, “[Resources and Regulations](#).”

### FLAA

The Florida Aquaculture Association serves as a testing platform for aquaculture-based classes seeking certification within the aquaculture industry. To register for these exams, educators are responsible for filling out the contact form (Florida Aquaculture Association, 2018). After educators complete and send the contact form, the Florida Aquaculture Association will send an email with an invoice form attached, inquiring for the total number of certification exams that will be distributed. After completing and sending back the invoice form, a link will be sent to the exam proctor who is designated by the teacher. The link will remain active for two weeks (Florida Aquaculture Association, 2018).

If educators are unable to test students within the two-week window due to certain circumstances, they should communicate as soon as possible with the Florida Aquaculture Association to see what other options are available at that time. The cost per exam is \$95.00. If a student does not pass, they have three more attempts to pass the exam, but each retake will cost \$50.00 (Florida Aquaculture Association, 2018). Seeing that the cost of these exams can quickly add up, it is important to ensure students are prepared. Find more frequently asked questions here: [www.flaa.org](http://www.flaa.org).

### FDEP

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers their certification exams online using its computer-based testing (CBT) platform through their testing vendor, PSI Testing Excellence, and educators can find it here: <http://online.goamp.com/CandidateHome/CandidateInformation.aspx> (AMP, 2023).

Students must create an account via the testing platform website. When students first navigate to the website and complete the first three steps (selecting a category, program, and examination), Florida students need to select water/wastewater for the category and Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the program. Then, simply select their chosen certification exam.

## iCEV

The American Meat Science Association issues a Food Safety and Science certification through the testing platform recognized as iCEV. Students must create an iCEV account and follow the registration steps to schedule the exam. The iCEV testing platform also provides students with study materials to better prepare for the exam (AMSA, 2022). Ducks Unlimited offers an Ecology Conservation and Management certification. Like the American Meat Science Association, Ducks Unlimited uses iCEV as its testing platform (Ducks Unlimited, n.d.). The iCEV testing platform provides resources and study materials for teachers and students.

There are many certifications available for students enrolled within an agricultural education program. To follow, there are also multiple testing platforms that require different registration steps. (See EDIS Publication #AEC776, “[Introduction to Industry Certifications](#).”) Educators should familiarize themselves with the different testing platforms to avoid conflicts on testing day. This publication should serve as a guide for educators who are encountering the testing platforms discussed throughout this article to ensure they complete registration steps. Also take into consideration the testing rules and resources discussed throughout the following publication: EDIS publication #AEC775, “[Resources and Regulations](#).”

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# Appendix: School-Based Agricultural Education Industry Certifications Series

“School-Based Agricultural Education Industry Certifications: Part 1—Introduction to Industry Certifications”

Introduction to agricultural education industry certifications, testing platforms, and organizations in Florida.

“School-Based Agricultural Education Industry Certifications: Part 2—Getting Started”

Overview of the Florida testing platforms available, how to register, and important tips to keep in mind.

“School-Based Agricultural Education Industry Certifications: Part 3—Resources and Regulations”

An overview of resources and how to prepare students for SBAE industry certification exams in Florida.