

ENGLISH

GEO ONCOURSE™ EVALUATION CRITERIA

Driving the
Green



*GEO Certified™
ecolabel
requirements for
sustainable golf
course and club
management*

This document presents the GEO OnCourse™ Evaluation Criteria in a working format that supports:

- 1) APPLICANTS for the GEO Certified™ ecolabel as they seek to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their golf course / club management.
- 2) ACCREDITED VERIFIERS from the GEOSA Network as they evaluate the performance of GEO Certified™ applicants.
- 3) GOVERNMENTS & STAKEHOLDERS seeking to understand the GEO Certified™ sustainability assurance.

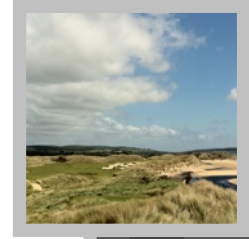
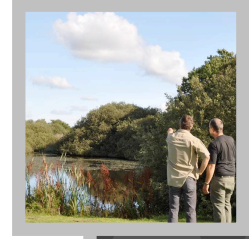
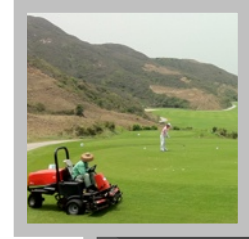
All criteria are weighted. The **‘must’** requirements are mandatory, and applicants are expected to demonstrate credible activity across **‘should’** criteria.

Across all management areas, legal compliance with applicable national or international regulations is mandatory.

A fundamental requirement to achieve the GEO Certified™ ecolabel is positive, proactive participation. No matter the sophistication of their sustainability work to date, all golf facilities are encouraged to show their commitment to sustainable management by adopting the GEO OnCourse™ Pledge.

GEO expects long-term continual improvement from all GEO Certified™ golf clubs.

Criteria Checklists for **‘must’** and **‘should’** requirements are provided at the end of this document.





LANDSCAPE & ECOSYSTEMS

As large green spaces that often feature diverse habitats, all golf facilities should contribute to ecosystem protection and enhancement, and the maintenance of healthy, functioning landscapes.

1.1 CONSULTATION & SURVEYS

Golf facility **must** demonstrate a sound understanding of the ecology, ecosystem and aesthetic (landscape) value of the site. This should be recorded / represented through:

- Descriptions and plans of habitats/vegetation types on the site
- A list of key species found, including rare or declining species, or specially protected species

Golf facility **should** monitor the status of key species as a measure of environmental quality.

Golf facility **should** have an established schedule for extending and updating ecological surveys.

Golf facility **should** receive targeted advice from ecosystem, biodiversity and landscape experts.

1.2 DESIGNATIONS & HABITATS

Golf facility **must** be aware of any conservation designations for protected sites, habitats, species or landscapes, and explain how these influence the management of the golf course.

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1.3 TURFGRASS

Golf facility **must** be able to explain why the grass species maintained provide an optimal balance between playing condition requirements, the efficient use of resources, and minimal reliance on chemical pest control.

Golf facility **should** be managing the playing quality expectations of members and visitors.

Golf facility **should** demonstrate ongoing refinements to grassing plan, and measures to minimize the area of managed turfgrass.

1.4 CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT

Golf facility **should** undertake practical activities to enhance the landscape character of the site in a way that is harmonious with surroundings.

Golf facility **should** demonstrate significant efforts towards maximizing the ecological value of the site, in ways that are appropriate to the ecological potential of the site.

Golf facility **should** demonstrate practical measures to enhance biodiversity through species conservation measures.

Golf facility **should** be able to demonstrate patch enlargement, improved connectivity, and the creation of corridors and links between habitats.

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WATER

Water is typically among the most critical management issues for golf facilities. Even in areas of high rainfall and cool climate, it is important to demonstrate a responsible approach to water management, both in terms of quantities used and the quality of water leaving the site.

2.1 SOURCES & CONSUMPTION

Facility **must** provide baseline figures for total annual water consumption, split into different management areas if possible (clubhouse, golf course, maintenance facility, other).

Facility **must** be able to state sources of water used.

Facility **should** demonstrate efforts to diversify water sources, and move away from the use of high-quality and potable sources: e.g. migration to treated waste water, harvested rainwater, etc.

2.2 IRRIGATION & EFFICIENCY

Facility **should** demonstrate ongoing measures to reduce irrigated areas.

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate irrigation system maintenance, servicing and upgrading, if applicable.

Facility **should** undertake activities to maximize irrigation efficiency.

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Facility **should** be able to demonstrate measures for minimizing water consumption in clubhouses, maintenance facilities and other golf operations buildings.

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ENERGY & RESOURCES

Against the context of rising oil prices, carbon taxes and concern over energy security, all golf facilities need to demonstrate that energy diversification and efficiency are on their agenda, that current consumption levels are understood, and that efficiencies have already been made or planned.

3.1 SOURCES & CONSUMPTION

Facility **must** state total energy and fuel consumption per annum, broken down by renewables and non-renewables. Facility **should** have undertaken an energy audit (formal or informal), detailing opportunities for energy efficiency and diversification.

3.2 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Facility **should** have undertaken practical actions to diversify energy and fuel supply. Facility **should** have undertaken practical actions to reduce energy consumption.

3.3 VEHICLES & TRANSPORT

Facility **must** state total number of operational vehicles under ownership or control. Facility **should** be transitioning to more fuel-efficient, low-carbon vehicles.

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Facility **should** demonstrate practical activities aimed at reducing vehicle use among staff and customers.

3.4 CARBON ACCOUNTING

Facility **should** be able to report full or partial energy consumption as carbon equivalent via carbon footprinting or other forms of ecological footprinting.

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Golf facilities can clean and improve the quality of air, water and soils. Attention to detail in the management of waste water, hazardous materials and pollution prevention are critical elements in safeguarding and enhancing environmental quality.

5.1 WATER ANALYSIS

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate that water quality is at least unaffected by golf facility operations, and ideally is improved.

Facility **should** undertake visual, biological and chemical sampling of water quality at regular intervals.

5.2 WASTE WATER

Facility **must** be able to identify where all waste water and runoff goes after leaving property.

5.3 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Facility **must** maintain a register of all hazardous materials.

Facility **must** be legally compliant in the storage, handling and safe disposal of all hazardous substances.

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5.4 POLLUTION PREVENTION

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple measures undertaken to prevent pollution from the maintenance facility and clubhouse.

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple measures undertaken to prevent pollution from the golf course.

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PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Golf facilities are focal points for a diverse network of people and businesses within local communities as well as being an important connection between people and the planet. As a result golf facilities can multiply valuable socio-economic benefits and act as advocates for more sustainable ways to live, work and play. This is an important element of golf being recognised as a social and environmental asset.

6.1 EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Facility **must** have a register of full time and part time staff employment, including all staff roles and responsibilities.

Facility **must** have an environmental working group comprising key staff, volunteers and external advisors.

Facility **should** demonstrate multiple formal and informal environmental education of employees.

6.2 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple measures to engage positively and constructively with neighbours, local community and environmental organisations.

6.3 LAND USE & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Facility **must** have a register of any historical, cultural or archaeological designations that apply to the site.

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Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple measures undertaken to provide appropriate levels and forms of diversified land use, access and other recreational opportunities for members of the local community.

Facility **should** have baseline information on historical, cultural or archaeological context and features.

Facility **should** have established dialogue with agencies related to historical, cultural and archaeological context and features.

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate measures undertaken to conserve and / or interpret the cultural, historical and archaeological interest of the site.

6.4 LEGAL DISPUTES

Facility **must** not have any legal disputes affecting the site, and must openly declare any controversy and / or community conflict pertaining to the facility and other related business activities.

6.4 COMMUNICATIONS

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple internal communications actions relating to environmental, community and sustainability issues.

Facility **should** be able to demonstrate multiple external communications and advocacy actions within the community, or at national to international level.

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CRITERIA CHECKLIST / MUST

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Use the following checklists to self assess eligibility for the GEO Certified™ award. The following requirements **must** be met by successful applicants:

LANDSCAPE & ECOSYSTEMS

Demonstrate a sound understanding of the ecology, ecosystem and aesthetic (landscape) value of the site.

Be aware of conservation designations for protected sites, habitats, species or landscapes.

Be able to explain why the grass species being maintained provide an optimal balance between playing condition requirements, the efficient use of resources, and minimal reliance on chemical pest control.

WATER

Provide baseline figures for total annual water consumption, split into different management areas if possible (clubhouse, golf course, maintenance facility).

State sources of water used.

ENERGY & RESOURCES

State total energy and fuel consumption per annum, broken down by renewables and non-renewables.

State the total number of operational vehicles under ownership or control.

PRODUCTS & SUPPLY CHAINS

Have an established ethical and environmental purchasing policy.

Provide baseline data for fertiliser and pesticide use.

Describe and demonstrate all current waste management operations.

Demonstrate legal compliance in waste management.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Identify where all waste water and runoff goes after leaving property.

Maintain a register of all hazardous materials.

Demonstrate legal compliance in the storage, handling and safe disposal of all hazardous substances.

PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Maintain a register of full and part time employees, including all staff roles and responsibilities.

Have an environmental working group comprising key staff, volunteers and external advisors.

Maintain a register of any historical, cultural or archaeological designations that apply to the site.

Not have any legal disputes affecting the site, and openly declare any controversy or community conflict connected to the facility or related business activities.



CRITERIA CHECKLIST / SHOULD

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

First-time applicants **should** demonstrate performance across the following areas, appropriate to local environment and scale of operation. Continual improvement targets will be drawn from these criteria.

LANDSCAPE & ECOSYSTEMS

- Monitor the status of key species as a measure of environmental quality.
- Establish a schedule for extending and updating ecological surveys.
- Enlist occasional targeted advice from ecosystem, biodiversity and landscape experts.
- Manage the playing quality expectations of members and visitors.
- Demonstrate ongoing refinements to grassing plan, and measures to minimize area of managed turfgrass.
- Undertake practical activities to enhance the landscape character of the site, in a way that is harmonious with the facility surroundings.
- Demonstrate efforts to maximize the ecological value of the site, in ways that are appropriate to the ecological potential of the site.
- Demonstrate practical measures to enhance biodiversity through species conservation measures.

LANDSCAPE & ECOSYSTEMS (CONT.)

Demonstrate patch enlargement, improved connectivity, and the creation of corridors and links between habitats.

WATER

- Demonstrate efforts to diversify water sources, and move away from the use of high-quality and potable sources: e.g. migration to treated waste water, harvested rainwater, etc.
- Demonstrate ongoing measures to reduce irrigated areas.
- Demonstrate regular irrigation system maintenance, servicing and upgrading, if applicable.
- Undertake activities to maximize irrigation efficiency.
- Demonstrate measures for minimising water consumption in clubhouses, maintenance facilities and other golf operations buildings.

ENERGY & RESOURCES

- Undertake an energy audit (formal or informal), detailing opportunities for energy efficiency and diversification.
- Undertake practical actions to diversify energy and fuel supply.
- Undertake practical actions to reduce energy consumption.
- Transition to more fuel-efficient, low-carbon vehicles.



CRITERIA CHECKLIST / SHOULD

ENERGY & RESOURCES (CONT.) Demonstrate practical activities aimed at reducing vehicle use among staff and customers.

Report full or partial energy consumption as carbon equivalent, via carbon footprinting, or other forms of ecological footprinting.

PRODUCTS & SUPPLY CHAINS Demonstrate evidence of purchasing policy in action and provide practical examples of sustainability in the supply chain.

Provide an overview of local to international suppliers, covering major categories of product and service.

Demonstrate multiple measures to minimize fertiliser, pesticide and other resource inputs to turfgrass (IPM approach to plant health).

Demonstrate actions undertaken to optimize fertiliser and pesticide use.

Demonstrate measures undertaken to avoid waste, to continue lifecycle of materials via reuse and recycling, and reductions made in amounts of waste disposed to landfill or incineration.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY Demonstrate that water quality is at least unaffected by golf facility operations, and ideally is improved.

Undertake visual, biological and chemical sampling of water quality at regular intervals.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (CONT.) Demonstrate multiple measures undertaken to prevent pollution from the maintenance facility and clubhouse.

Demonstrate multiple measures undertaken to prevent pollution from the golf course.

PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES Demonstrate formal and informal environmental education of employees.

Demonstrate measures undertaken to engage positively and constructively with neighbours, local community and environmental organizations.

Demonstrate measures undertaken to provide appropriate levels of diversified land use, access and other recreational opportunities for local community.

Establish baseline information on historical, cultural or archaeological context and features.

Maintain a dialogue with statutory and non-statutory agencies related to any historical, cultural and archaeological context and features.

Demonstrate measures to conserve and / or interpret cultural, historical and archaeological interest.

Demonstrate internal communications relating to environmental, community and sustainability issues.

Demonstrate multiple external communications and advocacy actions within the community, or at a national to international level.