

The EIA Accreditation Process

This section provides a brief overview of options for environmental impact assessment (EIA) certification in the Americas. While there is only one EIA certification body—The Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)—universities in most countries provide comprehensive courses at the undergraduate and master’s levels. The following provides information for education and accreditation in Canada and the United States in North America, and Costa Rica and Panama in Central America.

General

While there is limited information about an international system of accreditation, one organization, The Institute of Professional Environmental Practice, does have such a program. This organization is based in the United States but is international in stature with members representing countries such as Bahrain, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom, among others. According to their website, the [Qualified Environmental Professional \(QEP\) credential](#)—which requires all professionals to follow a strict code of ethics in their work—is a “multi-media, multi-disciplinary, board-certified credential, which requires environmental professionals to see the big picture and to have the skills and knowledge to solve real world problems.” To apply for the certification, a minimum of a bachelor’s degree or equivalent in physical, earth or natural sciences, engineering, or mathematics, combined with five subsequent years of environmental work is required. For candidates with more than 15 years of experience there is a 90-minute oral exam to obtain the certification. For professionals with between 5 to 15 years of experience, a two-part written exam is required that consists of:

1. A general environmental science exam, and
2. A specific practice areas exam focusing on one of four areas; air quality, water quality, waste management and environmental science, management and policy.

The original cost of the certification is USD 150.00. An annual renewal fee of the same amount is also necessary along with a document stating ongoing professional development and involvement in the field. The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is an international body that links people to training programs (IAIA courses, courses offered by others, training resources, webinars, etc.), but does not maintain an accreditation program, though it has a page devoted to training opportunities: <http://www.iaia.org/training/training-network.aspx>

North America

Canada

Certification is not required in Canada. The federal government is responsible for the scope and accuracy of the analysis.



Although no certification is required of EIA practitioners, a wide range of programs and courses are available. A few examples:

1. Concordia University has a graduate program in environmental assessment that includes both a course-based [Diploma in Environmental Assessment](#), and a [Master of Environment](#) program.
 - a. Required courses include environmental assessment (EA) concepts, principles and practices, data collection and analysis for EA, and GIS for EA. Other courses include: economics, environmental law and policy, environmental standards, Indigenous resource management, environmental governance, environmental modelling, community-based conservation, etc.
 - b. Hours: 30 credits, which represents approximately 1350 hours of academic activity anticipated (lectures, exams, personal work, etc.).
 - c. Experience: The Master of Environment program requires an additional 15-credit internship.
2. Niagara College program on [Environmental management and assessment](#) (post graduate certificate)
 - a. Topics covered: Environmental laws and regulations, environmental site assessment, waste management systems, hazardous materials management, environmental impact and risk assessment, etc.
 - b. Length: 43 credits over one year.
 - c. Experience: 12-day internship (one day per week for 12 weeks).
3. Dalhousie University offers a [Certificate in Environmental Impact Assessment](#).
 - a. Required courses include a course on EIA, introductory courses on the environment, theory-based classes (e.g., conservation biology, geomorphology and landscape evolution), field- and method-based classes (e.g., agroforestry, practical hydrogeology), and higher-level supplementary classes (e.g., Law and policy for resource and environmental management, Economics for resource and environmental management).

In addition to courses provided by post-secondary institutions, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency provides [training opportunities regarding environmental assessment](#) (the courses currently posted are all one or two days in duration).

United States

Certification is not required in the United States. The federal government is responsible for preparation of the environmental impact study (and therefore scope and accuracy of the analysis). Outside firms are sometimes hired to prepare the environmental impact study on behalf of federal agencies.

Since no certification is required of EIA practitioners, a wide range of programs and courses are available. A few examples:

1. North Carolina State University [Master of Environmental Assessment](#).
 - a. Required courses include environmental risk assessment, environmental exposure assessment, environmental monitoring and analysis, environmental stressors, intro to GIS, Environmental Assessment Law and Policy. A wide range of electives covering diverse topics are available (e.g., soil microbiology, agricultural waste management, project management). A professional project is also required.



- b. Length: 30 credit hours.
2. American University: [Graduate certificate in Environmental Assessment](#).
 - a. Required courses include an intro to GIS, two environmental science courses, environmental risk assessment, and a graduate course on statistical methods.
 - b. Length: 15 credit hours
3. Anne Arundel Community College [Certificate in Environmental Monitoring and Assessment](#).

Designed to provide students "with the knowledge base and skills needed to evaluate the condition and environmental status of the diverse types of ecosystems found in Maryland for the purpose of environmental assessment or compliance."

 - a. Required courses include general botany, zoology, chemistry, microbiology, environmental science, plus restoration ecology, geology of Maryland, and Ecological Principles and Environmental Assessment.
 - b. Length: 35 credit hours

Central America

In most countries in Central America, the ministries of the environment have legislation regarding who can perform an environmental consultation, EIA or environmental audit. For instance, in Guatemala multidisciplinary teams of registered consultants must develop environmental studies. In Nicaragua EIAs must be developed by individuals or corporations certified and registered by the Ministry of the Environment. However, there are no EIA professional associations or bodies in the country. In Honduras, all environmental service providers must be registered with MiAmbiente. While certification is necessary in most countries, few programs specific to Environmental Impact Assessments are available for training purposes.

Throughout much of Latin America, Fundacion Universitaria Iberoamericana (FUNIBER) provides an on-line distance specialization program in [Environmental Impact Assessment](#). This program has flexible start and end dates, but does require that the program be finished in no less than one month and no more than three months. The program requires 10 credits and approximately 100 hours of class time. This program is oriented toward people with no formal university education who would like training in this field as well as those with formal post-secondary education who would like a specialization in EIA. The program covers the following topics.

1. Definitions and basic concepts of EIA
2. Typology and characterization of impacts
3. Contents and methods for identification and assessing impacts
4. EIA in different countries
5. Practical cases

FUNIBER also offers a specialization on [EIA and Environmental Auditing](#), which focuses generally on EIA, environmental management and ISO standards, as well as a [Masters of Environmental Management and Auditing](#). FUNIBER has campuses across Latin America, Africa and Europe and is located throughout Central America in Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua.



Costa Rica

Certification is not required in Costa Rica, but the national environmental secretariat (*Secretaría Técnica Nacional Ambiental*, or SETENA) defines team composition required to prepare studies, which must be conducted by consultants who have been registered by SETENA.

While no specific certification is required, several universities offer courses and programs focusing on EIA.

1. The Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) offers a course on environmental impact assessment within their [Environmental Management Program](#). Through these diploma and degree program students “will improve and optimize different environmental aspects in productive processes and design and implement systems and technologies that help to solve environmental problems.”
 - a. Required courses include all courses listed under this program. They focus on the fundamentals of biology, chemistry, laboratory work, cartography and GIS, toxicology and research methods among others. The course on EIA is offered in the fourth year, semester 1 of the program. An additional course on managing social/environmental conflicts is also available during the last semester.
 - b. Length: Eight semesters and a total of 93 credit hours for the degree and two semesters and 68 credit hours for the diploma.
2. Universidad Autónoma de Monterrey, Costa Rica offers a Master’s program in [Environmental Management](#).
 - a. Requirements: To enter the program you must have a degree in law, economics or natural sciences; otherwise a qualifying exam is necessary. This program covers the principles of ecology, pollution and contamination management, law, planning and natural disasters and includes a course on environmental impact assessment in the final semester.
 - b. Length: This is a two- year program that requires a total of 68 credit hours.

Panama

In Panama, studies must be conducted by a multidisciplinary team of qualified professionals who are registered and certified by the Ministry of the Environment (*Ministerio de Ambiente*, or MINAM). The team must consist of five experts, registered in the ministry’s environmental auditing list, with experience in the fields of water quality, noise, soil, air, waste, residuals, clean production methods, environmental risk, flora and fauna, environmental management, industrial security and hygiene, civil works, technological processes and sociology. To be registered as an environmental consultant with the Ministry of the Environment, professionals must have a university education in environmental sciences and a certificate indicating a minimum of 120 hours of EIA-specific courses have been taken. They must also have developed at least one EIA in each of three categories and received acknowledgement by the ministry’s EIA department that the consultant has participated as an evaluator for at least one year. All registered environmental consultants must submit documents proving that they are keeping their skills up-to-date.



There are several options available for EIA training in Panama. These include:

1. The *Universidad Latina de Panama* has an [Environmental Engineering Program](#). This is a five-year program that includes courses in Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Auditing, Environmental legislation, ethics, biodiversity management and water quality among others.
2. *Universidad Latinoamericana de Comercio Exterior* (ULACEX) has a post-graduate program for Environmental Management, Risk Assessment and Industrial Safety.
3. The *Universidad Tecnologica de Panama* provides EIA and environmental management courses within its five-year Civil Engineering program. In addition to this, it holds occasional workshops and lectures for Environmental consultants to update their skills.

Source: EIA Online Learning Platform - <http://www.iisd.org/learning/eia>