

Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development (AOSPD) Certificate

(For Consultants Preparing Strategies and Plans Dealing with Agricultural Source Materials)

Updated June 2024

Overview of AOSPD Certificate

You are required to have an Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development (AOSPD) Certificate if you are preparing a Nutrient Management Strategy (NMS) or Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) for an agricultural operation that you don't own, operate or work for. Your certificate number is required on all NMS/Plans you prepare.

Certificates are valid for five years.

Core Competencies

The skills and knowledge that are required for the AOSPD Certificate can be found in the Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate Core Competencies guide, available at www.nutrientmanagement.ca.

Certificate Requirements

1. Take the Courses

There are three required courses for the AOSPD Certificate, offered in English and French:

- Introduction to Nutrient Management
- Regulation and Protocols
- How to Prepare a Nutrient Management Strategy and Plan (using NMAN)

You must write your exam within two years of completing the Regulation and Protocols course.

Introduction to Nutrient Management

This course outlines the basic agronomic principles underlying the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 and O. Reg. 267/03.

There are two ways to take this course.

Option 1 – Online version

This version of the course allows you to complete the course at your own pace and convenience (computer and Internet connection required).

Option 2 – Virtual classroom version

This online course is taught over 3 nights in January or February each year. An instructor guides you through the course material, similar to taking the course in-person.

Regulation and Protocols

This course provides an overview of the Nutrient Management Act, including key definitions and requirements of the Act, Regulation and Protocols. The course also reviews the basics of preparing an NMS/P, implementing an NMS/P and compliance under the NMA. You must write and pass the exam within two years of taking this course or you will be required to re-take it.

There are two ways to take this course.

Option 1 – Online version

This version of the course allows you to complete the course at your own pace and convenience (computer and Internet connection required).

Option 2 – Virtual classroom version

This online course is taught over 3 nights in January or February, usually shortly after Introduction to Nutrient Management. An instructor guides you through the course material, similar to taking the course in-person.

How to Prepare a Nutrient Management Strategy and Plan Using AgriSuite

This course guides you through the steps of developing an NMS and NMP using AgriSuite, a web-based tool specifically designed for this purpose. This course covers:

- What is contained in a NMS/P
- How to use AgriSuite for NMS/P preparation, and as a recordkeeping tool

Complete the course online

You can complete the course at your own pace and convenience (computer and Internet connection required).

Course Schedule

To view the course schedule and to register for a course, visit www.nutrientmanagement.ca or call Ridgetown Campus toll free at 1-855-648-1444.

2. Complete Practicum

After you have taken your required courses, you must complete a practicum. For this practicum, you will use AgriSuite to complete and submit two NMS/P (based on fictitious scenarios) for grading. You must achieve a passing grade of 80% on two assignments to complete your practicum. You will receive feedback on each assignment to apply to the next one and you will be allowed to attempt a maximum of four assignments.

3. Pass the Exam

The AOSPDC exam covers materials taught in the courses as well as the skills and knowledge outlined in the Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate Core Competencies. You must have written the AOSPDC exam and achieved a passing grade (75% or greater) within the last year to apply for your certificate.

Based on your preference, the exam can be scheduled at various locations across the province. To view the exam schedule or register for the exam, visit www.nutrientmanagement.ca or contact Ridgetown Campus.

You will have three opportunities to complete the exam successfully. If you fail the second time you write the exam, you must wait three months before you write again to allow time for you to improve your knowledge of the subject matter.

Accommodations

We will work to provide reasonable accommodations to candidates having physical, learning or linguistic barriers that may affect their ability to write the exam. Contact Ridgetown Campus to discuss your options.

Applying for the Certificate

After you have taken the three necessary courses and passed the practicum and exam, complete the Application for Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate and mail or e-mail the completed application to the address indicated on the form. You must submit your application within one year of the date you passed the exam. If you wait longer than one year, you will be required to retake the exam.

Certificate Conditions

Under section 108 of the Regulation, the Director may issue a certificate subject to any conditions that he/she considers appropriate. This may include conditions that are consented to by the applicant, imposed by a Director, or ordered by the Tribunal.

Refusal to Issue a Certificate

Under s. 109(1), the Director may refuse to issue a certificate if:

- The applicant is in contravention of the Act or this Regulation, or is in breach of a condition of another certificate issued under Part X;
- The applicant is not competent to carry on the activity that would be authorized by the certificate; or
- The past conduct of the applicant affords reasonable grounds for belief that the activity that would be authorized by the certificate will not be carried on with honesty and integrity.

Certificate Renewals

Certificates are valid for five years from the date of issue. If you hold an AOSPD Certificate that has not been suspended or cancelled and **has not expired**, you can apply for a renewal. It is your responsibility to know the expiry date of your certificate. We suggest that you begin the renewal process at least six months before your certificate expires.

To renew your certificate, you must have written and passed the exam (mark of 75% or greater) within the last year and submit your application before your existing certificate expires. It is highly recommended that you take the required course again before writing the exam.

Renewal exams can be written online or in-person. Visit www.nutrientmanagement.ca or contact Ridgetown Campus.

To apply for the certificate, complete the application for Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development (AOSPD) Certificate found at www.nutrientmanagement.ca or contact Ridgetown Campus to have an application sent to you.

Expired Certificate

If your certificate expires before you submit your application for renewal, you will be considered a new applicant and must complete the required courses, practicum and exam before you can recertify.

Additional Expectations

Stay Current in Your Field

Certificate holders are expected to keep up to date with the nutrient management legislation and actively pursue additional learning opportunities to remain competent in the field of nutrient management. This may include update sessions offered by OMAFRA. Updates can be found at www.nutrientmanagement.ca.

Performance Guidelines

Performance guidelines go beyond the regulatory requirements, skills and knowledge listed in the core competencies. These guidelines are intended to provide consistent guiding principles for AOSPD Certificate holders that reflect best management practices for the industry and good professional services to their clients. AOSPD Certificate holders are encouraged to follow these guidelines in their daily practice. The Performance Guidelines are available at www.nutrientmanagement.ca.

Other Considerations

- A site visit may be conducted on an NMS/P submitted by the AOSPD Certificate holder.
- Although not required, it is recommended that individuals who hold an AOSPD Certificate:
 - Carry errors and omissions insurance, and
 - Participate in a Professionalism and Ethics Course (offered through organizations such as the Ontario Institute of Agrologists).

For more information about courses and exam schedules, contact:

University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus:
Telephone: Toll free 1-855-648-1444
E-mail: mmcdonal@uoguelph.ca
www.nutrientmanagement.ca

For more information about certification and licensing, contact:

OMAFRA:
Telephone: 1-877-424-1300
E-mail: nman.omafra@ontario.ca

The information contained in this document is derived from the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 (NMA) and Ontario Regulation 267/03 (O. Reg. 267/03). Every effort has been made to make it as accurate as possible, but is not authoritative. Please refer to the e-Laws website for the authoritative text of the act.