



GRI Professional Certification Program

FAQ for participants

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GRI Professional Certification Program

What is the GRI Professional Certification Program?

The GRI Professional Certification Program is a sustainability curriculum that delivers globally applicable professional development on the GRI Standards and offers professionals an opportunity for continuous learning and upskilling. The program has two flexible learning routes to choose from - **online self-paced (Route A)**, hosted on the [GRI Academy](#) or **blended (Route B)**, delivered together with **GRI's network** of [Certified Training Partners](#).

Why was the GRI Professional Certification Program developed?

This program was developed in response to a market need, and the continuous calls by sustainability professionals for GRI to develop a certification program. Through this program, professionals will be able to enhance their knowledge, expertise, and skills on sustainability practices, particularly in implementing the GRI Standards. The overall aim of the program is to improve the quality of sustainability disclosures and reporting.

What is the GRI Academy?

The [GRI Academy](#) is a dedicated learning platform for sustainability professionals. It provides access to courses focusing on the most recent developments in the field of sustainability. The GRI Academy catalogue includes the Professional Certification Program, dedicated courses on reporting with the GRI Standards, and topic-specific courses focusing on topics such as Tax, Waste, and Occupational Health and Safety.

What are the benefits of certification?

- **Improve skills:** the program enhances the skills of sustainability professionals and resultantly, the quality of sustainability disclosures and reporting.
- **Provide acknowledgement:** certification enables sustainability professionals to demonstrate knowledge, capability, and competence.

- **Create credibility and marketability:** becoming certified is a form of quality assurance for sustainability professionals, improving their marketability.
- **Maintain and upskill knowledge:** continuous educational opportunities offered by GRI will keep sustainability professionals knowledge up to date with contemporary sustainability trends..

For whom is the GRI Professional Certification Program?

Besides sustainability reporting professionals (within companies) and consultants, this program is also very useful for anyone who works with sustainability reporting, such as Chief Sustainability Officers and assurers.

Do you need to be certified to prepare a sustainability report in accordance with the GRI Standards?

No, for the moment there is no such requirement.

The 2021 Updates

Why was the GRI Professional Certification Program updated in 2021?

The current GRI Professional Certification Program was launched in **November 2021** in line with the revised GRI Universal Standards 2021. The purpose of these changes is to keep the knowledge and skills of sustainability professionals up to date, enabling GRI's content to evolve with the ever-changing landscape of sustainability.

Why were the GRI Universal Standards revised in 2021?

The revised Universal Standards are:

- a. Simplified and updated, to set clearer expectations on what companies should be reporting;
- b. responding to emerging regulatory changes and growing stakeholder demands for comparable sustainability disclosures;
- c. more adaptable to future changes in the sustainability reporting landscape, with continuous improvement built in. This is to ensure better and more consistent sustainability reporting, which is needed to inform effective decision-making by organizations and their stakeholders.

What are the main changes in the Standards for the reporters?

- A more focused approach to identifying material topics, based on the organization's most significant impacts.
- New disclosures on human rights and due diligence are embedded in the reporting requirements for all organizations that use the Standards, to align with authoritative and intergovernmental instruments for responsible business conduct. This includes the UN Guiding Principles, OECD Guidelines, ILO labor standards, and ICGN global governance principles.
- Revised reporting principles are introduced that increase the focus on high quality and well-presented information, which are built around the key concepts of impact, material topic, due diligence, and stakeholder.
- More precise, understandable and flexible options for reporting- the term 'in accordance' offers the complete and balanced picture, addressing how an organization manages its material topics. This contrast to the term 'with reference to', which is only available when using selected Standards.
- Integration of the Sector Standards to support companies to identify their material topics, setting clear expectations for reporting on Topic Standards and providing additional sector-specific disclosures.

Can you explain a bit more about the Program and its courses?

The 2021 GRI Certification Program is comprised of four courses (see below) that cover the fundamentals of GRI reporting and the certification exam. On the [GRI website](#) and in the GRI Academy, you can find more information about each course, in addition to course content and learning objectives:

1. [Introduction to sustainability reporting and the GRI Standards 2021 Update](#)
2. [Reporting with GRI Standards 2021 Update](#)
3. [Reporting on Human Rights with GRI Standards 2021 Update](#)
4. [Integrating the SDGs into sustainability reporting](#)

How can I upgrade my certification based on the GRI Standards 2016?

If you already completed or are in the process of completing the Certification Program based on the GRI Standards 2016, once you passed the exam, there will be a fast-track option available to upgrade your current certification to the new GRI Standards 2021 Update. The fast-track will consist of two additional courses that you will be required to take **before** the 1st of January 2023, which are the following:

1. Reporting with GRI Standards 2021 Update
2. Reporting on Human Rights with GRI Standards 2021 Update

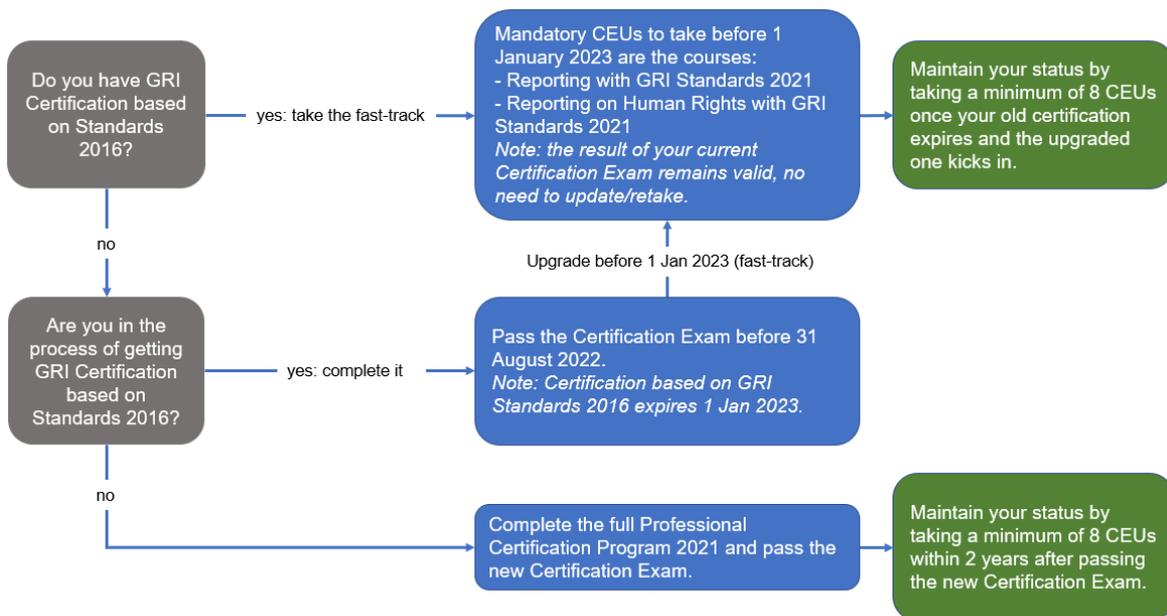
These two courses equate to a fast-track recertification path, whereby an individual can upgrade their certification and extend its validity by two years from the date of expiry of their “2016” certification. For most certified individuals, the expiry date of their “2016” certification is 1st of January 2023, the date when the revised GRI Universal Standards will come into force.

During the two year extension period, certified individuals will be required to accumulate eight Continuing Education Units ([CEUs](#)) to extend their certification for another two years. Individuals who choose the fast-track option will **not** be required to take the updated Certification Exam.

How can I get certified in the Professional Certification Program 2021?

If you are **not** certified yet, you can become certified by completing the full new Certification Program via Route A, or Route B, and passing the new Certification exam.

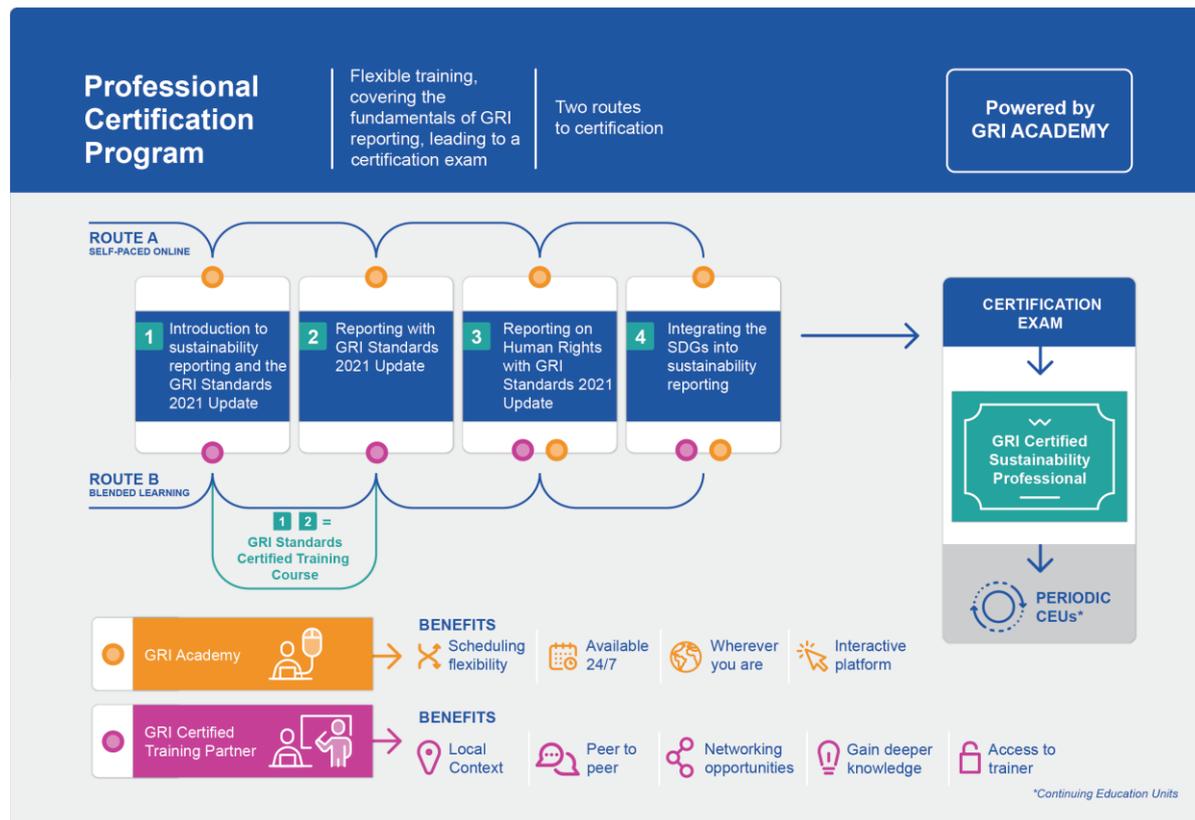
If you already **have** a GRI Certification based on the Standards 2016, or you are in the **process** of obtaining this certification, you can follow the fast-track. As shown in the diagram below, this is a path to upgrade your GRI Certification based on the Standards 2016 to the GRI Certification based on the Standards 2021 Update. It allows you to skip the Introduction course, the SDGs course and the exam of the 2021 Certification Program.



Why are there two routes (Route A and Route B) to get certified?

The reason for having different learning paths (Route A: online, and Route B: face-to-face) is to cater to the needs of different types of learners and to have a global reach at the same time.

The graphic below refers to Route A and Route B.



How does Route B work – through Certified Training Partners?

GRI's Certified Training Course is a customized training in a peer-to-peer learning environment offering networking opportunities and locally tailored content delivered by close to a hundred [training partners](#) in almost 50 countries across the world.

If you opt for Route B, the GRI Standards Certified Training course is equivalent to the first two courses of the Route A certification path:

- 1) "Introduction to sustainability reporting and the GRI Standards 2021 Update" and
- 2) "Reporting with GRI Standards 2021 Update".

Some CTPs also license the two additional courses:

- 3) "Reporting on Human Rights with GRI Standards 2021 Update" and

4) *“Integrating the SDGs into sustainability reporting”*

In that case, these courses can also be taken through a CTP. Otherwise, you can complete your learning path by taking these courses on the [GRI Academy](#).

What is the added value to take Route B?

There is a lot of added value to attending a course through a Certified Training Partner including:

- **Local context:** The material from Training Partners is certified and includes local cases and examples tailored to the region where the course is being offered. Often, it is also offered in the local language.
- **Peer-to-peer learning:** CTPs provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, which is invaluable.
- **Networking opportunities:** Through the set-up of face to face or remote training sessions, the participants get networking opportunities through the CTP courses.
- **Practical learning:** The GRI online courses cover the essentials of reporting, without the learner practicing the presented concepts, whereas the CTP courses provide practical exercises and case studies.
- **Access to a trainer:** The participants get access to the trainer (an experienced sustainability professional) throughout the CTP courses, which is not the case with the online GRI Academy courses.

What if I already have completed CEUs to extend my certification?

If a participant previously completed CEUs in an effort to recertify, the corresponding points will roll over into the new certification period.

Certification exam

What does the Certification Exam look like?

The Certification exam can be taken online. It consists of a combination of 40 true/false and multiple choice questions and requires a passing score of 75%. If an individual fails the exam, they can retake it 3 times in 6 months with a 7-day cooling off period between attempts.

Can I get a discount if I have to retake the Certification Exam?

Yes, if you have to retake the exam, you can get a 50% discount on the exam fee. Please, contact griacademy@globalreporting.org to claim your personal discount code.

Is the Certification Exam available on demand or is it scheduled on certain dates only?

The Certification Exam can be taken online through the GRI Academy. Upon completion of the learning path, all eligible candidates will be able to take the exam at their convenience.

What language is the Certification Exam in?

The GRI Professional Certification Program 2021, including the Certification exam, is currently only offered in English.

Can the Certification Exam be taken without taking the courses?

No, the Professional Certification Program requires individuals to follow the compulsory learning path. The courses are a prerequisite to take the Certification exam. In very specific cases, where the Grandfathering policy below applies, experts will be allowed to go directly to the Certification exam without having to go through the required courses by submitting this [self-declaration form](#).

Will participants earn a certificate when they complete the courses and the Certification Exam?

Yes, participants will receive a certificate of completion for each course and a certificate of achievement once the Certification exam is passed. The certificate of achievement will mention that the participant has acquired the status of “*GRI Certified Sustainability Professional*”. The status can be maintained through accumulating the minimum required number of CEUs.

How can those who have taken the GRI Standards Certified Training Course with a GRI Training Partner take the Certification Exam?

Successfully attending the GRI Standards Certified Training course with one of our certified training partners, is the equivalent to the first two courses of the Program. To continue the program, you must select the ‘Route B Learning Path’ from the Course Catalogue in the GRI Academy. Subsequently, you can proceed with the remaining courses and, once completed, the Professional Certification Exam will be unlocked. In cases where CTPs license the additional courses from GRI, these courses can also be taken through a CTP.

Pricing

What is the price of the GRI Professional Certification Program?

The price for the GRI Professional Certification Program 2021 is available [here](#). For the pricing of the CTP courses, please contact the [relevant CTPs](#) directly.

Are there any discounts for participants?

- Participants of the GRI Standards Certified Training course, through the GRI Certified Training Partners, get 25% discount on the **Certification exam** fee.
- Discount for students:
 - Students get 10% discount on the courses and the Certification exam.
 - To receive the 10% student discount coupon, please send a copy of your student ID or proof of enrolment to griacademy@globalreporting.org
- Discount for companies:
 - GRI Community members get 25% discount
 - Bulk discounts:

- 6 – 10 enrolments: 5%
- 11 – 25 enrolments: 10%
- > 25 enrolments: 15%

CEUs (Continuing Education Units)

What are CEUs?

The continuing development of professional competence involves a program of advancing educational activities. 'Continuing Education Units' (CEUs) is the term used in this program to describe educational activities that assist participants to maintain their GRI Certified Sustainability Professionals status.

Learn more about the Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and maintaining your certification status in our [CEUs requirements document](#).

Grandfathering Policy

Who does the Grandfathering Policy apply to?

The Grandfathering Policy has been designed specifically for experienced sustainability professionals. In very specific cases, experts will be allowed to go directly to the Certification exam without having to go through the five courses by submitting this [self-declaration form](#).

Can you clarify what the Grandfathering Policy entails?

If you are an experienced sustainability professional, who complies with the two predetermined criteria (see underneath), you may request for to take the GRI Professional Certification exam without going through the learning path (four courses). The request is a self-declaration statement including proof of relevant experience.

What are the criteria to comply with the Grandfathering Policy?

You must have a minimum of **5 years** of proven experience in sustainability reporting using the GRI Standards and /or GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines **and** you must have

composed or contributed to at least **10 sustainability reports** based on the GRI Standards.

Can GRI nominated trainers be included in the Grandfathering Policy?

No, they cannot. As it is required for all GRI's nominated trainers to regularly update their knowledge (i.e., to be intimately familiar with the content they teach, and to have their GRI Professional Certification status up to date), they will always have to go through the relevant courses, and resultantly, the grandfathering policy cannot be applied to them.

Stay in touch

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