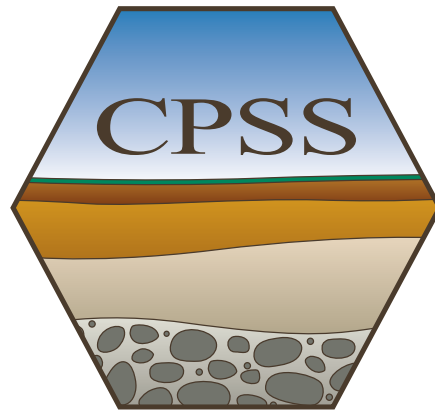


Certified Professional Soil Scientist



Certified Professional
Soil Scientist

A Program of the
Soil Science Society of America



Administered by the Soils Certifying Board

www.soils.org/certifications

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If you hold a current APSS certificate and are looking to transition to the CPSS certification, contact Zoe Brindley at zbrindley@sciencesocieties.org or 608-278-8739.

Soil Science Examination Information

Certification as a Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) requires an application and the passing of the Fundamentals of Soil Science exam. Complete requirements are contained in this document, but a summary table is provided below for reference. The table and this document cover the requirements for both the Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) and the CPSS.

The APSS is for soil scientists “in training” and have passed the Fundamentals of Soil Science Exam, have a Bachelor’s degree as outlined below, but do not meet the work experience requirement.

| | Exam | Education | Experience |
|--|--------------|---|---|
| Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) | Fundamentals | Minimum Bachelor’s degree in soils or related area | Junior standing to take exam; Bachelor’s to hold APSS |
| Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) | Fundamentals | Minimum Bachelor’s degree in soils or related area; | 5 years post Bachelor’s 3 years post M.S./Ph.D. |

Examinations are held by continuous testing, or within universities at other times of the year with permission from SSSA.

| Exam | Eligibility | Cost |
|-----------------------|---|-------|
| Fundamentals | Must meet all certification requirements* | \$195 |
| Professional Practice | Only required for <i>some</i> licensing states* | \$195 |

An applicant must apply to take the Fundamentals of Soil Science Exam by demonstrating to the Soils Certifying Board that all other requirements for certification are complete.

*Licensing State Information:

There are licensing states that work with SSSA and CSSE to provide the exams and other services. These states are listed on the SSSA website at <https://www.soils.org/certifications/become-certified/licensing>.

Soil Science Certification—Overview

Introduction

If you consider yourself a professional in soils and you teach, consult, conduct research, or otherwise work in the area of soil science, you should consider certification. Certification in soil science is based on measuring your qualifications against professional standards determined by the Soil Science Society of America's (SSSA) Soils Certifying Board. While anyone can call themselves a soil scientist, only those that have had their credentials reviewed and approved by SSSA's Soil Certifying Board can distinguish themselves to their clients, co-workers, and employers as a Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS).

The Soils Certifying Board is comprised of certified professionals across the U.S. and represents a broad spectrum of work experience from private sector to government to academia. The Board members are nominated by the Certifying Board and appointed by SSSA.

Purpose

Professional standards are needed for those whose activities affect the well-being of the general public as well as the environment. Professional standards have been recognized in professions such as medicine, law, engineering, and accounting. Problem solving in land use issues, agricultural and urban soils, management of soil and water, waste management and numerous other soils related topics and concerns create a need for the services of professionals. Such professionals must be able to show evidence of their qualifications to perform competent work. A certification program serves the public interest by identifying professionals for educational, scientific, and service activities with public and private agencies as well as the general public.

SSSA maintains a registry of those professionals meeting the requirements and qualifications to be certified as a CPSS and maintaining those standards through continuing education and ethics over time.

Eligibility

Certification is based on education, experience and examination as well as adherence to a Code of Ethics and undertaking continuing education after being certified. Individuals certified by SSSA have met the educational requirements, practical work experience standards, and passed the requisite exams to identify themselves and be recognized as professionals in soil science. Credentials of applicants are reviewed by the Soils Certifying Board both as part of the application process and then in maintaining and meeting continuing education and ethics requirements for continued renewal of the certification.

Certification is for individuals only. The designation of CPSS may not be used in such a manner as to indicate that a business, firm, or agency is a certified entity. Further,

the professional designation may not be used in any way to connote SSSA endorsement of a business, firm, agency, consulting service, product, or program.

Individuals are not required to be a member of SSSA to be a CPSS.

Benefits

The CPSS registry identifies trained professionals who have demonstrated a level of competency in soil science through education, experience and examination. Certified individuals are also required to participate in continuing education in soil science to maintain and renew their certification and stay current with the state of the practice. Certified professionals are frequently called upon to provide information on issues pertaining to soils and public concerns that requires them to be knowledgeable in their area of expertise. Examples include:

- consulting for a variety of clients,
- advising agencies of government,
- providing legal testimony, and
- supplying valid information to the media.

Reasons for Certification

There are a number of reasons to be certified as a soils professional including, but not limited to:

- maintaining and promoting high standards of performance by all members of the profession,
- enhancing the visibility of the profession,
- meeting state and national requirements regarding individuals making recommendations to the public,
- promoting and encouraging professional development, growth, and renewal, and
- publicizing and exemplifying the Code of Ethics.

Certification Information

For further information on certification and the associated programs or forms please see our website at www.soils.org/certifications or contact SSSA Headquarters, Member Services/Certification Programs, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, phone (608) 278-8739.

Certification versus Licensing

There are several states that have licensing programs or their own certification/registration programs that may have a different application process than SSSA. It is advisable to check with the state of interest or with SSSA staff to ensure that the correct process is being followed. While the CPSS is a nationally recognized certification, states with licensure will not accept the certification in lieu of the license.

Soil Science Certification

Certification Policies, Procedures, and Standards

I. Certified Professional Status

A. General

1. Application
 - a. Procedures for application as a CPSS are provided below. The Application Form is a separate document and located on the SSSA website at www.soils.org/certifications/become-certified/steps. Please ensure that you have read the instructions and provided all information required on the Application Form.
 - b. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant without review.
2. Registration
 - a. Certification and inclusion in the CPSS Professional Registry is limited to individuals who are deemed qualified professionals in soil science.
 - b. Registrants must subscribe to, and uphold, the Code of Ethics.
3. Certificate
 - a. A certificate is provided to each individual that has met and continues to meet the requirements to be registered as a Certified Professional Soil Scientist.
4. Renewal
 - a. Certification is valid through the current calendar year.
 - (1) Certification is renewable annually in accordance with Section D of this policy document.

B. Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

1. Education Requirements
 - a. Possess a Bachelor's degree in Soil Science or closely related Agricultural, Earth, or Environmental Science program (e.g., named option in Soil Science, minor in Soil Science) from a U.S. or Canadian institution (or show equivalency if outside the U.S. or Canada). The minimum Soil Science core course requirement of 15 semester hours must be met along with the 45 semester hours of supporting professional core courses, which shall be documented on the Application Form. Upper and lower division courses must be documented and official transcripts are required; a minimum GPA of 2.5 is required on the Soil Science core coursework. Specific course requirements are provided in this document at IB4 and IB5 and on the Application Form.
 - b. Possess a Master's or Doctoral degree in Soil Science or closely related Agricultural, Earth, or Environmental Science program (e.g., named option in Soil Science, minor in Soil Science)

from a U.S. or Canadian institution (or show equivalency if outside the U.S. or Canada). The minimum Soil Science core course requirement of 15 semester hours must be met along with the 45 semester hours of supporting professional core courses, which shall be documented on the Application Form. Upper and lower division courses must be documented and official transcripts are required; a minimum GPA of 2.5 is required on the Soil Science core coursework. Specific course requirements are provided in this section of the document at B4 and B5 and on the Application Form.

2. Work Experience

- a. Bachelor's degree requires five (5) years of professional experience in Soil Science subsequent to the bachelor degree being granted. Experience while working toward an advanced degree does not qualify as work experience.
- b. Master's or Doctoral degree requires three (3) years of professional experience in Soil Science subsequent to the bachelor degree being granted. Experience while working toward an advanced degree does not qualify as work experience.
- c. Applicants are required to document the percentage of their work experience in Soil Science.
 - (1) Activities such as consulting, research, extension, and teaching require a minimum of 70 percent of the applicant's time working directly in Soil Science to count fully as work experience.
 - (2) Work experience less than 70 percent will be prorated.
 - (3) Work experience must be documented on the Professional Work Experience form portion of the application.

3. References

- a. The applicant must submit five (5) references that are familiar with the applicant's work and professional experience. References must be familiar with the Soil Science work experience used to meet the certification requirements. The applicant will need to designate the time period for which the reference has personal knowledge of his or her work experience history. Forms for references are included as part of the Application Form.
 - (1) At least one of the five references must be a current CPSS or CPag, a licensed Soil Scientist, or a faculty member familiar with the applicant's work experience in Soil Science.
 - (2) References should include, to the extent possible, the applicant's current super-

- visor and a reference from outside the current place of employment.
- (3) References may not be friends or family members.
 - (4) References are to send their forms directly to SSSA, not through the applicant.
4. Soil Science Core Requirements
- a. A minimum of 15 semester credits (23 quarter credits) total of which a minimum of 9 semester credits (14 quarter credits) must be upper division
Lower division = Freshman and sophomore level courses
Upper division = Junior, senior, and graduate level courses
Laboratory and/or Field coursework is a required component in a minimum of 2 of the Soil Science core classes. Examples include soil judging, undergraduate research, laboratory exercises, field courses.
 - b. Courses must come from at least 3 of the following 6 specialty areas:
 - (1) Soils & Land Use Management
 - (2) Soil Genesis, Morphology, and Classification
 - (3) Soil Biology & Soil Ecology
 - (4) Soil Chemistry & Mineralogy
 - (5) Soil Fertility & Nutrient Management
 - (6) Soil Physics
 - c. Course examples are listed with the application form.
5. Supporting Professional Core Requirements
- a. A minimum of 45 semester credits (68 quarter credits) total of which a minimum of 15 semester credits (23 quarter credits) must be upper division
Lower division = Freshman and sophomore level courses
Upper division = Junior, senior, and graduate level courses
 - b. 4 of the following 8 areas must have a minimum of 5 semester credits (8 quarter credits):
 - (1) Agricultural Science
 - (2) Biological and Ecological Sciences
 - (3) Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics
 - (4) Communications
 - (5) Geoscience and Atmospheric Science
 - (6) Human Health and Land Use
 - (7) Technology and Engineering
 - (8) Water Sciences
 - c. Course examples are listed with the application form.
6. Exam Requirements
- a. Soils certifications are exam based and all applicants are required to pass the Fundamentals Exam.
 - b. An individual must get pre-approved by the Soils Certifying Board before they can take the Fundamentals Examination. Examinations are offered continuously and registration is mandatory. Online registration will be available at www.soils.org/certifications/exam-information/registration-remote.
For exam questions,
E: mlovejoy@sciencesocieties.org or P: (608) 268-4947.
 - c. Exams are computer-based testing with a proctoring system. No exam materials are allowed in the exam site.
An examinee handbook will be provided to the examinee upon registration for the exam.

C. Application

1. Documentation

- a. Application is made by submitting the completed application forms and providing the following information.
 - (1) An official transcript of all academic credits including verification of degree(s).
 - (a) If you have previously provided an official transcript for an American Society of Agronomy certification (CPAg or CCA), state for which certification. Another transcript is not required in this case.
 - (2) A professional resume or personal biographical information, which includes educational background, a list of all professional positions held, a list of significant professional activities, and a list of memberships in professional and honorary organizations.
 - (3) The names and addresses of at least five individuals familiar with your work and professional experience that the applicant has requested Reference Forms to as outlined in section IB3a of this document.
 - (4) Completed Summary of Core Requirements form.
 - (5) Completed Professional Work Experience form.
 - (6) Signed and dated Code of Ethics
 - (7) Those certified in another area such as CPAg or CCA who desire to apply for certification as CPSS may do so by completing the following:
 - (a) Submit completed Application Form, list of references, Core Requirements Form, and updated Professional Work Experience form.
 - (b) Submit the appropriate fee for a second area as listed on the application form.
 - (c) Information pertinent to this application that is not already on file with the Certification Office should be included.

2. If you have ever been charged, indicted or convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, or crime for which circumstances relate to being a soil scientist, the applicant should provide information to allow the Board to review the case as requested on the Application Form.
3. Fees
 - a. An Application for Certification must be accompanied by the appropriate non-refundable fee as indicated on a current Application Form.
4. Application by Comity

A person that holds a license in a state that uses the SSSA/CSSE exams can obtain certification via comity using the following process:

 - a. Comity is requirement based and requires an application to the Soils Certifying Board.
 - b. Those interested in comity should submit a full application to the Soils Certifying Board showing that they meet all the requirements for certification.
 - c. Comity may be granted by the Soils Certifying Board taking into consideration the requirements in place at the time of licensure in comparison to requirements for certification at the same time.
 - (1) Exams, if taken, need to be noted with proof of a passing score.
 - (2) If no exam was available at the time of licensure, or if the applicant was grandfathered in under the licensing law, this should be noted as part of the application.

D. Renewal

1. Annual Renewal
 - a. Certification may be renewed by earning the required Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and paying the appropriate annual fee.
 - b. Renewal fees are due annually on December 31st and is considered delinquent if not paid within 30 days after this due date. After January 31st, certification will be reinstated with payment of the annual fee plus a late fee. The registrant's name will be dropped from the active Registry if the fee is not paid by March 1st. After 12 months, reapplication is required.
 - (1) After recertification has lapsed for 12 months, the individual must reapply following the current rules of application.
 - (2) For a lapsed certification this includes:
 - (a) Taking and passing the Council of Soil Science Examiners' Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination.
 - (b) Meeting the CEU requirements.
 - (c) Submitting appropriate references.
 - (d) Meeting experience requirements.

c. Continual training and education is required of all Certified Professionals to keep abreast of rapidly changing conditions, techniques, and requirements in their field. Therefore, to ensure the validity and integrity of certification, Certified Professionals must submit evidence of continuing education to maintain their Certified Professional status. During each 2-year period of certification, a minimum of 30 CEUs, including 1 CEU in Ethics, must be accumulated. Details of the recertification program are provided at the time one becomes certified and are provided on the SSSA website at www.soils.org/certifications/already-certified.

E. Denial, Revocation, or Suspension of Certification

1. Rights and Responsibilities
 - a. The right to deny, revoke, or suspend certification is vested in the Soils Certifying Board.
 - b. Since the certification program is entirely voluntary, SSSA assumes no responsibility for any loss or disadvantage, real or imagined, which may be alleged to have resulted from denial of certification or revocation or suspension of an existing certification.
2. Reasons for Denial, Revocation, or Suspension of Certification.
 - a. Certification may be denied, revoked, or suspended for any of the following reasons:
 - (1) If the Soils Certifying Board determines that the applicant does not meet the minimum requirements as stated.
 - (2) Violation of rules, regulations, or the Code of Ethics established by SSSA.
 - (3) Misrepresentation on an application, willful submission of incorrect information, or failure to include relevant information in any communication to the Soils Certifying Board.
 - (4) Substantial proven charges of incompetence in the area of certification.
3. Appeal
 - a. Any applicant denied certification has the right of appeal.
 - b. Any action to revoke or suspend certification shall be preceded by a copy of the complaint to the individual.
 - (1) Registrants will be given the opportunity to appeal any such disciplinary action.
4. If an applicant has been denied certification or certification has been revoked due to a cause relevant to the Code of Ethics, the procedures outlined in the Board's Complaint Investigation and Procedures will be followed.

II. Associate Professional Status

A. General

1. Registration
 - a. It is acknowledged that individuals training for certification as a CPSS may want to become professionally recognized through a professional certification program. There is a time lapse between completion of the degree and attainment of the minimum work experience required to be eligible for full certification. For such cases, the classification of Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) is available.
2. Certificate
 - a. A certificate is provided to each qualified individual registered as an Associate Professional.
3. Renewal
 - a. Registration is valid for the current calendar year, renewable annually, and cannot exceed the number of years specified under time limit requirements, as outlined in Section E.
 - b. The Associate Professional does not participate in the CEU renewal program until the Certified Professional status is acquired.

B. Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

1. It is expected that those persons applying for the Associate Professional status will be recent graduates who have not met the experience requirements for a fully Certified Professional. These graduates must meet degree requirements as stated for Certified Professional Status by showing proof of degree granted with their official transcripts.
2. The Associate Professional must subscribe to the Code of Ethics and is subject to the same standards of ethics and professionalism as stated for Certified Professionals in all sections of Certified Professional status.
3. The Associate Professional applicant must take and pass the Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination.
 - a. The Fundamentals exam may be taken as early as Junior standing, but the APSS will not be awarded until proof of degree is submitted to the Board.

C. Application

1. Documentation
 - a. A request for registration is made by submitting a completed application form including the Summary of Core Requirements form and providing the following information:
 - (1) An official transcript of all academic credits including verification of the degree(s).
 - (2) A professional resume, or personal biographical information, that includes educational

background, a list of all professional positions held, a list of significant professional activities, and a list of memberships in professional and honorary organizations. If the applicant has held one or more professional positions, information about these experiences should be included on the Professional Experiences form.

- (3) You must submit five references familiar with your work and academic record.
 - (a) One reference must be from the degree granting institution or an immediate supervisor.
 - (b) If the applicant has held one or more professional positions, references from these positions are also requested.
 - (c) References are to send their forms directly to SSSA, not through the applicant.

2. Fees

- a. An application for certification must be accompanied by the appropriate non-refundable fee as indicated on a current application. The fee schedule is briefly outlined below:
 - (1) Graduating students (Bachelor, Masters, or Doctorate) qualify for a discount on the application fee if they apply and pay the required fee before graduation.
 - (a) The application will be processed when transcripts verifying receipt of the degree and other necessary documents are received.

D. Renewals

1. Registration is renewed annually by payment of a fee.
2. For lapsed Associate Professional Soil Scientist, this includes:
 - a. Taking and passing the Council of Soil Science Examiners' Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination.
 - b. Submitting appropriate references.
 - c. Meeting the educational requirements.

DI. Associate Time-Limit Requirement

1. Degree Requirement
 - a. The length of time a person may hold the Associate Professional status before applying for Certified Professional depends on the degree held. All requirements are exclusive of resident, full-time, graduate schoolwork beyond the bachelor's degree.
 - b. The individual holding a bachelor's degree is limited to six years as an Associate Professional and is eligible to apply for full certification after five years of professional practice.

- c. The individual holding a master's or doctorate degree is limited to four years as an Associate Professional and is eligible to apply for full certification after three years of professional practice.
2. Termination
- a. The Associate Professional status is terminated at the end of the time periods stated above or when Certified Professional status is granted.

F. Transition to Certified Professional Status

1. Application
- a. Transition from the Associate Professional status to Certified Professional status is not automatic; an application must be made.
 - b. An Associate Professional may apply for Certified Professional status after acquiring the minimum number of years of professional experience.
2. Documentation
- a. To apply for Certified Professional status, the Associate Professional must:
 - (1) Submit a completed Application Form.
 - (2) Submit a professional resume or personal biographical information, which includes educational background, a list of all professional positions held, a list of significant professional activities, and a list of memberships in professional and honorary organizations.
 - (3) The names and addresses of at least five individuals familiar with your work and professional experience. References should be selected from two or more agencies or organizations. These references, where possible, should include those who have been previously identified as familiar with the Associate Professional's professional work experience. Procedures for references can be found in section IB3a.
 - (4) Completed Professional Work Experience form.
 - (5) Remit the correct application fee. If the Associate Professional status is current, the application fee is the difference between the amount paid for the APSS application and the CPSS application fee. If the Associate Professional status is not current (annual renewal fee not paid), the fees are the same as the Certified Professional application fee.
 - (6) If you ever been charged, indicted or convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, or crime for which circumstances relate to being a soil scientist, the applicant should provide information to allow the Board to review the case as indicated on the Application Form.

G. Denial, Revocation, or Suspension of Associate Professional Status

1. The right to deny, revoke, or suspend certification as an Associate Professional is vested in the Soils Certifying Board as stated for Certified Professional status.

H. Code of Ethics and Complaint Investigation Procedures

A. Code of Ethics

The Soils Certifying Board's Code of Ethics is included in this policy document and in the application packet. Applicants must read, agree to, and sign the Code of Ethics as a condition of being certified at either a professional or associate level. Failure to do so will result in no certification being granted. Please note that one CEU in Ethics must be obtained each CEU reporting period to maintain certification.

B. Complaint Investigation Procedures

The procedures to be used by the Soils Certifying Board for complaints against certified individuals are attached to this policy document. Applicants should be familiar with these procedures and be aware of their responsibility to report unethical conduct as outlined in the Code of Ethics.

IV. Certified Professional Soil Classifiers

1. Application for certification as a CPSC was discontinued on January 1, 2012 with the exception of those with an active APSC as of that date, who will be allowed to obtain their full CPSC as they obtain the requisite experience.
2. Existing CPSCs continue to be covered under the Code of Ethics and Complain Investigation Procedures.
3. Existing CPSCs are responsible for the upkeep of their certification by reporting CEUs and pay-ing renewal fees as per the timelines outlined in this policy document for CPSSs.



Certified Professional
Soil Scientist

SSSA Soils Certifying Board

Code of Ethics

Article I. Preamble

1. The privilege of professional practice imposes obligations of responsibility as well as professional knowledge. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) certifies the credentials of individuals through the Soils Certifying Board, which is the national soil science certification board. Individuals who meet the requirements for soil science certification will receive the designation of Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) or Certified Professional Soil Classifier (CPSC). The soil science certification program will only award the title of CPSS/CPSC to individuals who have met the examination, education, experience and ethics requirements as set forth by the SSSA Soils Certifying Board.
2. The Soils Certifying Board will award the title of CPSS to individuals who meet the college education, experience, testing requirements, ethics and the continuing education requirements of the Soils Certifying Board. CPSC was no longer issued after 2011. Existing CPSC still apply.
3. A CPSS/CPSC, at the request of a client or employer, must disclose the information used to gain certification. CPSS/CPSC who knowingly misrepresents their credentials will face disciplinary action.

Article II. Relation of Professional to the Public

1. A CPSS/CPSC shall avoid and discourage sensational, exaggerated, and/or unwarranted statements that might induce participation in unsound enterprises.
2. A CPSS/CPSC shall not give professional opinion or make a recommendation without being as thoroughly informed as might reasonably be expected considering the purpose for which the opinion or recommendation is desired, and the degree of completeness of information upon which the opinion is based should be made clear.
3. A CPSS/CPSC shall not issue a false statement or false information even though directed to do so by employer or client.

Article III. Relation of Professional to Employer and Client

1. A CPSS/CPSC shall protect, to the fullest extent possible, the interest of his/her employer or client insofar as such interest is consistent with the law and professional obligations and ethics.
2. A CPSS/CPSC who finds that obligations to their employer or client conflict with their professional obligation or ethics should work to have such objectionable conditions corrected.
3. A CPSS/CPSC shall not use, directly or indirectly, an employer's or client's information in any way that would violate the confidence of the employer or client.

4. CPSS/CPSC retained by one client shall not accept, without the client's written consent, an engagement by another if the interests of the two are in any manner conflicting.
5. A CPSS/CPSC who has made an investigation for any employer or client shall not seek to profit economically from the information gained, unless written permission to do so is granted or until it is clear that there can no longer be a conflict of interest with the original employer or client.
6. A CPSS/CPSC shall not divulge information given in confidence.
7. A CPSS/CPSC shall engage, or advise employer or client to engage, and cooperate with other experts and specialists.
8. A CPSS/CPSC protects the interests of a client by recommending only products and services that are in the best interest of the client and public.
9. A CPSS/CPSC protects his/her credibility by disclosing to clients how he/she will be compensated for providing recommendations to the client.

Article IV. Relation of Professionals to Each Other

1. A CPSS/CPSC shall not falsely or maliciously attempt to injure the reputation of another person or organization.
2. A CPSS/CPSC shall freely give credit for work done by others, to whom the credit is due, and shall refrain from plagiarism of oral and written communications and shall not knowingly accept credit rightfully due another person.
3. A CPSS/CPSC shall not use the advantage of public employment (i.e., university, government) to compete unfairly with other certified professions.
4. A CPSS/CPSC shall endeavor to cooperate with others in the profession and encourage the ethical dissemination of technical knowledge.

Article V. Duty to the Profession

1. A CPSS/CPSC shall aid in exclusion from certification those who have not followed this Code of Ethics or who do not have the required education and experience.
2. A CPSS/CPSC shall uphold this Code of Ethics by precept and example and encourage, by counsel and advice, other Registrants to do the same.
3. A CPSS/CPSC having positive knowledge of deviation from this Code by another Registrant shall bring such deviation to the attention of the Soils Certifying Board.

Soil Science Society of America's (SSSA)

Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) • Certified Professional Soil Classifier (CPSC)

Complaint Investigation Procedures

The SSSA CPSS/CPSC complaint investigation procedures outline the process that the Soils Certifying Board will use in conducting a review of a CPSS/CPSC. It is based upon the potential violation of the Soils Certifying Board's code of ethics. Anyone can file a complaint. The complaint and rebuttal must be written and include as much detail as possible including but not limited to pictures, video, lab reports and eye witness testimonials. The complaint investigation process is conducted by fellow CPSS/CPSC. They will not know the complainant or defendant personally.

The complaint review process does:

- include an evaluation of whether or not the defendant should have been qualified to be involved with the soil science work described in the complaint based on but not limited to the defendant's certification records, training, continuing education and work experiences.

The complaint review process does **not**:

- include an evaluation of the defendant's recommendation on a specific job or project site.
- determine fair pricing, how or how much the complainant should have been charged for the work done by the CPSS/CPSC.

Steps that will be followed:

1. Complaints for ethics violations are filed with the SSSA's Soils Certifying Board's Standards and Ethics Committee (SEC). Anyone may file a complaint. A complaint must be written and signed to be considered.
 - a. The SSSA will notify the certifying board chair of the complaint. The board chair will be an ex-officio member of the SEC and will participate in all the activities related to the complaint investigation.
 - b. The SSSA Director of Certification and Licensing will notify the person who filed the complaint (complainant) that it has been received.
2. The SEC must decide in 30 days if the filed complaint has enough merit to warrant an investigation. The SEC will base their decision on what the complainant has provided as evidence with the written complaint. It is strongly advised that the complainant provide as much detail about the potential violation as possible including but not limited to witness' written testimony, lab results, pictures and/or video.
 - a. If yes, the SEC must establish the grounds for an investigation. They must decide which section of the Code of Ethics or other reason they will investigate. Go on to 3.

- b. If no, they must notify complainant they found insufficient grounds to investigate. SSSA must also be notified.

3. Once the grounds are established for an investigation, the defendant and complainant are notified.

Note: All correspondence to the defendant and complainant will be handled through the SSSA Director of Certification and Licensing.

4. The defendant will be provided a copy of the written complaint along with all supporting materials and be given 30 days to respond to the complaint and to provide rebuttal information in writing. Failure to respond within this time period shall be considered a waiver of the right to provide rebuttal information. During this period, the SEC will conduct an audit of the defendant's certification maintenance program.
5. The SEC upon review of the rebuttal information and the audit of the defendant's CEU maintenance program in 30 days must:
 - a. exonerate the defendant
 - b. write a letter of warning
 - c. suspend the defendant
 - d. revoke certification
 - e. extend the investigation
6. If b, c, or d, are selected, the defendant may request a hearing (personal appearance) by the full certification Board. The time and place will be set by SSSA.
 - a. To overrule the SEC, a two-thirds majority vote of the full certifying Board is required.
7. If 5e is selected, the committee may involve board members to assist the investigation which may be extended in 30 day increments. Funds may be requested from SSSA to assist the investigation.
 - a. Upon the completion of the investigation, a decision must be reached regarding 5a-d.