



**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

# GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Royal Greens Golf & Country Club

Prepared by independent verifier, Alexandra Almeida

Certified by GEO Foundation: October 2022  
Valid until: October 2025

**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

 **GEO  
Foundation**  
Sustainability in and through golf

*'Royal Greens GCC is the flagship facility for Golf Saudi, along with Dirab GCC and Riyadh GC, leading the sport into modern Saudi culture and providing opportunities for everyone to play.'*

*Royal Greens leads on sustainability in the country by example, using desalinated water to irrigate the most adapted and appropriate turfgrass species; naturalising out-of-play areas to benefit wildlife; and encouraging golf to all sections of society.*

*I look forward to seeing the outcome of new projects, infrastructure and initiatives, including the native tree-planting and coinciding opportunities this will bring to birds using the lake, and the potential for outreach through golf and sustainability in the country.'*

Alexandra Almeida

*(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



# Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Royal Greens Golf & Country Club** has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

**Royal Greens Golf & Country Club** has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points (CIP) set for the future, **Royal Greens Golf & Country Club** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Royal Greens Golf & Country Club** can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith  
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation  
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome  
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Richard Allison  
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



# Verification and Certification

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## Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

## Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at [www.sustainable.golf](http://www.sustainable.golf)

## Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at [www.isealalliance.org](http://www.isealalliance.org)



# Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitats &amp; Biodiversity</li> <li>• Turfgrass management</li> <li>• Pollution prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships &amp; Outreach</li> <li>• Golfing &amp; Employment</li> <li>• Advocacy &amp; Communications</li> </ul>

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Confirmed mapping of the site and vegetation types on the site.  The club has established and maintained documented information of flora.

			<p>Documents and data relating to biodiversity issues were reviewed while on-site.</p> <p>Confirmed plan to plant more than 2500 native trees and shrubs on the golf course.</p> <p>Implement a biodiversity management plan for habitat areas <b>(CIP)</b></p> <p>Consider restricting access to environmentally sensitive areas (to avoid damage) by golfers and maintenance staff, for example through the use of signs <b>(CIP)</b></p> <p>Record and monitor fauna found on site <b>(CIP)</b></p>
	<b>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</b>	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	The superintendent has knowledge of the native plant species occurring on site.
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Not applicable
<b>N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course</b>	<b>N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass</b>	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Confirmed plan to reduce irrigated area, 0.25 Ha has been reduced and the club will continue to remove grassing areas on the golf course to maximize the efficiency of the irrigation system and, at the same time, reduce water consumption.
<b>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</b>	<b>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</b>	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	The club has implemented a land management plan which includes revegetation of wildlife corridors with native shrubs and trees to encouraging biodiversity.
<b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b>	<b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b>		<p>The club is located on a major bird migratory route.</p> <p>Considering the impressive variety of birds occurring in Jeddah, install nesting boxes and a bird hide overlooking the lake <b>(CIP)</b></p>
<b>N2 Turfgrass</b>			
<b>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</b>	<b>N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and</b>	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Confirmed the use of <i>Paspalum vaginatum</i> wall to wall. Seashore paspalum ( <i>Paspalum vaginatum</i> ) is a salt-water friendly warm-season perennial grass, that can be irrigated with desalinated water.

	<b>other geomorphological factors</b>		Confirmed use of desalinated water for irrigating turfgrass.
	<b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b>		Course management plan includes physical maintenance, in form of topdressing, scarification, hollow coring and verticutting to relieve compaction and maintain low tach.
	<b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b>	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil testing is undertaken regularly to determine the need for inputs or other intervention.  Fertilizer applications are planned based upon soil test information and environmental conditions.
<b>N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance</b>	<b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b>	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The club has implemented non-chemical control strategies in addition to chemical control.  The quality of the playing surface is based on proper watering, balanced use of chemical controls and pest monitoring.
<b>N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly</b>	<b>N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues</b>	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	The superintendent is aware of the principles of IPM and the public health and environmental advantages of judicious pesticide use and is responsible for maintaining an ecologically-based management strategy with minimum impact on human health and the environment.  Discussed appropriate choice of pesticides and application methods through the use of IPM.
	<b>N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions</b>	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf	Pesticides are applied in accordance with label instructions, under appropriate environmental conditions and by qualified persons with proven methods and appropriate material.  Confirmed use of personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the pesticide in use.  Regular inspection of Plant Protection Product Application Equipment – sprayers / equipment have been tested for accurate and safe application.
<b>N3 Pollution Prevention</b>			
<b>N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site</b>	<b>N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are</b>	Document procedures for emergency spill responses; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas;	Discussed and confirmed emergency responses. The superintendent has implemented an emergency plan with procedures for handling sudden or unexpected situations.

	<b>minimised from golf course operations</b>	Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	Spill kits are in place.  Create maps of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas <b>(CIP)</b>
	<b>N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations</b>	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Fuel is properly stored on site and maintained.  Pesticides are stored in a separate room (structure is fireproof with an impermeable surface), in a dry, well ventilated area and with an appropriate fire extinguisher.  The pesticide storage area is locked and secured to prevent unauthorized entry and there is enough absorbent material available to handle a spill of the largest container.  Products are labelled clearly and stored correctly, with the MSDS, in their original containers with the labels attached.  Wastewater from the maintenance facility is collected and channelled to a wastewater treatment plant.  Upgrade the existing wash bay equipment with an oil water separator <b>(CIP)</b>
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations</b>	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	Observed wash bay and discharge.  The mixing and loading areas are impermeable and close to the storage facility, to minimize the distance that chemicals are carried.  After emptying a pesticide container, the superintendent always refers to the pesticide label for the recommended method of disposal.  Rinsing instructions on the pesticide container label are followed.  All pesticide safety data sheets are available and up to date.  Records of pesticide applications and monitoring logs are available at the maintenance
<b>N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances</b>	<b>N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances</b>	Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present;	Confirmed discharge procedure and waste management requirements.  Observed fuel storage tanks, secondary containment and surroundings.  Confirmed first aid equipment and locations.



		Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	
<b>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</b>	<b>N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences</b>	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Confirmed wash bay with impermeable surface. Confirmed wastewater discharge authorization.

<b>RESOURCES</b>			
<b>R1 Water</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>R1.1 Minimise water demand</b>	<b>R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water</b>	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	The club has initiated a turfgrass reduction programme to minimise areas requiring high maintenance, including fertility, mowing and irrigation.
<b>R1.2 Maximise water efficiency</b>	<b>R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course</b>	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	Weather and evapotranspiration rates are taken into consideration when scheduling irrigation.  The club has implemented water management plan to improve the efficiency of the golf course irrigation, e.g. hand watering dry areas on greens, tees and fairways to reduce water consumption.  The club has also implemented a lake management plan.
	<b>R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors;	Water use is recorded and monitored for both irrigation and potable consumption.  The superintendent encourages water-saving practices amongst staff.

		Categorise and track water consumption	
<b>R1.3 Source water responsibly</b>	<b>R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water</b>	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	Confirmed use of desalinated water for irrigation.
<b>R2 Energy</b>			
<b>R2.1 Reduce energy demand</b>	<b>R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance</b>	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Confirmed plan to remove grassing areas on tees and driving range.  Discussed revegetation plan and native species. The club plans to plant over 2500 native shrubs and trees (green corridors and clubhouse).
<b>R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency</b>	<b>R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Energy bills are reviewed monthly and energy consumption at the clubhouse and maintenance facility is monitored monthly.
<b>R2.3 Source energy responsibly</b>	<b>R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy</b>	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	Analyse potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site <b>(CIP)</b>
<b>R3 Materials</b>			
<b>R3.1 Reduce materials demand</b>	<b>R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives</b>	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Waste management includes policies, programs and practices that reduce the amount of materials that get discarded.  Start a composting program and install a composting unit on-site <b>(CIP)</b>
<b>R3.2 Purchase responsibly</b>	<b>R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy</b>	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	Restaurant primarily sources local.  Replace some accessories of the course, e.g. benches, course poles / fence and tee signs, garbage bins and flag poles, by new ones made from environmentally friendly material. <b>(CIP)</b>
<b>R3.3 Reuse and recycle</b>	<b>R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity</b>	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Initiate a comprehensive program for recycling, reuse and waste reduction <b>(CIP)</b>

<b>R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance</b>	<b>R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations</b>	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	See N3.1.1

<b>COMMUNITY</b>			
<b>C1 Outreach</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality</b>	<b>C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility</b>		Clubhouse is open to the community, organises club tournaments open to all ages and categories.  The club has launched a junior program - the "Royal Junior Stars Program" in February 2021, with the latest generation of SNAG (Starting New At Golf) equipment, with the aim to grow the program to 100 juniors in 2022 and start Royal Greens National Team.
<b>C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity</b>	<b>C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes</b>		
<b>C1.3 Establish active community partnerships</b>	<b>C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups</b>	Create a 'sustainability working group'	Initiate a working group to assist sustainability across departments and ensure continuity if staff leave <b>(CIP)</b>  Encourage members and visitors, especially youth, to participate in outdoor activities such as birdwatching and planned night sky observing sessions <b>(CIP)</b>
<b>C2 Golfers &amp; Employees</b>			

<b>C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing</b>	<b>C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities</b>		There is awareness of the benefits provided to mental and physical health.
<b>C2.2 Be open and inclusive</b>	<b>C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies</b>	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Friendly, family-orientated facility that welcomes golfers and non-golfers alike to enjoy a host of golf and leisure activities
<b>C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities</b>	<b>C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development</b>	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Ongoing training provided.
<b>C3 Communications</b>			
<b>C3.1 Engage golfers and members</b>	<b>C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors</b>	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	Create a digital newsletter that goes out to members and community, to share sustainable actions at each golf course <b>(CIP)</b>
<b>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</b>	<b>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</b>	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	<p>Consider placing a poster in the bird hide illustrating the birds that can be seen on the lake <b>(CIP)</b></p> <p>Encourage players and visitors to learn about resident or migratory wild birds, through the creation of a "Bird of the Month" initiative <b>(CIP)</b></p> <p>Consider placing informative signs alongside the tee boxes that identify local flora and fauna. This would enable golfers, both young children and older players, to learn more about local natural environment <b>(CIP)</b></p>

## Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value – strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at [www.sustainable.golf](http://www.sustainable.golf)