



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Safaa Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier, Alexandra Almeida

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

GEO Certified[®]

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

'Safaa Golf Club is a well-maintained family-focused golf facility, located within the KAUST University, with a nine-hole course and academy and great leisure and fun activities for golfers and non-golfers. The main lake is a hotspot for birdwatching and those with a keen eye should be able to spot Caspian Tern, Squacco Heron or the Black Scrub Robin. It will be interesting to see how nature conservation areas and wetlands evolve over time.'

Alexandra Almeida

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Safaa Golf 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.

Safaa Golf 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, **Safaa Golf Club** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Safaa Golf 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

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

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



Verifier's Report

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

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

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, surveys and biodiversity management plan. The club has established and maintained documented information of bird fauna and flora

			Documents and data relating to biodiversity issues were reviewed while on-site. The following areas were inspected during the site visit: Lakes, bird hide, apiary and nature conservation areas / wildlife sanctuaries.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	The superintendent has knowledge and understanding of how birds use the site and how the quality and configuration of wildlife sanctuaries can limit the richness of bird species.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Not applicable.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Confirmed effort being made to reduce irrigated area. The club could measure the reduction in the irrigated area (CIP).
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	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 protected areas to encouraging biodiversity and wildlife corridors that can be managed by the club under the supervision of HSE (KAUST).
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		The club is located on a major bird migratory route. Considering the impressive variety of birds occurring at KAUST, the club is actively managing habitats for wildlife, from lakes and wetlands to wooded areas. The lake is an excellent place to observe and the club has installed a bird hide overlooking the lake.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Confirmed the use of <i>Paspalum vaginatum</i> across entire playing area. Seashore paspalum (<i>Paspalum vaginatum</i>) is a littoral, warm-season perennial grass, that can be irrigated with TSE. Confirmed the use of high-quality treated sewage effluent (TSE) for irrigating the turfgrass.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Course management plan includes physical maintenance, in form of topdressing, scarification, hollow coring and verticutting to relive compaction and maintain low thatch.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	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.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	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 and balanced use of IPM (biological controls, mechanical or cultural methods, chemical controls and pest monitoring – e.g. when possible, salt is used for weed control and hand weeding is prioritized). Discussed the use of Arabian toothcarp to control the mosquito population to reduce the use of chemical products.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	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. Risks and efficacy of both chemical and non-chemical control methods of pest suppression are considered as part of an overall pest management strategy. Discussed the appropriate choice of pesticides and application methods through the use of IPM.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	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.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are	Document procedures for emergency spill responses;	Discussed and confirmed emergency responses. The superintendent has implemented an emergency plan with procedures for handling sudden or unexpected situations.

	<p>minimised from golf course operations</p>	<p>Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; 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.</p>	<p>Spill kits are in place.</p> <p>Buffer zones observed and discussed during the site visit.</p> <p>The club should create maps of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas (CIP)</p>
	<p>N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations</p>	<p>Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge</p>	<p>Fuel is properly stored on site and maintained.</p> <p>Pesticides are stored in a separate room (structure is fire proof with an impermeable surface), in a dry, well ventilated area and with an appropriate fire extinguisher.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Products are labelled clearly and stored correctly, with the MSDS, in their original containers with the labels attached.</p> <p>Discussed relationship with KAUST. KAUST aims to achieve zero waste to landfill and provides waste management services to the golf course, including waste collection and recycling.</p> <p>All the waste is safely and legally disposed of.</p> <p>Wastewater from the golf facility is collected and channelled to KAUST's own wastewater treatment plant for treatment and reuse as irrigation water.</p>
	<p>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Observed wash bay and discharge.</p> <p>The mixing and loading areas are impermeable and close to the storage facility, to minimize the distance that chemicals are carried.</p> <p>After emptying a pesticide container, the superintendent always refers to the pesticide label for the recommended method of disposal.</p> <p>Rinsing instructions on the pesticide container label are followed.</p> <p>All pesticide safety data sheets are available and up to date.</p> <p>Records of pesticide applications and monitoring logs are available at the maintenance</p>

N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	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; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	Confirmed discharge procedure and KAUST's waste management requirements. Observed fuel storage tanks, secondary containment and surroundings. Confirmed first aid equipment and locations.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Confirmed wash bay with impermeable surface. Confirmed use of treated sewage effluents (TSE) for golf course irrigation.

<h2 style="margin: 0;">RESOURCES</h2>			
<h3 style="margin: 0;">R1 Water</h3>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	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.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	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. The club has also implemented a lake management plan.

	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Water use is recorded and monitored for both irrigation and potable consumption. The facility manager encourages water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	The club has an agreement with KAUST which comprises the irrigation water (TSE) supply service, the drainage and treatment of wastewater and the collection of urban solid waste.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	The club has initiated a turfgrass reduction programme to minimise areas requiring high maintenance, including fertility, mowing and irrigation. The club has also changed its mowing patterns to reduce cutting times. Discussed land management plan, which includes protected areas to encouraging biodiversity and wildlife corridors that can be managed by the club under the supervision of HSE (KAUST).
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	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.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	Confirmed that energy is managed through the KAUST university. Discussed the project to supply KAUST with 60% energy from solar-photovoltaic cells and the flood light project (2025)
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Waste management includes policies, programs and practices that reduce the amount of materials that get discarded. Confirmed composting of organic waste by KAUST. The Recycling Centre (glass, metal, paper and cardboard, plastic) is managed by KAUST.

R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	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 produce. Consider replacing 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 (CIP) .
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Confirmed waste separation and recycling and labelled bins around the facility.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	Please see N3.1.1

COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		Clubhouse is open to the KAUST community, organises club tournaments open to all ages and categories. The club has implemented a junior program.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	Confirmed community education program. Community members, especially juniors, are encouraged to participate in outdoor activities, such as birdwatching.

			Consider formalising a working group to assist sustainability across departments and ensure continuity if staff leave (CIP) .
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		There is awareness of the benefits provided to mental and physical health.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Confirmed that the club organizes women-targeted competitions and promotes mixed-gender clinics to encourage participation of female players.
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Ongoing training provided.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	Information on sustainability is provided via the website, self-guided bird walk brochure and notice board.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	<p>Consider creating a digital newsletter that goes out to members and community, to share sustainable actions at the club (CIP).</p> <p>Consider placing a poster in the bird hide illustrating the birds that can be seen on the lake (CIP).</p> <p>Encourage players and visitors to learn about resident or migratory wild birds, through the creation of a "Bird of the Month" initiative (CIP).</p> <p>Consider installing tree / shrub identification sign to mark certain trees and shrubs along the golf hole. Another way to enhance the social value of the golf course would be to place informative signs alongside the tee signs that identify local flora and fauna. This would enable golfers, both young children and older players, to learn more about local natural environment (CIP).</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