Protocols for Regionalized Administration of Master Beekeeper Exams

Certified Level


Since 2002 the Georgia Master Beekeeper Program has certified over 670 individuals as competent ambassadors of the craft of beekeeping, drawing participants from 22 states and two countries. The Program is a 4-step process through which candidates advance through grades of increasing complexity and demonstrated expertise: Certified, Journeyman, Master, and Master Craftsman. The highest grade approaches a MS-level graduate degree in its complexity and demands on the student. The entry level, Certified, documents that the holder has a basic knowledge of bees and beekeeping.

Until now the program has been offered exclusively during the Young Harris College / University of Georgia Beekeeping Institute, held every year in mid-May. However, there has been growing grass-roots demand for more certifying opportunities at different places and times of year. The Program administrators have now developed guidelines for regionalizing examinations at the Certified level.

The plan depends on the cooperation of local bee clubs to offer training, administer the exams, protect the integrity of exams and the grading process, and submit student scores to Professor Delaplane. Upon receipt of the required documents, Delaplane’s office will mail signed certificates to the successful candidates. Essentially, the local club is deputized to train and examine candidates on behalf of the Program administrators. Beekeepers achieving the Certified rank this way will, after the standard 12-month wait time, be qualified to pursue the Journeyman and higher ranks at the annual Young Harris Institute.

Effective 2016, the program began requiring recipients of the entry level rank, Certified, to have at least one year’s experience keeping bees. The practical exam includes an affidavit form to be filled out and signed by the student and a witness, the witness typically being the examiner.

It is our hope that this provision will broaden the impact of the Georgia Master Beekeeper Program throughout the state and region, relieve pressure at the annual Institute, and strengthen local bee clubs by expanding the services they can offer their members and community. This protocol will integrate well with beginners’ workshops that many clubs hold for their communities. The next two pages detail a roadmap for clubs interested in pursuing this member service.
A Road Map for Regionalizing Examinations for the Certified Level Georgia Master Beekeeper Program

Qualifications for Deputized Examining Entity
1. It is expected that the examining entity will in most cases be a local bee club with the normal indicators of a public non-profit organization. These indicators include such things as a constitution, elected officers, open accounting policy, open membership policy, and in some cases incorporation.
2. It is understood that groups of students may organize around one or more local beekeepers whose activities are best described as mentoring and fall short of the definition of an association.
3. In every case, the proposed training and examining must include the direct supervision of at least one individual holding the rank of Journeyman or higher from the Georgia Master Beekeeper Program or sister program from another state. Information about Master Beekeepers available to provide these services is available at http://www.ent.uga.edu/bees/master-beekeeper/masters.html.
4. At least two weeks before an intended offering, the examining group must submit to Professor Delaplane a written statement describing the group’s qualifications and the proposed training / certifying event.

Road Map of Certifying Process
1. Upon confirming qualifications of the group, Professor Delaplane will contact the Supervisor with further details. This will include providing copies of the exams to help the group design curriculum. Group agrees that exams will not be retained, copied, or distributed, and all exams will be destroyed after grades and names are recorded.
2. There are two exams: a written exam that tests basic knowledge and a practical exam that emphasizes bee-handling skills and visual identification of hive parts, diseases, and bee colony components. In communications leading up to the event, Delaplane will coach Supervisor on the content of exams and proper mode of administration.
3. Group agrees to administer the written exam in a setting that is quiet and conducive to concentration. The room will be proctored constantly for the one-hour limit and cheating and the use of study notes or texts not tolerated.
4. The practical exam is administered individually, with one examiner, a clip-board, and one candidate. With large numbers of students it will be necessary to use many examiner / student pairings. If it is necessary to use non-certified examiners, the Supervisor will train examiners on the content of the exam and correct procedure for testing.
5. Group agrees to make specific on-site preparations for the practical exam. This includes plainly labeling hive parts and comb components; providing live bee hives, smokers, fuel, and all necessary bee-handling equipment; and providing real examples of bee diseases or disorders. It may be necessary for Supervisor to visit the UGA Bee Lab for more specific guidance.
6. UGA requires a fee (published in annual Institute registration information) to process paperwork and cover costs for mailing signed certificates to successful
candidates. The group agrees to collect this fee and forward to Delaplane, preferably in one check. The group is free to add to this fee whatever cost recovery required at their end.

7. Group will forward to Delaplane a list of student names, street addresses, telephone numbers, emails, and numeric scores for each exam within two weeks of event.

8. Delaplane will procure certificates with signatures and mail directly to successful candidates via conventional post within one month of receiving data. Delaplane will copy information to club officer.

9. A passing grade (70% or higher) is required for both exams to qualify for the Certified level.