



Ethics & Leadership Association

CERTIFICATION BLUEPRINT

Certified Ethical Leadership Practitioner (ELP™)

Exam Content Outline

Version 2.0 | August 2026

Prepared for candidates, educators, and ELA Recommended Learning Partners

ETHICS • JUDGMENT • TRUST • ACCOUNTABILITY

Purpose of this document

This Exam Content Outline defines the knowledge, judgment, and observable performance expected of candidates for the Certified Ethical Leadership Practitioner (ELP™) credential. It gives candidates and ELA Recommended Learning Partners a transparent blueprint for preparation while protecting the integrity of live examination content.

Credential at a glance

35 open-response questions • 120 minutes • Delivered through the Aether platform from N2X Labs • Three domains • Credential validity: three years

The ELP™ credential

The ELP™ recognizes an individual's ability to understand ethical leadership principles, apply structured ethical judgment, and recommend responsible actions in realistic organizational contexts. The assessment emphasizes application, analysis, and evaluation—not the recall of isolated definitions.

Eligibility and application pathway

- Complete either an eligible course or program delivered by an ELA Recommended Learning Partner, or ELA's online Introduction to Ethical Leadership course.
- Submit a free application for eligibility review. ELA membership is not required.
- After acceptance, pay the certification fee and schedule the assessment when invited.

Item	Current policy
Application	Free; applications are open.
Certification fee	US\$249, payable after acceptance.
ELA member benefit	20% discount; member fee US\$199.20.
Delivery	Online through the Aether assessment platform from N2X Labs.
Assessment format	35 open-response questions.
Time limit	120 minutes.
Credential term	Three years.
Renewal	12 hours of professional development, including at least 6 hours in ethics or ethical leadership, plus one short reflective case study; no retest.

Exam blueprint

The blueprint defines the relative emphasis of each domain. Task-level coverage is controlled within each domain to ensure that every delivered form remains aligned with the approved ELP™ assessment design.

Domain	Content area	Weight
Domain 1	Foundations and Principles of Ethical Leadership	30%
Domain 2	Ethical Decision-Making and Application Across Contexts	35%
Domain 3	Structuring, Culture, and Measuring Ethical Leadership	35%

Domains, tasks, and enablers

Domain 1: Foundations and Principles of Ethical Leadership

30% of the assessment blueprint

Task	Candidate must be able to...	Representative enablers
1.1	Interpret a situation using the foundations of ethical leadership.	Distinguish ethics, compliance, values, and leadership style; recognize ethical fading and performance ethics; connect conduct to stakeholder trust, legitimacy, resilience, and long-term value.
1.2	Evaluate conduct using the nine principles of ethical leadership.	Select and apply the relevant principles; integrate principles when they reinforce or conflict; account for pressure, power, and context; reach a justified conclusion.
1.3	Translate leadership as service and stewardship into responsible action.	Balance organizational purpose and people; protect, develop, and enable others; accept accountability; create value beyond short-term financial results.

Domain 2: Ethical Decision-Making and Application Across Contexts

35% of the assessment blueprint

Task	Candidate must be able to...	Representative enablers
2.1	Diagnose an ethical issue before deciding.	Separate facts from assumptions; identify stakeholders, including vulnerable groups; surface harms, risks, root causes, and missing information.
2.2	Evaluate options and justify a decision using the Integrity Model.	Apply Ability, Legal, Ethics, and Values; distinguish legality from ethical acceptability; compare options and trade-offs; define follow-through.
2.3	Adapt ethical action across cultural and sector contexts.	Use Cultural Configuration at national, organizational, generational, and individual levels; preserve ethical principles while adapting expression; avoid relativism and ethical imperialism.
2.4	Formulate responsible responses to AI, ESG, and emerging or systemic risks.	Use foresight, ethics by design, adaptive governance, safeguards, monitoring, and meaningful human oversight.

Domain 3: Structuring, Culture, and Measuring Ethical Leadership

35% of the assessment blueprint

Task	Candidate must be able to...	Representative enablers
3.1	Recommend governance structures that operationalize ethical principles.	Clarify roles, authority, escalation, independence, controls, and incentives; make governance proportionate to risk.
3.2	Create conditions for trust, protected voice, and	Establish safe and independent channels; prevent retaliation; ensure impartial investigation,

Task	Candidate must be able to...	Representative enablers
	accountability.	feedback, remediation, and follow-up.
3.3	Align culture, behavior, narratives, rituals, systems, and incentives with ethics.	Diagnose values–practice gaps; use systemic levers rather than slogans; model expected behavior; learn through feedback.
3.4	Design credible measurement and continuous improvement, extending accountability to the ecosystem.	Combine quantitative and qualitative evidence; interpret measures in context; prevent gaming; connect findings to action; include partners and supply chains.

What strong responses demonstrate

Responses are evaluated against task-specific evidence indicators. Across the assessment, successful candidates consistently demonstrate the following qualities:

- Execute the requested task and provide the essential evidence, rather than merely discuss the topic.
- Use Practice Guide concepts and models accurately and apply them to the facts presented.
- Distinguish facts, assumptions, stakeholders, risks, and trade-offs before reaching a conclusion.
- Justify a defensible course of action and specify accountability, safeguards, or follow-up.
- Communicate with relevance and clarity. Writing style supports—but cannot replace—ethical competence.

Important

Critical misconceptions cannot be offset by polished writing. Examples include treating legal compliance as sufficient evidence of ethical conduct, ignoring vulnerable stakeholders, or proposing nominal human oversight without meaningful authority.

How the Aether platform supports the assessment

Aether is the AI-enabled assessment platform developed by N2X Labs. It supports the controlled creation, delivery, analysis, and reporting of open-response assessments at scale. For the ELP™, ELA experts first design and approve the complete assessment experience: its domains, tasks, authoritative source materials, evidence requirements, scoring rubrics, coverage rules, and decision standards. Aether then operates within that approved design to generate or select appropriate questions, assemble a balanced assessment form, and analyze each response against the human-defined evidence criteria.

The psychometric approach in Aether

Aether uses a structured evidence-centered approach rather than treating every response as a generic writing sample. Each assessment task is linked to a specific competence claim, observable evidence indicators, rubric anchors, and counterevidence. The platform controls blueprint coverage and task diversity across forms, applies the approved scoring logic consistently, and preserves the evidence trail connecting a candidate response to task, domain, and overall results. ELA reviews scoring consistency, fairness, form comparability, performance near the passing standard, and potential drift through pilot and operational data.

Artificial intelligence provides automation, consistency, and scalability within this framework. It does not independently decide what ethical leadership competence means, set the credential standard, or interpret results outside the criteria established by human assessment designers. ELA retains authority over the assessment framework, psychometric validation, quality assurance, credential decision, and review process.

Results and candidate notice

Aether may generate or select assessment content, analyze candidate responses against ELA-approved criteria, calculate results, and prepare assessment records. An immediate result may be provisional while ELA completes the validation, quality-control, psychometric, or integrity review required for that administration. Only a result expressly identified as final has completed the applicable ELA validation process.

Candidate responses, scoring information, interaction records, and relevant system logs may be retained and used for administration, quality assurance, psychometric validation, security, and any permitted review, subject to applicable privacy notices and retention rules. Assessment content and candidate responses must be kept confidential. Where ELA provides a score review, reconsideration, complaint, or appeal process, requests must follow ELA's published procedure and deadlines.

Governance notice

Aether supports the administration and evidence-based scoring of the assessment. It does not independently confer, deny, suspend, or revoke the ELP™ credential. ELA remains the credentialing authority.

Scoring and standard setting

ELA establishes the passing standard through a documented standard-setting and validation process. The standard is reviewed using pilot evidence, scoring consistency, fairness analysis, and performance near the decision threshold. ELA may update the operational standard when warranted by evidence while preserving the comparability and integrity of the credential.

Preparation guidance

- Study the Ethical Leadership Practice Guide and the concepts and models referenced in this outline.
- Practice applying principles to ambiguous, multi-stakeholder situations rather than memorizing definitions.
- Structure responses around diagnosis, evidence, alternatives, trade-offs, decision, accountability, and follow-up.
- Use only resources and assistance expressly permitted for the assessment.

Maintenance of certification

The ELP™ credential is valid for three years. To renew, credential holders must complete 12 hours of professional development during the cycle, including at least 6 hours directly related to ethics or ethical leadership, and submit one short reflective case study demonstrating continued application. A new examination is not required under the current renewal policy.

Document control

Field	Value
Owner	Ethics & Leadership Association
Document	ELP™ Exam Content Outline
Version	2.0
Publication date	August 2026
Primary reference	Ethical Leadership Practice Guide, First Edition
Review principle	Updated when the credential blueprint or governing policies materially change.

This outline is informational and does not replace the current application terms, candidate rules, privacy notice, accommodation policy, or review procedure published by ELA.