



Learning Outcomes

Communication

Core & Specialized Credentials

International Certification Alliance

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LICENSING INFORMATION

The work in this document was facilitated by the International Certification Alliance (ICA) and done through the contributions of various experts and practitioners. These learning objectives are intended to help the growing Tomorrow-Ready™ community worldwide.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LICENSING INFORMATION	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT	4
CORE CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES	5
Communication Core	5
SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES	8
Impactful Feedback	8
Group Communication	10
Storytelling	12
Difficult Conversations	14
Written Communication	16
Presenting & Speaking	17
Listening and Inquiry	19
Stakeholder Alignment	21
Stakeholder Progress Communication	23
Giving and Receiving Feedback with Emotional Intelligence	25
EQ in Remote and Hybrid Environments	27
Performance Management	29
Insight Storytelling	31
Change Communication	32
Risk Escalation and Reporting Design	34
Remote & Hybrid Collaboration	36
Visual Facilitation Introduction	38
Large Group Facilitation	40
Negotiation and Influence	42
SPECIAL THANKS	44

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the learning outcomes that accredited member organizations must address to offer ICA's Communication certification. To achieve the certification, a learner must complete the core credential plus at least two specialized credentials.

Each learning outcome (LO) follows a particular pattern, described below.

O.O Learning Outcome Name

Additional Context, describing why this Learning Outcome is important or what it is intended to impart.

The learning outcome's purpose further describes what is expected to be imparted to the learner (e.g., a key point, framework, model, approach, technique, or skill).

CORE CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Communication Core

This is an 8-hour Core Credential within the Influence & Interpersonal Dynamics Skill Area, for anyone who wants to communicate with greater impact, regardless of role or seniority. Tomorrow-Ready professionals don't just exchange information; they create understanding. In a world of constant change, competing priorities, and distributed teams, the ability to communicate with clarity, intention, and adaptability has never mattered more.

1. Foundation of Communication

1.1 Meaning-Making, Intent, and Impact

A message can be delivered accurately and still be misunderstood, because what a speaker means and what a listener takes away aren't automatically the same thing. Left unnoticed, that gap causes confusion, rework, or conflict.

Develop learners' ability to recognize when a gap between what was meant and what was understood is a common source for a communication problem. This misalignment can go unnoticed or when recognized, escalate defensive stances instead of effective communication.

1.2 Communication Modes and Channel Choice

Choosing a channel that doesn't fit the message costs clarity, trust, or time, even when the content itself is fine.

Build learners' judgment to match a communication channel to what a message, audience, and relationship actually need to avoid situations such as a nuanced disagreement handled over chat or a routine update stretched into a meeting

1.3 Audience-Centered Communication

A message can be factually correct and still fail if it ignores what the audience already knows, cares about, or needs from it.

Develop learners' ability to shape a message around what a specific audience needs to hear, not just what's true. This could include adjusting tone, framing, level of detail, etc.

2. Building the Conditions

2.1 Active Listening

Listening only to a speaker's literal words potentially misses some of what's actually being communicated.

Develop learners' ability to listen for what's implied or left unsaid, not only what's explicitly stated such as hesitation, what's left unsaid, or a softened version of the real concern. Cover techniques such as paraphrasing, summarizing, or being present. Ignoring what is implied or unsaid can negatively impact connections, trust, collaboration and more.

2.2 Purposeful Questions

A poorly chosen question can shut down thinking or pull a conversation toward the questioner's own assumptions, even when the intent was to help.

Develop learners' ability to ask questions that open up thinking rather than narrow or redirect it. Asking purposeful questions helps build an environment that encourages curiosity to increase possibilities.

2.3 Equitable Participation in Group Communication

Wisdom and innovation are best achieved through a diverse set of perspectives and experiences but only if all of the voices are engaged and heard.

Develop learners' ability to notice unequal participation in a group and shift it toward engaging all the voices and contributions. Some voices dominate group conversations by default while others go quiet. The group loses when there is not an intentional focus on creating an environment for all voices to be heard.

3. Communication in Practice

3.1 Message Structure

A message that isn't structured makes the reader do extra work to figure out what matters.

Develop learners' ability to structure a message so it's easy to process, especially under pressure. Applying different structures based on the purpose such as providing awareness versus providing information for a decision.

3.2 Checking for Shared Understanding

People often agree on the surface of a conversation while privately understanding it differently, and that gap tends to surface later when it's more costly to fix.

Develop learners' ability to build the habit of surfacing and validating assumptions alongside checking for shared understanding. Recognize that miscommunication often hides unexamined assumptions or differences in understanding. Introduce communication techniques that are used in clarification such as asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing and reflecting, explicitly invite opposing opinions.

3.3 Communication Across Difference

A single communication style can work well for some people and quietly disadvantage others, often without the speaker realizing it.

Develop learners' ability to notice when a communication approach may be excluding some people depending on culture, identity, neurodiversity, or personal style. Cover how to adapt based on the communication needs in the moment.

3.4 Personal Communication Development

Communication skills don't automatically improve with more communication. Intentional reflection and skill development is important to build better habits.

Develop learners' ability to build the habit of reflecting on communication practices and deliberately working to improve them. Without deliberate reflection, people tend to repeat the same habits, including the ones that aren't working.

SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Impactful Feedback

Impactful Feedback is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course equips practitioners with practical techniques for giving, receiving, and applying feedback constructively, in ways that support growth, build trust, and strengthen performance.

1.1 Why Impactful Feedback Matters

Feedback is one of the highest-leverage tools for improving performance and more. Yet, poorly delivered or defensively received feedback can erode trust and discourage people from asking for it again.

Develop learners' ability to build a working understanding of the importance of impactful feedback for supporting growth, building trust, and improving performance. Cover how to determine what separates feedback that strengthens from feedback that damages.

2.1 Preparing to Give Feedback

Situations calling for feedback differ and a default, one-size-fits-all approach that fits one situation well may cause damage in another.

Develop learners' ability to choose and deliver a feedback approach that fits the specific situation, such as praise, correction, or advice, rather than defaulting to one approach regardless of context.

3.1 Asking for and Receiving Feedback

People typically receive less candid feedback than they need, leaving blind spots that persist unless the person actively works to counter this.

Develop learners' ability to elicit feedback despite hesitations such as power dynamics, trust, fears, etc and to receive it without becoming defensive.

4.1 Practicing Impactful Feedback

Feedback skills discussed but never practiced tend not to transfer to real communication.

Develop learners' ability to build confidence and skill in using feedback skills. Provide techniques or approaches for noticing and dealing with human reactions such as nerves, power dynamics, and emotions that complicate giving and receiving feedback.

Group Communication

Group Communication is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who regularly lead, participate in, or design group interactions, meetings, workshops, team discussions, and collaborative decision-making sessions.

1.1 Why Group Communication Is Different

Group settings introduce dynamics that do not exist in one-to-one communication.

Develop learners' ability to build an understanding of what makes group communication genuinely different from one-to-one conversation. Talking in a group adds pressures that may be amplified compared to one-to-one such as competing voices, uneven airtime, and the challenge of building understanding that the whole group actually shares,

2.1 Adapting Communication

A technique that works for a 5-person huddle can fall apart in a 30-person room, and a discussion that flows easily in person can lose nuance or momentum online. Group communication needs different handling as scale and format change.

Develop learners' ability to adjust communication approach based on group size, setting and energy (small vs. large, in-person vs. remote/hybrid). Cover ways to make shifts based on a group's collective energy and engagement.

3.1 Synthesis and Shared Meaning

A group can generate a lot of ideas and still leave the room without a shared sense of where it landed.

Develop learners' ability to pull together what a group has said into a clear picture the group can check and confirm. More talking doesn't automatically produce agreement.

4.1 Facilitating Group Dynamics

Without intentional facilitation, groups converge quickly on false agreement, missing perspectives and making weaker decisions. Prepared facilitation surfaces real thinking and builds decisions people actually own.

Cover the challenges that exist in group communication such as group think, lack of engagement, or dominant participation. Introduce techniques to facilitate group conversation in response to these dynamics in a psychologically safe way.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who want to move beyond information transfer and use storytelling as a tool for meaning-making, alignment, and change. It is relevant across roles, whether communicating strategy, leading through uncertainty, building a case for change, or making ideas resonate with diverse audiences.

1.1 Why Storytelling Works

Facts alone often fail to change minds or spur action, because they don't engage emotion, identity, or a sense of shared meaning the way a story can.

Effective storytelling begins by understanding the intended outcome, whether to inspire, influence, teach, build trust, persuade, or reinforce organizational values. Build an understanding of what a story can accomplish that a list of facts alone cannot.

2. Writing Stories

2.1 Story Structure

A story without structure loses its listener, and a story built on anecdote alone, without any supporting evidence, loses its credibility.

Build the ability to structure a story so it moves clearly, and to back it with evidence that strengthens rather than distracts from it. Introduce the structural elements of effective stories such as context, tension, turning point, and resolution. Cover how to combine stories with data, examples, and facts to increase credibility while maintaining audience engagement. Conclude stories with clear connections to the intended message, decision, or action.

2.2 Designing for the Audience

A story that fits one audience can fall flat, breach confidentiality, or distort the truth for another. The line between persuading an audience and manipulating it isn't always obvious in the moment.

Build the judgment and ability to shape a story for its audience without compromising accuracy, confidentiality, or honesty.

2.3 Building a Story Library

Creating a collection of stories increases confidence and communication effectiveness over time.

Build the ability to intentionally develop and maintain a collection of stories that can be adapted for different leadership, coaching, change, and communication situations. Help learners understand that they don't need to manufacture stories. They already have them from their work experience, failures, learning moments, changes they've navigated.

3.1 Delivering Stories

A well-built story can still fail if the delivery lacks presence or doesn't connect with how the audience is actually responding.

Build storytelling delivery skill by incorporating techniques such as adjustments to tone, timed pauses, and visible emotion. Help learners increase their ability to recognize the impact of different story delivery approaches.

Difficult Conversations

Difficult Conversations is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for anyone who needs to navigate high–stakes interpersonal exchanges in the workplace, whether delivering unwelcome news, addressing a pattern of behavior, raising a concern with a senior stakeholder, or naming tension that others are avoiding. It is role–agnostic: these conversations are part of professional life at every level.

1.1 What Makes a Conversation Difficult

A conversation becomes difficult not simply because people disagree, but because something important feels at stake. What feels high–stakes to one person may not feel high–stakes to another.

Build learners' ability to recognize what is making a conversation difficult and why the stakes may be experienced differently by each person. Explore factors such as the stated issue, emotions, past history, future uncertainty, power, identity, relationships, and perceived consequences. Help learners recognize when surface tension may be masking deeper concerns, and identify signals that the stakes are rising, such as defensiveness, disengagement, emotional reactions, or escalation.

2.1 Preparation for Difficult Conversations

Preparing for a difficult conversation is not about scripting or controlling how it will go, but without thoughtful preparation the conversation can derail before it really begins.

Build learners' ability to prepare intentionally for a difficult conversation by clarifying what they hope the conversation will make possible, examining their assumptions, considering the other person's perspective and likely stakes, considering what verbal and nonverbal responses may occur and planning how to open the conversation in a way that supports constructive dialogue.

3.1 Maintaining Dialogue Under Pressure

A difficult conversation may be anticipated, or an ordinary conversation may become difficult without warning. When conversation shifts, the ability to stay present, recognize what is happening, and respond intentionally can determine whether dialogue continues or breaks down.

Build learners' ability to maintain constructive dialogue when a conversation becomes emotionally charged or difficult. Develop self-awareness of their own reactions, the ability to recognize verbal and non-verbal signals in others, and a repertoire of techniques for responding intentionally, such as de-escalating defensiveness, recovering from missteps, redirecting dialogue, and recognizing when to pause or step away rather than force an unproductive conversation to continue.

4.1 Outcomes of Difficult Conversations

A difficult conversation does not have to end in agreement to have a useful outcome. But ending without clarity can create false closure and allow the issue to resurface/escalate.

Build learners' ability to bring a difficult conversation to a constructive close by clarifying what has been resolved, agreed, acknowledged, or remains open, and identifying appropriate next steps. Develop the ability to distinguish among different types of outcomes and determine what each requires for moving forward.

Written Communication

Written Communication is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who want to communicate more effectively in writing across the full range of workplace contexts: messages and emails, proposals and recommendations, updates and reports, and asynchronous exchanges in digital environments. It focuses on purposeful writing rather than technical correctness.

1.1 Reader–Centered Workplace Writing

Workplace writing gets skimmed, not studied, and a message that makes the reader dig for its point or supply missing context gets misread, ignored, or forwarded back with questions.

Build the ability to write from the reader's point of view, so the message lands with less effort on their part.

2.1 Structure and Calls to Action

A message written to inform reads differently from one meant to persuade or request something, and a reader left without a clear next step often doesn't act on a message at all.

Build the ability to structure writing for its actual purpose and make the desired action explicit.

3.1 Digital and Asynchronous Communication

Digital and asynchronous messages lose the tone of voice, timing, and back-and-forth that in-person conversation provides, so a poor word choice or missing context is more likely to be misread.

Build the judgment to write clearly and completely when there's no real-time conversation to fall back on.

4.1 Credibility, Evidence, and AI-Assisted Writing

Written communication leaves a lasting record of someone's judgment, and an AI-assisted draft can sound polished while still containing weak evidence, inaccuracies, or the wrong tone and the person who sends it is still accountable for it.

Build the ability to critically review a piece of writing, including an AI-assisted draft, before it goes out under your name.

Presenting & Speaking

Presenting and Speaking is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who need to communicate ideas, recommendations, or information to an audience, whether in team meetings, stakeholder briefings, cross-functional forums, or larger group settings. It focuses on the communication effectiveness of spoken delivery rather than presentation design or technical production.

1.1 Presenting and Conversational Communication

Standing in front of an audience adds demands that a normal conversation doesn't.

Develop learners' ability to explore what makes presenting different from conversational communication and what each difference demands of the speaker such as managing nerves, holding attention, and being clear the first time, since a listener can't pause or re-read what was just said.

2.1 Structure for a Listening Audience

A structure that reads well on paper can lose a listening audience, because listeners can't reread or hold much complexity in mind.

Build the ability to structure spoken communication so a listening audience can follow and retain it. Addressing challenges such as how limited working memory and the inability to reread mean spoken content needs specific techniques such as signposting, repetition of key points, and front-loading the main idea.

3.1 Presence, Delivery, and Managing Anxiety

Presentation anxiety can push someone to avoid speaking altogether or to perform worse than their actual skill, but presence isn't a fixed trait.

Build the ability to manage presentation anxiety and present with a grounded, credible presence. Explore why presentation anxiety happens and why it isn't a fixed trait or personal limitation. Cover practical techniques for managing anxiety in the moment so learners can build a stronger, more grounded presence regardless of their natural starting point.

4.1 Reading and Adapting to the Audience in Real Time

A speaker who doesn't notice audience signals keeps delivering the same plan even after it's stopped working.

Build the ability to notice audience signals, such as confusion, disengagement, and restlessness, while speaking and adjust delivery in response. Cover how to shift pacing, tone, or level of detail in the moment rather than continuing on a fixed plan regardless of how it's landing.

Listening and Inquiry

Listening and Inquiry is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who want to develop the quality of their attention and their use of questions as tools for deepening understanding, generating insight, and moving thinking forward. Effective listening and purposeful inquiry are among the highest-leverage communication skills in professional life, yet they are rarely taught with the depth and intentionality they deserve.

1.1 What Deep Listening Actually Requires

Hearing someone's words isn't the same as listening to what they mean, and everyone listens through personal filters and biases that quietly shape what they notice and miss.

Build the ability to distinguish deep listening from simply hearing words. Cover how personal filters and biases quietly shape what a listener notices and misses, so learners can recognize their own patterns and listen more deliberately. Skilled listeners pay attention not only to what is being said but also to emotions, values, intentions, and what remains unsaid. Developing this capability strengthens empathy and improves the quality of professional dialogue.

2.1 The Architecture of Purposeful Questions

Questions are among the most powerful tools available, yet most people use a narrow repertoire by default asking closed, leading, or rhetorical questions without recognizing the effect this has on the conversation

Build the ability to recognize and distinguish between different question types such as open vs. closed, leading, or stacked/compound questions. Understand how different question types shape and steer a conversation. Build awareness of the learner's default questioning patterns and the contexts in which those patterns serve or limit effective inquiry.

3.1 Balancing Listening and Inquiry

Listening and inquiry do not operate the same way across all professional contexts. The approach that serves a one-to-one coaching conversation differs from what is needed in a group problem-solving session, a stakeholder alignment meeting, or a difficult feedback exchange.

Build the ability to read a conversation for which mode it actually calls for at a given moment, rather than defaulting to a single habitual style. Cover how to balance listening and inquiry by appropriately shifting between asking questions, listening deeply, and contributing perspectives based on the needs of the conversation.

4.1 Reflective Listening and Inquiry Practice

Listening and inquiry are skills that develop over time through deliberate practice and honest reflection.

Build the habit of evaluating your own listening and inquiry practice, rather than repeating it unexamined. Assess depth of attention, quality of presence, and the actual impact of inquiry on the people and conversations involved. Explore the risk of not evaluating your listening and inquiry practices.

Stakeholder Alignment

Stakeholder Alignment is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to build the relationships, communication practices, and influence needed to keep stakeholders aligned. Project leaders and product managers rarely have direct authority over the people whose support they need most. Getting the right decisions made, protecting direction from scope pressure, saying no or negotiating trade-offs when priorities compete, and maintaining stakeholder confidence in conditions of uncertainty all require deliberate relationship-building and communication skills that go beyond producing good artifacts.

1.1 Understanding Your Stakeholder Landscape

Stakeholders differ in influence, interests, and decision authority. Treating them as one audience can waste effort and miss the relationships most important to successful outcomes.

Develop learners' ability to map the stakeholder landscape and choose an appropriate engagement approach. Consider influence, decision relevance, dependencies, interests, likely impact, and whether a stakeholder needs awareness, alignment, consultation, or active involvement.

2.1 Communication Under Uncertainty

Stakeholders often want certainty while teams operate with incomplete information. Overclaiming confidence can damage trust later, while vague communication can make a well-reasoned direction difficult to understand or support.

Develop learners' ability to communicate direction in a way that connects customer evidence, business outcomes, strategic reasoning, uncertainty, and the decision or support needed. Help them understand that good strategic communication explains the direction clearly, is honest about what's uncertain, and builds shared understanding.

3.1 Navigating Competing Priorities

Competing stakeholder requests are normal. Different stakeholders have legitimate but incompatible priorities, and practitioners who cannot navigate these conflicts end up trying to please everyone and satisfying no one.

Develop learners' ability to navigate conflicting priorities through evidence, outcomes, interests, decision rights, and explicit trade-offs. Introduce communication techniques such as constructive refusal, negotiation, reframing, and escalation when necessary.

4.1 Sustaining Trust and Alignment

Stakeholder confidence can erode through missed expectations, weak follow-through, unexplained decisions, or changes in direction that appear arbitrary. Sustained alignment depends on how the relationship is managed over time, not only on a single communication.

Develop learners' ability to maintain stakeholder alignment and trust over time through expectation setting, decision records, follow-through, feedback, and early repair of relationship risk. Reinforce that changing direction can strengthen trust when the evidence and reasoning are transparent.

Stakeholder Progress Communication

Stakeholder Progress Communication is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to keep stakeholders accurately informed and genuinely engaged throughout delivery. The gap between what delivery teams know and what stakeholders understand is one of the most persistent sources of delivery failure. This credential goes beyond status reporting to build the communication practices, visualization approaches, and stakeholder engagement disciplines that create shared understanding and enable timely decisions.

1.1 Stakeholder Information Needs

Executives, delivery teams, customers, managers, and partners need different information to make different decisions. One status report for every audience usually provides too much or too little detail.

Build learners' understanding of delivery communication as an audience–designed practice. For example, an executive needs a high–level read on budget, timeline, and risk to decide whether to keep funding or escalate; or a customer needs a clear view of what's been delivered and what's coming to decide whether their own downstream plans need to adjust.

2.1 Delivery Progress Artifacts

Traffic lights, percentage–complete reports, and milestone summaries can create false confidence when they obscure delivery health, forecast, risk, or decisions needed.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether delivery artifacts create genuine shared understanding. For example, a report with a simple green light can mask a risk that hasn't materialized yet but is clearly building, a percentage–complete figure can imply steady linear progress on work that's actually 80% done on the easy parts and stalled on the hard 20%, and a milestone summary can confirm dates were hit without revealing that scope was quietly cut to hit them.

3.1 Stakeholder Communication Design

Effective delivery communication ensures the right information reaches the right audience at the right time and in a format that supports action.

Develop learners' ability to design proactive, audience–calibrated delivery communication linked to stakeholder decisions. A stakeholder communication approach contains audience, information, cadence, format, and decision support.

4.1 Communication When Delivery Falls Short

Delayed, defensive, or overly optimistic communication can erode confidence quickly.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether difficult delivery communication is honest, timely, and constructive.

Giving and Receiving Feedback with Emotional Intelligence

Giving & Receiving Feedback with EQ is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to navigate the emotional dynamics that can make feedback difficult to give, hear, and use. Learners develop the ability to recognize emotional triggers on both sides of a feedback exchange, combine clarity with emotional attunement when giving feedback and navigating the response, regulate their own reactions when receiving challenging feedback, and evaluate how feedback interactions affect future honesty, learning, and relationship quality.

1.1 Emotional Dynamics of Feedback

Feedback can trigger threat, identity concerns, defensiveness, or self-protection for both the person giving it and the person receiving it. These reactions can interfere with learning even when the message is accurate and well intended.

Develop learners' understanding of the emotional dynamics that shape feedback interactions. Examine common triggers on both sides of the exchange, notice how threat or self-protection can alter tone, listening, interpretation, and behavior, and distinguish the emotional response from the underlying information the feedback may still contain.

2.1 Feedback Clarity and Emotional Attunement

Feedback is more likely to be useful when clarity is paired with attention to timing, tone, relationship context, and the conditions in which the message is delivered.

Develop learners' ability to give feedback with both clarity and emotional awareness. Consider what the person needs to understand, how specific and direct the message needs to be, whether the timing and setting support the conversation, and how tone, relationship history, power, and emotional state may affect how the feedback is received. Stay attentive to the other person's response and adjust how the conversation proceeds without losing the substance of the feedback. Reinforce that emotional attunement should improve how feedback is delivered without diluting necessary honesty or accountability.

3.1 Receiving Feedback with Openness

Critical, unexpected, or poorly delivered feedback can trigger defensiveness, shame, anger, or withdrawal. Self-regulation creates enough space to understand the message before deciding what to accept, question, or do with it.

Develop learners' ability to regulate emotional reactions while receiving feedback without becoming passive or uncritical. Notice their internal response, stay engaged long enough to understand what is being communicated, ask clarifying questions, separate useful information from delivery problems or assumptions, and choose how to respond after considering the feedback rather than reacting immediately.

4.1 Feedback Relationships and Learning

Feedback happens within relationships, not as isolated transactions. How people give, receive, and respond to feedback over time can make future honesty and learning easier or harder.

Develop learners' ability to reflect on feedback interactions and strengthen the conditions for future candor and learning. Explore the emotional dynamics, message clarity, response, and relational impact of an exchange; recognize patterns that increase avoidance, defensiveness, or trust; and identify how future feedback could be handled differently to support both honesty and development.

EQ in Remote and Hybrid Environments

EQ in Remote & Hybrid Environments is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to apply emotional intelligence when distance and technology reduce context or create uneven experiences of connection and inclusion. Learners develop the ability to recognize the emotional demands of distributed work, interpret digital signals without treating assumptions as fact, choose communication modes based on the emotional and relational needs of the situation, and use emotionally intelligent practices to strengthen trust, inclusion, and connection across distance.

1.1 Emotional Demands of Remote and Hybrid Work

Remote and hybrid work can reduce many of the cues and informal interactions people use to understand one another. Digital fatigue, asynchronous work, ambiguity, and blurred boundaries can also create distinctive emotional pressures.

Develop learners' understanding of how distributed work changes the emotional demands of professional relationships. Consider reduced social cues, digital fatigue, asynchronous communication, isolation, blurred boundaries, and uneven experiences between remote and in-person colleagues, and recognize how these conditions can affect emotion, interpretation, behavior, and connection.

2.1 Emotional Signals in Digital Communication

Digital communication can reduce, alter, or remove cues such as tone, body language, facial expression, timing, and physical context. What is missing can be as important as what appears to be present.

Develop learners' ability to interpret emotional information in digital communication without treating inference as fact. Examine available cues such as wording, response patterns, silence, tone, pace, or video behavior; recognize important information that is missing or obscured; distinguish observation from interpretation; and use curiosity or checking when greater understanding is needed.

3.1 Communication Mode and Emotional Fit

The communication channel shapes what emotional information is available and how easily misunderstandings can be repaired. A convenient mode is not always the right mode for the sensitivity, ambiguity, or relational importance of the conversation.

Develop learners' ability to choose and shift communication modes based on the emotional and relational needs of the situation rather than habit or convenience alone. Consider sensitivity, complexity, ambiguity, urgency, need for dialogue, available cues, accessibility, relationship context, and the cost of misunderstanding when deciding between asynchronous messaging, voice, video, or in-person communication. Reinforce that shifting communication modes can be an EQ choice when the current mode is no longer serving understanding.

4.1 Trust and Connection Across Distance

Trust and connection can weaken when informal contact, shared context, and physical presence are reduced. Distributed relationships therefore require more deliberate relational attention.

Develop learners' ability to use emotionally intelligent behavior to strengthen trust and connection across distance. Create clarity and predictability, make space for informal and relational connection, notice signs of isolation or disengagement without over-interpreting them, respond to emotional cues with appropriate curiosity rather than assumption, and adapt communication practices so remote or less-visible colleagues are not unintentionally excluded.

Performance Management

Performance Management is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for managers who want to address performance issues directly and early rather than letting them drift into a bigger problem. Participants examine how to set clear performance expectations, recognize early signs of underperformance, hold direct performance conversations, and document performance formally when needed.

1.1 Setting Performance Expectations

Clear performance expectations matter because employees can't reliably deliver the work a manager actually needs if that standard was never made explicit to them in the first place.

Develop learners' ability to set clear expectations and examine system conditions before attributing a performance gap to the individual. Underperformance can reflect unclear expectations, competing priorities, missing tools, or weak support rather than individual deficiency. Managers need to examine the surrounding system before concluding the person is the problem.

2.1 Recognizing Underperformance Early

Underperformance is easier to address when early signals are recognized.

Develop learners' ability to recognize early indicators of underperformance before they become larger performance issues. Missed details, slipping deadlines, or changing engagement can create an opportunity for a lower-stakes conversation before problems grow.

3.1 Holding Performance Conversations

Managers often soften accountability messages so much that the employee does not understand the problem. Effective conversations combine directness about performance with genuine care for the person.

Develop learners' ability to hold clear, respectful performance conversations that combine directness with care. Clarity comes through techniques such as being specific about what's not working, naming the impact (why this matters), and stating what needs to change. Care comes through techniques such as curiosity about what's blocking them, investment in their success, and follow-through on support.

4.1 Performance Documentation and Escalation

Formal documentation creates a clear record when informal performance conversations have not resolved an issue. Poor documentation can undermine fairness and create legal risk, making timely HR or legal involvement important.

Develop learners' ability to create fair performance documentation and recognize when additional HR or legal expertise is needed. Build learners' understanding that performance documentation is about creating a clear, objective record of what happened, what was communicated, and what changed. Good documentation protects both the employee and the organization by making expectations and conversations transparent. Introduce issues that require escalation such as discrimination concerns, safety violations, harassment, insubordination that challenges authority, or repeated performance issues where previous documented conversations didn't result in change.

Insight Storytelling

Insight Storytelling is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to interpret data responsibly and communicate insights in ways that support understanding and action.

1.1 From Data to Insight

Reports can present numbers without clarifying what they mean, why they matter, or what action follows. Insight adds interpretation and relevance to raw information.

Build learners' understanding of how interpretation turns data into useful insight without overstating the evidence.

2.1 Data Patterns and Limitations

Patterns can be meaningful, random, distorted, or context-dependent. Interpretation needs to consider variation, outliers, uncertainty, and alternative explanations.

Develop learners' ability to interpret patterns with appropriate caution and context as the basis for a clear, honest data story.

3. Audience-Centered Insight Stories

Different audiences need different levels of detail, context, and recommendation. Communicating insight is more useful when it is organized around what the audience needs to understand and do.

Develop learners' ability to turn analysis into a clear narrative, including appropriate visual choices, suited to a defined audience.

4. Reviewing Communication Quality

Data communication can be misled through poor visuals, missing caveats, selective evidence, or unclear recommendations. Review helps protect clarity and integrity before it is shared.

Develop learners' ability to assess data communication for clarity, integrity, and usefulness.

Change Communication

Change Communication is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to design and deliver communication that helps people make sense of change rather than simply receive information about it. Learners examine why broadcast communication fails during change, explore how to design for meaning-making and two-way dialogue, practice adapting messages to different stakeholder needs and transition stages, and build feedback-informed communication approaches that support adoption.

Learners will explore why change communication differs from broadcast, designing for meaning and dialogue, adapting communication across the change journey, and evaluating communication effectiveness.

1.1 Why Change Communication Is Different

Change communication often focuses on announcing what is changing and why. Information alone does not help people fully interpret what the change means for their work, identity, relationships, or choices.

Build learners' knowledge of the difference between information transfer and communication that supports sense-making. Push past the assumption that clearly explaining a change is the same as helping people understand it. For example, a well-written announcement can accurately convey what's changing and why, and someone can read every word of it and still be left wondering what it actually means for their job, their team, or the choices they'll need to make. Sense-making communication does the work that a broadcast alone can't: connecting the change to what specifically shifts for that person's day-to-day reality.

2.1 Designing for Meaning and Dialogue

Effective change communication requires deliberate choices about channel, timing, tone, participation, and feedback. These choices need to vary by stakeholder group and stage of transition.

Develop learners' ability to design communication that creates dialogue and supports meaning-making rather than compliance messaging. For example a tone that works for leadership won't necessarily work for a frontline team.

3.1 Communication Across Transition Stages

People need different information and support as they move through a change. Early messages often focus on meaning, while later communication may emphasize capability, feedback, reinforcement, and continued adaptation.

Develop learners' ability to adapt change communication to stakeholder needs at different transition stages. Address a common failure mode where practitioners write one strong announcement and then let communication trail off, treating the launch message as the finish line rather than the starting point of an ongoing conversation. What people need to hear shifts as they move through the transition, such as someone just learning about a change needs to understand why it matters, while someone six weeks into living with it needs practical help, an acknowledgment of what's still hard, and evidence that the change is sticking.

4.1 Evaluating Communication Effectiveness

A communication plan executed is not the same as communication that lands. Assessing whether people actually understand, feel heard, support and implement the change is what determines whether it sticks.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether change communication is creating understanding, dialogue, and adoption support. Challenge the assumption that a communication plan is working just because it's being executed on schedule/. For example, a practitioner can hit every planned touchpoint while people remain quietly confused, concerns go unspoken because no one's actually checking, and adoption metrics slide without anyone connecting the dots back to how the change was communicated.

Risk Escalation and Reporting Design

Risk Escalation and Reporting Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design how risk information moves from where it is first noticed to the governance body responsible for acting on it. Risk oversight fails less often because no one saw a risk coming, and more often because someone saw it and the information never reached anyone with the authority or the urgency to act. This course focuses on the practical design of escalation paths, reporting cadence, and decision triggers that get risk information to the right people in time to matter.

1.1 Risk Escalation Failure Patterns

Risk information can be delayed, softened, or lost as it moves through organizational layers. Unclear ownership and reluctance to surface bad news often worsen the problem.

Build learners' understanding of why risk escalation breaks down in practice. Introduce challenges such as filtering, translation loss, competing priorities, unclear ownership, or delays in reporting.

2.1 Risk Reporting and Escalation Paths

Managing risk isn't just about identifying it. It's about getting information to people who can act, without it getting delayed, distorted, or deprioritized along the way.

Develop learners' ability to trace and diagnose where existing escalation paths break down. Cover the journey from when the risk is first noticed to when it is acted on and what happened at each step of the way.

3.1 Risk Escalation Structures

Escalation structures only work if they're specific, clear about who does what, and actually tested. Vague structures leave critical risks stranded.

Develop learners' ability to create escalation structures that function clearly under real operating conditions. Cover the specifics of effective escalation structures such as triggers, ownership, destination, and expected governance response before pressure is high. This reduces reliance on ad hoc judgment.

4.1 Timeliness of Risk Escalation

A risk identified but escalated too late is almost as useless as a risk not identified at all.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether an escalation structure produces governance action within an appropriate, defined timeframe. Timeliness needs a clear standard tied to the risk and context.

Remote & Hybrid Collaboration

Remote and Hybrid Collaboration is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who collaborate with colleagues they rarely or never share physical space with.

1.1 Differences in Remote and Hybrid Collaboration

Colleagues in the same location pick up an enormous amount without ever scheduling a meeting for it and none of that transfers automatically when a team moves to remote or hybrid work. Teams often chalk up the resulting friction to individual effort or attitude, when the real cause is structural. Proximity itself was quietly doing work that now has to be done deliberately, or not at all.

Build an understanding of what physical proximity actually contributes to collaboration, and what's lost when it's removed. For example, in-person work provides informal updates and quick clarification that quietly disappear, or become unevenly distributed, once a team goes remote or hybrid. This is a structural change, not a matter of individual effort.

2.1 Trust and Shared Understanding at a Distance

Remote and hybrid teams lose many of the informal interactions that normally build trust, and those mechanisms don't get replaced automatically.

Build the ability to build trust and shared understanding intentionally when a team can't rely on informal, in-person contact. For example, practices like opening a meeting with unstructured personal check-in time, or narrating context out loud that would otherwise be picked up incidentally in person, can rebuild some of what distance removes.

3.1 Distributed and Asynchronous Collaboration Design

Trying to replicate in-person work through more meetings tends to disadvantage people across time zones and schedules, rather than solving the collaboration challenge.

Build the ability to design collaboration practices that fit distributed and asynchronous work, rather than defaulting to more meetings. Help learners be able to design an approach that deliberately splits work between synchronous elements, such as a live discussion reserved for genuine debate, and asynchronous elements, such as a shared document with a comment deadline for input that doesn't require everyone online at once. While also building in a specific mechanism to maintain equitable participation, such as rotating meeting times across time zones or requiring async input be reviewed before a decision is finalized.

4.1 Health of Remote and Hybrid Collaboration

A remote or hybrid team can look productive on paper while quietly excluding some participants from information, influence, or a sense of belonging.

Build the ability to assess remote and hybrid collaboration health by criteria beyond whether the tasks got done. Help learners examine specific factors driving inequitable participation in a given scenario, such as who gets called on first in a hybrid meeting or whose messages get responses versus left unread.

Visual Facilitation Introduction

Visual Facilitation Introduction is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to make group thinking visible in real time. At its core, visual facilitation is an act of listening, synthesizing, and adapting, not simply drawing.

1.1 Why Visual Facilitation Works

Visual facilitation makes group thinking visible through images, text, and spatial organization. Its value depends on listening for key ideas first, then representing them in ways that support shared understanding and alignment.

Build learners' understanding of why visual facilitation works and how listening for key ideas distinguishes it from note-taking or presentation. For example, a facilitator sketching a simple diagram that clusters what three different speakers just said into one shared theme does something a transcript or a pre-made slide can't: it lets the group see their own thinking reflected back and correct it in real time. The value of that image depends entirely on the facilitator actually listening for the key idea first.

2.1 Building a Visual Vocabulary

Visual facilitation does not require advanced artistic skill. A small set of visual elements can help facilitators synthesize ideas, create hierarchy, and make meaning clearer without transcribing every word.

Develop a practical visual vocabulary focused on synthesis, hierarchy, emphasis, clarity, and usefulness rather than artistic quality. For example, a box around an idea signals "this is a distinct concept," an arrow shows a relationship or flow between two ideas, and simply varying size or adding an underline creates a hierarchy that tells the group at a glance which point matters most. The real skill being practiced isn't drawing, it's listening and synthesizing.

3.1 Adaptive Visual Facilitation Design

Visuals support a session best when they are intentionally connected to purpose, timing, and participant needs. They also need to evolve as the group's thinking changes rather than treating an early visual as final.

Develop learners' ability to design visual support that aligns with session outcomes and adapts as new information emerges. For example, a simple sticky-note cluster might suit an early divergent thinking phase where the goal is capturing lots of raw input. While a more structured matrix might suit a later phase where the group needs to compare and prioritize options. Using the wrong one at the wrong point can actually slow the group down rather than help it. This also means resisting the temptation to treat the first version of a visual as finished.

4.1 Visual Facilitation in Practice

Visual facilitation improves through practice and reflection. Effective evaluation considers how well the facilitator listened, synthesized, and adapted in real time, not only how the final visual looked.

Build learners' ability to practice and evaluate visual facilitation based on its contribution to group thinking and outcomes. Redirect self-evaluation away from the question "does my visual look good?" toward the question that actually matters: did it help the group think together?

Large Group Facilitation

Large Group Facilitation is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design and hold productive group processes when scale introduces complexity that small group approaches cannot adequately address. The course applies across in-person, virtual, and hybrid contexts.

1.1 Distinctive Demands of Large Group Facilitation

Large group facilitation changes more than headcount. Scale reduces individual visibility and increases complexity, requiring facilitators to trust structure, work with subgroup dynamics, and shift their mindset from managing individuals to holding a larger system.

Build learners' understanding of how scale changes facilitation demands and the facilitator mindset needed across in-person, virtual, and hybrid settings. For example, in a small group a facilitator might notice one participant disengaging and check in with them personally, but in a large group that same facilitator has to trust a structure, like small breakout tables with their own reporting mechanism, to surface that same kind of signal without the facilitator personally catching it.

2.1 Reading the Large Group Context

Large groups contain subgroups with different interests, histories, cultures, and levels of power. Size, purpose, composition, safety, and context influence both session design and what the facilitator needs to notice in real time.

Develop learners' ability to read large-group purpose, composition, culture, power, safety, and complexity before and during the session, including when co-facilitation may help. For example, knowing in advance that one subgroup holds significantly more organizational power than another should shape design choices like using anonymous input methods so quieter subgroups aren't drowned out, and during the session that same power dynamic should make the facilitator specifically watch whether the lower-power subgroup's ideas are actually surfacing or quietly getting talked over.

3.1 Participation at Scale

Large groups need deliberate participation architecture so many people can contribute without chaos or domination. Group configuration, sequencing, and connections between small- and large-group work shape inclusion and coherence.

Develop learners' ability to design and test participation architecture that supports diverse contribution and collective understanding at scale. For example, a well-sequenced architecture might start with individual silent reflection so people form their own thinking without social pressure, move into small-group conversation where that thinking gets tested and refined with a few others, and only then bring ideas to the large group, where a subgroup reports out a synthesized point rather than every individual competing for airtime.

4.1 Evaluating Large Group Facilitation

A large group session can appear successful while still excluding important voices or missing its purpose. Facilitators need to assess effectiveness and equity during the session so they can adapt while it still matters.

Build learners' ability to evaluate purpose, participation equity, and live signals that indicate when a large-group approach needs adjustment. For example, a facilitator might notice midway through that report-outs are consistently coming from the same two tables while others stay quiet, and use that as an in-the-moment signal to adjust; perhaps by explicitly rotating which table reports next, or checking in directly with a table that's gone silent.

Negotiation and Influence

Negotiation and Influence is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who need to reach workable agreements, shape decisions, and move people toward action in contexts where they may have limited formal authority. Negotiation and influence are not the preserve of sales professionals or senior leaders: they are everyday professional capabilities required any time someone needs to align stakeholders, secure resources, navigate competing interests, or advocate effectively for a position or a person.

1.1 Negotiation Preparation

Negotiations often go poorly before the conversation even begins because the parties have not clarified what they need, what the other side may value, what alternatives exist, or where their real leverage comes from.

Develop learners' ability to prepare deliberately for a negotiation rather than relying on improvisation. Explore positions and underlying interests, desired outcomes, BATNA—the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement—walk-away conditions, sources of leverage, relevant information, stakeholders, and the process or sequence that may shape the negotiation.

2.1 Creating and Claiming Value

Negotiation is not only about splitting the difference. Some situations create opportunities for win-win outcomes by expanding the value available through different priorities, trades, or options, while other situations require protecting one's own interests and deciding how value will be divided.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish creating value from claiming value and to use both appropriately. Explore how win-win outcomes differ from simple compromise, how to uncover differences in priorities, generate options, package issues, make trade-offs, protect important interests, use concessions deliberately, and recognize when a more collaborative or competitive approach fits the situation.

3.1 Negotiation–Specific Ethical Influence

A sound “win-win” proposal does not influence people on its own. How an issue is framed, what questions are asked, what evidence or objective criteria are used, and how options and concessions are presented can materially affect how the negotiation unfolds. These choices are also expressions of power because they can shape what others perceive as possible, valuable, or reasonable.

Develop learners' ability to use influence deliberately and responsibly within a negotiation without turning this credential into a general persuasion class. Explore framing, purposeful questions, objective criteria, persuasive rationale, anchoring where appropriate, proposal sequencing, packaging, concessions, and adapting to the counterpart's responses. Connect these practices to Power & Responsibility by examining the ethical use of leverage and the difference between influence that preserves genuine choice and influence that becomes manipulative or coercive.

4.1 Agreement Quality, Commitment and Relationship Impact

A negotiation is not successful simply because someone says yes. Agreements can fail when commitments are unclear, implementation support is weak, trust has been damaged, or one party agreed only because of pressure in the moment.

Develop learners' ability to evaluate and strengthen negotiated outcomes for agreement quality, clarity of commitments, implementation viability, relationship impact, and ethical process. Explore the difference between genuine agreement and surface compliance, what should be documented or clarified, whether value was unnecessarily left on the table, and when revisiting the conversation is better than claiming a short-term win.

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