CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS

ISO 9001:2018 Certified Lead Auditor

Exam Code: 9001:2018-CLA™



A complete preparation guide covering exam objectives, core competencies, domain weightage, and topics to prepare.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

1. **Exam Name & Code** 1
2. **Table of Contents** 2
3. **Objective of the Certification** 3
4. **Core Competencies** 4-5
5. **Who Should Take This Certification** 6
6. **Exam Information** 6
7. **Examination Domain & Weightage** 7
8. **Topics to Prepare** 8-10

- *QMS & ISO 9001:2015 Requirements (Advanced)*
- *Process Approach, Risk-Based Thinking & Quality Principles*
- *Audit Program Management & Principles*
- *Audit Planning & Preparation*
- *Audit Execution, Evidence & Interviewing*
- *Findings, Nonconformity Grading & Reporting*
- *Certification Audits, Follow-up & Audit Leadership*

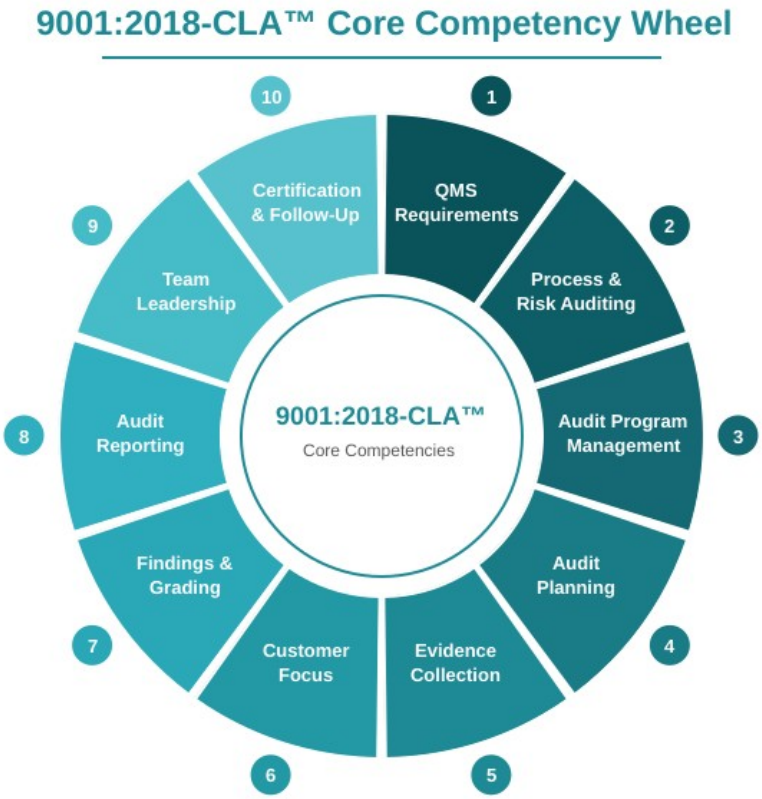
©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Objective of the Certification

- **Validate lead auditor competence:** the ability to plan, lead, and report audits of a Quality Management System (QMS) against ISO 9001:2015.
- **Deepen standards expertise:** apply the ISO 9001:2015 requirements, together with ISO 9000 concepts and vocabulary, with the judgment needed to lead an audit.
- **Audit processes, not just documents:** evaluate the process approach, interactions between processes, and risk-based thinking.
- **Manage audit programs:** establish and manage an audit program, applying ISO 19011 (guidelines for auditing management systems).
- **Lead audit teams:** assign roles, guide auditors, and manage team dynamics, conflicts, and time.
- **Conduct first-, second-, and third-party audits:** understand the differences, including certification audit stages, surveillance, and recertification (ISO/IEC 17021-1 concepts).
- **Evaluate evidence:** use sampling, interviews, observation, and document review to reach sound audit findings.
- **Grade findings and report:** classify nonconformities, write clear findings, and present balanced audit conclusions.
- **Drive follow-up:** evaluate corrective action plans, including root cause analysis, and verify their effectiveness.
- **Uphold ethics and impartiality:** apply independence, confidentiality, and professional skepticism, and manage conflicts of interest.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Core Competencies — 9001:2018-CLA™ (ISO 9001:2018 Certified Lead Auditor)



©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

- **QMS requirements knowledge:** interpret ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4 to 10 in depth, including context, leadership, planning, support, operation, evaluation, and improvement.
- **Process and risk-based auditing:** audit process interactions, inputs and outputs, performance indicators, and the use of risk-based thinking.
- **Audit program management:** set program objectives, assess risks, assign resources, and monitor and improve the program.
- **Audit planning:** define scope, criteria, and objectives, and prepare the audit plan, checklists, and team assignments.
- **Evidence collection:** gather objective evidence through interviews, observation, and sampling of records.
- **Customer focus and product conformity:** assess how the organization meets customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- **Findings and grading:** write nonconformities and opportunities for improvement, and grade them consistently.
- **Audit reporting:** prepare closing meeting content and reports that are clear, accurate, and balanced.
- **Team and conflict leadership:** direct an audit team, resolve disagreements, and communicate with auditee management.
- **Certification audit and follow-up:** understand stage 1, stage 2, surveillance, recertification, and the verification of corrective action.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Who Should Take This Certification

- Experienced internal auditors who want to lead QMS audits and audit teams.
- Quality managers, quality assurance, and compliance professionals moving into audit leadership.
- Auditors who plan to work in third-party certification or supplier audit roles.
- Audit program managers and heads of internal audit or quality functions.
- QMS managers and consultants who support organizations through ISO 9001 certification.
- Professionals who have completed an auditor-level credential and want to advance.

Exam Information

Exam Name	ISO 9001:2018 Certified Lead Auditor
Exam Code	9001:2018-CLA™
Exam Format	Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), including scenario-based questions
Duration	120 minutes
Number of Questions	80
Passing Score	70%
Mode of Exam	Test Center Based Testing / Online Testing
Language	English
Validity	Lifetime
Open Book	No

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Examination Domain & Weightage

Domain	Weightage
QMS & ISO 9001:2015 Requirements (Advanced)	20%
Process Approach, Risk-Based Thinking & Quality Principles	15%
Audit Program Management & Principles	15%
Audit Planning & Preparation	10%
Audit Execution, Evidence & Interviewing	15%
Findings, Nonconformity Grading & Reporting	10%
Certification Audits, Follow-up & Audit Leadership	15%
Total	**100%**

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

Topics to Prepare — 9001:2018-CLA™ (ISO 9001:2018 Certified Lead Auditor)

The topics below represent the core areas candidates should focus on for each domain, reflecting the auditor-level depth expected at the 9001:2018-CLA™ level.

1. QMS & ISO 9001:2015 Requirements (Advanced) (20%)

- **Quality management principles:** customer focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision-making, and relationship management.
- **Context and scope (clause 4):** external and internal issues, interested parties, QMS scope, and processes.
- **Leadership (clause 5):** top management commitment, customer focus, quality policy, roles and authorities.
- **Planning (clause 6):** risks and opportunities, quality objectives, and planning of changes.
- **Support (clause 7):** resources, competence, awareness, communication, and documented information.
- **Operation (clause 8):** planning and control, requirements for products and services, design and development, external providers, production and service provision, release, and control of nonconforming outputs.
- **Performance evaluation and improvement (clauses 9 and 10):** customer satisfaction, monitoring, internal audit, management review, nonconformity, corrective action, and continual improvement.
- **Terminology:** key definitions from ISO 9000.

2. Process Approach, Risk-Based Thinking & Quality Principles (15%)

- **Process approach:** inputs, outputs, process owners, interactions, and the PDCA cycle.
- **Risk-based thinking:** how risks and opportunities are identified and addressed within the QMS.
- **Process performance:** indicators, monitoring, and measurement.
- **Customer requirements:** customer satisfaction, complaints, and feedback.
- **Quality tools:** root cause analysis, Pareto analysis, and control charts, at an auditor's level of understanding.
- **Integrated systems:** the relationship between ISO 9001 and other management system standards.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

3. Audit Program Management & Principles (15%)

- **Audit principles:** integrity, fair presentation, due professional care, confidentiality, independence, and evidence-based approach, as in ISO 19011.
- **Audit program:** objectives, risks and opportunities, roles, resources, and procedures.
- **Program monitoring:** review and improvement of the audit program.
- **Audit types:** first-, second-, and third-party audits, and combined or joint audits.
- **Auditor competence:** knowledge, skills, evaluation, and continual development.
- **Related guidance:** the role of ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17021-3 in certification audit and auditor competence.

4. Audit Planning & Preparation (10%)

- **Audit initiation:** feasibility, contact with the auditee, and audit objectives, scope, and criteria.
- **Audit plan:** timing, locations, team roles, and sampling approach.
- **Document review:** preparing the audit and reviewing the auditee's documented information.
- **Work documents:** checklists, sampling plans, and forms.
- **Team preparation:** briefing, assignments, and managing resources.

5. Audit Execution, Evidence & Interviewing (15%)

- **Opening meeting:** confirming the plan, scope, and communication channels.
- **Evidence collection:** interviewing, observation, and sampling of records and processes.
- **Process audit techniques:** tracing, following process flow, and linking evidence to the requirements.
- **Evaluating evidence:** reliability, sufficiency, and objectivity.
- **Communication:** managing the audit, guides and observers, and difficult situations.
- **Audit conclusions:** forming and checking conclusions before the closing meeting.

6. Findings, Nonconformity Grading & Reporting (10%)

- **Audit findings:** conformity, nonconformity, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Grading:** differences between major and minor nonconformities, and grading consistency.
- **Writing findings:** statement, requirement, and objective evidence.
- **Closing meeting:** presenting findings and conclusions, and handling disagreement.
- **Audit report:** content, accuracy, and distribution.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.

7. Certification Audits, Follow-up & Audit Leadership (15%)

- **Certification process:** stage 1, stage 2, certification decision, surveillance, recertification, and special audits.
- **Follow-up:** reviewing corrective action plans, root cause, and verifying effectiveness.
- **Impartiality:** conflicts of interest and consultancy limits for certification bodies.
- **Audit leadership:** leading the team, time management, and handling challenges.
- **Continual improvement:** lessons learned and improving the audit program.

©2026 Certaining, Inc. All rights reserved.