



Become Certified in the Paul-Elder Framework for Critical Thinking™

Foundation for Critical Thinking, January 2023

Purpose and Overall Approach to the Foundation for Critical Thinking Certification Process:

Introduction

The Paul-Elder Framework for Critical Thinking is the most integrated approach to critical thinking in the world, and is based in the natural languages we speak every day. Our approach—also referred to as the Paulian Approach to Critical Thinking™—offers a developed language for critical thinking and a conceptual framework that can be incorporated into the core of teaching and learning at all levels and is directly relevant to skilled reasoning in every domain of human life. We advance a fairminded, robust conception of critical thinking across education and society.

Those certified in our approach are well-versed in the foundations of critical thinking and they embrace substantive, fairminded critical thinking as essential to the cultivation of the educated mind and to the creation of ethical, compassionate critical societies across the world.

It is understood that internalization of critical thinking concepts and principles occurs over many years of study in the field, but through an intensive training program in critical thinking, facilitators can learn the foundations at a level that will enable them to teach the foundational tools, concepts, and principles to those new to a disciplined, explicit, robust approach to critical thinking. As they advance, facilitators will themselves continue to deepen their understanding of critical thinking over time, and through additional training.

When people have internalized the basic concepts and tools implicit in a fairminded, rigorous conception of critical thinking, and when they actively and routinely practice contextualizing these principles in problem-solving and decision-making, their thinking—and hence the quality of their decisions and actions—improves. One develops as a critical thinker in a way that is similar to how one develops as a basketball player, ballet dancer, or pianist. First of all, one must understand the basic principles. Secondly, one must regularly engage in self-monitored, self-evaluative practice (putting the principles to work in a given context) to progressively upgrade one's understanding and skill.

Critical Thinking as Essential to Education at All Levels and in All Areas

Facilitators and educational leaders in our program come to recognize explicitly that critical thinking is not just one of many divergent educational aims, but rather a way of teaching and learning at a high level of effectiveness within any subject, field, or discipline. Commitment to internalizing the first principles of critical thinking is required of those in the program. Those in the program come to see, by degrees, that critical thinking is essential to: properly designing instruction at all levels and in all fields of study, to internalizing and thinking through of any content one is learning, and to effectively reasoning through life's daily issues, problems, and decisions.

When immersed in our facilitator's program in critical thinking over time, facilitators come to recognize that teaching in a critical manner is essential for:

- Skilled reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- Skilled reasoning within all subject areas.
- Skilled decision-making and problem-solving in all parts of life.
- Skilled analysis and evaluation of one's emotions and values.
- Intelligent choices in human relationships.
- Skilled decision- making in the workplace.
- Skilled civic and personal choices, etc...

This certification program is organized on the principle that one learns critical thinking by engaging one's mind in thinking critically. Facilitators in the program will be engaged in a variety of activities in which they will be internalizing critical thinking concepts and principles (while applying them to the logic of problems and issues within academic disciplines and the workplace). As the program progresses, participants will increasingly develop their abilities to facilitate understanding of critical thinking in others as well.

Critical Thinking as Essential to Effective Decision-Making in the Workplace and in Everyday Life

Critical thinking is essential, not only in education, but in the workplace at all levels. Therefore, some may seek certification in our approach for the purpose of facilitating understanding and contextualization of critical thinking in professional life.

To reason well through complex problems and issues requires that today's managers and employees be skilled in the analysis of thought, or in other words, deconstructing it to identify its parts—the elements of reasoning – in order to understand the basic logic of one's reasoning and the logic of the issues one is facing. They also must be able to assess their reasoning, and the reasoning of others, using universal intellectual standards such as clarity, accuracy, relevance, precision, logic, and significance.

Those in an effective critical thinking education program in the workplace will learn to more explicitly and systematically:

- Identify goals and purposes.
- Gather relevant information.
- Formulate questions clearly and precisely.
- Determine the assumptions they (and others) are using and analyze those assumptions for justifiability.
- Think through the implications of the decisions they (and others) make, and the solutions they come to.
- Make logical and accurate inferences and interpretations.
- Articulate the concepts or ideas guiding their thinking (and the thinking of others).
- Consider alternate ways of looking at problems and situations.

Fostering Critical Thinking in the Workplace Using the Paul-Elder Framework™

Through our certification program, facilitators learn to help managers and employees:

- Use the foundational principles of critical thinking in everyday business decision-making.
- Discover ways and means for using critical thinking as a set of tools for thinking deeply through the questions, issues, and challenges they face in their work.
- Develop the art of intelligent decision-making using critical thinking concepts.
- Understand the important long-term implications and benefits of building a critical thinking culture within the organization.
- Develop the skills, abilities, and traits of the critical person and the critical mind.
- Understand the importance of developing critical thinking skills, abilities, and traits in order to reason well through complex issues in the workplace.
- Understand critical thinking as the key to high-quality thinking within any domain of thought or work.
- Understand how to analyze thinking by focusing on its parts or elements, and how to use the elements of reasoning in working through decisions and problems.
- Understand the importance of universal intellectual standards in thinking, and how to apply these standards to workplace decisions.
- Understand the fundamental barriers to critical thinking development.
- Understand the relationship between cognition and affect, and how emotions and desires influence work performance.

Through our certification program, facilitators begin to internalize these critical thinking foundations:

1. Understanding the pervasive role of thinking in human life and the problems common to human thought (that serve as barriers to skilled thinking within all

- disciplines and all parts of life).
2. Understanding critical thinking as essential to high-quality thinking within any subject, discipline, profession, or domain of thought.
 3. Understanding how to analyze thinking by focusing on its parts (or 'elements').
 4. Understanding the importance of adhering to intellectual standards when reasoning through problems and issues in any domain of human thought.
 5. Understanding the importance of fostering intellectual virtues across instruction and society at all levels, and in all disciplines.
 6. Rethinking content as a mode of thinking; analyzing the foundational logic of subjects and disciplines.
 7. Fostering deep and transformative learning through close reading.
 8. Distinguishing between questions of fact, of preference, and of judgment; recognizing the importance of these distinctions in teaching and learning.
 9. Seeing the development of critical thinking as unfolding in stages, and as involving deep commitment on the part of the learner.
 10. Designing professional development in critical thinking for business managers and employees, using the Paulian Framework™ (Paul- Elder Model™).

Mechanics of the Paul-Elder Critical Thinking Certification Program:

Those wishing to be certified in our approach must successfully complete the following:

1. Initial and Intermediate Internalization of the Foundations in the Paul-Elder Approach to Critical Thinking™ – Internalizing the First Principles of Critical Thinking

This step may be completed through one or more of the following:

- a. successful completion of one of our semester-long [online courses](#), plus attendance at one of our [live events](#) or one of our [Guided Study Groups](#), -or-
- b. engaged attendance at 3 (three) or more of our [live events](#), [Guided Study Groups](#), or a combination of these. “Engaged attendance” means you are attending the sessions and completing the assignments (both in-session activities and homework if applicable).

If you have already achieved this prerequisite, and are interested in becoming certified in our approach, [contact us](#) to begin the application process. We can provide exemptions to the internalization prerequisite in some cases. If you have worked with our approach in some significant manner not listed above (e.g., teaching at your institution or attending professional development workshops we've conducted etc.), please [contact us](#) to discuss your potential unique route to certification.

2. Application for Certification in the Paul-Elder Approach to Critical Thinking (see below). Once the initial prerequisite (above) has been completed,

participants may apply for certification in the Paul-Elder Framework for Critical Thinking.

3. **Facilitator’s Training in the Foundations of Critical Thinking.** Once approved for the certification path, facilitators are trained in how to begin introducing our approach in education or the workplace—under certain conditions—and are given specific guidelines. This phase of the certification process may be completed through one of the following:
 - a. successful completion of the Facilitator’s Training Program at any event where certification is offered, or
 - b. a customized program for facilitators to be held at your institution ([contact us](#) for details and pricing information).

Our Certification Process

Certification may be granted at the following levels:

Level One Certification (this level is possible after completing the initial Internalization and Facilitator’s Training processes described above):

Facilitators at this level show proficiency in leading foundational activities in:

- The analysis of thought (focused on the elements of reasoning).
- The assessment of thought (focused on the universal intellectual standards).
- Intellectual virtues.
- Understanding academic subjects and professions as modes of thinking to be reasoned through using the tools of criticality.
- The intrinsic barriers to critical thought: egocentric and sociocentric thinking.
- Bringing critical thinking into everyday work and decision-making.

All workshop activities to be used by those certified in our approach will be designed by FCT Fellows and Scholars. These activities require that clients/colleagues/employees being taught by those certified in our program use FCT materials while learning our approach. All of our activities require the use of one or more FCT-authored [books](#) or [Thinker’s Guides](#) as core content/curriculum material in teaching our approach.

Level Two Certification (after additional training – contact us for details on going beyond Level One Certification):

- The analysis of thought (going deeper—to greater levels of complexity and comprehensiveness)
- The assessment of thought (going deeper).
- Intellectual virtues (going deeper).
- Understanding academic subjects and professions as modes of thinking to be

reasoned through using the tools of criticality (going deeper).

- The intrinsic barriers to thought: egocentric and sociocentric thinking (going deeper).
- Asking essential questions within a field of study or domain of thought.
- Ethical reasoning and why it is essential to advancing human societies.
- Bringing critical thinking into everyday work and decision-making (going deeper).

Assessments for Certification in The Paul-Elder Framework for Critical Thinking:

Before being certified in our approach, the applicant must complete the relevant training and assessments. This will be further detailed at the Certification Academy where most of these assessments will be completed. This includes achieving proficiency on the [Critical Thinking Basic Skills Test](#), being videotaped while leading “mock” training sessions in critical thinking using the Paul-Elder Approach, and successful completion of the [International Critical Thinking Essay Test](#). The applicant must also submit a 5-page written assignment arguing for the importance of some aspect of critical thinking.

Again, most of these assessment processes will be completed during the Certification Academy. The written paper will be submitted after the Certification Academy is completed, within 60 days of completion. Certification will be based on:

1. The applicant meeting minimal levels of understanding of the Paul-Elder Approach to Critical Thinking as determined through the assessment methods developed by the Fellows of the Foundation for Critical Thinking.
2. The applicant possessing skills in public speaking and presenting at a level acceptable to the certifiers in this program.
3. The willingness of the certifier to continue learning the FCT framework for critical thinking.
4. The submission of videos of their presentations four (4) times throughout the year (each quarter) for FCT approval, with the videos showing the facilitator competently leading training programs in the Paul-Elder Approach. Further details will be provided at the Fellows Academy.

To become certified for each additional year, the facilitator will submit a report of the groups/individuals the facilitator worked with during that year using the Paul-Elder Approach. This report may be published on the Foundation for Critical Thinking website; its data will become part of the work of the FCT.

Application/Costs for Certification:

Participants who have successfully completed Level One or Level Two training may apply for certification under our auspices. (Please note that an application for certification must be received at least two weeks before certification training.) The

annual application fee for certification is \$2,500 USD. \$50 is collected from each applicant upon application for the initial certification process, and an additional \$1,950 is due at least two weeks before commencement of certification training. When an applicant passes certification, an additional \$500 is required to complete the certification process. Participants are certified for one year, assuming the assessments required throughout the year are achieved at a minimal level of competency.

Facilitators must apply each year for continued certification. A fee of \$2,500 is required at the beginning of each new certification year. To remain certified, participants must continue training each year directly under Foundation for Critical Thinking Scholars and Fellows. This includes, at minimum, attendance at one full Foundation for Critical Thinking (FCT) International Conference, or attendance at an FCT facilitators training workshop, or an FCT Fellows Academy, or on-site training (5 minimum days per year), or an online course. As mentioned above, the facilitator will submit a report of the groups/individuals the facilitator worked with during that year using the Paul-Elder Approach. This report may be published on the Foundation for Critical Thinking website; its data will become part of the work of the FCT.

If participants complete the training program at a satisfactory level, but are unable to successfully complete the certification process, they may attend additional training and resubmit their application. For reassessment, a \$1,500 retesting fee is required.

Certification in our approach is for one year and does not extend beyond that year unless recertification is requested and granted.

Facilitators whose certification lapses can renew it by submitting an application and the annual fee within one year of the lapse. Beyond this one-year grace period, they must attend certification training to regain certification.

Facilitators who violate the requirements for maintaining certification, and are determined by the FCT to have done so in bad faith (i.e. not by oversight, confusion, etc.), may be decertified. Decertified facilitators may or may not be allowed to regain certification after any period of time determined by the FCT. The FCT reserves the right to publish the names of decertified facilitators on its website if it finds that those individuals are likely to falsely represent themselves as certified facilitators.

Consultant Use of Our Materials:

All facilitators certified by the Foundation for Critical Thinking to present the Paul-Elder Framework understand that they are to use only Foundation for Critical Thinking books, Thinker's Guides, and other materials in teaching the core principles of critical thinking in all critical-thinking workshops they conduct while certified in our approach; any other materials to be used in these workshops must be approved by the FCT. These materials may be purchased in print or digital format. No other

critical thinking materials are authorized for use while teaching the Paulian, or Paul-Elder, Approach.

All clients, colleagues, or employees learning our approach under the direction of a certified instructor must have their own books and Thinker's Guides. All copyright laws apply to the use of our work.

Dr. Linda Elder



As President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and an educational psychologist, Dr. Linda Elder has extensive experience in leading seminars in such topics as 'The Art of Making Intelligent Decisions,' 'Infusing Critical Thinking Into Your Professional Life,' 'Taking Charge Of The Affective Dimension Of Thinking,' and 'Critical Thinking: The Key to Survival in a World of Accelerating Change, Intensifying Complexity, and Increasing Danger.' She has presented to more than 50,000 professional educators, as well as countless private-sector businesspeople, military personnel, and other government employees. Dr. Elder has co-authored four books with Dr. Richard Paul, including *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life* and *30 Days to Better Thinking and Better Living Through Critical Thinking*. She has also co-authored 24 Thinker's Guides to Critical Thinking, and has developed an original stage theory of critical thinking development. With experience in both administration and the classroom, Dr. Elder understands first-hand the challenges facing corporations today. She is a dynamic presenter who reaches her audience on a person-to-person level.

Dr. Gerald Nosich



Dr. Gerald Nosich is a noted authority on critical thinking, and has given more than 250 workshops on all aspects of teaching critical thinking. Since the mid-1980s he has become committed to teaching critical thinking across the curriculum. He is the author of *Reasons and Arguments* (Wadsworth, 1982). His second book, *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, has been translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic. Dr. Nosich has given workshops on critical thinking throughout the world; he has worked with the U.S. Department of Education on a project for National Assessment of Higher Order Thinking Skills, given teleconferences sponsored by PBS on teaching critical thinking within subject-matter courses, served as a consultant/evaluator for SACS Accreditation of programs at various colleges and universities emphasizing critical thinking, and has been featured as a Noted Scholar at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of numerous articles, audio tapes, and videos on critical thinking. He is a Senior Fellow and Bertrand Russell Distinguished Chair at the Foundation for Critical Thinking. Dr. Nosich is a witty presenter whose down-to-earth sense of humor adds spice to his practical insights.