Syllabus
Foundation of XM and XLA®

Version 1.0.

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Introduction

The syllabus

The syllabus outlines the knowledge that the candidate will be tested on during the Foundation of XM and XLA® exam. It also provides suggestions for preparation and highlights the benefits of taking this exam. The XM and XLA® Foundation Certification is the basic certification level of the XM and XLA® program. This program is a collaboration between the XLA Institute and Van Haren Certify.

About the XM and XLA® Foundation Certification by the XLA Institute

The XLA Institute is a community for its members. It's a strong community because of members who share a passion and conviction about the importance of working in an XM and XLA® manner. It is driven by organizations that care about the impact of their digital services on their customers and end users. The membership is open to end user organizations and their partners and providers, and other parties in the Experience Management ecosystem. Together, they develop and promote the effective adoption of principles and practices related to XM and XLA®.

About the best practice

With the omnipresence of digital technology in our modern society and the increasing dependence on it, contractual relationships and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have become a necessity in IT. However, relying solely on SLAs can lead to a situation where everyone works in their own silo, often neglecting the impact on the customer's business and the people they serve.

IP owner:	XLabs B.V.
Accreditation institute:	Van Haren Certify

SLAs are task-based on minimum accepted quality and risk avoidance. In today's business and IT landscape, we need more than technical output to ensure user and employee satisfaction. We need a standardized approach to measure how services are perceived; this is where Xperience Level Agreement (XLA®) comes into play.

XLA® is a commitment between service providers and clients to optimize the outcome of digital and technology on humans and business. Experience Management (XM) is a set of activities that achieves a better experience and greater business impact by driving and improving collaboration. Prioritizing XM and XLA® is the key to satisfaction for both end users and employees. (More info on NEN 8038:2023)

Certification definition

The Foundation of XM and XLA® Certification is an essential component of the XM and XLA® Certification program. This certification validates that a candidate understands how to improve end-user experience and drive business impact through better collaboration using XM and XLA® practices. The certification also verifies the candidate's knowledge about how to achieve an experience that is aligned with expectations and that sits in the "Zone of Good Enough". It covers best practices for implementing experience through the Experience Management Journey, including exercises to build a compelling business case and action plan to move forward.

Candidates can become certified by passing the Foundation of XM and XLA® exam.

Vouchers for the certification exam are available through accredited trainers and Van Haren Group.

Certification levels

The program has two different levels: Foundation and Practitioner. The XLA Institute works closely with Van Haren Certify to ensure further development of professionals within the industry.

Foundation of XM and XLA® exam

You first need to have successfully completed the Foundation of XM and XLA® exam to obtain the Foundation of XM and XLA® Certificate. The exam procedure is explained in this section.

Practical information

You must pass a multiple-choice exam in which your knowledge of XM and XLA® will be tested in order to obtain an XM and XLA® Foundation Certificate.

All exam candidates will get access to the online exam environment and will need to answer 40 multiple-choice questions within 60 minutes.

You must answer 80% of the questions correctly (or at least 32 of the 40 questions) to pass. Each question has multiple answers where only one is the best answer.

You will receive the result immediately after the exam. (Digital) Access to your certificate will be given once you have passed.

Registration for the exam can be done by purchasing a participation certificate at www.vanharen.net

Number of questions:	40
Time (minutes) for the exam:	60 minutes
% minimal passing grade:	80%
Open/closed book:	Open
Language:	English
Exam format:	Online
Type of questions:	Multiple choice
Are there also negative questions included in the exam? (e.g. "which is NOT a principle of **")	Yes. Candidates are advised to read the questions carefully.

Levels

The XM and XLA® Foundation Certification tests candidates at levels 1 and 2, according to the Bloom Revised Taxonomy.

- Bloom Level 1: Recall & Retention
  We test candidates on their ability to memorize factual information, to retain information by collecting, remembering, and recognizing specific knowledge. Knowledge includes facts, terms, answers, or terminology.
- Bloom Level 2: Understanding
  We test candidates on their ability to construct meaning from oral, written, or graphical pieces of information. This is done by interpreting, summarizing, distracting, comparing, classifying, predicting, or explaining the message.

Learning objectives

In this section, you can read about how the XM and XLA® Foundation exam is structured and which subjects you will be tested on as a candidate. It is also a tool that you can use to prepare yourself for the exam.

After successfully certifying in XM and XLA® Foundation, a professional has demonstrated that:

- He or she recalls and understands what XM and XLA® are.
- He or she recalls and understands why XM and XLA® are important.
- He or she recalls and understands what the XLA® value drivers are.
- He or she recalls and understands the 5 Ds within the XM Journey, and how to use the components that the 5 Ds consist of.

Exam structure

The exam specifications describe the topics in the subject matter of the XM and XLA® Foundation exam, and their relative importance. Questions can be asked during the exam about the following subjects.

Module	Exam requirements	Exam specification	Bloom level	Weight %
1	Introduction to XM and XLA®			30%
1.1		What are XM and XLA?	1 + 2	
1.2		Why are XM and XLA important?	1 + 2	
1.3		What are the XLA value drivers?	1 + 2	
2	The XM Journey			5%
2.1		The 5 Ds	1 + 2	
3	Define			5%
3.1		Scope	1 + 2	
3.2		Commitments	1 + 2	
3.3		Purpose	1 + 2	
3.4		Positioning	1 + 2	
3.5		BHAG	1 + 2	
4	Discover			20%
4.1		Experience	1 + 2	
4.2		Collaboration	1 + 2	
4.3		Business impact	1 + 2	
5	Dream			10%
5.1		Ambition organization	1 + 2	
5.2		Ambition per service	1 + 2	
5.3		Gap analysis	1 + 2	
5.4		Roadmap	1 + 2	
6	Design			20%
6.1		Experience	1 + 2	
6.2		Method	1 + 2	
6.3		Collaboration	1 + 2	
6.4		XLA	1 + 2	
6.5		Experience Management Office	1 + 2	
7	Deliver			10%
7.1		Taskforce	1 + 2	
7.2		Governance	1 + 2	
7.3		Processes	1 + 2	
7.4		Tooling	1 + 2	
7.5		Reporting	1 + 2	

Detailed learning objectives
Here you can find the detailed learning objectives per module.

Section 1: Introduction to XM and XLA®

1. What are XM and XLA? This module covers the basic introduction to XM and XLA, its components and capabilities in business.

Describes the definition of XM and XLA and the components it consists of. It covers the difference between SLA and XLA and the difference between KPI and XI. It describes the difference between O-data and X-data and how the correlation of data leads to the Magic Zone. It also describes the difference between output and outcome together with how experience can vary from person to person, that experience is context dependent, that perspective determines experience and that a person's perception is a reality for that person. It addresses the difference between in-time and over-time experiences and also describes the Peak-End Rule. It covers what an XLA Stack is and during an individual assignment participants complete an XLA Stack on their own, whilst during the evaluation four learning points are explained.

2. Why are XM and XLA important? This module covers why experience is important and how to move away from a bad experience.

Describes why experience is important and explains what the Experience Economy is. It describes the difference between User experience (UX) and Employee experience (EX) and how the service profit chain works. It also describes Moonshot thinking and how to use this concept in practice. It addresses the Watermelon syndrome and how to overcome problems when a dashboard shows green KPIs and red XIs.

3. What are the XLA value drivers? This module covers the three XLA value drivers and how value circles work within a value stream.

Describes the three XLA value drivers: collaboration, experience, and business impact. It also describes why win-win is important in XM and XLA and what the conditions are when measuring experience. It explains the three value circles and how they work within a value stream.

Section 2: The XM Journey

4. The 5 Ds. This model covers the Experience Management Journey and its 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver.

Describes the Experience Management Journey and its 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver and how these Ds are connected. Explains what Service Design is, how a design process works and how to use it in XM and XLA for which an open mindset is needed.

Section 3: Define

5. Scope. This model covers the scope.

Describes what Define entails. Define forms the basis of the Experience Management Journey to steer and improve experience and collaboration. Through this it generates business impact. Define determines the Scope of the Experience Management Journey. This journey becomes manageable through the Commitments toward your customer. You can make it even more practical by defining your Purpose, your Positioning, and a 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal' (BHAG), although this is optional. Explains the Scope and what an Experience Management business case is. Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on the Experience Management business case.

6. Commitments. This model covers the commitments.

Describes what commitments are, whilst participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on commitments.

7. Purpose, Positioning, and BHAG

Self-study Purpose, Positioning, and BHAG.

Section 4 Discover

8. Experience. This module covers experience.

Describes what Discover entails. Discover aims to clarify the existing situation/baseline measurements. Understand the current experience. Understand who the customer is and how the service is experienced today. Explains what a Persona is and how to identify, interview, and observe them in order to visualize and describe the persona. Describes the Customer Journey Map and Service Blueprint. Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on the Persona, the Customer Journey Map, and the Service Blueprint.

9. Collaboration. This module covers collaboration.

Understand the current Collaboration. Understand where you sit in the Service chain and in the Ecosystem. Understand who the stakeholders are and where to plot them in the Stakeholder Map. Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on the Stakeholder Map.

10. Business impact. This module covers business impact.

Understand the current Business impact and that it can be improved by increased productivity and/or lower costs. Understand the business you are in and what elements of value are important to the customer. Participants will undertake an individual assignment on the elements of value.

Section 5: Dream

11. Ambition organization. This module covers the ambition of an organization.

Describes what Dream entails. Dream revolves around the direction, to imagine what could be done given the existing situation and the defined BHAG. Participants in a team of three or four will need to undertake a Use Case. Understand that an organization could set the ambition, both internal and external, for collaboration, experience, and business impact. Understand how ambition strives for "good enough".

12. Ambition per service. This module covers the ambition per service.

Understand what experience you want to achieve and what the Empathy Map is used for. Understand the concept of "jobs to be done" (JTBD). Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on the Empathy Map and the JTBD.

13. Gap analysis. This module covers the Gap analysis.

Understand that a gap is a difference between the actual result in experience and the desired result of experience. Explain how this can be positive or negative. Understand how to formulate initiatives and plot them in a Priority matrix. Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on formulating initiatives and plotting them in a Priority matrix.

14. Roadmap. This module covers the Roadmap.

Understand the purpose and the construction of a roadmap.

Section 6: Design

15. Experience. This module covers the Experience.

Describes what Design entails. Design focuses on creating, improving, or renewing services and experiences in co-creation. It seeks to optimize collaboration and provides guidelines for the realization of the XLA and the Experience Management Office (XMO). Understand why thinking in chains is necessary since many services influence experience. Understand how prototyping can help to predict how a newly designed service will be experienced.

16. Method. This module covers the Method.

Understand that a good measuring method is needed to measure current and desired experience. Understand how to develop a good method. Understand how to collect relevant X-data and O-data. Explain how to use reverse brainstorming to get to the core of what shapes an experience. Understand the step-by-step plan for creating XIs. Understand the two types of survey fatigue and how to deal with them. Understand how to build a good survey including scale and scoring. Describe the different types of O-data. Participants in a team of three or four will undertake a group assignment on creating relevant O-data and X-data.

17. Collaboration. This module covers the Collaboration.

Understand how to improve collaboration with partners in the chain. Understand the concepts of ABC analysis and Leary's Rose. Explain how to establish a Code of Conduct.

18. XLA. This module covers the XLA.

Understand which components to include in an XLA. Explain how an experience is shaped by two sides so an XLA must be drawn up from two perspectives.

19. Experience Management Office. This module covers the Experience Management Office.

Understand the goals and tasks of an XMO.

Section 7: Deliver

20. Taskforce. This module covers the Taskforce.

Describes what Deliver entails. Deliver is about actually delivering, monitoring, and reporting better experience, better collaboration, and adapted services. Understand the goals and tasks of a Taskforce. Explain the differences between a Taskforce and an XMO.

21. Governance. This module covers Governance.

Understand the need to continuously plan, report, and evaluate to adjust actual and desired experience. Describe the three components of governance.

22. Processes. This module covers processes.

Understand why establishing good processes is important. Explain where and how to integrate the processes of the 5-D model into the organization. Understand process guidelines and what gravity of expectations means.

23. Tooling. This module covers tooling.

Understand that tooling enables organizations to measure, manage and, maximize business results by optimizing user experience. Describe four categories of tooling applications.

24. Reporting. This module covers reporting.

Understand that dashboards visualize the results of surveys. Explain the different characteristics of a dashboard. Understand the need to regularly check that previous data correlations are still valid. Participants will undertake an individual assignment on their next steps. Covers what they need for that and what they will achieve.

Key terms and concepts

The XM and XLA® Foundation Certification uses several key terms, concepts, and definitions shown in the list below. You can use these definitions to support and clarify topics related to the exam. However, please note! If you only learn these terms, then you may not be sufficiently prepared to pass the exam.

Key term	Explanation
5 Ds	A series of coordinated phases intended to drive organizational change from a positive mindset. It consists of 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver. These Ds do not need to be followed in a particular order. Depending on the context and situation, you may decide to go back or skip a phase. It aims to improve collaboration continuously, and in turn, improves experience and business impact.
Ambition	A stated desire that can be fulfilled by the XLA value drivers. In the context of Experience Management, there is an overarching ambition for the organization that is based on its core values, purpose, and strategy. There are also ambitions for individual services. In both cases, ambition is specific enough to be translated into XLA goals.
Business Impact	The tangible effect of IT on the business. Traditional IT metrics such as availability and network latency are too often mumbo jumbo for business stakeholders. "99-point-whatever percentages" are meaningless when you don't know the actual impact. Business impact can be both financial and non-financial. Business impact is one of the three value drivers.
Business Requirements	A representation of goals, objectives, and outcomes that describe why a change has been initiated and how success will be assessed. Business requirements focus on the outcome that is required by the business and why this outcome is needed, rather than how to achieve it.
Collaboration	The act of working with someone else in order to achieve something. In successful collaborations, there are constructive win-win situations and agreement about a common goal. Collaboration is one of the three value drivers.
Commitments	Obligations regarding the characteristics and quality of services and the co-creation with customers.
Customer	The consumer of an internal or external provider's IT products or services, that are responsible for the outcome. A customer is not necessarily an end user.
Customer Experience (CX)	A customer's perception of the relationship and interactions with an IT organization. CX of the relationship happens on a cumulative basis.
Customer Journey Map	A visualization of the chronological steps and associated emotions a customer goes through before, during, and after the use of a service. It also visualizes pain points and areas for improvement.
Define	This phase of the Experience Management Journey determines the scope.
Deliver	This phase of the Experience Management Journey is about delivering, monitoring, and reporting better experience, collaboration, and improved services.
Design	This phase of the Experience Management Journey focuses on creating or improving collaboration, experiences, and services.
Discover	This phase of the Experience Management Journey aims to clarify the existing situation in terms of collaboration, experience, and business impact.
Dream	This phase of the Experience Management Journey is about the direction and ambition within the constraints of the existing situation.

Employee Experience (EX)	Employees' perceptions about their interactions and touchpoints with an employer, from onboarding to exit. The digital workspace and other technology services are essential components of EX.
End User	The individual consumer of an internal or external provider's IT products or services that are responsible for the outcome.
Experience	The set of emotions, feelings, and judgments that result from sensory perception while living through an event.
Experience Economy	In an experience economy, it is the experience that determines economic value. Understanding this critical change in the fabric of the economy allows us to rethink connecting with customers and securing their loyalty. The experience economy is the next economy following the agrarian economy, the industrial economy, and the service economy.
Experience Indicator (XI)	It is a metric that captures personal thoughts and feelings The data on XIs is called X-data and should be curated and correlated with objective data (O-data) for proactively managing customer, employee, or other human experiences.
Experience Management (XM)	A set of activities that achieves better experience and greater business impact by driving and improving collaboration. It is a data-driven approach that combines operational measurements (O-data) and sentiment measurements (X-data), so it correlates output (technology-focused) with outcome (human-focused).
Experience Management Journey	An approach for embedding Experience Management into the current operating model and continuously improving it.
Experience Management Office (XMO)	A permanent function of an organization that embraces and practices XM. In large organizations, there may be several decentralized XMOs that are coordinated by a central XMO.
Gravity of Expectations	A theory that states that the experience of a company's performance naturally declines over time. Delivering the same good experience, without improvements or innovations, will not be good enough in the long run.
In-Time Experience	The experience that occurs during an in-time interaction.
Jobs to be Done (JTBD)	A description of what someone wants to achieve by using a product or service. It is a reframing of customer discovery based on why people choose to buy a product or service rather than on shared characteristics of a group of potential customers (aka personas). A JTBD can be formulated with the following structure: When I … [situation], I want … [motivation], so that … [expected outcome].
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A desired target for objective performance measurement. KPIs are based on O-data that have hypothesized correlations with SLA goals.
Leary's Rose	A model for human interactional behavior based on effect and power. It is used for analyzing behavior when communication is difficult or when you want to improve collaboration. It helps to better understand someone and enables a more efficient response to that person's behavior.
Magic Zone	A correlation of X-data (XLA) with O-data (SLA) that provides actionable insights for improving experience.
Moment of Truth	A critical interaction that makes or breaks the result from a business impact or Customer Experience perspective. For mission-critical IT systems, these moments are commonly related to IT failure during daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual cycles.

Moonshot Thinking	A technique for finding a solution to a problem for which no logical solution can be thought of, or for which a logical solution is too expensive. It aims to achieve massive improvements in perception at a fraction of the cost of equivalent improvements.
O-data	Factual and objective performance measurements of IT systems, processes, and service interactions. In the context of XLA, O-data is operational data collected from IT applications.
Outcome	The result for a stakeholder, such as the value of a product or service for the customer. Outcomes are often enabled by outputs. Sound output is always required but doesn't indicate if the business, employees, or customers experience the value. Outcome always outclasses output.
Output	The result of an activity, such as the quality and efficiency of the delivered product and service. Outputs often enable outcomes. IT performance is traditionally measured with output metrics like reliability, latency, and availability. Output metrics too often mismatch with the actual impact of IT on the business and the Customer Experience.
Over-Time Experience	A cumulative set of remembered in-time experiences of multiple interactions.
Peak-End Rule	A theory explaining that people remember the most positive or negative moments ("peak") and the last moments ("end") of an experience better than other moments. It is essential to improve the experience over time to make both the "peak" and the "end" positive.
Persona	A set of demographic and psychographic characteristics that represents a group of people who fulfill a role (e.g., customer, end user, service agent) within a certain organizational context, and which are used to serve that group effectively.
Positioning	A practice that provides insight into the current and desired perception of an organization. Positioning defines where a company's product (item or service) stands in relation to others offering similar products and services in the marketplace, as well as in relation to the consumer. Good positioning makes a product unique and makes the consumer use it as it has a distinct benefit for them.
Prototyping	A development technique involving the presentation of a draft to stakeholders. Prototyping can be used to predict how a service will be experienced without the delay and investment associated with the final version. It reduces risks and improves quality.
Purpose	A reason for an organization's existence that aligns with long-term financial performance, provides a clear context for daily decision-making and unifies and motivates relevant stakeholders.
Reverse Brainstorming	An XLA practice that builds on our natural ability to see problems faster than solutions. Instead of asking a group to brainstorm ideas that would work, the group has to come up with ways that could cause a plan, project, or product introduction to fail.
Service	Economic exchange where actors in the role of service providers and service consumers collaborate to co-create value for mutual benefit.
Service Blueprint	A visualization of the connection between Customer Experience and an organization's way of working. It connects internal processes with customer actions and visualizes the mutual relationship.
Service Chain	A set of organizations in the ecosystem that are connected by provider-consumer relationships.
Service Level Agreement (SLA)	A documented agreement between a service provider and a customer that identifies both the services required and the expected level of those services.

Survey Fatigue	Respondents' lack of motivation to participate in or complete surveys.
Task Force	A temporary team that adopts, practices, and improves Experience Management. Its goal is to rapidly improve experience and collaboration that generates business impact, both inside and outside the organization. It remains in effect until XM becomes business-as-usual with a roadmap, processes, and governance in place. At that point, responsibility is transferred to an XMO.
User Experience (UX)	The end user's thoughts, feelings, and impressions. The term UX is primarily used in IT and is related to the end-user (employee) or the interactions of people (customers) with a digital product or service.
Watermelon syndrome	A situation where service providers show "green" (positive) performance indicators, but the customer's emotions are colored "red" (negative). The watermelon syndrome kicks in because traditional performance indicators such as availability, network latency, and resolution times are useless for business stakeholders and end-users.
Win-Win	A situation where the outcome benefits all parties involved. Each party is happy with the outcome because everyone wins; there are no losers.
X-data	Subjective measurements of human perception of IT systems, processes, service interactions, and business impact. X-data covers a wide variety of themes such as user adoption, usability, and satisfaction.
XLA Stack	A visual representation of how the correlation of X-data and O-data provides insight into how to measure the achievement of the desired experience.
XLA Value Drivers	Experience, collaboration, and business impact.
Xperience	An alternative spelling of the word experience.
Xperience Level Agreement (XLA)	An outcome-oriented document that is a measurable and verifiable agreement between the IT provider and the customer concerning collaboration, experience, and business impact. An XLA can be an integral part of an SLA, an addition to an SLA, or a separate document that overrides an SLA.
Zone of Good Enough	The range of acceptable quality levels to prevent terrible experience, and renounce delightful customer experiences.

Reference literature

The XLA Institute creates XM and XLA literature, and a good understanding of XLA and having an XLA mindset are considered essential for the successful application of XM and XLA.

In the table below, you will find the link between the exam subjects and the items in the list of recommended literature.

Core literature

ID	Source	Link
[A]	XLA® Pocketbook	https://www.vanharen.store/xla-pocketbook

Exam regulations

General rules

An XM and XLA Foundation Certification via the XLA Institute is an widely respected title, and fraud is not tolerated. Your exam will be immediately rejected if fraud is found to have been committed during or after completion of the exam. As a result, you will not be reimbursed for your examination fees.

If you fail to pass the exam, you will not receive a certificate. This also means that you must purchase and take a new exam for your certification. Every candidate only gets one attempt per exam to succeed.

Sharing of exam questions is illegal

It is not allowed to share exam questions with others or make them public. This is a violation of the copyright and IP of XLABS and Van Haren Learning Solutions. Doing so can lead to legal action by Van Haren Learning Solutions with potentially harmful consequences.