FREE STUDY GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

NPPE in Simple English

Understand professional practice, ethics and law in Canada, and learn to approach demanding NPPE-style questions.

For engineers and geoscientists preparing for the National Professional Practice Examination, especially readers whose first language is not English.



Try free NPPE questions

Explore PMCLEAR NPPE

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Welcome

You may already be an experienced professional. Preparing for the NPPE means learning how professional responsibilities, ethics and law work in Canada, and learning how to recognize those ideas in examination questions.

Learn the idea in simple English. Then practise the challenge.

The PMCLEAR guide explains professional practice, ethics and law through clear language and practical examples.

The PMCLEAR simulator uses demanding questions, professional terminology, longer scenarios and closely competing answers. This guide helps you build the knowledge, vocabulary and reading skills needed to approach that challenge.

You do not need to understand every professional term on your first day. We explain the ideas step by step.

Each lesson follows the same path: **understand the idea → recognize the terminology → apply it in a demanding situation**. Every practice question in this book has a complete answer and explanation. Nothing is locked.

How to read the labels

Label	Meaning
Rule	A legal or regulatory requirement, with its source.
Guidance	Professional guidance, such as a national guideline. Important, but not itself law.
Good practice	A practical recommendation.
Depends on facts	A conclusion that can change if the facts change.

This is general study information, not legal advice. Always confirm current requirements with your regulator.

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What is the NPPE?

NPPE stands for **National Professional Practice Examination**. It assesses knowledge of professionalism, ethics, professional practice and law, as described in the official blueprint.[1][2] It does not test technical engineering or geoscience.

Who needs it? Applicants for a professional engineering or geoscience licence with a regulator that uses the NPPE.[2][8] Licensing usually has several parts: your education is assessed, your work experience is reviewed, and you pass the NPPE. The regulator then decides.[2] The order differs: in Alberta you can register only after applying for a licence;[4] Ontario's engineering regulator asks applicants to complete the NPPE before submitting the licence application.[5] Quebec's professional orders have their own requirements.

Why does it matter? Licensed professionals make decisions that affect public safety, property and the environment. A regulator needs confidence that you know your duties before it grants a licence.

The six examination areas[1]

Area	What it covers
I. Professionalism	what a profession is, and the role of professionals in society
II. Ethics	ethical reasoning and the codes of ethics
III. Professional Practice	responsibility for work, standards, risk, documents and communication
IV. Law for Professional Practice	the legal system, contracts, torts such as negligence, employment and other areas of law
V. Professional Law	the acts, regulations and bylaws; admission; illegal practice and misuse of title
VI. Regulation and Discipline	discipline, practice reviews and continuing professional development

The blueprint defines the areas and their weightings. A revised blueprint is in preparation, so check the official NPPE website before you study.[9]

Format, language and scoring

Checked on 8 November 2026

Feature	What to know
Questions	110 multiple-choice questions. Each has four options and one correct answer.[2]
Scoring	Each question is right (1 point) or wrong (0). There is **no penalty for guessing**, so answer every question. A small number of unscored experimental questions are included, and you cannot tell which ones.[2]
Time	2.5 hours. Closed book.[2][5]

Pass mark	A **scaled score of 65**. This is **not** 65 percent: results are adjusted statistically so that every session is held to the same standard. The result is pass or fail.[2]
Language	English or French.[3] Generally, testing accommodations are not offered for English as a second language, because sufficient language competence is a licensing requirement.[2] This guide helps you build that reading skill.
Results	About 3–4 weeks after the exam. Candidates who do not pass receive a mastery report showing weaker areas. Most regulators allow up to four attempts; check yours.[2]

Words made simple

scaled score: a result converted to a common scale, so that different exam versions are treated fairly

experimental question: a trial question that does not count toward your result

Registering and booking are two different steps

Checked on 8 November 2026

Step	What it means	Who handles it
Registering	You apply to write the NPPE in a session. You do this with **your regulator**, by the regulator's deadline, and pay the fee to the regulator.	Your regulator
Booking	After the registration deadline, the exam provider emails you on the first day of the **booking window**. You then choose your exam day and time.	Meazure Learning, the exam provider

> Registering does not give you an exam time, and you cannot book until you have registered. Missing either step can cost you a session.[2][6]

Step by step

1. **Check your regulator's rules.** In some provinces you must apply for a licence before registering for the NPPE.
2. **Register by your regulator's deadline.** Late registrations are not accepted.[2][4]
3. **Watch for the booking email** on the first day of the booking window, and check your junk folder. If it has not arrived three weeks before the exam, contact Meazure Learning.[2]
4. **Book your day and time** in the window. Choose your time zone carefully: a wrong time zone can mean a missed exam and a second fee.[2] If you do not book, you are not automatically moved to a later session.[6]

Dates, deadlines and your regulator

Checked on 9 November 2026

Exam days	Registration deadline	Booking window	Source (regulator)
January 11–13, 2027	November 27, 2026	December 11–27, 2026	APEGA, EGBC, PEO[4][5][6]
January 11–13, 2027	November 25, 2026	—	Engineers Nova Scotia[7]
March 22–24, 2027	February 12, 2027	February 26 – March 14, 2027	APEGA, EGBC, PEO[4][5][6]
June 7–9, 2027	April 23, 2027	May 7–23, 2027	Official NPPE website, APEGA, EGBC, PEO[9][4][6][5]
June 7–9, 2027	April 21, 2027	—	Engineers Nova Scotia[7]
August 23–25, 2027	June 30, 2027	Not yet published	Engineers Nova Scotia[7]
November 1–3, 2027	September 21, 2027	Not yet published	Engineers Nova Scotia[7]

Exam days are the same across Canada; each regulator sets and publishes its own deadline. Confirm yours before relying on any date here.

Where	Regulator's NPPE page (examples)
Alberta	APEGA
British Columbia	Engineers and Geoscientists BC
Saskatchewan	APEGS
Ontario, engineers	Professional Engineers Ontario
Ontario, geoscientists	Professional Geoscientists Ontario
Nova Scotia, engineers	Engineers Nova Scotia

Other regulators are listed on the official NPPE website: nppexam.ca.[9]

My exam record
My regulator
My registration deadline
My booked appointment (date, time, time zone)

Equipment and exam-day preparation

Checked on 8 November 2026

Prepare your equipment[2]

1. **Your own computer and home network.** Work or school computers and networks are not permitted.
2. **A webcam and a stable high-speed internet connection.** Run the computer checks in your booking confirmation.
3. **A phone or tablet as a second camera**, required since the June 2026 session.[7]
4. **Remove or turn off restricted software**, such as remote-access tools, Grammarly or Snipping Tool.
5. **Valid government-issued photo ID with a signature**, for example a driver's licence, passport or permanent resident card.

On exam day[2]

1. You have a **15-minute window** to log on. Connecting to the proctor can take up to 30 minutes: wait, and do not log out.
2. You may take **one comfort break**, but the timer keeps running.
3. Report any technical problem to the proctor **during** the exam. Problems reported later are much harder to resolve.
4. Before exam day, use your free access to the exam interface to practise with its tools, such as bookmarks, notes and font size.

> The official candidate guide is the authority on these rules, and they can change. Read the current version before your exam.[2]

Understanding professional practice in Canada

Engineering and geoscience are regulated by each province and territory. These pairs of ideas are often confused.

A university degree vs A professional licence

A degree shows you completed an education. A **licence** is legal permission from a regulator to practise engineering or geoscience and to use a protected title such as P.Eng. or P.Geo. Education is one requirement for a licence; experience and the NPPE are usually others.[1][13]

Geoscience example: Lin studied geology and worked for six years abroad. Until a Canadian regulator licenses her, she may not call herself a professional geoscientist (P.Geo.) in that province.

An individual licence vs A firm's authorization

A licence belongs to a person. In many provinces, a **company** that offers engineering services to the public also needs its own permit or certificate, with a licensed professional responsible for its work. Ontario calls this a Certificate of Authorization.[13]

Engineering example: a design company owned by non-engineers wants to offer engineering services to the public in Ontario. It needs a Certificate of Authorization, with a licensed engineer who takes responsibility for its engineering work.

A regulator vs A professional association

A **regulator** is created by law to protect the public: it licenses people, sets standards and disciplines members. A professional association supports its members, for example with networking and training, and does not license anyone. Ontario example: PEO is the engineering regulator; OSPE is an association.[1]

Example: a client who believes an engineer acted unprofessionally complains to the regulator, not to an association.

Engineers Canada and Geoscientists Canada vs Provincial and territorial regulators

Engineers Canada and **Geoscientists Canada** are national organizations of the regulators. They write national guidelines and support standards and accreditation, but they do not license or discipline individuals. Each province or territory has its own regulator, which does.[1][11]

Example: an engineer who wants a licence in Saskatchewan applies to APEGS, not to Engineers Canada.

Acts and regulations vs Codes of ethics and practice guidelines

An **act** is a law passed by a legislature. A **regulation** is a detailed rule made under the act. The **code of ethics** comes from the act or regulation, so breaking it can lead to discipline.[1] A **practice guideline** gives professional guidance. National guidelines are not regulations, although a regulator may adopt or rely on them.[11]

Example: a regulator's guideline describes good practice for site visits. It is not itself law, but it can help show what a careful professional would have done.

A professional complaint vs A claim for compensation

A **complaint** goes to the regulator, which decides whether conduct was acceptable and can impose discipline. A **claim for compensation** goes to a court or arbitrator, which decides whether someone must pay for a loss. Both can happen, for different purposes. Ontario example: the discipline powers in the act do not include ordering compensation to the complainant.[13]

Example: a homeowner unhappy with a structural report may complain to the regulator about the engineer's conduct and, separately, sue in court to recover repair costs.

Requirements differ between provinces and territories, and between engineering and geoscience. Examples from one place are labelled, for example Ontario example.

What should I study, and do I need the textbooks?

Resource	Its purpose
The official NPPE blueprint	Defines the content areas and how questions are weighted. Use it as your map of what to study.[1][2]
Official suggested textbooks	Detailed explanations. The candidate guide says most applicants find one ethics textbook and at least one law textbook helpful. You decide which resources suit you.[2]
Free official study materials	Government guides to copyright, patents, trademarks and industrial designs; your jurisdiction's act; ethics and safety resources.[2]
Your regulator's resources	Its act, regulations, code of ethics and practice guidelines show how the principles apply where you will be licensed.
Official NPPE practice tests	Sold at nppepractice.com; built from previously administered questions, with a diagnostic report. The official guide notes they are an approximation, not identical in difficulty.[2]
This PMCLEAR guide	An introduction: the main ideas in simple English, with examples and practice.
The PMCLEAR simulator	Demanding scenario practice with every option explained. It is challenging practice, not a copy of the real exam.

The official suggested textbooks[2]

Title	Authors	Edition listed	Topic

Canadian Professional Engineering and Geoscience: Practice & Ethics	Gordon C. Andrews, Patricia Shaw, John McPhee	5th or 6th ed., 2014/2018	Ethics and professional practice
Practical Law of Architecture, Engineering, and Geoscience	Brian M. Samuels, Doug R. Sanders	2nd or 3rd Canadian ed., 2011/2015	Law
Law for Professional Engineers: Canadian and Global Insights	Donald L. Marston	5th ed., 2019	Law
Practical Guide to Ethics and Professional Practice for Engineers and Geoscientists	Brian M. Samuels, Doug R. Sanders	1st ed., 2022	Ethics and professional practice

Do you need them? The textbooks are suggested, not required.[2] Use them as reference books: when a lesson or practice question shows a topic you do not understand, look it up in the index, read that section, then return to practice.

How the 24 lessons map to the blueprint

#	Lesson	Syllabus area
1	What makes engineering and geoscience a profession?	I.1, I.4
2	Public trust and professional responsibility	I.2
3	Regulators, national bodies and professional associations	I.3, V.4
4	Ethics versus law	II.1
5	Ethical reasoning: duties, consequences and fairness	II.2
6	Public safety under pressure	II.4, III.9
7	Conflicts of interest, gifts and relationships	II.3, II.4, III.2
8	Confidentiality and reporting concerns	II.4, III.1, III.9

9	Competence, supervision and responsibility	III.1, III.3
10	Standard of care and professional judgment	III.4, IV.3
11	Risk, due diligence and insurance	III.5
12	Documentation, review and change control	III.8
13	Canada's legal system	IV.1
14	Contracts and enforceable promises	IV.2
15	Scope changes, breach and contractual responsibilities	IV.2
16	Negligence, liability and causation	IV.3
17	Negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation	IV.6
18	Intellectual property and ownership of work	IV.7
19	Acts, regulations, codes and guidelines	V.1, II.3
20	Individual licensing and business authorization	V.2
21	Seals, titles and practising across jurisdictions	III.8, V.2, V.3
22	Complaints, investigations, hearings and practice reviews	VI.1–VI.3
23	Misconduct, incompetence and procedural fairness	VI.1
24	Discipline, civil claims and different remedies	VI.1, IV.3

Outside this introductory guide (study these from the textbooks and your regulator's resources): Quebec civil law in depth (IV.4); business, employment and labour law (IV.5); expert witnesses (IV.8); bonds and construction liens (IV.9); international law (IV.10); environmental law (IV.11); occupational health and safety and workers' compensation (IV.12); human rights and privacy (IV.13); further areas such as real property and Aboriginal law (IV.14); environmental responsibility and sustainability

(III.6); software and computer tools (III.7); communication (III.10); continuing professional development in detail (VI.4).[1]

How to read difficult questions

Long questions become manageable when you ask the same six questions each time. The Lesson 7 answer in Area II shows the full method on a complete example; other answers use a shorter version.

Ask	How
Who decides?	Find the person whose action is asked about. Answer from that person's position and authority.
What is asked?	**First** and **next** ask about order. **Best** and **most appropriate** ask you to compare good options.
Which duty or issue?	Name it: conflict of interest, public safety, confidentiality, contract, negligence, licensing or discipline.
Which facts decide it?	Mark the facts that change what a careful professional should do.
Which details are context?	Some details make the story realistic but do not decide the answer.
Best versus closest	Two options often look reasonable. Find the fact that makes one of them better.

Small words that change the answer

Word	Meaning in a question
unless	The rule applies, except in the situation after “unless”. That part is often the deciding fact.
except	Everything is included apart from the item named. Check whether the facts fall inside the exception.
may	Permitted or possible, not required. “May disclose” is different from “must disclose”.
must / shall	Required. In legal texts, “shall” usually means “must”.
most likely	The most probable result on the stated facts, not one that is merely possible.

> **No tricks.** Do not choose the longest or the most cautious-sounding answer. Choose the option that fits the deciding facts.

NPPE AREA I

I. Professionalism

What a profession is, why society trusts it, and who regulates engineers and geoscientists in Canada.



Lesson 1 · What makes engineering and geoscience a profession?

Lesson 2 · Public trust and professional responsibility

Lesson 3 · Regulators, national bodies and professional associations

What makes engineering and geoscience a profession?

Goal: Explain what makes engineering and geoscience professions, and why self-regulation must be earned.

THE SITUATION

A technician with twenty years of experience asks: “I know more than some engineers. Why can't I call myself one?”

Understand

Many jobs need skill. A **profession** needs more. The NPPE syllabus lists its features: advanced knowledge that the public must take on trust; service to the public and in the public interest; a distinct code of ethics; long preparation; continued learning; and membership in a **self-governing** organization that maintains standards.[1]

Why does trust matter? A client cannot easily check a foundation design or a groundwater model. So society lets the profession regulate itself through a regulator created by law, on condition that it protects the public. The right is earned, and depends on members taking part.[1]

Recognize

The law defines engineering and geoscience broadly (advising, evaluating, designing or interpreting, using mathematics and science) and reserves the **title** (P.Eng., P.Geo.) and the **practice** for licence holders.[1] Rule

The Iron Ring and the Earth Ring are symbols of commitment to the profession. They are not licences.

Words made simple

profession: work based on advanced knowledge, an ethical code and self-regulation in the public interest

protected title: a title, such as P.Eng., that only licence holders may use

Worked decision

The technician's experience is valuable, but the title is protected by law. Using it requires a licence, which the regulator grants after assessing education, experience and the NPPE. Rule

Your memory card

- A profession: trusted knowledge, public service, ethics, self-regulation, long preparation, lifelong learning.
- Self-regulation is a privilege granted to protect the public.
- Title and practice are reserved by law for licence holders.

Practice question for this lesson: page 18 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Challenging NPPE practice with every answer option explained; deeper lessons in preparation. PMCLEAR.com/nppe/ · *Understand the basics. Master the challenge.*

Public trust and professional responsibility

Goal: Describe who "the public" is, what protection includes, and why professionals are personally accountable.

THE SITUATION

A geoscientist studies slope stability for a new subdivision. The client asks for a report that "focuses on the positives" so that approval comes quickly.

Understand

Professionals depend on the confidence of employers, clients, authorities and the public. The syllabus describes **the public** broadly: depending on the situation, it can include the general public, the client, the employer and fellow workers. **Protection** includes physical safety, environmental protection and economic safety.[1]

National guidance asks professionals to hold **paramount** the safety, health and welfare of the public and the protection of the environment: other duties give way when public safety or the environment is involved.[10] Guidance

Recognize

Professionals are **personally accountable** for their own work and for work done under their supervision.[1] National guidance also asks them to make clear, in every report, which statements are **facts**, which are **assumptions** and which are **opinions**.[10] Guidance

Words made simple

paramount: more important than any other duty

accountable: responsible for your decisions and able to explain them

assumption: something treated as true for the analysis, without full proof

Worked decision

The geoscientist can write clearly and positively, but must not hide or soften real risks. The report should state the findings, the assumptions (for example, rainfall data) and the uncertainty, because approval authorities and future residents rely on it. Good practice

Your memory card

- "The public" can include the client, the employer and workers, not only strangers.
- Protection includes safety, the environment and economic safety.
- Public safety is paramount over other duties.
- Separate facts, assumptions and opinions.

Practice question for this lesson: page 18 →

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Regulators, national bodies and professional associations

Goal: Distinguish the roles of provincial and territorial regulators, Engineers Canada and Geoscientists Canada, and professional and technical societies.

THE SITUATION

An engineer licensed in Manitoba is asked to design a small building in Saskatchewan. A colleague says: “Engineers Canada accredited your degree, so your licence is valid everywhere.”

Understand

Each province and territory has its own regulator. A regulator has authority, given by law, to license, self-regulate, discipline and enforce, and regulators are independent of each other. A licence is therefore valid only in the jurisdiction that issued it.[1]

Engineers Canada and **Geoscientists Canada** are “associations of associations”. They are non-regulatory: they create national standards and guidelines and have roles in accreditation, but they do not license or discipline anyone.[1] Professional and technical **societies** have different purposes, such as sharing knowledge or supporting members' interests, and they are not regulators.[1]

Organization	Main purpose	Licenses or disciplines?
Provincial or territorial regulator	Protect the public: licensing, standards, discipline	Yes, in its own jurisdiction
Engineers Canada / Geoscientists Canada	National guidelines, accreditation, coordination	No
Technical society	Knowledge sharing in a technical field	No
Professional association (advocacy)	Support members' professional interests	No

Recognize

Moving between provinces is easier because of mobility agreements, but you still register with the regulator where you practise.[1] **Rule**

Words made simple

jurisdiction: the area where a law or regulator has authority

accreditation: approval of a university program as meeting national standards

mobility agreement: an agreement that makes it easier for a licence holder in one province to register in another

Worked decision

The engineer must check the Saskatchewan regulator's requirements and obtain registration there before practising in Saskatchewan. Accreditation of a degree does not create a national licence. **Rule**

Quick check · Which organization would you contact?

1. You want a licence to practise in Alberta.
2. You want the national guideline on conflicts of interest.
3. A client wants to complain about an engineer's conduct.
4. You want to join a technical group on bridge design to share knowledge.

Answers: see the answer to the Lesson 3 practice question, page 21.

Your memory card

- Licences are provincial or territorial.
- National bodies guide and accredit; they do not license.
- Societies and associations support members; they do not regulate.
- Practising in another province: register there first.

Practice question for this lesson: page 19 →

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Practice: Area I

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 1

A provincial government is reviewing whether engineering should continue to regulate itself. Which reason best explains why legislatures give this right to the profession?

A. Members pay the regulator's costs through annual fees, so taxpayers do not have to.

B. The work requires advanced knowledge that the public cannot easily evaluate, and the profession commits to regulating its members in the public interest.

C. Universities accredit engineering programs, so every graduate is already qualified to practise.

D. Professional associations promote the economic interests of their members.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 20 →

Practice question · Lesson 2

Nadia, P.Geo., is finishing a slope-stability report for a subdivision. Her analysis depends on rainfall records with a five-year gap, which she discusses in a section on uncertainty. The client asks her to delete that section because “the approval reviewers will ask too many questions”. What should Nadia do?

A. Delete the section, because the client owns the report and decides what it contains.

B. Keep the uncertainty in the report and explain clearly how it affects the conclusions.

C. Move the section to an appendix and leave the conclusions unchanged without referring to it.

D. Withdraw from the assignment immediately, because the client's request is unethical.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 20 →

Practice question · Lesson 3

Daniel, P.Eng., licensed in Manitoba, is asked by a long-time client to design a small warehouse in Saskatchewan. The deadline is short. A colleague suggests a quick solution. What should Daniel do?

A. Proceed, because his degree was accredited nationally and his Manitoba licence is recognized across Canada.

B. Ask Engineers Canada to confirm that he may practise in Saskatchewan.

C. Check the Saskatchewan regulator's requirements and obtain the required registration before practising there.

D. Proceed, and ask a Saskatchewan engineer to seal the final drawings after a brief check.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 21 →

Answers: Area I

Answer · Lesson 1 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Self-regulation rests on public trust: the public cannot easily judge technical work, so the profession is trusted to set and enforce standards in the public interest.[1]

The closest competing answer. A is true in practice, but paying fees is not the reason for self-regulation. The reason is protecting the public.

The other choices. C confuses education with licensing: a degree is only one requirement. D describes advocacy associations, not regulators.

The deciding fact. The question asks for the reason the legislature grants self-regulation, which is public protection based on trust.

← Back to the question — Page 18 · Lesson 1

Answer · Lesson 2 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The report must show the assumptions and uncertainty on which its conclusions depend. Reviewers and residents rely on it, and public safety is paramount.[10]

The closest competing answer. C looks like a compromise, but if the conclusions do not refer to the uncertainty, readers can be misled. An appendix is acceptable only if the conclusions clearly point to it.

The other choices. A ignores Nadia's own responsibility for the report's accuracy. D goes too far: Nadia can first explain her position and keep the report honest.

The deciding fact. The data gap affects the conclusions, so removing or hiding it would make the report misleading.

← Back to the question — Page 18 · Lesson 2

Answer · Lesson 3 · Best answer: C

Why C is correct. Licensing is provincial: Daniel must meet the Saskatchewan regulator's requirements before practising there. Mobility agreements can make registration easier, but do not remove it.[1]

The closest competing answer. D sounds practical, but a seal means taking professional responsibility after adequate review, not a brief check, and Daniel would still be practising in Saskatchewan himself.

The other choices. A confuses accreditation with licensing. B asks the wrong body: Engineers Canada does not license.

The deciding fact. Daniel's licence was issued by Manitoba, and the work is in Saskatchewan.

Quick check answers. 1. The Alberta regulator (APEGA). 2. Engineers Canada. 3. The regulator in the province where the engineer is licensed. 4. A technical society.

← **Back to the question — Page 19 · Lesson 3**

READY FOR MORE NPPE PRACTICE?

You have learned the main concepts in simple English.

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Develop your understanding of Canadian engineering ethics, law, regulations, and professional responsibilities.

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Understand the basics. Master the challenge.

NPPE AREA II

II. Ethics

Ethics is the study of right and wrong conduct. The code of ethics turns it into professional duties: to the public first, and to employers, clients and colleagues.



Lesson 4 · Ethics versus law

Lesson 5 · Ethical reasoning: duties, consequences and fairness

Lesson 6 · Public safety under pressure

Lesson 7 · Conflicts of interest, gifts and relationships

Lesson 8 · Confidentiality and reporting concerns

Ethics versus law

Goal: Explain how ethics, law and the code of ethics relate, and why the legal minimum is not always enough.

THE SITUATION

A bylaw does not require a soil investigation for small retaining walls. The site, however, is known for soft clay. Is meeting the bylaw enough?

Understand

Ethics is the study of right and wrong. Societies develop moral principles, and their **laws** flow from those principles.[1] Law sets enforceable minimum rules. Ethics often asks more of us than the law requires.

Professional codes of ethics sit between the two. They express ethical principles, but they come from the professional acts, so breaking them can lead to discipline.[1] Ontario example: the code of ethics is part of a regulation under the Professional Engineers Act.[12] **Rule**

	Law	Ethics	Professional code
Source	Legislatures and courts	Moral principles	The profession's act and regulations
Applies to	Everyone	Everyone, as a matter of conscience	Licence holders
Enforced by	Courts and authorities	Conscience and reputation	The regulator, through discipline

Words made simple

ethics: the study of right and wrong conduct

code of ethics: the profession's ethical duties, given legal force through its act

minimum: the lowest standard that is still acceptable

Worked decision

Meeting the bylaw is legal, but the engineer knows of a site condition that could cause failure. The code's duties to protect the public and to practise carefully require the engineer to advise the client about the risk and recommend an investigation. **Guidance**

Your memory card

- Law sets the minimum; ethics often asks more.
- The professional code has legal force for licence holders.
- Legal is not always enough.

Practice question for this lesson: page 31 →

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LESSON 5 OF 24 · II. ETHICS

Ethical reasoning: duties, consequences and fairness

Goal: Recognize the main ethical perspectives in a decision, and use them together with the code of ethics.

THE SITUATION
A design change would save $2 million and slightly increase the risk to the few families living closest to a plant. Is the saving worth it?

Understand

Different ethical theories can reach different answers, and each can seem correct within its own logic. The NPPE does not ask you to memorize the theories, but to recognize their principles when they are applied.[1]

Four classical perspectives appear in the syllabus: the greatest good (utilitarianism), duty, rights and virtue.[1] Professional codes of ethics draw on all of them.

Perspective	Main question	In the plant example
Greatest good (utilitarianism)	Which choice produces the best overall result?	The saving benefits many people; the extra risk is small.
Duty	What are my obligations, whatever the result?	Public safety is a duty that is not traded for savings.
Rights	Whose rights are affected?	The nearest families have a right not to bear extra risk without fair consideration.
Virtue	What would a person of good character do?	Be honest about the trade-off and consult those affected.

Recognize

Use the code first, then the perspectives. If the code clearly decides the matter, as with public safety, the theories do not override it. Where the code leaves room for judgment, the perspectives help you see what each choice would mean for the people affected.

Words made simple

utilitarianism: judging an action by its overall consequences

duty-based ethics: judging an action by whether it fulfils obligations

rights-based ethics: judging an action by whether it respects people's rights

virtue ethics: judging an action by what a good person would do

Worked decision

A careful engineer would quantify the risk, check whether it stays within the applicable standards, tell the client honestly about the trade-off and the people affected, and recommend against any change that creates an unacceptable risk to the public. Good practice

Quick check · Which perspective is this?

1. "This plan helps the most people for the lowest cost."
2. "We promised the client a full inspection, so we must do it, even though nobody would notice."
3. "The residents have a right to be consulted before we raise their risk."
4. "A trustworthy engineer would tell the client about the problem."

Answers: see the answer to the Lesson 5 practice question, page 34.

Your memory card

- Theories can disagree; recognize them in use.
- Greatest good, duty, rights, virtue.
- The code's duty to the public comes first.

Practice question for this lesson: page 31 →

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Public safety under pressure

Goal: Decide what to do, and how to escalate, when your advice is overruled and safety may be at risk.

THE SITUATION

Your manager rejects your advice to replace a corroded safety valve, to avoid stopping production. What now?

Understand

Conflicts between **technical authority** (your professional judgment) and **management authority** (budgets and schedules) are common,[1] but public safety stays paramount.[10]

National guidance describes a path when advice is overruled. First, report the possible consequences clearly to your supervisor or employer. If that does not work, a consultant advises the client and an employee informs the most senior officer. If the danger remains, take it to the regulator, even at the risk of losing employment.[10] Guidance

Recognize

Ontario example: failing to act to correct or report a situation that may endanger public safety or welfare can be professional misconduct.[12] Rule Protection for whistleblowers differs between laws and jurisdictions, so check the rules that apply to you.[1]

Words made simple

overrule: to reject someone's decision or advice

escalate: to take a concern to a higher level of authority

whistleblowing: reporting wrongdoing or danger to people outside the normal chain of authority

Worked decision

Put the risk and its likely consequences in writing to the manager, with your recommendation. If the risk is not addressed, take it to the most senior officer. If it is still not addressed, report it to the regulator or the appropriate authority. If danger is imminent, act at once to protect people, for example by asking to stop the equipment and informing those at risk. Depends on facts

Your memory card

- Explain the consequences in writing.
- Escalate: manager, then senior officer or client, then regulator.
- Imminent danger: act immediately to protect people.

Practice question for this lesson: page 32 →

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Conflicts of interest, gifts and relationships

Goal: After this lesson you can recognize real, potential and perceived conflicts of interest, explain what disclosure means, decide whether a conflict can be managed or requires withdrawal, and judge gifts and situations involving competing clients.

THE SITUATION

You must recommend which supplier your company should choose. One supplier is owned by your cousin. You are sure you will be fair. Is that enough?

Understand

Other people rely on your professional judgment because they believe it is independent. Now imagine that you could gain something from one result: a relative owns one of the companies, you hold shares in it, or you hope to work there later. Even an honest person can be influenced without noticing. And others cannot see inside your mind, so they may reasonably doubt the decision.

Recognize

This situation has a name. A **conflict of interest** exists when your personal interests, or your duties to someone else, could affect your judgment, or would appear to a reasonable person to affect it. The conflict exists whether or not you are actually influenced.[11] Codes of ethics require professionals to avoid conflicts of interest or,

where one arises, to disclose it fully and without delay to the employer or client.[10] [12] Rule

National guidance describes three types.[11] They are not separate boxes: one situation can be more than one type. If your cousin's company is a bidder you will score, the conflict is **real** (it exists now) and also **perceived** (others will reasonably see it). A **potential** conflict can become real later, for example when a friend's company decides to bid.

Type	Meaning
Real	Exists now: your interest is connected to a decision you are making.
Potential	Can reasonably be foreseen to become real later.
Perceived	A reasonable person would see a risk, even if you are not influenced.

Managing a conflict: four options

1. **Proceed**, if you and your organization conclude there is no conflict. Record why.
2. **Proceed with confidentiality screens** between parts of an organization. National guidance says this suits conflicts between clients, not personal conflicts such as evaluating a relative's bid.
3. **Inform everyone affected and obtain their consent.** This is often the simplest solution. If agreement cannot be reached, withdraw.
4. **Do not proceed** when a conflict clearly cannot be managed adequately.

These four options come from national professional guidance.[11] Guidance Whatever you choose, you remain responsible for following the rules that apply to you: your regulator's code of ethics, any contract, and your employer's or client's policies. A manager's approval does not replace those rules, and it is effective only when the manager has the authority to give it and the rules allow it. Rule

After withdrawal. Further involvement, such as answering factual questions, must be permitted by the people responsible for the decision and controlled so that it does not improperly influence the result. Good practice

Gifts and hospitality

A gift can create a sense of obligation, or the appearance of one. Before giving or accepting one, national guidance asks you to consider several factors. These include your relationship with the giver, the cultural context, how often gifts are offered and their value. Also consider your employer's policies, the reason for the gift, and whether a favour is expected in return.[11] Guidance There is no universal acceptable dollar amount, and disclosing a gift does not automatically make accepting it appropriate.

Situation	Assessment
A supplier offers coffee and a branded notebook to everyone visiting its stand at a public trade show.	Small, offered to everyone, no decision pending. Usually acceptable if your employer's policy allows it.
A contractor whose payment claim you are reviewing offers you playoff tickets the week before your decision.	Timing and value link the gift to your decision. Decline it and follow your employer's policy, which may require you to report the offer.

A different kind of conflict: two clients. Amir, P.Eng., prepared a site study for a land developer. Months later the municipality, which must approve the developer's plans, asks Amir to review them. Amir must tell the municipality about his earlier work, without revealing the developer's confidential information. He should accept only if both clients agree, and the developer, his first client, should confirm in writing. If either does not agree, he should decline.[11]

Guidance

Words made simple

disclose: to make the relevant facts known to the person entitled to know them, such as your employer or client

document: to keep a written record. Writing is **required** when a law, code, contract or policy requires it; otherwise it is strongly **recommended** practice.

consent: agreement, given by a person with authority who understands the risk

withdraw (recuse yourself): to stop taking part in the decision

impartial: fair, not favouring any side

Worked decision

In the opening situation, you should tell your employer about your cousin's ownership before making the recommendation, and record that you did so. Because the recommendation depends on your judgment and the relative is directly involved, propose that someone else evaluate that supplier or make the recommendation, and follow your employer's procurement policy.

Depends on facts If the policy sets specific steps, such as a written declaration, follow them.

Your memory card

- A conflict is about the risk to trust; it exists even if you are not influenced.
- Real, potential and perceived conflicts can overlap.
- Disclose fully and without delay; put it in writing when rules require it, and record it as good practice.
- Approval helps only if the person has authority and the rules allow it; you remain responsible.
- Step aside when the conflict cannot be managed adequately, or when the applicable rules require withdrawal.
- Judge gifts by timing, value, influence and policy, not by a dollar rule.

Practice question for this lesson: page 32 →

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LESSON 8 OF 24 · II. ETHICS

Confidentiality and reporting concerns

Goal: Explain confidentiality, its limits when the public is at risk, and how to report concerns responsibly.

THE SITUATION

During confidential work for a buyer, you find evidence that contamination is moving toward a town's drinking-water well. Can you tell anyone?

Understand

Professionals act as faithful agents of their clients and employers. Information obtained professionally should not be revealed without the owner's consent, and a former employer's or client's confidential information should not be used without permission.[10] Guidance

Confidentiality has a limit. Where the public is at risk, national guidance asks you first to try to have the client or employer correct the situation. If necessary, you then escalate to the regulator or another appropriate authority. Protect confidential information as far as possible. Do not enter into agreements that prevent you from reporting illegal, dangerous or unethical practices.[10] Guidance

Recognize

Other laws, such as environmental laws, may create separate reporting duties; check the laws that apply.[1]

Words made simple

confidential: to be kept private and shared only with permission

non-disclosure agreement (NDA): a contract promising to keep information confidential

Worked decision

Tell the client promptly and in writing what you found and the risk to the public, and recommend reporting it to the appropriate authority. If the client refuses and the risk remains, report it to the regulator or appropriate authority, sharing only what is needed to address the risk. Depends on facts

Your memory card

- Keep clients' information confidential.
- Public safety is the exception.
- Ask the client to fix it first, then escalate.
- No agreement can stop you reporting danger.

Practice question for this lesson: page 33 →

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Practice: Area II

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 4

Oleg, P.Eng., is designing a 1.4 m retaining wall. The town's bylaw does not require a geotechnical investigation for walls under 1.5 m. Oleg knows from nearby projects that the area has soft, sensitive clay, and a playground will be built beside the wall. What should Oleg do?

A. Proceed without an investigation, because the bylaw does not require one.

B. Advise the client in writing about the soil risk and recommend an investigation before finalizing the design.

C. Refuse the assignment, because the bylaw is unsafe.

D. Design a very conservative wall without telling the client about the soil concern.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 34 →

Practice question · Lesson 5

During a design review, Felix argues that a cheaper outfall location is acceptable because it saves the municipality $3 million and affects only twelve households downstream, whose risk would rise slightly. Grace replies that those households would carry a risk they did not agree to, while the benefit goes to everyone else. Which ethical perspective does Grace's objection mainly reflect?

A. Utilitarianism, because she is comparing total costs and benefits.

B. Rights, because she focuses on what the affected households are entitled to.

C. Virtue, because she is describing the character of a good engineer.

D. Duty, because she is following a specific clause of the code.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 34 →

Practice question · Lesson 6

Kim, P.Eng., a plant engineer at a chemical facility, recommends replacing a corroded pressure-relief valve. The production manager decides to wait for the planned shutdown in four months. Kim's latest inspection shows that the valve could fail within weeks. The manager has not seen this inspection. What should Kim do next?

A. Accept the manager's decision, because production scheduling is the manager's responsibility.

B. Report the situation to the regulator immediately.

C. Give the manager the new inspection results and the possible consequences in writing, and escalate to the most senior officer if the risk is not addressed.

D. Replace the valve during a night shift without approval, to protect the workers.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 35 →

Practice question · Lesson 7

Tamara, P.Geo., is a senior hydrogeologist employed by a regional conservation authority. She chairs a three-person technical committee that will recommend which of two consulting firms should receive a five-year groundwater-monitoring contract. Two weeks before the committee meets, Tamara learns that her spouse has accepted a part-time advisory role with one of the two firms, paid through a fixed monthly retainer that does not depend on whether the firm wins the contract. Tamara tells her director in a short conversation. The director replies that, because the retainer is fixed, he sees no problem, and asks her to continue chairing because her expertise is essential. The authority's written procurement policy requires committee members to declare any relationship with a proponent in writing and to withdraw from the evaluation where “a reasonable person could perceive a lack of impartiality.” What should Tamara do next?

A. Continue chairing the committee, because she disclosed the relationship to her director, who has authority over her work and approved her participation.

B. Declare the relationship in writing as the policy requires and withdraw from the evaluation, leaving any further technical input to be decided and controlled by the authority.

C. Continue as a non-voting chair who guides the discussion but does not score, because her spouse's retainer does not depend on the outcome.

D. Ask her spouse to resign from the advisory role before the meeting, so that there is no longer a relationship to declare.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 35 →

Practice question · Lesson 8

Amara, P.Eng., signs a non-disclosure agreement with an investor to review a manufacturer's equipment. She discovers that the manufacturer falsified pressure-test certificates for units already installed in several public buildings. What should Amara do?

A. Keep the information confidential, because she signed a non-disclosure agreement.

B. Tell the investor and leave any decision about reporting entirely to the investor.

C. Tell the investor about the safety risk and, if it is not addressed promptly, report it to the regulator or appropriate authority, sharing only what is needed.

D. Report the manufacturer to the regulator immediately, without informing the investor.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 37 →

Answers: Area II

Answer · Lesson 4 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The bylaw is a legal minimum. Oleg's knowledge of soft clay, next to a playground, means his professional duties require him to tell the client and recommend an investigation.[10]

The closest competing answer. A is legal, which makes it tempting. But the question asks what Oleg should do with what he knows, and the legal minimum does not end his professional duty.

The other choices. C overreacts: the risk can be managed by investigation. D may reduce the risk, but it hides important information the client needs to decide.

The deciding fact. Oleg knows of a specific hazard that the bylaw does not address, next to a public space.

← Back to the question — Page 31 · Lesson 4

Answer · Lesson 5 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Grace argues that the households are entitled not to bear an unfair risk, whatever the overall benefit. That is a rights-based objection.

The closest competing answer. A is Felix's argument, not Grace's: comparing total costs and benefits is utilitarian reasoning.

The other choices. C and D are not what she says: she does not appeal to character or to a specific clause.

The deciding fact. Grace's focus on what the affected households are entitled to, regardless of the overall saving.

Quick check answers. 1. Greatest good (utilitarianism). 2. Duty. 3. Rights. 4. Virtue.

← Back to the question — Page 31 · Lesson 5

Answer · Lesson 6 · Best answer: C

Why C is correct. The manager has not seen the new evidence. Kim's first step is to report it, with the consequences, in writing; if that does not work, she escalates inside the organization before going outside it.[10]

The closest competing answer. B is a step Kim may need to take later, but national guidance starts inside the organization, and the manager does not yet have the key information.

The other choices. A ignores Kim's duty to report the consequences of overruled advice. D bypasses authority and could itself create danger.

The deciding fact. The manager has not seen the new inspection, and failure is expected within weeks, not hours.

Change one fact. If the inspection showed that failure was likely within hours, Kim should act immediately to protect people, for example by asking that the unit be shut down and informing those at risk, and report at once, rather than following the slower step-by-step path.

← **Back to the question — Page 32 · Lesson 6**

Answer · Lesson 7 · Best answer: B · full question-reading walkthrough

In plain English. Tamara's husband or wife now advises one of the two companies competing for a contract. Tamara leads the group that will recommend the winner. Her employer's written rules say she must declare this kind of relationship in writing, and must stop taking part if a reasonable person could doubt her fairness. Her director said it was fine in a short conversation. What should Tamara do now?

Words made simple

proponent: a company that submits a proposal or bid

retainer: a regular fixed payment for being available to give advice

impartiality: fairness; not favouring one side

Ask	In this question
Who decides?	Tamara: the question asks what **she** should do.
What is asked?	What to do **next**: the right immediate step.
Which issue?	A conflict of interest, and a written procurement policy.
Deciding facts	Her spouse advises one of only two competing firms. The policy requires a **written** declaration and withdrawal where a reasonable person could perceive a lack of impartiality.
Context only	Her expertise, the two-week timing and the committee's size.

Closest alternative	Option A: disclosure and a director's approval are reasonable steps in many cases.

Why B is correct. The written policy sets two duties: declare the relationship **in writing**, and **withdraw** where a reasonable person could perceive a lack of impartiality. A spouse advising one of only two competing firms meets that test, whether or not the retainer is fixed. Option B follows both duties and leaves any further technical involvement to the authority to permit and control.

Why the others are weaker.

- **A.** The closest alternative. Telling her director was a good first step. But the policy requires a written declaration and withdrawal in this situation, and the director's verbal approval cannot set those requirements aside. Tamara remains responsible for following the policy.
- **C.** Removing her vote does not remove her influence. As chair she would still guide the discussion, and the policy's test is what a reasonable person could perceive.
- **D.** This tries to make the conflict disappear by controlling another person's career. The relationship exists now and must be declared; even if her spouse resigned, the recent relationship should still be disclosed so the authority can decide.

The deciding fact. The written policy requires a written declaration and withdrawal where a reasonable person could perceive a lack of impartiality, and her spouse advises one of only two competing firms.

Changed-fact exercise. The policy had **no** withdrawal rule. It required only a written declaration and a decision by the procurement manager. All other facts stay the same. **Does this change the best action? Why?**

The best action changes only slightly. Tamara must still declare the relationship in writing, because the policy requires it. She should then **recommend** that she not evaluate the proposals, because her spouse advises one of only two competitors and national guidance says personal conflicts like this cannot be managed by screens.[11] The **decision** now belongs to the procurement manager, so the best answer becomes: declare in writing, recommend her withdrawal, and follow the manager's decision, unless that decision would conflict with her code of ethics. Option A is still weaker, because a verbal conversation with the director does not meet the written declaration requirement.

← Back to the question — Page 32 · Lesson 7

Answer · Lesson 8 · Best answer: C

Why C is correct. Units already in public buildings may be unsafe. Amara should first give her client the chance to act, but her own duty to report remains if the risk is not addressed. An NDA cannot prevent reporting danger.[10]

The closest competing answer. D protects the public, but national guidance asks her first to give the client the chance to act, unless the danger is so urgent that there is no time.

The other choices. A treats the NDA as stronger than public safety. B gives away Amara's own professional responsibility.

The deciding fact. The falsified units are already installed in public buildings, so the public is at risk now.

Change one fact. If the false certificates concerned prototypes that had never left the factory, there would be no immediate public risk: telling the investor and recommending action would likely be enough at first.

← **Back to the question — Page 33 · Lesson 8**

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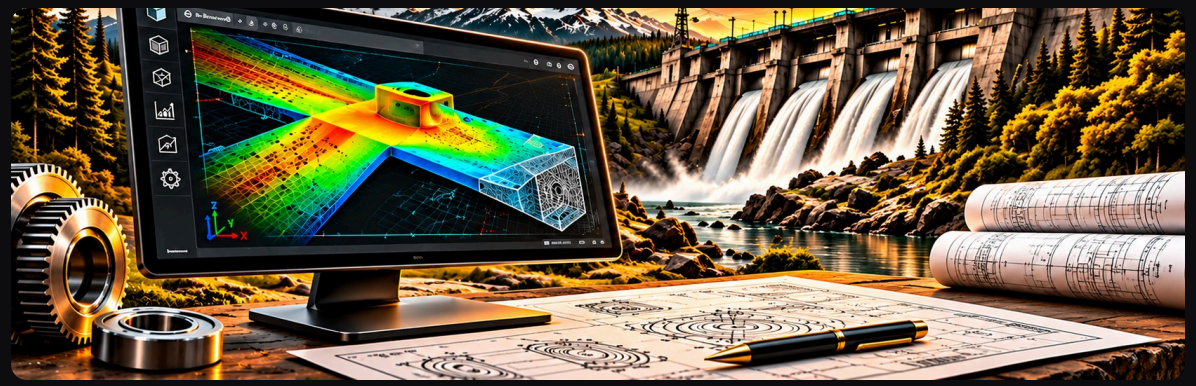
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NPPE AREA III

III. Professional Practice

How professionals take responsibility for their work: competence, the standard of care, risk and documents.



Lesson 9 · Competence, supervision and responsibility

Lesson 10 · Standard of care and professional judgment

Lesson 11 · Risk, due diligence and insurance

Lesson 12 · Documentation, review and change control

Competence, supervision and responsibility

Goal: Decide when work is within your competence, what supervision means, and how to rely on other people's work and on software.

THE SITUATION

You design water-treatment processes. Your manager asks you to design a seismic steel connection by Friday. Should you?

Understand

Practise only in areas where your education, experience and ability make you competent. Telling the client about a gap does not, by itself, make it acceptable to do work beyond your competence: obtain the necessary expertise, develop and demonstrate competence, or refer the work to a qualified professional. Where the required knowledge does not yet exist anywhere, proceed only with full disclosure to everyone involved.[10] Guidance

You are responsible for your own work and for work done under your **direct supervision and control**. A symbolic role is not supervision: the supervisor must really know what is being done, and should limit the number of people supervised so that oversight is real.[10] Guidance

Recognize

Using software, including artificial intelligence tools, does not move responsibility to the tool. You must be able to **validate** the outputs you rely on.[10] When you rely on work by others or review another professional's work, check it is suitable for your purpose, and inform the other engineer when you review their work.[1][10]

Words made simple

competence: the knowledge, skill and experience to do a task properly

direct supervision and control: real, active oversight of the work, not supervision in name only

validate: to confirm that a method or tool gives correct results for the use intended

Worked decision

Tell the manager that the connection is outside your competence, and recommend a structural engineer with seismic experience. You can coordinate the water-treatment requirements with that engineer. Guidance

Your memory card

- Practise only within your competence.
- Supervision must be real, not symbolic.
- You are responsible for software outputs you use.
- Bring in a specialist when needed.

Practice question for this lesson: page 45 →

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LESSON 10 OF 24 · III. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Standard of care and professional judgment

Goal: Explain the standard of care, how codes and accepted practice relate to it, and when you must go beyond a code.

THE SITUATION

Your design meets the building code. A reviewer says a careful engineer would have added bracing for the site's unusual wind exposure. Does meeting the code protect you?

Understand

The **standard of care** is what a reasonable and prudent professional in the same field would do in the same circumstances, judged by what was known at the time, not with hindsight. It does not require perfection, and an honest error of judgment is not, by itself, a failure to meet it.[14]

Codes and standards are strong evidence of good practice. **Statutory** codes are legally binding, such as a building code adopted by regulation; **non-statutory** standards and guidelines are not law but show accepted practice.[1] Codes are usually minimum requirements and may not cover unusual conditions.

Recognize

Following accepted practice usually meets the standard of care, but the Supreme Court has said that a practice "fraught with obvious risks" can itself be negligent.[14]

Rule When conditions are outside what a code assumes, a reasonable professional adapts the design and records why.

Words made simple

standard of care: the level of skill and care expected of a reasonable professional in the same situation

hindsight: knowledge gained after the event

statutory: made binding by law

Worked decision

Assess the wind exposure as a reasonable engineer would; add bracing if it is needed, and record why. Meeting the code is evidence of care, not a guarantee.

Depends on facts

Your memory card

- Standard of care: a reasonable professional, same field, same circumstances, at that time.
- Codes are usually minimums.
- Accepted practice usually meets the standard, but not if it has obvious risks.
- Unusual conditions: adapt and record why.

Practice question for this lesson: page 45 →

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LESSON 11 OF 24 · III. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Risk, due diligence and insurance

Goal: Describe the basic steps of risk management, explain due diligence, and understand what professional liability insurance does and does not do.

THE SITUATION
Your firm has three weeks to design a temporary viewing platform for a public festival. How do you manage the risk?

Understand

Risk management follows a logical order. First, identify the hazards. Next, estimate each risk from how likely it is and how serious the consequences would be. Then decide which risks are acceptable. Finally, control them by reducing, transferring, retaining or monitoring them.[1] Good practice

Due diligence means taking the care that a reasonable person would take in the circumstances. The syllabus links it to three questions: was the harm **foreseeable**, was it **preventable**, and was it **controllable**?[1] In law, for many regulatory offences, an accused can avoid conviction by proving that they took all reasonable care: the due diligence defence.[15] Rule

Insurance	What it is for
Commercial general liability	Claims for bodily injury or property damage arising from a business's operations
Professional liability (errors and omissions)	Claims that professional services were negligent

Recognize

Topics to check for your own situation include whether insurance is compulsory or optional, corporate or individual coverage, consultant or employee status, and the policy's **retroactive date**.[1] Many professional liability policies respond only to claims made while the policy is in force. Insurance pays eligible claims, subject to the policy's conditions, exclusions and limits; it does not remove your professional responsibility. Good practice

Words made simple

hazard: something that could cause harm

risk: the chance of harm combined with how serious it would be

due diligence: taking all reasonable care in the circumstances

Worked decision

List the hazards (crowd loading, wind, foundations, access), assess and control each one, have an independent check of the design, inspect the platform after erection, and keep records of each step. Good practice

Quick check · Which insurance responds?

1. A visitor trips over a cable in your firm's office.
2. A client claims your foundation design was negligent.
3. A truck from your site damages a neighbour's fence.
4. A report you sealed contained a calculation error that cost the client money.

Answers: see the answer to the Lesson 11 practice question, page 48.

Your memory card

- Identify, assess, evaluate, control, monitor.
- Due diligence: foreseeable, preventable, controllable.
- Insurance covers eligible claims, within conditions, exclusions and limits.
- Insurance does not remove your responsibility.

Practice question for this lesson: page 46 →

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LESSON 12 OF 24 · III. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Documentation, review and change

control

Goal: Explain what sealing means, how to control document revisions, and why records matter.

THE SITUATION
A contractor asks you to seal your preliminary drawings now, so that the building permit can be obtained faster. Should you?

Understand

A seal or stamp tells others that a licence holder takes professional responsibility for the document, and that it can be relied on.[10] The syllabus also covers electronic authentication, revision control, as-built drawings, record keeping and control of your seal.[1]

Ontario example: since July 2022, practitioners must seal engineering documents whose engineering content they prepared or for which they take responsibility. They must not seal drafts or incomplete documents. They must show which part they are responsible for, and take reasonable steps to prevent others using their seal.[12] **Rule** Other regulators have their own rules.

Recognize

Good **revision control** means every issued document has a revision number, a date and a clear status, such as “for review” or “issued for construction”. Superseded versions are marked so that nobody builds from them. **Good practice**

Words made simple

seal: the professional's official stamp, showing that they take responsibility for a document

revision: a changed version of a document

as-built drawings: drawings that show what was actually constructed

Worked decision

Do not seal preliminary drawings as final. Complete the design, or, if the permit authority accepts preliminary documents, issue them clearly marked "preliminary, not for construction", following your regulator's sealing rules.

Depends on facts

Your memory card

- A seal means: I take responsibility.
- Do not seal drafts.
- Number, date and label every revision.
- Control your seal; keep good records.

Practice question for this lesson: page 46 →

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Practice: Area III

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 9

Malik, P.Eng., is asked to seal foundation calculations prepared by Lea, an engineer-in-training on his team. Lea used a new geotechnical software package that the firm has not used before. The results look reasonable, and the client needs the drawings tomorrow. What should Malik do before sealing?

A. Check that Lea entered the correct input data, then seal, because the software performed the calculations.

B. Seal, because Lea is competent and the software is widely used in the industry.

C. Independently check the method and key results, for example with a hand calculation or a known benchmark, and record the check before sealing.

D. Ask the software vendor to confirm in writing that the program is reliable, then seal.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 47 →

Practice question · Lesson 10

Rosa, P.Geo., is designing a groundwater-monitoring program for a landfill expansion. The provincial guideline she normally follows assumes porous soil. Her site investigation finds karst limestone, in which contaminants can travel quickly through fractures. The client wants to follow the guideline exactly to control costs. What should Rosa do?

A. Follow the guideline exactly, because compliance with the provincial guideline meets the standard of care.

B. Follow the guideline and add monitoring designed for karst conditions, explaining the reasons to the client in writing.

C. Refuse to continue until the province updates the guideline for karst conditions.

D. Follow the client's instructions, because the client accepts the cost risk.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 47 →

Practice question · Lesson 11

Helen, P.Eng., a sole consultant, plans to retire at the end of the year and cancel her professional liability insurance. Her policy is “claims-made”: it covers claims made while the policy is in force. A building she designed in 2023 could still lead to a claim several years from now. What is the most appropriate step before she cancels?

A. Cancel the policy, because work done while she was insured remains covered.

B. Ask her insurer or broker about extended reporting or run-off coverage for claims made after she retires.

C. Rely on her commercial general liability policy, which covers her business activities.

D. Keep all her project records so she can defend herself without insurance.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 48 →

Practice question · Lesson 12

After construction, a client asks Ian, P.Eng., to seal the as-built drawings for a pump station. The drawings are based on the contractor's marked-up prints. Ian inspected the main structure but not the buried piping, which was installed and backfilled while he was away. What should Ian do?

A. Seal the drawings as submitted, because the contractor has certified the marked-up prints.

B. Review the information sources first; seal only what he has adequately verified or otherwise takes responsibility for under his regulator's rules, and clearly identify the buried piping as based on the contractor's information.

C. Refuse to provide any drawings, because he did not inspect everything.

D. Add a general note that the drawings are “based on information provided by others”, then seal the whole set.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 48 →

Answers: Area III

Answer · Lesson 9 · Best answer: C

Why C is correct. By sealing, Malik takes responsibility for the outputs. With an unfamiliar program, he must be able to validate the results himself, for example with an independent check of the method and key values.[10]

The closest competing answer. A is a necessary step, but correct inputs do not prove that the program and method suit this foundation. Malik must also check the outputs.

The other choices. B relies on reputation instead of verification. D: a vendor's general statement does not validate the program for this specific use.

The deciding fact. The software is new to the firm, and Malik is taking responsibility for its outputs.

← Back to the question — Page 45 · Lesson 9

Answer · Lesson 10 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The guideline assumes conditions that do not exist at this site. A reasonable geoscientist would adapt the program to the karst conditions and explain why.[14]

The closest competing answer. A is tempting, because following accepted guidance is usually strong evidence of care. But the guideline does not address the conditions Rosa found, so following it exactly could miss the main risk.

The other choices. C is unnecessary: Rosa can design for the actual conditions now. D confuses the client's cost risk with the risk to the public and the environment.

The deciding fact. The investigation found conditions the guideline does not assume.

← Back to the question — Page 45 · Lesson 10

Answer · Lesson 11 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. A claims-made policy responds to claims made while it is in force. Once it is cancelled, a later claim about the 2023 design may not be covered. Run-off or extended reporting coverage is designed for this gap.

Good practice

The closest competing answer. D is good practice, and Helen should keep her records. But records help defend a claim; they do not pay for one.

The other choices. A describes how some other policies work, not a claims-made policy. C covers a different kind of risk, not negligent professional services.

The deciding fact. The policy is claims-made, and a claim could be made after cancellation.

Quick check answers. 1. Commercial general liability. 2. Professional liability (errors and omissions). 3. Commercial general liability. 4. Professional liability (errors and omissions).

← Back to the question — Page 46 · Lesson 11

Answer · Lesson 12 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. A seal means Ian takes responsibility. He must review what the drawings are based on. He should seal only what he has adequately verified or otherwise takes responsibility for, following his regulator's sealing rules. Those rules may require him to show which part he is responsible for.[12] Recording the source of each piece of information lets readers know what they can rely on.[10]

The closest competing answer. D looks careful, but a general note does not make it acceptable to seal work he has not adequately verified. Qualifications must be specific, and they do not replace the review that sealing requires.

The other choices. A treats the contractor's certification as Ian's own verification. C is unhelpful when he can issue properly documented record drawings.

The deciding fact. Ian did not observe the buried piping before it was backfilled, and he is being asked to seal.

← Back to the question — Page 46 · Lesson 12

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NPPE AREA IV

IV. Law for Professional Practice

How Canadian law shapes engineering and geoscience work: the legal system, contracts, negligence, disputes and intellectual property.



Lesson 13 · Canada's legal system

Lesson 14 · Contracts and enforceable promises

Lesson 15 · Scope changes, breach and contractual responsibilities

Lesson 16 · Negligence, liability and causation

Lesson 17 · Negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation

Lesson 18 · Intellectual property and ownership of work

Canada's legal system

Goal: Describe where Canadian law comes from, how courts and tribunals fit together, and the main types of law.

THE SITUATION

Your firm has one project in Quebec and one in Alberta. Why could the same contract question have different answers?

Understand

Canada's **Constitution** divides law-making power between Parliament and the provinces. Criminal law is federal; property and civil rights, and the regulation of professions, are provincial. That is why each province has its own engineering and geoscience act.[1]

Law comes from two main places. Legislatures make **statutes** (acts) and authorize **regulations**. Courts decide cases, and their decisions form the **common law**: under the rule of **precedent**, lower courts follow the decisions of higher courts. Every province and territory uses the common law for private matters except Quebec, which uses the Civil Code.[1][16]

Type of law	What it governs	Engineering example
Criminal (public)	Offences against society	Criminal negligence causing death
Administrative (public)	Government bodies and tribunals	A regulator's discipline hearing
Contract (private)	Agreements between parties	A consulting agreement
Tort (private)	Civil wrongs that cause harm	A negligent design

Recognize

Courts include provincial courts, superior courts, courts of appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. Many decisions are made by **administrative tribunals**, such as a regulator's discipline committee. The **Charter of Rights and Freedoms** protects rights against government action.[1]

Words made simple

statute: a law passed by a legislature; also called an act

precedent: an earlier court decision that later courts follow

common law: law developed through court decisions

tribunal: a body, other than a court, that decides disputes under a statute

Worked decision

For the Quebec project, contract questions are answered under the Civil Code of Québec. For the Alberta project, they are answered under the common law and Alberta statutes. Check the law of the place that governs the contract, and get legal advice for important questions. Depends on facts

Your memory card

- Federal and provincial powers are divided.
- Statutes and regulations come from legislatures; the common law comes from courts.
- Quebec uses the Civil Code for private law.
- Public law: criminal and administrative. Private law: contract and tort.

Practice question for this lesson: page 59 →

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Contracts and enforceable promises

Goal: Name the elements of a contract, and separate an agreed obligation from an assumption, an informal request and an unapproved change.

THE SITUATION

The client's site superintendent emails: “Can you also look at the mezzanine? We need it soon.” If you start the work, do you have a contract for it?

Understand

A **contract** is an agreement that the law will enforce. In the common-law provinces, a contract needs four things. First, an **offer** and an **acceptance** on the same terms: a reply that changes the terms is a counter-offer, and silence is not acceptance. Second, **consideration**, meaning each side gives something of value. Third, an intention to be legally bound. Fourth, terms clear enough to enforce.[1]

Most contracts need not be in writing, but oral terms are hard to prove. In Quebec, the Civil Code applies. A contract is formed by the exchange of consents between people with capacity to contract, and the parties must act in good faith. Consideration is not used in the same way.[16] In the common-law provinces, courts also recognize a duty of **honest performance**: parties must not knowingly mislead each other about how the contract is performed.[17]

What it is	Is it binding?
An agreed obligation: scope, price and terms both parties accepted	Yes.
An assumption: something one party believed but never agreed	No.
An informal request: “Can you also look at…?”	Not by itself. It may start an agreement on extra work.
An unapproved change: extra work done without the contract's change process or proper authority	Uncertain. It depends on the contract, the authority of the person who asked, and how the owner behaved.

Recognize

Business practice and the legal position are different questions. Recommended practice is written approval, from someone with authority, before extra work. That is not because informal agreements never count: they can bind if the elements are present and the person had authority. Writing proves who agreed, to what and at what price. **Good practice**

Words made simple

offer: a clear proposal that can be accepted

consideration: what each party gives in exchange: the “price” of a promise

counter-offer: a reply that changes the terms; it ends the original offer

authority: the power to bind an organization to an agreement

Worked decision

Treat the email as an informal request. Reply in writing that the mezzanine is outside the agreed scope, estimate the extra fee and time, and ask the person with authority to approve a change in the way the contract requires.

Good practice

Your memory card

- Offer, acceptance, consideration, intention, clear terms.
- An assumption or informal request is not an agreed change.
- Informal agreements can bind, but are harder to prove.
- Before extra work: scope, price and authority, in writing.

Practice question for this lesson: page 59 →

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LESSON 15 OF 24 · IV. LAW FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Scope changes, breach and contractual responsibilities

Goal: Explain how contract changes are made, what breach means, and how limitation clauses and remedies work.

THE SITUATION

The owner's representative asks by email for extra analysis, “paperwork to follow”. The paperwork never comes. Will you be paid?

Understand

Projects change. Standard construction contracts usually set a **change process**. A **change order** records an agreed change in scope, price and time. A **change directive** tells the contractor to proceed while the price is settled later. Follow the process your contract sets. Good practice

A **breach** is a failure to do what the contract requires. Most breaches give the other party a right to **damages**, money intended to put it in the position it would have been in had the contract been performed. A very serious breach, one that defeats the main purpose of the contract, can allow the other party to end it.[1]

Recognize

Limitation of liability and **exclusion clauses** limit what one party must pay. Courts generally enforce clear clauses, but may refuse in limited cases, for example where enforcing the clause would be unconscionable or contrary to public policy.[19] Rule If work was requested and accepted without an agreed price, a court may still award reasonable payment for the benefit received (unjust enrichment, often called quantum meruit).[18] Depends on facts

Words made simple

change order: a signed agreement changing scope, price or time

breach: failure to perform a contractual obligation

damages: money to compensate for a loss

quantum meruit: reasonable payment for work done when no price was agreed

Worked decision

Record the request, the work done and its value now, and submit a claim under the contract's change process. Do not wait until the end of the project, and keep working while the claim is processed unless the contract says otherwise.

Good practice

Your memory card

- Follow the contract's change process.
- Breach usually means damages; very serious breach can end the contract.
- Clear limitation clauses are usually enforced.
- Document requests and claims promptly.

Practice question for this lesson: page 60 →

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Negligence, liability and causation

Goal: Explain the four elements of negligence and separate what the facts suggest from what still needs to be checked.

THE SITUATION

A floor you designed has deflected badly, and a worker was injured. Are you automatically liable because something went wrong?

Understand

Negligence is a **tort**, a civil wrong for which a court can award compensation. A bad result alone does not prove negligence. In the common-law provinces, the injured person (the **plaintiff**) must prove four elements:[20]

1. Duty of care: a legal duty to take reasonable care. Engineers owe it to clients and often to others who could foreseeably be harmed, such as occupants and workers.[21] **2. Breach**: falling below what a reasonable professional would have done then, not judged with hindsight.[14] **3. Damage**: real harm.[20] **4. Causation**: "but for" the breach, the harm would not have happened, and the harm was not too remote.[22][20]

Recognize

Each element must be proved on the **balance of probabilities**: more likely than not.[23] A client may sue in both contract and negligence unless a valid contract term limits that.[24] In Quebec, civil liability is governed by the Civil Code, so terms and some rules differ.[16]

Words made simple

tort: a civil wrong that causes harm

plaintiff: the person who brings a lawsuit

causation: the link between the breach and the harm

balance of probabilities: more likely than not

Worked decision

Elena designed a mezzanine for light storage, as the owner's brief said, and showed the load limit on her drawings. The owner later stacked heavy pallets, and a worker was injured. **The facts suggest** a duty and damage, but no breach, and another cause. **Still to check:** whether the limit was communicated, whether heavier use was foreseeable, and expert review of the design. Depends on facts

Your memory card

- Duty, breach, damage, causation: all four.
- Standard: a reasonable professional at that time.
- A failure is not proof; code compliance is evidence, not a guarantee.
- Separate what the facts suggest from what needs checking.

Practice question for this lesson: page 60 →

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Negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation

Goal: Compare the main ways of resolving disputes, and recognize why deadlines matter.

THE SITUATION

A client and your firm disagree about a $300,000 claim for extra work. What are the ways to resolve it?

Understand

Most disputes are settled by **negotiation**: the parties discuss and agree. In **mediation**, a neutral person helps them reach their own agreement but cannot impose one. In **arbitration**, the parties choose a private decision-maker whose decision is usually binding. In **litigation**, a court decides in a public process, with rights of appeal.[1]

If a contract contains a valid arbitration agreement and one party sues in court anyway, courts usually stop the lawsuit and send the dispute to arbitration, with limited exceptions. Ontario example: the Arbitration Act says the court shall stay the proceeding.[25] **Rule**

Method	Who decides?	Binding?	Private?
Negotiation	The parties	Only if they agree	Yes
Mediation	The parties, with a neutral helper	Only if they agree	Yes
Arbitration	An arbitrator chosen by the parties	Usually yes	Usually yes
Litigation	A judge	Yes, subject to appeal	No, generally public

Recognize

Limitation periods are deadlines for starting a legal claim. Ontario example: generally two years from when the claim was discovered, with an ultimate limit of fifteen years.[26] **Rule** Other provinces have different rules: check the law that applies, and act early.

Words made simple

mediation: a neutral person helps the parties agree

arbitration: a private, usually binding decision by a chosen arbitrator

stay: a court order stopping a lawsuit

limitation period: the deadline for starting a legal claim

Worked decision

Try negotiation first, using the contract's dispute process. If talks stall, propose mediation. Check the contract for an arbitration clause and note the limitation deadline, so that talking does not cause you to lose the right to claim.

Good practice

Your memory card

- Negotiation and mediation: the parties decide.
- Arbitration and litigation: a third party decides.
- Valid arbitration clauses are usually enforced.
- Know your limitation deadline.

Practice question for this lesson: page 61 →

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Intellectual property and ownership of work

Goal: Distinguish copyright, patents, trade secrets and trademarks, and decide who owns professional work.

THE SITUATION

A municipality paid your firm to design a pump station. Now it wants to reuse the drawings for a second station. Does it own them?

Understand

Copyright protects the expression of a work, such as drawings, reports and software code, not the ideas behind it. The **author** is the first owner. When an employee makes a work in the course of employment, the **employer** is the first owner, unless they agreed otherwise.[27] An assignment of copyright must be in writing.[27] Rule

So a consultant usually keeps copyright in its drawings unless the contract assigns it, and the client usually receives a **licence** to use them for the project. Whether a work was made "in the course of employment" can be a real question, so check the facts and the contract. Depends on facts

Type	Protects	How obtained
Copyright	Expression: drawings, reports, code	Automatically, when the work is created
Patent	A new, useful and non-obvious invention	By application to the patent office
Trade secret	Valuable confidential information	By keeping it confidential
Trademark	Brand names and logos	By use, and by registration

Recognize

A patent lasts twenty years from filing. Public disclosure before filing can prevent a patent: Canada gives inventors a limited one-year grace period for their own disclosure, but many countries do not.[28] **Rule** Authors also have **moral rights**, such as the right to be associated with the work, which can be waived but not assigned.[27]

Words made simple

copyright: the right to copy and use an original work

licence: permission to use something that someone else owns

assignment: a transfer of ownership; for copyright it must be in writing

moral rights: an author's rights to the integrity of the work and to be named

Worked decision

Check the contract. If it does not assign copyright or give a wider licence, the municipality probably has the right to use the drawings for the original station only, and needs the firm's permission to reuse them elsewhere. **Depends on facts**

Your memory card

- Copyright: expression, not ideas.
- Employees: employer owns, unless agreed otherwise.
- Consultants: usually keep copyright unless assigned in writing.
- Patent: file before public disclosure.

Practice question for this lesson: page 61 →

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Practice: Area IV

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 13

A client sues Tomas, P.Eng., in court for the cost of repairing a design error. At the same time, the regulator begins a discipline hearing about the same project. Tomas's lawyer explains the difference between the two proceedings. Which statement is correct?

A. Only one proceeding can continue, because Tomas cannot be judged twice for the same project.

B. The lawsuit is private law about compensation; the discipline hearing is administrative law about professional conduct. Both can continue.

C. Both proceedings are criminal law, because they concern public safety.

D. The discipline hearing must wait until the Supreme Court of Canada decides the lawsuit.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 62 →

Practice question · Lesson 14

Priya, P.Eng., sends a client a fee proposal of $48,000 for a drainage study. The client emails back: “Accepted, but at $43,000.” Priya does not reply. Two weeks later, knowing about the client's email, she starts the work and issues her first invoice at the $48,000 rate. The client refuses to pay more than $43,000. Which statement best describes the likely position?

A. A contract exists at $48,000, because the client wrote “Accepted”.

B. The client's reply was a counter-offer; by starting work knowing of it, Priya may have accepted the $43,000 terms through her conduct.

C. No contract exists, so Priya cannot be paid anything for the work.

D. A contract exists at the average of the two amounts, because neither party agreed.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 62 →

Practice question · Lesson 15

Lena, P.Eng., has a design contract with a developer. The contract names Ahmed as the owner's representative and says changes require a written change order signed by him. Ahmed emails Lena: “Please add the seismic upgrade analysis we discussed. Paperwork to follow.” Lena does the 40 hours of work. No change order is signed, and the developer now refuses to pay, pointing to the change order clause. Which statement is most accurate?

A. Lena cannot recover anything, because the contract requires a signed change order and none exists.

B. Lena has reasonable grounds to claim payment, because the request came in writing from the person the contract names as the owner's representative, but the result depends on the contract and the facts, so she should document the claim now.

C. Lena is automatically entitled to her full fee, because any work an owner requests must be paid for.

D. Lena should stop all work on the project until the developer signs a change order.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 63 →

Practice question · Lesson 16

Omar, P.Eng., designed a retaining wall using a geotechnical report prepared by another firm and supplied by the client. The report stated: “Groundwater levels are based on dry-season readings; drainage requirements must be confirmed before final design.” Omar used the report's values, did not ask about drainage, and his drawings show no drainage system. After heavy spring rain, the wall moved and damaged a neighbour's property. Which question is most important in deciding whether Omar breached the standard of care?

A. Whether the wall moved within its intended design life.

B. Whether the design met the minimum building code requirements for retaining walls.

C. Whether the geotechnical firm that wrote the report is also liable to the neighbour.

D. Whether a reasonable engineer in Omar's position would have acted on the report's stated limitation about drainage before finalizing the design.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 63 →

Practice question · Lesson 17

A consulting contract states that “all disputes arising under this agreement shall be resolved by arbitration”. After a disagreement about fees, the client files a lawsuit in the Ontario Superior Court. The consulting firm wants the dispute decided by arbitration. What is the most likely result?

A. The court will hear the case, because courts always have jurisdiction over contract disputes.

B. The court will usually stay the lawsuit and send the dispute to arbitration, subject to limited exceptions.

C. The parties must first attend mediation, because mediation is required before arbitration.

D. The court will hear the case, because the client filed first.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 64 →

Practice question · Lesson 18

A municipality hired a consulting firm to design a pump station. The contract is silent on copyright. Two years later, the municipality wants to use the sealed drawings to build an identical station at a new site, without involving the firm. Which statement is most accurate?

A. The municipality owns the copyright, because it paid for the drawings.

B. The consulting firm probably owns the copyright, and the municipality's licence probably covers only the original project, so reuse elsewhere likely needs the firm's permission.

C. The copyright belongs personally to the engineer who sealed the drawings.

D. No one owns copyright in drawings for public infrastructure.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 64 →

Answers: Area IV

Answer · Lesson 13 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The two proceedings belong to different types of law and have different purposes: one decides whether Tomas must pay compensation, the other whether his conduct met professional standards. Both can proceed.[1]

The closest competing answer. A sounds fair, but the rule against being tried twice applies to the same offence in criminal law. A lawsuit and a discipline hearing are different proceedings with different purposes.

The other choices. C is wrong: neither proceeding is criminal. D is wrong: tribunals and courts act independently, and a lawsuit rarely reaches the Supreme Court.

The deciding fact. One proceeding seeks compensation for a client; the other examines professional conduct.

← **Back to the question — Page 59 · Lesson 13**

Answer · Lesson 14 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. A reply that changes the price is a counter-offer, not an acceptance. When Priya started the work knowing the client's terms, a court may find that she accepted them by conduct. **Depends on facts**

The closest competing answer. A focuses on the word “Accepted”, but the client changed the price, so it was a counter-offer.

The other choices. C ignores acceptance by conduct and the benefit the client received. D has no legal basis.

The deciding fact. The client changed the price, and Priya started work knowing of the change.

← **Back to the question — Page 59 · Lesson 14**

Answer · Lesson 15 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The written request came from the person the contract itself names as the owner's representative. That supports Lena's position, although the outcome is not automatic, so she should document the claim promptly.

Depends on facts

The closest competing answer. A: change order clauses matter, and if the request had come from someone without authority, Lena's position would be much weaker. A missing signature does not automatically defeat a claim when the authorized representative asked in writing.

The other choices. C is too absolute. D could put Lena herself in breach and harm the project.

The deciding fact. The email came from the person named in the contract as the owner's representative.

← Back to the question — Page 60 · Lesson 15

Answer · Lesson 16 · Best answer: D

Why D is correct. Breach asks what a reasonable engineer would have done at the time. The report expressly said drainage must be confirmed. Engineers may rely on others' reports, but must read and act on the limitations they state.[14]

The closest competing answer. B: code compliance is strong evidence of care, but it does not answer whether Omar should have acted on a specific warning in the report he relied on.

The other choices. A focuses on the result, which does not by itself prove breach. C concerns how responsibility may be shared, not whether Omar fell below the standard.

The deciding fact. The report expressly required drainage to be confirmed, and Omar did not act on it.

Change one fact. If the report had given no warning and nothing gave Omar reason to doubt it, reasonable reliance and code compliance would carry much more weight.

← Back to the question — Page 60 · Lesson 16

Answer · Lesson 17 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Ontario's Arbitration Act directs courts to stay court proceedings covered by a valid arbitration agreement, subject to limited exceptions.[25]

The closest competing answer. A sounds right, because courts do decide most contract disputes. But a valid arbitration agreement changes that: the court usually defers to the parties' agreement.

The other choices. C: mediation is required only if the contract or a statute requires it. D: filing first does not override the arbitration agreement.

The deciding fact. The contract contains an arbitration clause covering the dispute.

← Back to the question — Page 61 · Lesson 17

Answer · Lesson 18 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Without a written assignment, copyright usually stays with the author, here the consulting firm. The client's licence to use the drawings is usually limited to the project they were made for.[27] Depends on facts

The closest competing answer. A is a common belief, but paying for a work does not transfer copyright. An assignment must be in writing.

The other choices. C: the engineers were probably employees, so their employer, the firm, is usually the first owner. D has no basis in law.

The deciding fact. The contract does not assign copyright, and the drawings are being reused at a new site.

← Back to the question — Page 61 · Lesson 18

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Understand the basics. Master the challenge.

NPPE AREA V

V. Professional Law

The laws that create the professions: acts, regulations and guidelines, licensing, business authorization, seals and titles.



Lesson 19 · Acts, regulations, codes and guidelines

Lesson 20 · Individual licensing and business authorization

Lesson 21 · Seals, titles and practising across jurisdictions

Acts, regulations, codes and guidelines

Goal: Explain the difference between an act, a regulation, a bylaw, a code of ethics and a practice guideline, and how much weight each one carries.

THE SITUATION

Your regulator publishes a guideline on preparing engineering reports. A colleague says: “It's only a guideline, so we can ignore it.” Is that right?

Understand

Each province and territory has a **professional act**, passed by its legislature. The act creates the regulator, defines the practice of engineering or geoscience, protects the titles and sets up licensing and discipline.[1]

Under the act, the regulator makes **regulations**, often with government approval. Ontario example: regulations made by the regulator's council need the approval of the provincial cabinet.[13] Rule Regulations contain detailed rules, such as the code of ethics or the rules for seals. **Bylaws** deal with internal matters, such as fees and elections.

Document	Made by	Binding?
Act	The legislature	Yes
Regulation	Under the act, often with government approval	Yes
Bylaw	The regulator, for internal matters	Yes, within its scope
Practice guideline	The regulator or a national body	Guidance; check its stated status

Recognize

A **practice guideline** describes expected professional practice. National guidelines say plainly that they are not regulations.[10] Guidance Even so, a regulator or a court can use a guideline as evidence of what a careful professional would have done. Some regulators also issue mandatory practice standards, so check the status stated in the document itself.

Words made simple

act (statute): a law passed by a legislature

regulation: a detailed legal rule made under an act

bylaw: an internal rule of an organization

guideline: recommended practice; not itself law unless made binding

Worked decision

Tell the colleague that the guideline is not itself law, but it shows what the regulator expects. Follow it unless there is a good reason not to, and record the reason if you depart from it. **Good practice**

Your memory card

- Act → regulations → bylaws: all binding.
- Guidelines: guidance, unless stated to be mandatory.
- Guidelines are evidence of expected practice.
- Depart only for good, documented reasons.

Practice question for this lesson: page 70 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Challenging NPPE practice with every answer option explained; deeper lessons in preparation. PMCLEAR.com/nppe/ · *Understand the basics. Master the challenge.*

Individual licensing and business authorization

Goal: Describe how individuals become licensed, when a business also needs authorization, and what illegal practice and misuse of title mean.

THE SITUATION

A licensed engineer starts her own company to offer design services to the public. Is her personal licence enough?

Understand

To be licensed, an individual usually needs an accepted education, enough relevant experience, the required examinations (including the NPPE), and good character. **Mobility agreements** make it easier to register in another province, but you still register there.[1] Some regulators also issue limited or temporary licences.[13]

In many provinces, a **business** that offers engineering services to the public needs its own authorization, with a licence holder who takes responsibility for its engineering work. Ontario example: a Certificate of Authorization is required, and it stops being valid if no licence holder takes responsibility.[13] **Rule**

Recognize

Illegal practice means practising without the required licence. **Misuse of title** means using a protected title, or a term that suggests you are licensed, without the right to do so. Regulators can prosecute, and in Ontario can seek court orders to stop the conduct.[13] **Rule**

Words made simple

licence: legal permission for a person to practise

Certificate of Authorization / permit to practise: permission for a business to offer engineering services

misuse of title: using a protected title without the right to do so

Worked decision

Before offering services to the public, she must check whether her province requires the company to hold its own authorization, apply for it, and make sure a licence holder takes responsibility for the company's engineering work. **Rule**

Your memory card

- Licence: education, experience, exams, character.
- Businesses may need their own authorization.
- Illegal practice and misuse of title are offences.
- Mobility helps, but you still register.

Practice question for this lesson: page 70 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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LESSON 21 OF 24 · V. PROFESSIONAL LAW

Seals, titles and practising across jurisdictions

Goal: Explain what a seal and a protected title allow, and what to check before practising in another province or country.

THE SITUATION

You are licensed in Ontario and work from home. A client asks you to seal drawings for a building in British Columbia. Can you?

Understand

A **seal** is issued by your regulator and shows that you take professional responsibility for a document (see Lesson 12). A licence and its seal are valid only in the jurisdiction that issued them. Working remotely does not change this: what matters is where the work is practised and relied on, and the rules of that jurisdiction.[1]

Protected titles, such as P.Eng. and P.Geo., may be used only by people licensed by the regulator in that jurisdiction. Using the title where you are not licensed can be misuse of title.[1][13]

Recognize

For international work, you must meet the licensing rules and laws of the country where you work. Your home regulator's code of ethics continues to guide your professional conduct as a member.[1] **Guidance**

Words made simple

seal (stamp): the regulator-issued mark showing professional responsibility

jurisdiction: the province, territory or country whose rules apply

registration: becoming licensed by a regulator

Worked decision

Before sealing for the British Columbia project, check British Columbia's requirements and become registered there. Use the British Columbia seal and title only after registration. **Rule**

Your memory card

- A seal shows responsibility, and only for your jurisdiction.
- Remote work does not avoid licensing rules.
- Use protected titles only where licensed.
- Abroad: local law plus your own code of ethics.

Practice question for this lesson: page 71 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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Practice: Area V

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 19

Your regulator publishes a guideline on site reviews during construction. A senior colleague tells a new engineer: “Guidelines are not law, so you never need to read them.” Months later, a client complains that the engineer's site reviews were inadequate. Which statement is most accurate?

A. The guideline is irrelevant to the complaint, because it is not a regulation.

B. The guideline is legally binding in the same way as the act, so any departure is automatically misconduct.

C. The guideline is not itself law, but the regulator may use it as evidence of the practice it expects, so departures should be justified and documented.

D. The guideline applies only to members of technical societies, not to licence holders.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 72 →

Practice question · Lesson 20

Maria, P.Eng., licensed in Ontario, incorporates a company to design small commercial buildings for the public. She will personally review and seal every drawing. Her first client is ready to sign next week. What should she do before the company offers these services?

A. Nothing more, because her personal licence covers all the engineering work she seals.

B. Obtain the Certificate of Authorization her regulator requires for the company to offer engineering services to the public.

C. Register the company's business name with the province, which is enough to offer engineering services.

D. Sign the first contract now and apply for any company authorization after the project starts.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 72 →

Practice question · Lesson 21

Andre, P.Eng., licensed only in Ontario, works from his home office in Ottawa. A developer asks him to design and seal drawings for a warehouse in Vancouver, to be submitted for a British Columbia building permit. Which approach is most appropriate?

A. Seal the drawings with his Ontario seal, because he will do all the design work in Ontario.

B. Become registered with the British Columbia regulator before practising on the project and sealing the drawings.

C. Ask a British Columbia engineer to stamp the drawings without reviewing them.

D. Do the design but leave the drawings unsealed, so that no licensing issue arises.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 73 →

Answers: Area V

Answer · Lesson 19 · Best answer: C

Why C is correct. A guideline shows the practice the regulator expects. It is not itself law, but it can be used to judge whether the engineer's site reviews met professional expectations.[10]

The closest competing answer. B overstates the guideline's status. A departure is not automatically misconduct; what matters is whether the practice met the expected standard.

The other choices. A ignores how guidelines are used in practice. D confuses regulators with technical societies.

The deciding fact. The complaint is about whether the engineer's practice met the expected standard.

← Back to the question — Page 70 · Lesson 19

Answer · Lesson 20 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. In Ontario, a business offering engineering services to the public needs a Certificate of Authorization, in addition to the licences of the individuals who do the work.[13]

The closest competing answer. A is tempting because Maria will seal everything herself. But the company, not only Maria, will be offering the services, and the company needs its own authorization.

The other choices. C: business-name registration is a different legal requirement. D: the company would be offering services before it is authorized.

The deciding fact. The company, not only Maria personally, will offer engineering services to the public.

← Back to the question — Page 70 · Lesson 20

Answer · Lesson 21 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. The drawings are for a building in British Columbia and will be relied on there. Andre needs registration with the British Columbia regulator before practising on the project and sealing.[1]

The closest competing answer. A is tempting because the work is physically done in Ontario. But an Ontario seal does not authorize practice for a British Columbia project.

The other choices. C: a seal requires real responsibility and review. D: practising on the project is still the issue, and permit drawings normally need a seal.

The deciding fact. The work will be relied on, and sealed for a permit, in British Columbia, where Andre is not registered.

← **Back to the question — Page 71 · Lesson 21**

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NPPE AREA VI

VI. Regulation and Discipline

How regulators protect the public: complaints, investigations, hearings, fairness and the different consequences of professional failure.



Lesson 22 · Complaints, investigations, hearings and practice reviews

Lesson 23 · Misconduct, incompetence and procedural fairness

Lesson 24 · Discipline, civil claims and different remedies

Complaints, investigations, hearings and practice reviews

Goal: Describe how a complaint moves through a regulator, what practice reviews are, and what a licence holder must do during an investigation.

THE SITUATION

A client complains to the regulator about your report. An investigator asks for your project files. What happens now?

Understand

Anyone can complain to a regulator: a client, a member of the public or another professional. The regulator reviews the complaint and may investigate. It may take no further action, give advice or a caution, or refer the matter to a **discipline hearing**.[1] [13] Ontario example: discipline hearings are generally open to the public, and the decision can be appealed to court.[13] **Rule**

During an investigation, a regulator has legal powers to obtain information. Ontario example: obstructing an investigator is an offence.[13] **Rule** Client confidentiality does not normally prevent you from giving the regulator what the law allows it to require.

Recognize

A **practice review** is different from discipline: some regulators review the practice of an individual or a firm to check and improve it, even without a complaint. Many regulators also require **continuing professional development** (CPD).[1] Requirements differ between regulators.

Words made simple

complaint: a formal concern about a professional's conduct or competence

investigation: the regulator's process of gathering facts

practice review: a review of how an individual or firm practises, aimed at improvement

CPD: continuing professional development: ongoing learning

Worked decision

Cooperate with the investigator, provide the records the law allows the regulator to require, keep copies, and answer honestly. You may ask how confidential information will be protected, and you may get legal advice. **Good practice**

Your memory card

- Complaint → review → investigation → possible hearing.
- Cooperate with investigations; obstruction can be an offence.
- Practice reviews aim to improve practice.
- Keep up your CPD.

Practice question for this lesson: page 79 →

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LESSON 23 OF 24 · VI. REGULATION AND DISCIPLINE

Misconduct, incompetence and procedural fairness

Goal: Distinguish professional misconduct from incompetence, and explain what procedural fairness requires in a discipline process.

THE SITUATION

You are told that a discipline hearing will consider both “professional misconduct” and “incompetence”. What is the difference, and what rights do you have?

Understand

Professional misconduct is conduct that the professional act or regulations define as unacceptable. Ontario example: the regulation lists conduct such as negligence, failing to correct or report a danger to the public, and failing to disclose a conflict of interest.[12] **Incompetence** is about ability: practice that shows a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment, or a disregard for the welfare of the public, of a kind that makes the member unfit to practise.[13] **Rule**

Regulators must act fairly. **Procedural fairness** generally means knowing the case against you, having a fair chance to respond, and an impartial decision-maker. How much fairness is required depends on the context, including how important the decision is to the person affected.[29] **Rule**

Recognize

Discipline findings use the civil standard of proof: the balance of probabilities, based on clear, convincing and cogent evidence.[23] Courts reviewing a regulator's decision usually ask whether it was **reasonable**.[30]

Words made simple

professional misconduct: conduct defined as unacceptable by the act or regulations

incompetence: lack of knowledge, skill or judgment shown in practice

procedural fairness: fair process: notice, a chance to respond, an impartial decision-maker

bias: a decision-maker's unfair leaning toward one side

Worked decision

Read the notice of hearing carefully, ask for the evidence you are entitled to see, prepare your response, and raise any concern about fairness, such as bias, as soon as you know of it. Consider legal advice. **Good practice**

Your memory card

- Misconduct: defined unacceptable conduct.
- Incompetence: lack of knowledge, skill or judgment.
- Fairness: notice, chance to respond, impartial decision-maker.
- Raise fairness concerns early.

Practice question for this lesson: page 79 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?
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LESSON 24 OF 24 · VI. REGULATION AND DISCIPLINE

Discipline, civil claims and different remedies

Goal: Compare discipline, civil claims and prosecutions: what each is for, who decides and what each can order.

THE SITUATION

A canopy you designed collapses. A passer-by is injured and a neighbour's car is damaged. Which processes could follow?

Understand

One event can lead to several separate proceedings, each with its own purpose. **Discipline** protects the public by deciding whether a professional's conduct met the profession's standards. Ontario example: penalties include a reprimand, conditions, suspension, revocation, a fine and publication, and the member may be ordered to pay costs.[13] Discipline does not generally award compensation to the person harmed.

Civil claims in contract or negligence decide whether someone must pay compensation for a loss (Lessons 14–16). **Prosecutions** punish offences: under regulatory laws, such as workplace safety or environmental laws, a due diligence defence may be available.[15]

Proceeding	Purpose	Who decides	Typical outcome
Discipline	Protect the public; uphold standards	Regulator's discipline committee	Reprimand, conditions, suspension, revocation, fine
Civil claim	Compensate a loss	A court or arbitrator	Damages paid to the injured party
Regulatory prosecution	Enforce a statute	A court	Fine or other penalty
Criminal prosecution	Punish serious wrongdoing	A criminal court	Conviction and sentence

Recognize

A professional can face more than one of these at once. The outcome of one does not automatically decide the others, because each uses its own rules and purpose.

Words made simple

remedy: what a court or tribunal orders to address a wrong

damages: money compensation for a loss

prosecution: a proceeding to punish an offence

revocation: cancellation of a licence

Worked decision

Expect separate processes. Notify your insurer as your policy requires, preserve all records, cooperate with the regulator and authorities, and get legal advice before making statements about liability. **Good practice**

Your memory card

- Discipline: protects the public.
- Civil claim: compensation.
- Prosecution: punishment for offences.
- One event can lead to all three.

Practice question for this lesson: page 80 →

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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Practice: Area VI

Answer each question before checking. These are original PMCLEAR questions, not NPPE exam questions. Use the reading method on page 12.

Practice question · Lesson 22

Following a client's complaint, an investigator appointed by the regulator asks Sofia, P.Eng., for her calculations and correspondence on the project. Sofia's contract with the client includes a confidentiality clause. What should Sofia do?

A. Refuse until the client gives written consent, because of the confidentiality clause.

B. Provide the records the regulator is legally entitled to require, and ask how confidential information will be protected.

C. Remove the draft calculations from the file before providing it, because drafts are not final.

D. Ignore the request until the investigation reaches a formal hearing.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 81 →

Practice question · Lesson 23

At the start of his discipline hearing, Victor, P.Eng., learns that one of the three panel members is a business partner of the person who made the complaint. The panel chair says the other two members are independent, so the hearing will continue. What should Victor do?

A. Continue, and appeal later if the decision goes against him.

B. Raise the concern about bias immediately and ask that the member step aside.

C. Leave the hearing, because the process is unfair.

D. Accept the panel, because two of the three members are independent.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 81 →

Practice question · Lesson 24

A canopy designed by Paula, P.Eng., collapses during a storm, injuring a passer-by. The regulator opens a discipline proceeding, and the province charges the building owner under a safety statute. The passer-by wants to be compensated for medical costs and lost income. Which proceeding can award that compensation?

A. The regulator's discipline committee, because it is examining Paula's conduct.

B. A civil lawsuit for negligence in court.

C. The prosecution under the safety statute, because it concerns the same collapse.

D. The regulator's complaints committee.

See the correct answer and explanation — Page 82 →

Answers: Area VI

Answer · Lesson 22 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. A regulator's statutory investigation powers are not overridden by a private confidentiality clause. Sofia should cooperate, provide what is required and ask about protection of confidential information.[13]

The closest competing answer. A sounds loyal to the client, but refusing can obstruct the investigation. A contract between private parties cannot override the regulator's legal powers.

The other choices. C alters the record, which would be a serious problem in itself. D delays cooperation the law may require now.

The deciding fact. The request comes from an investigator acting under the regulator's legal powers.

← Back to the question — Page 79 · Lesson 22

Answer · Lesson 23 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Procedural fairness requires an impartial decision-maker. A business relationship with the complainant raises a reasonable concern about bias, and such concerns should be raised as soon as they are known.[29]

The closest competing answer. A preserves Victor's rights in some sense, but waiting can weaken his position: fairness objections should be raised when the problem is known.

The other choices. C risks a decision being made without his participation. D: one biased member can affect the whole panel's decision.

The deciding fact. A panel member has a business relationship with the complainant.

← Back to the question — Page 79 · Lesson 23

Answer · Lesson 24 · Best answer: B

Why B is correct. Compensation for a loss is decided in a civil claim. The passer-by would need to prove the elements of negligence against those responsible.[20]

The closest competing answer. A is the common mistake: discipline examines conduct to protect the public, but generally does not award compensation to the person harmed.

The other choices. C: a prosecution punishes an offence, for example with a fine. D screens complaints and does not award damages.

The deciding fact. The passer-by is asking for compensation for a personal loss.

← **Back to the question — Page 80 · Lesson 24**

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STUDENT TOOLKIT

Registration and booking checklist

Remember: registering and booking are two separate steps. You **register** with your regulator, by its deadline. Later, you **book** your exam day and time with Meazure Learning, during the booking window (see page 5).

Before registering

- [ ] I know which regulator I am applying to, and whether I must apply for a licence before registering for the NPPE.
- [ ] I have read the current NPPE Candidate Guide.
- [ ] I know my regulator's registration deadline for my chosen session.
- [ ] I have budgeted for the fee charged by my regulator.

Registering (with your regulator)

- [ ] I have registered for a specific session before the deadline.
- [ ] I have received confirmation from my regulator.
- [ ] If I need a testing accommodation, I requested it with my registration, with supporting documents.

Booking (with Meazure Learning)

- [ ] I watched for the booking email on the first day of the booking window, including my junk folder.
- [ ] I contacted Meazure Learning if the email had not arrived three weeks before the exam.
- [ ] I booked my day and time, and checked the time zone carefully.
- [ ] I saved my booking confirmation.

Adaptable study plan

This plan is for people who work full-time. It assumes about 5–6 hours a week: three weekday sessions of 45 minutes and one longer weekend session. Stretch it if you have less time; compress it if you have more.

Week	Read	Practise	Also
1	Introduction pages; how to read difficult questions	Area I lessons; Area I practice	Start your own word list
2	Area II lessons 4–6	Area II practice for those lessons	Read every answer explanation

3	Lessons 7–8; your regulator's code of ethics	Area II practice	Re-read the Lesson 7 walkthrough
4	Area III lessons	Area III practice	Note topics you found hard
5	Area IV lessons 13–15	Area IV practice for those lessons	Compare contract and tort
6	Area IV lessons 16–18	Area IV practice	Check your booking
7	Areas V and VI; your regulator's act	Areas V and VI practice	Review your word list
8	Review weak topics from your list	Timed mixed practice (about 80 seconds per question)	Exam-day checklist

Four weeks? Combine weeks 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and 7 and 8. Keep the timed practice in the final week.

A suggestion, not a requirement. Use the official textbooks as references when a topic needs more detail (page 9).

Exam-day checklist

Based on the official NPPE Candidate Guide.[2] Always read the current version before your exam.

The day before

- [ ] My computer is personal, on my home network, not a work or school device.
- [ ] I ran the computer checks in my booking confirmation.
- [ ] I removed or turned off restricted software (remote-access tools, Grammarly, Snipping Tool).
- [ ] My phone or tablet is charged and ready as the second camera.
- [ ] My government-issued photo ID with signature is ready.
- [ ] I know my exam time and time zone.

On exam day

- [ ] I log on within the 15-minute window, and I do not log out while waiting for the proctor.
- [ ] I remember: one comfort break is allowed, and the timer keeps running.
- [ ] I answer every question: there is no penalty for guessing.
- [ ] I report any technical problem to the proctor during the exam.

Readiness checklist

Use this list to find gaps in your learning. It cannot predict or guarantee your result. If you cannot honestly tick a line, return to the lesson shown.

- [ ] I can explain why engineering and geoscience are self-regulating professions. Lesson 1
- [ ] I can explain what “paramount” means in the code of ethics. Lesson 2
- [ ] I know the difference between a regulator, Engineers Canada and a professional association. Lesson 3
- [ ] I can explain how ethics, law and the code of ethics differ. Lesson 4
- [ ] I can recognize the four classical ethical perspectives in a scenario. Lesson 5
- [ ] I know the steps to take when my safety advice is overruled. Lesson 6
- [ ] I can recognize real, potential and perceived conflicts of interest, and judge gifts. Lesson 7
- [ ] I know the limits of confidentiality when the public is at risk. Lesson 8
- [ ] I know what to do when a task is outside my competence. Lesson 9
- [ ] I can explain the standard of care and the role of codes. Lesson 10
- [ ] I can explain due diligence and the purpose of professional liability insurance. Lesson 11
- [ ] I know what sealing a document means. Lesson 12
- [ ] I can describe the types of law and the court system. Lesson 13
- [ ] I can name the elements of a contract. Lesson 14
- [ ] I know how contract changes and breaches are handled. Lesson 15
- [ ] I can apply the four elements of negligence. Lesson 16
- [ ] I can compare negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation. Lesson 17
- [ ] I know who owns copyright in professional work. Lesson 18
- [ ] I can distinguish an act, a regulation and a guideline. Lesson 19
- [ ] I know when a business needs its own authorization. Lesson 20
- [ ] I know what to check before practising in another province. Lesson 21
- [ ] I can describe the complaint and discipline process. Lesson 22
- [ ] I can distinguish misconduct from incompetence, and explain procedural fairness. Lesson 23
- [ ] I can compare discipline, civil claims and prosecutions. Lesson 24

Plain-English glossary

Short definitions of terms used in this guide and in NPPE-style questions. Legal terms keep their legal meaning; check the lesson for context.

act (statute)
A law passed by a legislature. Example: a province's Professional Engineers Act.

arbitration
A private process in which an arbitrator chosen by the parties makes a decision that is usually binding.

assumption
Something treated as true in an analysis without full proof. Reports should state assumptions clearly.

balance of probabilities
The civil standard of proof: more likely than not.

breach of contract
Failing to do what a contract requires.

bylaw
An internal rule of an organization, such as a regulator's rules on fees or elections.

Certificate of Authorization / permit to practise
Permission for a business to offer engineering or geoscience services to the public. The name differs between provinces.

change order
A signed agreement that changes a contract's scope, price or time.

civil claim
A lawsuit asking for compensation, for example for breach of contract or negligence.

code of ethics
The profession's ethical duties, usually made binding through the act or a regulation.

common law
Law developed through court decisions. Used in every province and territory except Quebec for private matters.

competence
Having the knowledge, skill and experience to do a task properly.

confidentiality
The duty not to reveal a client's or employer's information without consent, except where the public is at risk or the law requires it.

conflict of interest
A situation where a personal interest or another duty could affect, or appear to affect, your professional judgment.

consideration
What each party gives in exchange in a contract: the “price” of a promise.

copyright
The right to copy and use an original work, such as drawings, reports or software code.

counter-offer
A reply that changes the terms of an offer. It ends the original offer.

damages
Money awarded to compensate for a loss.

disclose
To make the relevant facts known to the person entitled to know them.

discipline
The regulator's process for dealing with misconduct or incompetence, to protect the public.

due diligence
Taking all reasonable care in the circumstances. Also a defence to many regulatory offences.

duty of care
A legal duty to take reasonable care to avoid harming others.

escalate
To take a concern to a higher level of authority when it is not resolved.

guideline
Recommended practice. Not itself law unless the regulator makes it binding.

incompetence
A lack of knowledge, skill or judgment, shown in practice, that makes someone unfit to practise.

jurisdiction
The area (province, territory or country) where a law or regulator has authority.

liability
Legal responsibility, for example to pay compensation.

licence
Legal permission from a regulator for a person to practise and use a protected title.

limitation period
The deadline for starting a legal claim.

mediation
A process in which a neutral person helps the parties reach their own agreement.

misconduct (professional)
Conduct that the act or regulations define as unacceptable for a licence holder.

negligence
Careless conduct that breaches a duty of care and causes harm. All four elements must be proved.

paramount
More important than any other duty. In the code of ethics, public safety is paramount.

patent
Protection for a new, useful and non-obvious invention, obtained by application.

plaintiff
The person who starts a lawsuit.

precedent
An earlier court decision that later courts follow.

procedural fairness
A fair process: notice of the case, a chance to respond, and an impartial decision-maker.

protected title
A title, such as P.Eng. or P.Geo., that only licence holders may use.

regulation
A detailed legal rule made under an act.

regulator
The body created by law to license, set standards and discipline members in a province or territory.

remedy
What a court or tribunal orders to address a wrong, such as damages or a suspension.

seal (stamp)
The regulator-issued mark showing that a licence holder takes professional responsibility for a document.

self-regulation
A profession regulating its own members, through a regulator created by law, in the public interest.

standard of care
What a reasonable and prudent professional in the same field would do in the same circumstances, at that time.

tort
A civil wrong that causes harm, such as negligence.

tribunal
A body, other than a court, that decides disputes under a statute, such as a discipline committee.

whistleblowing
Reporting wrongdoing or danger to people outside the normal chain of authority.

References

Sources checked 8–9 November 2026 · Edition 1.0. Numbers in the text link to these sources. Rules and dates change: confirm current requirements with your regulator. This guide gives general information, not legal advice.

[1] NPPE syllabus (2017) with additional descriptions, published by Professional Engineers Ontario

[2] NPPE Candidate Guide, version 17 (draft date December 11, 2025), published by Professional Engineers Ontario

[3] APEGS, NPPE application guide (language of the exam)

[4] APEGA, National Professional Practice Exam: registration, dates and booking windows

[5] Professional Engineers Ontario, National Professional Practice Exam

[6] Engineers and Geoscientists BC, National Professional Practice Examination

[7] Engineers Nova Scotia, NPPE: 2026–2027 schedule and second-camera requirement

[8] Professional Geoscientists Ontario, Professional practice examination

[9] Official NPPE website

[10] Engineers Canada, Guideline on the code of ethics (2024)

[11] Engineers Canada, Guideline on conflict of interest (July 2024)

[12] Ontario example: R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 941 under the Professional Engineers Act, s.53 (seals, as amended by O. Reg. 837/21, in force July 1, 2022), s.72 (professional misconduct) and s.77 (code of ethics)

[13] Ontario example: Professional Engineers Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.28, current consolidation (e-Laws)

[14] ter Neuzen v. Korn, [1995] 3 SCR 674, 1995 CanLII 72 (SCC): standard of care; accepted practice

[15] R. v. Sault Ste. Marie, [1978] 2 SCR 1299, 1978 CanLII 11 (SCC): strict liability and the due diligence defence

[16] Civil Code of Québec (contract formation, good faith, civil liability)

[17] Bhasin v. Hrynew, 2014 SCC 71: duty of honest performance

[18] Garland v. Consumers' Gas Co., 2004 SCC 25: unjust enrichment

[19] Tercon Contractors Ltd. v. British Columbia, 2010 SCC 4: enforceability of exclusion clauses

[20] Mustapha v. Culligan of Canada Ltd., 2008 SCC 27: elements of negligence; remoteness

[21] Cooper v. Hobart, 2001 SCC 79: duty of care in new situations

[22] Clements v. Clements, 2012 SCC 32: the “but for” test

[23] F.H. v. McDougall, 2008 SCC 53: the civil standard of proof

[24] BG Checo International Ltd. v. British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, [1993] 1 SCR 12: claims in contract and in negligence

[25] Ontario example: Arbitration Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, c. 17, s.7 (stay of court proceedings)

[26] Ontario example: Limitations Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 24, Sched. B, ss.4 and 15 (basic and ultimate limitation periods)

[27] Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-42 (official consolidation, current to 2026), ss.13 and 14.1

[28] Patent Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-4 (official consolidation)

[29] Baker v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration), [1999] 2 SCR 817, 1999 CanLII 699 (SCC): procedural fairness

[30] Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration) v. Vavilov, 2019 SCC 65: review of administrative decisions for reasonableness

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