

# International Technical Rescue Association



## Assessment Charter

## Document Control

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## General principles

The ITRA Assessment Charter provides the policy to underpin the assessment methodology undertaken when students and candidate instructors are assessed against its qualifications.

The Assessment Charter is divided into general principles and discipline specific aspects known as Assessment Sub Charters.

The general principles apply regardless of discipline:

### Scope

- Assessment is present so that students and candidate instructors can demonstrate performance in accordance with the ITRA standards.
- Students shall not be assessed on anything outside the relevant Learning Objectives.
- Assessment consists of practical and theoretical components.
- The assessment process is designed to assess competence and will take the form of oral, practical, observational or any other reliable and objective means.
- Assessments are based on the achieved outcomes demonstrated by the student. Outcome-based assessment does not detail the exact method the student must adopt.
- For qualification assessments, direct entry is allowed at any level and a student may elect to enter an assessment at any level. However, any prerequisite learning objectives must also be assessed if not demonstrated as a lesser included component at the target level.
- The assessment decision is not restricted to the level the student has elected to complete. For example, if a student wishes to be assessed at Level 3 and is deemed not yet competent (fail) in any Level 3 Learning Objectives, if they pass all Level 1 & 2 Learning Outcomes, they may attain a Level 2 qualification.
- Each discipline has prepared a specific assessment sub-charter as well as a discrepancies addendum (included in this document). Discrepancies are classified as major or minor discrepancies.
- A major discrepancy is a violation that is life threatening or destructive to property. Award of a single major discrepancy will terminate the assessment, and the entire assessment must be retaken.
- Minor discrepancies are awarded for instances that may lead to unsafe situations. Being awarded three or more minor discrepancies constitutes failure of the assessment, which must then be redone in its entirety.
- Failure to complete a task / learning outcome constitutes a minor deficiency (either unable to complete the task or unable to complete it in the allotted time.) An assessment task/LO failed for this reason may be re-attempted a second time provided there were no major discrepancies involved.
- A candidate may re-attempt up to TWO assessment tasks/LO's during an assessment that were incomplete to standard. They do not have to re-take the entire assessment.
- Failing/incompletes of three or more assessment tasks/LO's constitutes an overall fail and the entire assessment must be redone.
- An individual assessment task/LO may only be re-attempted once. If the task/LO is incomplete or failed a second time, the assessment is over and must be retaken in its entirety.
- There is no mandatory waiting period for a re-attempt at an incomplete assessment task/LO or to redo the entire assessment. In the event of an entire reassessment being required, if there is not enough time allotted to redo the entire assessment, the candidate will have to make separate arrangements to be reassessed. This may involve additional assessment fees as per arrangements with the assessor. (ITRA does not prescribe assessment fees.)

## Independence / Assessment Models

ITRA Instructors are deemed suitable to carry out the assessment of ITRA qualification courses/direct entry assessments for learning objectives in the technician levels for their respective discipline(s). Only ITRA assessors may assess/reassess instructors and assessors as such. There are separate learning objectives that apply specifically to instructor and assessor qualifications.

In all cases, assessments must be conducted using one of the approved assessment models below. Total independence remains the goal model and is the default technique. However, ITRA recognizes that certain situations will not realistically allow for this and/or that certain disciplines may either not have enough instructors or assessors reasonably available, may have restrictions based on travel, security clearances, etc., may require a team-based assessment model for tasks that cannot be completed by a single candidate, or must be evaluated in context to the actions/reactions of others.

- The assessment (theory & practical) must be independently assessed. For example, with a course of 12 students with two instructors, the course may be split into two groups with one instructor delivering the training to each group of six. The instructors then exchange groups for the assessment process, so they are not assessing the candidates they trained. To allow flexibility in session planning, individual or groups of objectives can also be assessed independently as opposed to an entire course. For example, an instructor may deliver one session consisting of a single or a number of objectives, but then another instructor must conduct the assessment.

In addition, Instructors:

- Shall not be from the same family (within two degrees of separation or less) and/or must not have had any commercial relationship with them or their employer/organization for a specified time (90 days).
- Must disclose any conflicts of interest and record these on the assessment documentation.
- Should provide clear instructions and remember that they are there to assess the student, not to coach or assist in any way.
- Shall not influence the outcome of the assessment in any way, even if other activities may take place at the training venue.

Five assessment models may be considered by ITRA instructors and assessors. Models 1 and 2 are considered default models and are preferred whenever possible. Use of other models must be specified in a discipline sub-charter, stating the conditions for its use, or establishing benchmarks for numbers of instructors and assessors in a region that would mandate the use of models 1 or 2.

1. True total independence: Instructor/assessor performing the assessment has had no contact with the candidates within 90 days and has no conflicts of interests as described above.
  - Example: A course is run by instructors A and B and at the conclusion, Assessor X shows up, having never seen anyone or the training, and assesses everyone.
  - Considerations: Can add an additional expense to bring in an additional assessor. Assessor has seen nothing of the class and may not understand the context of what is being taught or the specific customizations in practice by that agency or industry. Instructor may brief the assessor as to any accepted or agreed upon customized practices.

2. Split Instruction / Assessment: The course is split into half or thirds. Each group is taught by their own instructor. For the assessment, the instructors switch groups to assess a group they did not instruct.
  - Example: A level three rope qualification course has 15 students. Class is divided into three groups of five. Instructors A, B, and C each take a group and deliver the entire content. For assessments, instructors rotate groups and assess a segment of the class they did not teach.
  - Considerations: Can save money by not having to bring in a separate assessor. Even though the three instructors teach separately, they will more typically understand the context and oddities of that course and the students.
  - Effort must be made to maintain impartiality, especially if socializing after hours.
  
3. Split by Learning Objectives: Learning objectives (or clusters of them) are taught and assessed by different instructors/assessors during the course or class. In disciplines where there are many TEAM BASED skills to be assessed (tactical, USAR, swift water, etc.), there is a high burden of demonstration and/or a need for a large number of instructors given the risk analysis (i.e., tactical can easily be a 2 to 1 student to instructor ratio in some cases), and all students will receive some instruction from all instructors but will have their LO's taught and assessed by different cadre.
  - Example: Instructor A teaches student Q how to pass a knot. Instructor B teaches student Q how to inspect a system for deficiencies. Instructor/assessor A will assess student Q on system deficiencies, and instructor/assessor B will assess student Q on knot pass. In other words, instructors will not assess an LO they taught.
  - Considerations: This allows for situations where there is a paucity of instructor-assessors regionally or a need for multiple instructors to teach or witness students doing high risk tasks or team-based skill training (or where certain LO's can only be taught or performed by very few select instructors).
  - This requires a strong commitment to professional impartiality. It is also more administratively complex to track and set up who teaches and assesses what LO's. Must have a good course coordinator (This has been common practice with Tactical thus far and is a global best practice with military, law enforcement, and many mountain rescue organizations).
  
4. Exceptional Circumstance Model: If a special situation is anticipated at a certain venue where one of the above assessment models is not suitable, a proposal may be submitted to the relevant working group for review at least 60 days in advance of the proposed training/assessment. The reason none of the pre-approved assessment models will work must be articulated in detail. The assessment plan must be described in as much detail as possible. The working group will make a recommendation about the proposed custom assessment model and forward it to the board of directors for final review and disposition. A robust justification will be needed to obtain permission to *not* use one of the pre-approved models, but ITRA recognizes that in some special cases, the needs of the host nation or student group may benefit from it.
  
5. Team-Based Assessment (TBA) model:  
 For some disciplines (e.g., USAR, Swift water, and Tactical), some learning objectives either cannot be performed alone or the skills are graded in context with performance with

adjacent operators. In these cases, candidates will be assessed as a group/team and will ALL pass or fail together. Learning objectives with this requirement should be listed in the qualification syllabus as TBA, and this should also be mentioned in the comments section for each learning objective in ITM.

For TBA learning objectives, the same assessment models/requirements apply as above.

## **Safety**

- The assessment should be carried out with an appropriate number of students. This will vary from discipline to discipline but should ensure that a thorough assessment has occurred of each individual and cover all objectives.
- Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment must be worn at all times.
- Students must be reminded that they are required to be physically and medically fit to carry out the assessment.
- The instructor should be satisfied that the student has the aptitude to work in the expected conditions expected, for example, at height, in moving water or confined spaces.
- Manual handling should be considered with regards to the activity, including the handling of live casualties or dummies.
- If using a live casualty, this must be specifically addressed in the risk assessment.
- Safety as well as comfort should be considered when using live casualties. They should have appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, be dressed appropriately for the environment, and safety should be a priority at all times.
- The use of dummies should be realistic to the task or activity but not excessive. For example, a dummy of 70kg should be acceptable to simulate an adult.
- The use of live casualties should only be used where necessary to fulfil specific outcomes.
- Safety signage or demarcation should be provided where appropriate.
- Risk assessments and safety procedures relating to the site, the activity, and equipment used must be in place, up to date, and available for all personnel to see.
- An emergency medical capability and procedures must be present, which must include a rescue capability.
- Suitable conditions must be present for the assessment to take place.
- Students must be adequately supervised.
- The assessment may be stopped at any time on the grounds of safety.
- A safety briefing must be given prior to the assessment taking place.

## **Equipment**

- Any equipment used must be serviceable, traceable and comply with any relevant requirements (e.g., rope access/lifting equipment must be marked for traceability and have inspection records). Where appropriate, equipment should have load markings visible.
- Where students supply their own equipment, it must meet the same criteria as above.
- Equipment provided must be capable of sustaining the number of students under assessment.
- Proprietary equipment must not be specified for use in the assessment (i.e., specific make of equipment).
- Students should only use equipment on which they have been trained.
- Equipment should be stored appropriately and securely.

## **Training Site and Facilities**

- The site, training rigs, and training areas must be capable of sustaining the number of students under assessment.
- Welfare facilities should be provided (toilets/washrooms/showers/eating areas etc.).
- Adequate lighting should be in place.
- Classroom facilities should be provided for the knowledge assessment.
- Adjacent training should not conflict with the assessment with regards to distraction and noise levels.
- The environment must be as safe as reasonably expected for an assessment but provide sufficient challenges to ensure the assessment reflects real world conditions. The environment must also be protected from the activities of the assessment.

## **Other Assessment Parameters**

- The Assessor must explain the marking system to the student before the assessment begins.
- Assessment instruments must be approved prior to use by the Association. The Association provides theory assessments; however, instructors may develop and submit their own assessment instruments where required to allow for language, laws, incident management systems, and contextual requirements (i.e., urban versus remote).
- Assessment evidence is maintained for audit and review for 12 months. Evidence used in an assessment decision from checklists, theory assessments or other such approved assessment instruments must be kept for external review. It is recommended that video and/or photographic evidence is taken with consent during assessment.
- Students have the right to appeal an assessment decision. Students are protected and supported in their appeal efforts, and the appeal process is to be made clear prior to assessment. The Board of Directors will list on the website a contact for appealing assessments
- Assessments are focused on technical skills, not language skills. Accommodation for translation is to be supported where required. Though students may have to interpret written documents, they are not required to be in English.
- Signals and markings used should meet local requirements unless otherwise specified. Whistle signals, hand signals, colour coding, and building markings should be consistent to with recognized international, federal, regional, or local protocol unless specified otherwise by the assessment.
- The assessment discrepancy lists, approved by the discipline working group and board of directors should be used to assist with the assessment. Each discipline has its own discrepancy list.
- The instructor providing the training is responsible for providing the necessary resources for the assessment to take place. Where an individual, or group of individuals, are requiring direct entry to assessment, they will be responsible for the provision of resources.
- Assessment is used to provide feedback for development. It is expected that the instructor carrying out the assessment will use it to also provide feedback to students for their development, regardless of assessment outcome.
- The instructor carrying out the assessment may consult with the student's instructor prior to the assessment (whether they are qualified with ITRA or not) to clarify technical matters or approaches likely to be used. Such consultation should not lead to pre-determining the student's level of competence.
- Instructors carrying out the assessment shall notify the Association of the assessment outcome within seven days of the assessment.



- Only those who demonstrate competence are awarded certification.
- Feedback will be provided to each student.
- The Assessment Sub-Charter for each discipline must be followed.

## Discipline Specific Sub-charters and Discrepancy Addendums

### 1. Rope Rescue

#### Sub-charter

##### **Rope Rescue Principles**

1. Rope rescue systems shall consist of at least two ropes where it does not interfere with the technique.
2. Rope functions may be inter-changeable. The function (belay, lower, raise, etc.) of the ropes may be inter-changeable during an evolution.
3. Rope systems shall pass the *hands-off test*. If all persons are “hands-off”, rope systems shall limit any free fall without compromising the safety of the load.
4. Rope rescue systems shall incorporate appropriate redundancy. Exceptions on two independent points may be done if this is the agreed technique and additional risk assessment is provided.
5. Rope systems construction and strength. Rope systems utilized in an assessment shall be constructed with adequate strength for managing a rescue load of a minimum of 200 kg (approximately 440 lbs). Additionally, rope system construction/strength shall incorporate adequate passive redundancy (i.e., additional margin) in the event of unexpected dynamic loading.
6. Assessor to candidate ratios. Assessors shall not assess more than 8 candidates per day.
7. Time limit during tasks. Tasks must be completed in a realistic timely manner showing continuous progress. Failure to show continual progress will result in a failure to complete the task.
8. Systems must not cause harm to the patient. Steps must be taken to mitigate the potential to exacerbate injuries to the patient. Techniques performed must not put the patient in danger of additional injuries.

#### Discrepancies

##### **Major Discrepancies (F)**

Major Discrepancies are awarded for any single event that may lead to loss of life, injury, gear failure, or damage. Awarding a single Major (F) will result in the termination of the assessment.

1. **F1 Less than two independent points of attachment during suspended works if this is the agreed protocol.** At all times during suspension, the candidate/victim needs to be attached to two separate ropes/rope systems. If this is not possible because of the technique being performed, then an appropriate risk assessment must be performed, and potential hazards must be mitigated.
2. **F2 Excessive time taken over entire assessment.** Excessive time may be indicative of either poor technique or lack of fitness for the required tasks. The time allowed for assessment shall be determined by the assessor.
3. **F3 Task not completed.** Candidates need to ensure they receive training to address all aspects of the assessment. If a candidate has a task set for their level, and this is not completed – whether the candidate gives up or is stopped by the assessor, a major will be awarded.
4. **F4 Harness un-secured, cows-tails/lanyards tied or attached incorrectly.** Any load-bearing connection to the harness shall be connected in a secure manner. This will also include any tied direct connection.
5. **F5 No helmet in hot zone.** An appropriate helmet must be worn anytime the candidate is exposed to a hazard – this may be from objects falling from above or when there is any fall potential.

6. **F6 Equipment used incorrectly.** Equipment needs to be used in a manner that does not defeat the function of the device. Potential loads applied must not exceed the rating of the device used.
7. **F7 Descender threaded or attached incorrectly AND loaded.** Loading a descender on a rope incorrectly and then loading it with the intention of use shall be viewed as device that can't be operated correctly. This device can't be counted as a point of attachment to the rope.
8. **F8 No or inappropriate safety equipment used on an unprotected edge.** Candidates must have a full understanding and awareness fall hazards. This may include:
  - Fall arrest systems.
  - Different types of fall protection.
  - How to protect yourself when going from fall-arrest to rope-suspension or vice versa.
9. **F9 Swinging or uncontrolled moves that may cause injury or damage equipment.** Swinging or uncontrolled movement that may cause injury to yourself or others or damage to equipment must not occur. Typical areas of concern are:
  - Edge mobility.
  - Deviations.
  - Cross hauls.
  - Rope-to-rope transfers.
  - Highlines.
  - Tensioned lines and Skate Blocks.
  - Swing falls of more than 600mm (loss of height).
10. **F10 Poor technique or incorrect use of equipment that may be unsafe.** At no stage should the candidate place anyone at risk of injury through poor technique or poor use of equipment. Some examples may include:
  - Attaching to non-rated points on a harness.
  - Allowing a fall potential to develop during a rescue.
  - Incorrect use of equipment that may result in failure of the device.
  - Potential to fall onto toothed cam ascenders.
  - Not backing up a loaded line.
  - Allowing a loop to develop in safety/backup lines.
  - Failure to protect a swing fall.
11. **F11 Fraud, cheating or coaching.** Fraud, cheating, or coaching will not be tolerated during the assessment. A major discrepancy will be award for any cheating or coaching.

### Minor Discrepancies (D)

Minor discrepancies are any action or event that may lead to an unsafe condition to develop. Being awarded three Minors will result in termination of the assessment. Minor discrepancies are grouped into these main areas:

1. **D1 Attachment connection not secure.** All connections for load bearing use shall be connected in a secure manner. If a connector is placed in the system with the intention of use, then it must be locked. It may be left unlocked to facilitate immediate attachment of further elements.
2. **D2 Equipment dropped or left behind.** Critical equipment dropped or left behind increases risk to others, shows poor planning, and the possible lack of equipment to complete the task.
3. **D3 No rope protection or incorrectly placed when required.** Placing rope protection enhances the safety of the rope access system and may protect the facility/environment from rope marks and damage.
4. **D4 Helmet: No helmet in warm zone or chin strap unfastened in hot zone.** No helmet being worn when exposed to falling objects or to a potential fall. Chin strap not fastened

when suspended on a rope or in a position where a falling helmet presents a hazard to others.

5. **D5 Tangles in rope.** Descending or lowering with a running rope moving through a fixed rope (cows-tails, lanyards, harness, etc.) that may cut or cause damage. This may also lead to confusion and entanglement.
6. **D6 Poor or incorrect use of equipment.** Poor or incorrect use of equipment contrary to the manufacturers' instructions. This may include:
  - Lack of extra required friction when lowering/descending.
  - Misuse of equipment that may cause damage.
  - Not locking off descender/lowering device when not in use.
  - Cross loading carabiners.
  - Incorrect selection of gear for task.
7. **D7 Excessive time taken in individual task.** Excessive time taken during an individual task may be indicative of either poor technique or unfamiliarity with the activity. The time allowed for each task shall be at the discretion of the assessor.
8. **D8 Swinging, uncontrolled movement.** Small unintended swings or uncontrolled movement demonstrates poor technique and is to be avoided. It may cause injury or damage to equipment. Typical areas of concern are:
  - Cross hauls
  - Deviations
  - Negation of an edge
  - Highlines
  - Tensioned lines and Skate Blocks
  - Swing falls of less than 600mm (loss of height)
9. **D9 Allowing slack rope to develop between devices and the load or anchor.** Techniques that allow slack rope to develop between devices and the load or anchor should be avoided. Large forces may result and place excessive loads on elements of a rope system.
10. **D10 Poor technique that allows an unsafe condition to develop.** Some examples are:
  - Incorrect knot selection
  - Incorrect knot tying
  - No return knot for diversions
  - Poor sling angles in anchor systems
  - Failure to protect swing fall of less than 600mm

## 2. Tactical Rescue

### Sub Charter

1. **Tactical rope systems should consist of two ropes where possible.**  
Operational realities will often negate the use of two rope systems; this needs to be identified in ITRA training and assessment. Where possible (especially in training) a second rope or other backup system should be employed. For the sake of reality-based training and mental conditioning, however, a single rope system is permissible as long as all parties are in agreement, and a comprehensive risk assessment validates this course of action.
2. **Rope functions may be interchangeable.**  
The function of the ropes may be completely interchangeable during an evolution/task, as long as rope diameter and MBS/WLL remains appropriate (i.e., micro rope systems in the 8 - 6mm range may not safely afford immediate interchangeability of roles).
3. **Rope systems should pass the *hands-off* test where possible.**  
The hands-off or 'whistle' test may not be applicable in tactical scenarios. If all participants agree prior to any assessment activity that a hands-off test is both appropriate and applicable, it may be implemented. Otherwise, this test may be void.
4. **Rope systems may pass a *critical point analysis* if appropriate & agreed upon.**  
Unlike other roping disciplines, tactical roping will inevitably make use of single rope, non-redundant systems, and highly improvised anchors. Trainers and assessors running ITRA tactical roping programs will not always (and in some cases will never) be able to apply critical point analysis to different situations.  
Traditionally, the below items have been considered *bombproof* elements, but experience has shown that these can, and have, failed as well. Pre-operation inspection is still required!
  - a) Rigging plates/rings rated 36 KN and higher (smaller rigging plates go down to 30 KN)
  - b) Heavy rescue pulley (such as Kootney) rated 36KN or greater
  - c) Harnesses (sit or full body, proprietary or improvised webbing type)
  - d) Unquestionably sound anchors (large tree, concrete column, steel beam etc.)

Acceptable elements may include:

Vegetation anchors, parapet hooks, grappling hooks, escape system hooks, human anchors, active & passive climbing protection, pitons, bolts, ground stakes, vehicle component anchors, and single ropes rated for rescue loads (minimum 20KN) that have been adequately protected on all edges.

5. **Rope systems must be capable of supporting a fully equipped operator and potentially a rescue (2kN) load.**  
In the context of the assessment activity, if there is any likelihood an anchor or anchor system (i.e., used for tactical access) may be co-opted into a rescue anchor or anchor system (i.e., to retrieve a downed operator), this anchor or anchor system must be capable of supporting a minimum 2kN rescue load.
6. **Assessors operate safe and effective ratio to candidates.**  
Assessors may not exceed assessing more than eight rope candidates per day unless operational context dictates a larger group. In this instance a second assessor may be required.

7. **Canine activities.**

Canine simulation dummies will be preferable over live animals where possible.

8. **Assessment Independence.**

ITRA's goal for assessment is for an independent assessor who has not instructed a candidate to perform the assessment. This is the ultimate goal of the tactical discipline as well. However, based on the current paucity of tactical assessors, and often the access restrictions and security clearances mandated at military installations/law enforcement special operations, this requirement will not always be possible. Some special operations instructors will seek ITRA instructor/assessor qualification with the intent to train in-house operators that will not permit outside assessors due to operational security. Current culture in military/LE professional training accepts that in most cases, some instructor cadre will also be tasked to perform certain assessments, especially where some skills are group/team-oriented (i.e., night operations, team window entry, weapons management, remote rigging over structures, some specific intervention skills), or where one instructor has the specific prowess to perform instructor quality demonstrations for the course. In some cases, team-based drills and training operations require several cadre members to teach and provide feedback at once, perhaps at different points along a team entry. This is a common practice worldwide in military/special operations field training.

The greater goal in this capacity is to ensure impartiality versus independence. Tactical assessors MAY be required to assess certain students (in their course) in certain learning objectives. If this is anticipated to occur, the team affiliations and personal relationships between assessor and student must be disclosed prior to assessment, and if a direct conflict of interest exists, that assessment will be postponed until an impartial assessor can be secured, regardless of which assessment model is intended.

The current ITRA Assessment charter lists 5 assessment models:

1. True total independence: Instructor/assessor performing the assessment has had no contact with the candidates within 90 days and has no conflicts of interests as described above.
2. Split Instruction / Assessment: The course is split into half or thirds. Each group is taught by their own instructor. For the assessment, the instructors switch groups to assess a group they did not instruct.
3. Split by Learning Objectives: Learning objectives (or clusters of them) are taught and assessed by different instructors/assessors during the course or class. In disciplines where there are many TEAM BASED skills to be assessed (tactical, USAR, swift water, etc.), there is a high burden of demonstration and/or a need for a large number of instructors given the risk analysis (i.e., tactical can easily be a 2 to 1 student to instructor ratio in some cases), and all students will receive some instruction from all instructors but will have their LO's taught and assessed by different cadre.
4. Exceptional Circumstance Model: If a special situation is anticipated at a certain venue where one of the above assessment models is not suitable, a proposal may be submitted to the relevant working group for review at least 60 days in advance of the proposed training/assessment. The reason none of the pre-approved assessment models will work must be articulated in detail. The assessment plan must be described in as much detail as possible. The working group will make a recommendation about the proposed custom assessment model and forward it to the board of directors for final review and disposition. A robust justification will be needed to obtain permission to *not* use one

of the pre-approved models, but ITRA recognizes that in some special cases, the needs of the host nation or student group may benefit from it.

5. Team-Based Assessment (TBA) model:

For some disciplines (e.g., USAR, Swift water, and Tactical), some learning objectives either cannot be performed alone or the skills are graded in context with performance with adjacent operators. In these cases, candidates will be assessed as a group/team and will ALL pass or fail together. Learning objectives with this requirement should be listed in the qualification syllabus as TBA, and this should also be mentioned in the comments section for each learning objective in ITM.

The tactical working group has as its goal to only use models 1 and 2, but until a sufficient population of tactical instructor cadre is established, model 3 is also accepted without prior authorization. Once a region has collectively obtained 30 instructors/assessors, model 3 should only be used on a case-by-case, special request basis, akin to the custom model stipulations described under model 4.

Model 5 deals with team-based assessments. This applies to those LO's listed as TBS (Team-Based Skills) in the syllabus, or at the discretion of the instructor with advance approval from the TacWG. This merely means that candidates assessing those LO's will be assessed as a group of some size. Models 1, 2, and 3 equally for this requirement.

## **Discrepancies in Rope Assessments Tactical Addendum ver. 1.5**

### **Introduction**

Tactical rope training, assessment, and operations differ intrinsically from rope access, traditional rope rescue, USAR, and other rope disciplines due to the unique requirements of a hostile environment. Effective tactical rope training and assessment requires a levity not necessary or warranted in other rope disciplines. With this in mind, the Tactical Addendum to Discrepancies in Rope Assessments has been developed to assist ITRA trainers and assessors to design & conduct effective ITRA assessments in the tactical sphere.

### **Major Discrepancies (F)**

Major discrepancies are awarded during an assessment for any single event that may lead to loss of life, injury, gear failure, or damage. Awarding a single Major (F) will result in the termination of the assessment. Major Discrepancies are grouped into these areas:

**1. TAC-F1**

**Less than two independent points of attachment during suspended operations if this is an agreed protocol for the activity.** (Exception: rappelling on a proven descent control device [i.e., DCD is proven with full intended weight with a secondary back up in place prior to traveling on it as a single device.] )

**2. TAC-F1.1**

**Unlocked or unfastened connector in a single point of attachment system or going to a single point of attachment on single rope technique with the exception of a proven descent control device (see above).**

**Explanatory** - F1 and F1.1 allow for flexibility in training delivery and assessment but must be mutually agreed upon by all parties involved. If the system is based on a 'two rope' model (i.e., a rappel rope and a backup rope), then F1 is enacted. If the system is based on a 'single rope' model (i.e., a final assessment of an escape system with no backup), then F1.1 is enacted. (Most tactical assessments are of skills done on single rope technique. For

ASCENDING, two points of attachment are almost universally required and also during maneuvers passing obstacles on a line where components must be removed and then reattached.)

**3. TAC-F2**

**Task / mission not completed after a 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt**

**Explanatory** - Candidates need to ensure they receive training to address all aspects of the assessment. If a candidate has a task set for their level and this is not completed, in terms of the written performance, standards, and conditions, the task/learning objective is considered failed, and a minor discrepancy is awarded (TAC-D11). Provided no major discrepancies were involved, and no more than two minor discrepancies are collectively accrued by the candidate throughout the assessment, candidate may re-attempt the failed task/learning objective one additional time. A failure to complete a task/learning objective a 2<sup>nd</sup> time will constitute a major discrepancy.

**4. TAC-F3**

**Harness un-secured, lanyards/tethers tied or attached incorrectly.**

**Explanatory** - Any load bearing connection to the harness shall be connected in a secure manner. This will also include any tied direct connection. Special attention should be given to any system that employs quick release type connectors.

**5. TAC-F4**

**No helmet at any stage during assessment.**

**Explanatory** - In a tactical/threat environment, helmets will do double duty, affording head protection in the event of a fall or being hit by a falling object but also providing ballistic protection. (A helmet used for training or assessment is not required to be ballistic but DOES need to meet approved climbing helmet standards in that region.) This being the case, assessment candidates should have their helmets on and chin straps fastened during the entire assessment activity.

**6. TAC-F5**

**Safety backup used incorrectly if the system is a two point/redundant system (see TAC-F1 above)**

**Explanatory** - Backup devices need to be used in a manner that does not defeat the function of the device. The devices need to be attached correctly to the harness. The potential load applied must not to exceed rating of the device used.

**7. TAC-F6**

**Descent control device (DCD) threaded or attached incorrectly AND loaded with the clear intention of using it that way.**

**Explanatory** - Loading a descender of any description on a rope incorrectly (per manufacturer's and/or agreed industry guidelines) and then loading it with the clear intention of use shall be viewed as a major discrepancy. If the candidate identifies the issue prior to 'use loading' (or with a backup connection in place) and corrects the problem, there is no discrepancy.

**8. TAC-F7**

**No or inappropriate safety equipment (or attachment) used on an unprotected edge.**

**Explanatory** - Candidates must have a full understanding and awareness of fall hazards relevant to the situation. This may include:

- Restraint systems
- Fall arrest systems
  - Different types of fall protection
  - How to protect yourself when going from fall-arrest to rope-suspension or vice versa.
- Failing to protect an edge that has a high likelihood of damaging the rope.



**9. TAC-F8**

**Swinging / uncontrolled moves, where unwarranted, that may cause injury or damage equipment.**

**Explanatory** - Swinging or uncontrolled movement that may cause injury to yourself or others or damage to equipment ideally should not occur. Typical areas of concern are:

- Edge mobility.
- Clearing parapets on rappel

**10. TAC-F9**

**Incorrect\* use of equipment or technique in general that creates an identifiable risk.**

**Explanatory** - At no stage should the candidate place anyone at risk of injury through incorrect technique or use of equipment. Some examples may include:

- Attaching to non-rated points on a harness.
- Allowing a fall potential to develop during a rescue/mission.
- Incorrect use of equipment that may result in failure of the device.
- Down climbing with an ascender by operating the installation latch versus thumbing the cam.
- Potential to fall (more than 10 inches) onto toothed cam ascenders. (Toothed ascenders are used globally in SRT as backups to prove descenders, or pass knots, as long as the potential fall onto them is under 10 inches.)
- Allowing a loop to develop in safety/backup lines.
- Failure to protect a swing fall.
- Drawing a weapon to cover operator at vertical entry point and sweeping him with muzzle/loss of control of weapon/dropping it (failure to use a lanyard), etc.

\* Per manufacturer's instructions or industry peer reviewed guidelines.

**11. TAC-F10**

**Fraud, cheating or coaching.**

**Explanatory** - Fraud, cheating, or coaching will not be tolerated during the assessment. A major discrepancy will be award for any cheating or coaching. This is inclusive of student candidates involved as a partner in assessment.

**Minor Discrepancies (D)**

Minor discrepancies are any action or event that may lead to an unsafe condition to develop. Being awarded three Minors will result in termination of the assessment.

Minor discrepancies are grouped into these main areas:

**1. TAC-D1**

**Attachment connection not secure in a two rope, redundant system.**

**Explanatory** - All connections for load bearing use shall be connected in a secure manner. If a connector is placed in the system with the intention of use, then it must be locked. It may be left unlocked to facilitate immediate attachment of further elements.

**2. TAC-D2**

**Essential equipment dropped or left behind.**

**Explanatory** - Critical equipment dropped or left behind increases risk to others, shows poor planning, and the possible lack of equipment to complete the task. (Exception: dropping a firearm (even a mock one used in training) constitutes a major discrepancy.

**3. TAC-D3**

**No rope protection or incorrectly placed if it was possible to do so.**

**Explanatory** - Placing rope protection enhances the safety of the rope access/rescue system and may protect the facility/environment from rope marks and damage.

**4. TAC-D4**

**Excessive tangles in rope.**

**Explanatory** - Descending or lowering with a running rope moving through a fixed rope (cows-tails, lanyards, harness, ...) that may cut or cause damage. This may also lead to confusion and entanglement.

**5. TAC-D5**

**Poor or incorrect use of equipment per manufacturer's instructions and SOPs.**

**Explanatory** - Poor or incorrect use (but **not immediately life threatening** or warranting a major discrepancy) of equipment contrary to the manufacturers' instructions.

This may include:

- Lack of extra required friction when lowering/descending.
- Safety backup devices used incorrectly.
- Misuse of equipment that may cause damage.
- Not locking-off DCD when not in use (per manufacturer's instructions).
- Cross loading carabiners.
- Incorrect selection of gear for task.
- Having gear come un-stowed & becoming an issue when inverted etc.
- Getting hung up when performing entry through window, door, balcony on rope etc.

**6. TAC-D6**

**Excessive time taken in an individual task (based upon agreed timeframe).**

**Explanatory** – This may be indicative of either poor technique or unfamiliarity with the activity. The time allowed for each task shall be at the discretion of the assessor and should be **set and agreed upon by all participants** prior to the assessment activity. Note: Some LO's have Performance, Standards, Conditions that specify time limits. Where a time limit is specified, this will be used.

**7. TAC-D7**

**Swinging or uncontrolled movement that is unwarranted.**

**Explanatory** - Small unintended swings or uncontrolled movement demonstrates poor technique and is to be avoided. It may cause injury or damage to equipment.

Typical areas of concern are:

- Bypassing a deviation
- Rope-to-rope transfer
- Clearing a nasty overhang/edge (bridge/pipe etc.).

**8. TAC-D8**

**Allowing excessive slack rope to develop between devices and the load or anchor.**

**Explanatory** - Techniques that allow slack rope to develop between devices and the load or anchor should be avoided. Large forces may result and place excessive loads on elements of a rope system. (In general, this is between 10 to 12 inches.)

**9. TAC-D9**

**Poor technique that allows an unsafe condition to develop.**

**Explanatory** - Some examples are:

- Lack of fitness that directly results in excessive time taken for a task or objective
- Helmet chinstrap unfastened
- Harness incorrectly adjusted

**10. TAC-D10**

**Use of unconventional or self-improvised techniques that have not been taught during the training and cannot be adequately explained or demonstrated as safe.**

**Explanatory** - All techniques used in the assessment must at least meet the minimum safety standard taught during the course. A technique that has not been taught or used throughout the training may be deemed unsafe or inappropriate unless the student can explain and/or demonstrate how it meets the assessment requirements.

**11. TAC-D11**

**Task / mission not completed.**

**Explanatory** - Candidates need to ensure they receive training to address all aspects of the assessment. If a candidate has a task set for their level and this is not completed, in terms of the written performance, standards, and conditions, the task / learning objective is considered failed, and minor discrepancy is awarded. Provided no major discrepancies were involved, and no more than two minor discrepancies are collectively accrued by the candidate throughout the assessment, candidate may re-attempt the failed task/learning objective one additional time. A failure to complete a task/learning objective a 2<sup>nd</sup> time will constitute a major discrepancy. (TAC-F2)

### 3. Confined Space Rescue

#### Sub-Charter

1. Local requirements must be adhered to.  
All activity must, as a minimum, meet local requirements.  
Where local requirements do not exist or are deemed lesser, ITRA Confined Space Working Group guidance should be sought.
2. Time limit during tasks.  
Tasks must be completed in a realistic time demonstrating continued progress.
3. Confined spaces used for assessment must have respirable atmospheres.  
Confined spaces used must provide safe respirable atmospheres as per local requirements.
4. Gas monitors  
Gas monitors should be maintained, tested and used in line with the manufacturers' guidance and local requirements.  
Gas monitor simulators may be used in a confined space simulator.  
Mock readings and mock alarms may be used to elicit specific responses from the candidates.
5. Use of rope systems  
Where rope-based systems are used the rope sub-charter shall apply unless otherwise risk assessed and justified.
6. Systems must not cause harm to the patient.  
Steps must be taken to mitigate the potential to exacerbate injuries to the patient.  
Techniques performed must not put the patient in danger of additional injuries.

#### Discrepancies<sup>1</sup>

##### **Major Discrepancies (F)**

Major Discrepancies are awarded for any single event that may lead to the loss of life, injury, gear failure or damage. Awarding a single Major Discrepancy (F) will result in the termination of the assessment. Assessments must be conducted in a safe atmosphere (clean air).

Major Discrepancies are grouped into these areas:

- F1 Fails to achieve criteria in skills assessment form
- F2 Fails to make continued progression throughout entire assessment
- F3 Task not completed
- F4 Attempts confined space entry with supplied air or self-contained breathing apparatus below acceptable amount of rated pressure (based on local requirements of the geographical training location [i.e., Europe, Asia, North America, etc.]
- F5 Entering or attempts to enter confined space without permit
- F6 Fails to identify and/or appropriately assess and mitigate hazards (isolate hazards [i.e., Lock Out, Ventilation/Duct or exhaust system not deployed when applicable])
- F7 Applies technique that compromises rescuer or victim safety
- F8 Fails to interpret gas meter/detection reading correctly
- F9 Fails to respond appropriately to gas meter/detection alarm
- F10 Fails to respond or acknowledge the low air alarm from SCBA and/or SARA/SAR
- F11 Fraud, cheating or coaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Major and Minor Discrepancies updated 09/22

F12      Actions or inactions cause injury to self or others without reasonable cause

**Minor Discrepancies (D)**

Minor discrepancies are any action or event that may lead to an unsafe condition to develop. Being awarded three Minors (D) will result in the termination of the assessment.

Minor discrepancies are grouped into these main areas:

- D1      Attachment connection not secure
- D2      Equipment dropped in a confined space
- D3      Suitable equipment for task not carried
- D4      Ropes when placed are not adequately protected
- D5      Helmet: No helmet in warm zone or chin strap unfastened in hot zone
- D6      Poor or incorrect use of equipment (against manufacturing directions, etc.)
- D7      Fails to make continued progression through individual task
- D8      Fails to establish team roles (Entrant, attendant, supervisor, etc. [Terminology of this is dependent on location of training])
- D9      Fails to establish RIT/Emergency Rescue Team (terminology of this is dependent on location of training)
- D10     Unable to recall basic requirements of local confined space regulations/ordinances
- D11     Fails to ensure gas meter/detection is calibrated and bump tested prior to use
- D12     Insufficient personal hygiene methods used (i.e., lack of decontamination)
- D13     Ventilation or exhaust systems not sufficient or correctly configured

#### **4. Swiftwater Rescue**

##### Subcharter

##### Discrepancies

##### **Major Discrepancies (F)**

Major Discrepancies are awarded for any single event that may lead to the loss of life, injury, gear failure or damage. Awarding a single Major Discrepancy will result in the termination of the assessment.

##### **Major Discrepancies are groups into these areas:**

- F1 Fails to achieve criteria in assessment workbook checklist
- F2 Excessive time taken over entire assessment
- F3 Task not completed
- F4 PFD un-secured, cows-tail/quick release rigged incorrectly
- F5 No helmet or PFD in hot zone
- F6 Fails to self-rescue by set downstream limit
- F7 Applies technique that compromises rescuer or victim safety
- F8 Connects rope around body in water without quick release
- F9 Attempts to stand up in fast moving current/if swept away
- F10 Poor technique or incorrect use of equipment that may be unsafe
- F11 Fraud, cheating or coaching.
- F12 Actions or inactions cause injury to self or others without reasonable cause

##### **Minor Discrepancies (D)**

Minor discrepancies are any action or event that may lead to an unsafe condition to develop. Being awarded three Minors will result in the termination of the assessment.

##### **Minor discrepancies are grouped into these main areas:**

- D1 Attachment connection not secure
- D2 Equipment dropped or left behind or minimum equipment not carried
- D3 Ropes when placed are not adequately protected
- D4 Helmet: No helmet in warm zone or chinstrap unfastened in hot zone.
- D5 Works immediately close downstream of tensioned rope
- D6 Poor or incorrect use of equipment
- D7 Excessive time taken in individual task
- D9 Unable to recall or interpret standard whistle or hand signals to ensure safety
- D10 Poor technique that allows an unsafe condition to develop
- D11 Fails to ensure upstream spotter and/or downstream safety in place
- D12 Tensioned ropes across current are appropriate angle
- D13 Stands inside of loop of rope that is being used/likely to be tensioned
- D14 Lack of confidence in task noticeable

## 5. Urban Search & Rescue (USAR)

### Subcharter

1. **Assessors operate safe and effective ratio to candidates.**  
Assessors may not exceed assessing more than 12 USAR candidates per day.
2. **Identification of hazards.**  
The training rig/area will have simulated hazards that reflect a real scenario and can be recognised as such.
3. **Simulated structure collapse training rig/area.**  
Any simulated structure collapse training rig/area may have real hazards (exposed edges/unstable surfaces). However, they should be easily identifiable and be able to be managed within the training session as safe as is reasonably practicable.
4. **Individual search techniques will be assessed as part of a team.**  
Where individual search techniques are being assessed, the student will carry out the search as part of a team to enable them to show that their search overlaps the adjacent searchers and that they can adjust their speed, alignment, and tempo in line with the rest of the team.
5. **The student should not be assessed as a Team Leader.**  
Some learning objectives require the student to be aware of incident command and basic command tactics. A student is not required to act in this role and should not be assessed as such.
6. **For any task given, a clear, concise, and realistic brief will be given.**  
A clear, concise, and realistic brief should be given so that the student knows what is exactly required of them.
7. **The breaching of materials shall reflect the thickness according to the level at which they are being assessed.**  
Any breaching and breaking task given to the student should reflect the level at which they are being assessed as thicknesses of materials differ with each different level. Each student may be required to carry out a breaching and breaking assessment but may breach/break as part of a team.
8. **Shoring tasks given to students should reflect the level at which they are being assessed.**  
Any shoring task given to the student should reflect the level at which they are being assessed. For example, at USAR Technician (Light) level, emergency shoring for damaged structures (FEMA Class 1) is required, whereas in USAR Technician (Medium) level, the construction of window, door, and other vertical systems (FEMA Class 2) is required and so on. Each student may be required to carry out a shoring size up but may construct the shore as part of a team.
9. **The weight of a load required to be lifted, cribbed, rolled, or stabilized should reflect the weight according to the level at which they are being assessed.**  
A different weight of load is required dependent on the USAR Technician level being assessed.
10. **Appropriate tools available for task.**  
The tools and equipment available should reflect that operationally available and those required for the task. Options for choice of tool/equipment should be given to reflect a real incident.

11. **When the student is involved in the rescue of persons from a structure when participating in a mock urban search and rescue exercise, the type of structure (light, medium, heavy) shall reflect the type of structure according to the level at which they are being assessed.** A different type of structure is required dependent on the USAR Technician level. Due to availability of training rigs, a pragmatic approach may be taken to this matter.

#### Discrepancies

#### **Major Discrepancies (F)**

Major Discrepancies are awarded for any single event that may lead to the loss of life, injury, gear failure or damage. Awarding a single Major Discrepancy will result in the termination of the assessment.

#### **Major Discrepancies are grouped into these areas:**

- F1 Fails to achieve criteria in assessment workbook checklist
- F2 Excessive time taken over entire assessment
- F3 Task not completed
- F4 Fails to ensure they are accounted for in the hot zone
- F5 Clearly working alone
- F6 Fails to wear appropriate Personal Protective equipment according to task
- F7 Applies technique that compromises rescuer or victim safety
- F8 Fails to keep to identified safe zones
- F9 Fails to identify/react to all significant hazards
- F10 Poor technique or incorrect use of equipment that may be unsafe
- F11 Fails to act on emergency signals or does not follow emergency procedures
- F12 Fails to communicate significant or immediate safety information
- F13 Fraud, cheating or coaching
- F14 Actions or inactions cause injury to self or others without reasonable cause
- F15 Fails to adhere to safety briefing allowing the potential for injury to self or others.



### **Minor Discrepancies (D)**

Minor discrepancies are any action or event that may lead to an unsafe condition to develop. Being awarded three Minors will result in the termination of the assessment.

#### **Minor discrepancies are grouped into these main areas:**

- D1 Personal Protective Equipment worn but improperly (such as helmet chinstrap undone)
- D2 Poor or incorrect use of equipment
- D3 Excessive time taken on individual task
- D4 Poor technique that allows an unsafe condition to develop
- D5 Fails to adopt appropriate hygiene protocols (handwash etc.)
- D6 Only partly acts on emergency information (signals/procedures)
- D7 Only partly identifies/reacts to significant hazards
- D8 Slow in communicating significant or immediate safety information
- D9 Fails to recognise when welfare break is needed (carries on working excessively)
- D10 Lack of confidence in task noticeable
- D11 Lack of knowledge/misinterpretation of marking systems.