Preparation Guide
for
BCAP and CCAP

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16 August 2020

Fellow Army Leaders,

The Army's Command Assessment Programs (CAP) mark a bold step forward to ensure that our most talented officers are selected for command and key billets. These programs reflect the Army's changing paradigm on the selection of future commanders and strategic leaders. It currently consists of two programs: the Colonels Command Assessment Program (CCAP) and the Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP).

This guide is intended to assist candidates in their preparation for the Command Assessment Programs and help units prepare their officers. By design, some of the CAP events are opaque in order to preserve the integrity of the assessments. Other events are executed with full transparency and clear standards such as the physical fitness, written communication, and verbal communication assessments.

For participating officers, it is your responsibility to prepare for BCAP or CCAP. As a foundation, you should arrive at your CAP event well rested, clear headed, focused, and ready to perform your best on a series of events that span a number of days. CAP is designed to allow you to showcase your many strengths, and as such, the only officer you are competing against is yourself. Regardless of the outcome from your participation in CAP, you will emerge a more insightful, self-aware, and better officer.

Please take the time to review this guide to assist in your preparation. If you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to contact the Army Talent Management Task Force. Your primary POCs will be COL Mike Shekleton, michael.a.shekleton.mil@mail.mil, or COL Chad Foster, chad.r.foster3.mil@mail.mil.

Talent Wins!

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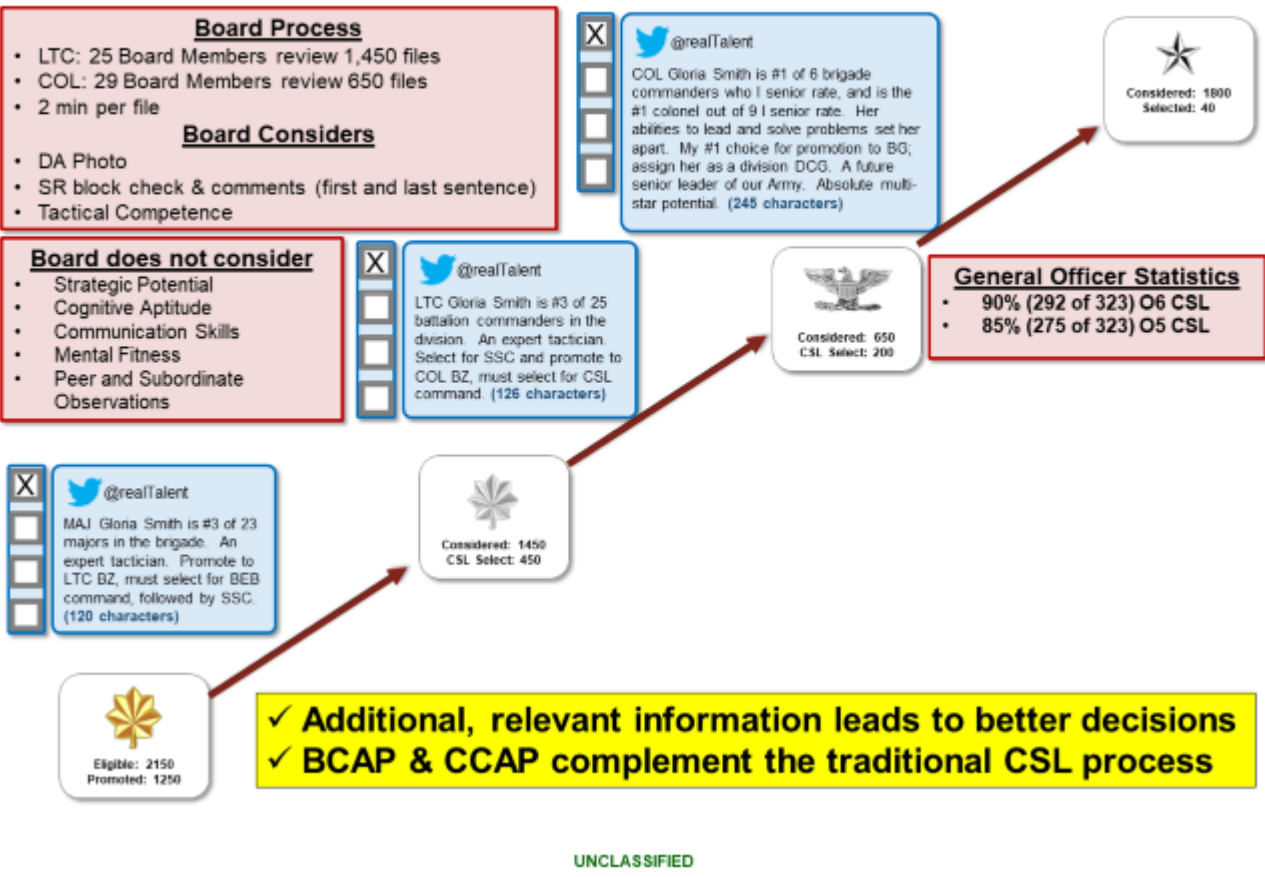
Table of Contents

Why?

The Army adopted the Centralized Selection List (CSL) process in 1975 to address the challenge of selecting the best officers to command our battalion- and brigade-level formations. It was designed to ensure fairness and meritocracy during these critical personnel decisions. The CSL process is a good system that has served the Army well for decades. However, with the rise of great power competitors that are eroding our economic and technological advantages, good is no longer good enough. We must ensure that we select the *best* officers for our most significant leadership positions, and since the path to general officer commonly passes through battalion and brigade-level CSL positions, we must select officers who also possess strong strategic potential.

In early 2019, the Army Talent Management Task Force (ATMTF) sought out the best ideas on leader selection from the military, industry, and academia, and used them to design a comprehensive assessment program to select battalion commanders, arguably the most consequential leaders in the Army. Their experience, placement, and influence give them an out-sized ability to shape the future service of the soldiers they lead. They train and develop our young soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers and have more impact on their decisions to continue serving (or not) than any other leadership position. In short, battalion commanders are critical to the accomplishment of the Army's mission.

The premise of BCAP was that the addition of new, relevant information would allow the Army to make better decisions. Rather than relying solely on the evaluations provided by senior raters looking at past performance, BCAP would add objective assessments that would address both readiness for command and strategic potential. This would allow the Army to take into consideration readiness not only for the next assignment – command / key billet – but also for future assignments.

In June and July 2019, the Army invited 26 infantry and armor alternate CSL selects (three requested to be removed from command consideration and did not participate) and four primary CSL selects to participate in a BCAP pilot. The participants conducted a series of cognitive, non-cognitive, physical, written, and verbal assessments; an interview with a specially trained military psychologist; and a panel interview with a group of senior Army leaders. After compiling the results, the average change for an officer's position on the order of merit list (OML), either up or down, was eight positions, or 35%. The lowest alternate moved from worst to first (23rd to 1st), and eight of the officers invited (30%) were found to be *Not Ready for Command* or had requested to be removed from consideration for command.

The Big Idea – Path to Strategic Leadership

Board Process
- LTC: 25 Board Members review 1,450 files
- COL: 29 Board Members review 650 files
- 2 min per file

Board Considers
- DA Photo
- SR block check & comments (first and last sentence)
- Tactical Competence

Board does not consider
- Strategic Potential
- Cognitive Aptitude
- Communication Skills
- Mental Fitness
- Peer and Subordinate Observations

X @realTalent
MAJ Gloria Smith is #3 of 23 majors in the brigade. An expert tactician. Promote to LTC BZ, must select for BEB command, followed by SSC. (120 characters)

X @realTalent
LTC Gloria Smith is #3 of 25 battalion commanders in the division. An expert tactician. Select for SSC and promote to COL BZ, must select for CSL command. (126 characters)

X @realTalent
COL Gloria Smith is #1 of 6 brigade commanders who I senior rate, and is the #1 colonel out of 9 I senior rate. Her abilities to lead and solve problems set her apart. My #1 choice for promotion to BG; assign her as a division DCG. A future senior leader of our Army. Absolute multi-star potential. (245 characters)

Eligible: 2150
Promoted: 1250

Considered: 1450
CSL Select: 450

Considered: 650
CSL Select: 200

Considered: 1800
Selected: 40

General Officer Statistics
- 90% (292 of 323) O6 CSL
- 85% (275 of 323) O5 CSL

✓ Additional, relevant information leads to better decisions
✓ BCAP & CCAP complement the traditional CSL process

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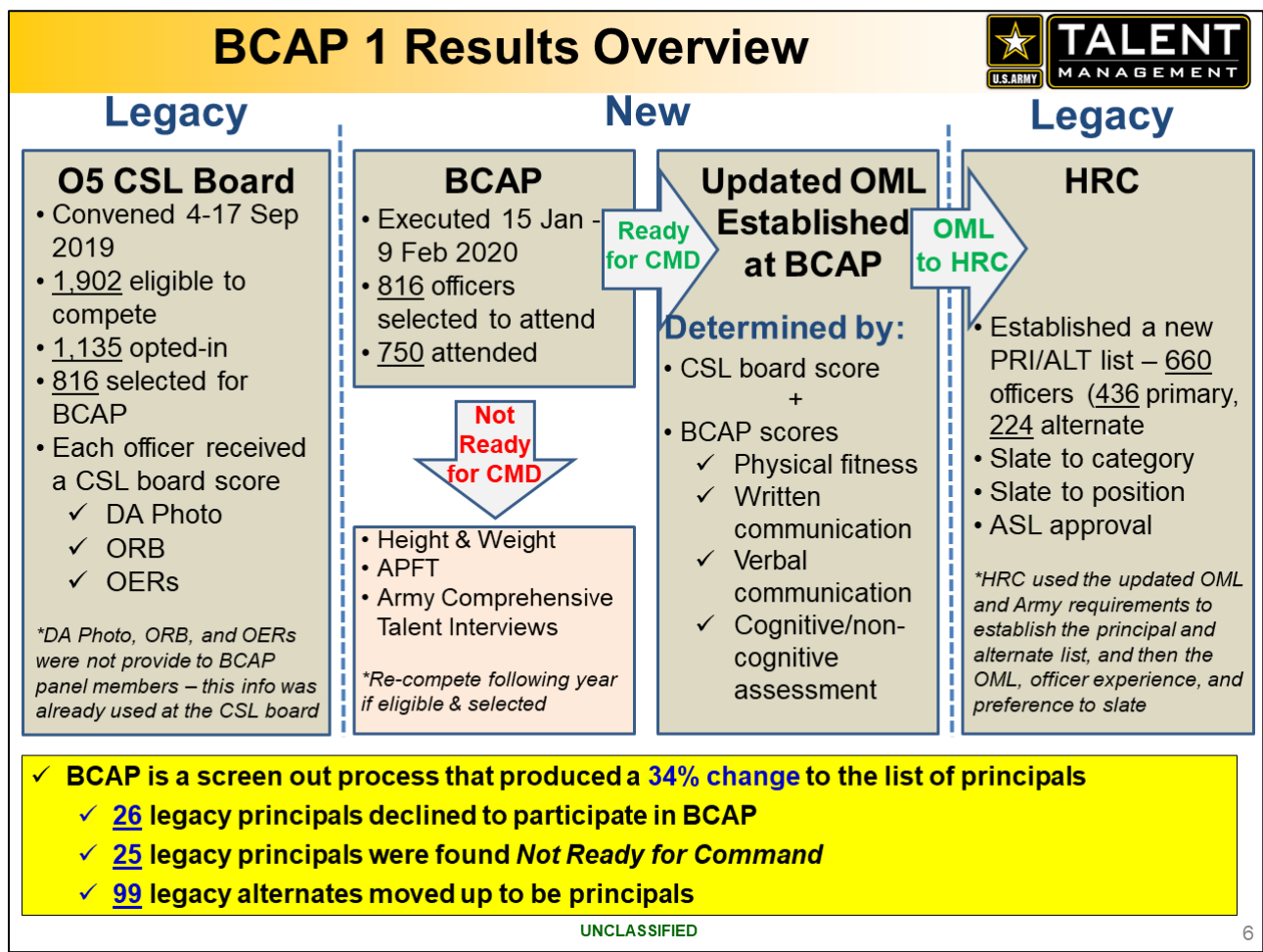## Battalion Commander Assessment Program

Given the compelling results from the pilot, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) directed the implementation of BCAP for those officers competing for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Army Competitive Category (ACC) Centralized Selection List (CSL) Command/Key Billets. The Army inserted BCAP between the legacy CSL Board, which selected and ranked the officers who would participate in the inaugural BCAP, and the standard Human Resources Command (HRC) slating process. Rather than replacing the legacy CSL process, BCAP complemented it.

BCAP 1 Results

The FY21 LTC ACC CSL Command/Key Billet Boards selected 816 officers to attend the inaugural BCAP, which was conducted in January and February 2020. Out of these 816 officers, 750 attended the four-day BCAP at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Of these 750, 436 were selected as CSL principals, 224 were selected as CSL alternates, and 90 were found *Not Ready for Command*.

Of the 436 officers who would have been selected by the legacy CSL process alone, BCAP led to the change of 150 of these officers, or 34%: 26 legacy principals declined to participate in BCAP, 25 legacy principals were found *Not Ready for Command*, and 99 legacy principals were replaced by legacy alternates based on performance on BCAP assessments.

After these results were released, the Army asked all 750 participants for their comments regarding BCAP's effectiveness. Despite 12% of officers having been found as *Not Ready for Command* and numerous others who likely believed they had been legacy principals but were now BCAP alternates, 94% of the BCAP 1 participants believed that BCAP is a better way to select battalion commanders than the legacy board process alone, and 97% believed that the Army should continue BCAP.

BCAP 1 Results Overview

TALENT MANAGEMENT — U.S.ARMY

Legacy

O5 CSL Board
- Convened 4-17 Sep 2019
- 1,902 eligible to compete
- 1,135 opted-in
- 816 selected for BCAP
- Each officer received a CSL board score
  - ✓ DA Photo
  - ✓ ORB
  - ✓ OERs

DA Photo, ORB, and OERs were not provide to BCAP panel members – this info was already used at the CSL board

New

BCAP
- Executed 15 Jan - 9 Feb 2020
- 816 officers selected to attend
- 750 attended

Ready for CMD →

Not Ready for CMD ↓

- Height & Weight
- APFT
- Army Comprehensive Talent Interviews

Re-compete following year if eligible & selected

Updated OML Established at BCAP

Determined by:
- CSL board score
  +
- BCAP scores
  - ✓ Physical fitness
  - ✓ Written communication
  - ✓ Verbal communication
  - ✓ Cognitive/non-cognitive assessment

OML to HRC →

Legacy

HRC
- Established a new PRI/ALT list – 660 officers (436 primary, 224 alternate
- Slate to category
- Slate to position
- ASL approval

HRC used the updated OML and Army requirements to establish the principal and alternate list, and then the OML, officer experience, and preference to slate

✓ **BCAP is a screen out process that produced a 34% change to the list of principals**
  ✓ **26 legacy principals declined to participate in BCAP**
  ✓ **25 legacy principals were found *Not Ready for Command***
  ✓ **99 legacy alternates moved up to be principals**

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6

Colonels Command Assessment Program

In March 2020, following the successful execution of the inaugural BCAP, the CSA directed the ATMTF to design and execute the Colonels Command Assessment

Program (CCAP) for the selection of FY22 COL ACC CSL Command/General Staff. Like BCAP, CCAP is based on the premise that the addition of new, relevant information will allow the Army to make better decisions on these vitally important positions and assesses readiness for command while placing additional emphasis on strategic potential.

Leaders at the Colonel-level are critical to the accomplishment of the Army's mission for a variety of reasons: they play a crucial role in developing and enabling battalion commanders, they ensure the mission success of their units, and they comprise the primary source of future general officers and strategic leaders. Therefore, the Army must select adaptive and innovative leaders who can both lead the Army enterprise and generate results within Joint and Interagency environments.

Benefits of BCAP and CCAP

The implementation of the Command Assessment Programs (CAP) created several benefits for the Army. First and foremost, they select better leaders for command and key billets, improving the quality of leadership provided to our soldiers and civilians. The data from BCAP identified that selected officers were more physically fit, had higher levels of cognitive ability, communicated better, and exhibited fewer counterproductive leadership behaviors.

Next, because the programs assess strategic potential in addition to readiness for command, they ensure that those officers on the path to strategic leadership also possess the requisite talents to be both successful commanders and strategic leaders.

Third, officers who participated become more self-aware. Even though they were designed as assessment and selection programs, as opposed to developmental programs, several of the CAP events provide opportunities to reflect deeply on past experiences and grow in substantial ways. Additionally, the developmental outbrief provides feedback tailored for each candidate that officers can use for further reflection and self-improvement.

Fourth, the data collected during CAP will allow the Army to improve the management and development of its officer cohorts. This data can be analyzed to identify cohort-wide trends or specific branch trends to drive changes to the programs of instruction (POIs) at professional military education venues. For example, the School of Command Preparation will start using select information from an officer's CAP performance to create tailored developmental opportunities for officers attending the Pre-Command Courses (PCCs).

Lastly, the Command Assessment Programs are already driving positive behaviors in our officer corps. Just as Army officers as a whole can largely outperform

their civilian counterparts in two minutes of push-ups, two minutes of sit-ups, and a two-mile run for time – the APFT – so too will the existence of CAP drive behavior. The inclusion of the peer and subordinate feedback influences officers to follow the Army's leadership doctrine (ADP 6-22) while striving to treat all with dignity and respect. Though we only have anecdotes so far, we are now seeing individual officers and units training on verbal and written communication skills, which are integral components of effective leadership.

How BCAP and CCAP Benefit the Army

- **Selects better commanders for the Army**
  - Emphasizes the importance of battalion- and brigade-level command
  - Gateway to strategic leadership
  - Provides the Army the requisite information to make decisions about future strategic leaders
- **Drives positive behaviors**
  - Reinforces a climate of dignity and respect
  - Career-long personal development
  - Better verbal and written communications
  - Physical fitness and height / weight
- **Eliminates officers found unfit for command**
  - Screens for toxicity
  - Screens for sub-par physical or cognitive performance
- **Creates more confident and self-aware officers**
- **Provides an opportunity for officer development**
- **Data collection & insights**
  - More granular information on the individual and Officer Corps
  - Panel members gain unfiltered insights to a critical cohort of officers

- Premise: more relevant information leads to better decisions
- Selection for command and key billets is a balance between an officer's readiness for command and strategic potential

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6

How to Prepare

There are multiple assessments administered at CAP, and preparation, though not required, can allow an officer to put his or her best foot forward. Both individual officers and units can create development plans to improve officers' performance at CAP.

Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The APFT will serve as the physical fitness assessment at CCAP 1 and BCAP 2 (pending senior leader approval). The APFT will be administered IAW FM 7-22 (with the exception of the use of sit-up bars for COVID-19 mitigation), with specified grading standards being strictly adhered to. Based on this, we recommend the following.

Officers

- Accurately assess where you are physically and set challenging goals. An example goal could be to earn the Army Physical Fitness Badge with 10 points to spare.
- When training, ensure that you complete the full range of motion for all push-up and sit-up repetitions.
- Work with a no-nonsense grader that will correct your form and periodically film your repetitions so you can check your form.
- Run timed intervals (1200m, 800m, and 400m) with a disciplined partner.
- Set monthly goals and check your progress with full diagnostic APFTs.

Units

- Train your APFT graders on the movement/range of motion standards articulated in FM 7-22. *Note – units should do the same for the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) to prepare officers for future iterations of BCAP and CCAP.*
- Ensure graders enforce these standards during the execution of the APFT (and ACFT) so that CAP candidates have an accurate assessment on their current level of fitness.
- Have ACFT equipment readily accessible for all CAP candidates.

Links

- Field Manual 7-22, *Army Physical Readiness Training*, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN7938_FM%207-22%20INC%20C1%20Final.pdf
- https://www.army.mil/acft/

- *Army Combat Fitness Test, Initial Operation Capability, 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020*,
  https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/acft/acft_ioc.pdf

      <u>Psychometrics and Cognitive, Non-cognitive Assessment (CNCA)</u>. Practice taking timed conceptual assessments of any type to improve your ability to focus on one task (ability to concentrate on a specific mental task and resist the temptations to think about other things such as checking your phone or a challenge you are experiencing at work). Ensure that you are well rested, are engaging in balanced nutrition, and are hydrated before and during your attendance at CAP.

      <u>Leadership Reaction Course (LRC – BCAP only) and Strategic Leader Exercise (SLE – CCAP only)</u>. Practice taking timed assessments of any type to improve your ability to focus on one task. Ensure that you are well rested, are engaging in balanced nutrition, and are hydrated before and during your attendance at CAP.

      <u>Army Commander Evaluation Tool (ACET)</u>. The ACET provides an opportunity for peers and subordinates to provide feedback about you on observable leadership behaviors. The ACET feedback will provide a more complete understanding of your capabilities relative to the demands of command and key billets from those who have unique insight into your leadership effectiveness. These behaviors are grouped by leader attributes and competencies found in FM 6-22, *Leader Development,* (as well as on the OER support form). The ACET is tailored to the demands and challenges of battalion (BCAP) and brigade (CCAP) roles, respectively. You will also contribute a self-assessment to the ACET. While the ACET focuses on capturing positive aspects of your leadership, it also assesses the frequency with which you engage in counterproductive leadership. We recommend the following:

Officers

- Read FM 6-22, *Leader Development*. Reflect and self-assess your leadership in comparison to the Army Leadership Requirements Model (LRM). Think of experiences over the past several years that gives insight into your strengths and developmental needs—maybe a critical decision, an important task you led or were a part of, or a significant personal interaction.
- Sincerely ask your peers and subordinates to tell you about your leadership strengths and developmental needs. Use the LRM to facilitate the conversation, if necessary. Do not just seek out peers and subordinates who you perceive will provide positive feedback. Cast your net widely so you can get tough but useful feedback. This can help identify strengths and developmental needs that went unnoticed or that you have been reluctant to acknowledge. One technique is to ask

subordinates at the end of a counseling session about what you can do personally to help improve their performance. It might invite a conversation that identifies that you are not communicating effectively or similarly not meeting their developmental needs.

Units

- Create a unit-level leadership development program. Ensure to cover the LRM and counterproductive leadership. Potential strategies and plans are outlined in FM 6-22, Chapter 2.
- Work with units across your installation to combine efforts and provide unbiased feedback and assessment of your officers.
- Set up an anonymous, developmental peer and subordinate feedback system in your unit and have your leaders take it at least yearly and following major training events. Ensure the chain of command does not have access to this data – for the program to be effective, all must know that the data will only be seen and given directly to the subjects by a confidential facilitator.

Written Communication. Written communication is critical to ensure that intent, orders, guidance, and feedback can be communicated concisely and effectively. Written communication is assessed through two instruments. The Written Communication Competence (WCC) instrument assesses an officer's facility with English, including grammar, punctuation, and interpretation (i.e., ability to interpret intended meaning). For BCAP, the Argumentative Writing Exercise (AWE) assesses your ability to both formulate an argument and effectively communicate this argument to others; for CCAP, the Strategic Writing Exercise (SWE) assesses the same qualities while also assessing an officer's capacity for strategic thinking. We recommend the following preparation:

Officers

- Read professional journal articles across a variety of disciplines. Identify best practices in organizing and communicating an effective argument. Seek out arguments that challenge your current thinking – how/why was the author able to challenge your current thinking?
- Assess your job-related writing using the provided written communication scoring rubric.
- Practice writing an argumentative essay monthly. Read a professional journal article for 45 minutes. Take notes on the central thesis and lines of argument. Identify the author's use of (or lack of) evidence to defend his or her argument. Then spend 45 minutes writing your own argument related to supporting or refuting a conclusion or hypothesis in the article,

focusing on your evidence and analysis. Take a short break and then take another 45 minutes to write an argument against your previous position.

- After practicing on your own, ask a strong writer to assess your writing using the written communication scoring rubric. Have them pick an article, develop an argument for you to make, and then assess your work. Discuss areas to improve during the next iteration.

Units

- Develop a formal writing program that focuses on grammar and argumentative essays.
- Provide feedback on job-related writing. Identify effective writing as well as writing that needs development.
- Conduct an argumentative essay assessment/LPD session.
  - Assign a strong writer from your unit to select an article to read. Align the topic to your leader development program.
  - Provide 45 minutes to your leaders to read, and then provide them a prompt that will be used to develop an argumentative essay over an additional time period.
  - Have candidates self-assess and then turn-in the essays to the strong writer, who will later provide an independent assessment using the written communication scoring rubric.
  - Discuss potential arguments as a group. Choose one or two arguments, and for each, develop a thesis, lines of argumentation, and then discuss potential evidence and analysis that would support the thesis.
  - Schedule a follow-up session where the strong writer provides a well-crafted essay as an example and discusses how/why it is effective.
  - Repeat regularly.

The Army Comprehensive Talent Interview (ACTI). The ACTI is a structured, behavioral-based interview conducted by a panel of senior Army leaders (a behavioral-based interview uses past behavior to project how someone will behave in the future; this contrasts with hypotheticals that are not grounded in past behavior). The interview is double blind, meaning that neither you nor the panel members see each other. Additionally, all information that the panel sees is anonymous – they only see your roster number. The interview process and questions are consistent across all candidates to facilitate a fair experience. The panel assesses your verbal communication using the rubric, and after reviewing all of the CAP assessment results and the interview, makes a determination on whether you are *Ready for Command* or

Not Ready for Command. To help prepare for the verbal communication assessment that is part of the ACTI, we recommend the following.

Officers

- Review the verbal communication rubric provided with this guide.
- Practice interviewing and answering behavior-based questions with another person. Use the rubric to assess whether you provide a complete answer (argument) and do so concisely. If helpful, you may use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to ensure you provide a complete response. Note the use of the STAR method is not required to provide an excellent response.
- Ask for feedback on your verbal communication skills. Provide the rubric to colleagues and ask them to comment on your strengths and developmental needs for verbal communication.
- Create a plan to work on your development needs. Periodically ask those same colleagues (and others) for feedback on your progress. Review chapter 7 in FM 6-22 which gives specific suggestions on how to improve your communication skills (paragraphs 7-33 through 7-39).

Units

- Develop an interview training plan.
    - Conduct mock interviews for officers using behavioral-based questions that explore leadership experiences (Note: The ACTI is not designed to be a knowledge-based quiz of doctrine or tactics).
    - Score the interviews using the given verbal communication rubric.
    - Videotape these mock interviews and provide them to the officers so they can compare how the panel scored the interview versus their own self-assessment.
- Provide feedback on verbal communication regularly using standard meetings and interactions. Use the rubric to articulate strengths and development needs.

Links

- FM 6-22, Leader Development, https://caccapl.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/web/repository/doctrine/fm-6-22.pdf
- Candidate STAR training video: https://talent.army.mil/ccap
- Individual and unit leadership development: https://www.capl.army.mil

SUGGESTED REFERENCES

Articles

"Battalion Commanders Are the Seed Corn of the Army"
https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/battalion-commanders-are-the-seed-corn-of-the-army/

"The Army's NFL Combine: The Battalion Commander Assessment Program"
https://mwi.usma.edu/armys-nfl-combine-battalion-commander-assessment-program/

Articles from BCAP Candidates

"What I Learned from the Army's New Battalion Commander Assessment Program"
https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2020/02/10/what-i-learned-from-the-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program/

"I Took Part in the Army's New Battalion Commander Assessment Program: Here's What I Learned"
https://mwi.usma.edu/took-part-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program-heres-learned/

Videos

Battalion Commander Assessment Program (8 minutes):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY8yRyhlYS4

Inaugural Battalion Commander Assessment Program Results (3 minutes):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMYfdnPTOJU

Paving the Way: The BCAP Experience (4 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svX_eFzrUS8

BCAP Documentary (30 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUWncCpSQF0

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION RUBRIC

The Army assesses an officer's written communication during CAP. Part of the written communication assessment will involve officers constructing an essay in response to an article and prompt. Essays are assessed using the rubric outlined below; there is only one difference between the CCAP and BCAP rubric, which is highlighted below. Specific scores and weights used in this assessment are not being released.

Substance:

A. Does the essay advance a compelling and clear thesis that answers the prompt?

B. Does the essay effectively incorporate evidence, logic, and reasoning that supports its claims?

C. Overall, does the essay demonstrate insight and/or originality?

D. (*CCAP only*) Does the essay demonstrate comprehension of strategic issues and clear, effective deployment of strategic thinking?

Organization:

A. Does the essay employ an organizational pattern/structure that is coherent and systematically developed?

B. Are transitions between arguments/elements/paragraphs of the essay evident?

C. Does the essay end with a conclusion/statement that reinforces the thesis?

Style and Mechanics:

A. Does the essay demonstrate economy and clarity of language?

B. Does the essay demonstrate facility with conventional writing with respect to grammar and mechanics, to include spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, etc.?

VERBAL COMMUNICATION RUBRIC

CAP includes the Army Comprehensive Talent Interview (ACTI), where a panel of senior officers interview candidates. The panel assesses an officer's verbal communication skills and overall readiness for command. Panel members will use the following rubric to assess each candidate's verbal communication. Specific scores and weights used in this assessment are not being released.

Key Behaviors	Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Exceptional
Clearly communicates thoughts and ideas to others	Thoughts and ideas lack coherence to each other and are disorganized or random; difficult to follow answer or train of thought.	Thoughts and ideas are listed or ordered without clear structure; wandering at times.	Thoughts and ideas are connected.	Thoughts and ideas flow logically from one to another; building cohesive answers.
Uses logic, relevant facts, and examples in dialogue; expresses well-organized ideas	Rationale for positions or courses of action are unclear, disorganized, or missing; points, decisions, and conclusions left unsupported.	Argument for positions or courses of action lack sufficient detail, relevance, or feasibility; points and conclusions supported with examples, which may or may not be pertinent.	Singular or limited argument made to support position or course of action; points and conclusions often supported with relevant examples, analogies, vignettes, etc.	Builds sound arguments for position or course of action; points and conclusions enhanced and/or clarified by germane examples, analogies, vignettes, etc.
Avoids miscommunication; verifies shared understanding	Follow-up responses negate or contradict prior statements or arguments.	Follow-up responses repeat previous statements or arguments; misses opportunity to clarify and extend shared understanding.	Follow-up responses provide new insights and further clarity to earlier points.	Follow-up responses extend shared understanding by expounding upon previous statements and reframing ideas to better reach diverse audiences.
Communicates articulately and with confidence	Verbal disfluencies and/or use of fillers (e.g., hmm, ah, huh, er, etc.) render the message ineffective. Speaks hesitantly or stutters, insecure in delivery of answer.	Verbal disfluencies and/or use of fillers (e.g., hmm, ah, huh, er, etc.) limit understanding and/or creditability. Stumbles in delivery.	Speaks with confidence and composure; message is understandable.	Articulate; speaks with confidence and enthusiasm, maintaining listener interest.

ARMY LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS MODEL (LRM), FM 6-22, *Leader Development*