



Instructor Quality Assurance Guide

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Introduction

Overview

Providing education, training, and technical assistance is essential to the COPS Office mission of advancing the practice of community policing in the nation's state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Although there are several factors that impact the quality of training, maintaining highly qualified instructors is critical to providing a successful training program.

The purpose of this Instructor Quality Assurance Guide (IQAG) is to ensure that all instructors who deliver COPS Office–sponsored courses meet a set of standards and follow protocols that will contribute to their effectiveness in the classroom and to standardize the selection, orientation, monitoring, and professional development of instructors. All training providers who develop and deliver COPS Office–sponsored training must ensure that their instructors meet the standards and follow the protocols of the IQAG.

A successful instructor quality assurance process requires effective hiring protocols, ongoing monitoring, and continued professional development. It is imperative that training providers develop standards and processes that follow the guidelines established in this document to ensure that instructors possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver quality instruction and maintain their skills.

Training guiding principles

Any training or training materials developed or delivered with award funding provided by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services is to adhere to the following guiding principles:

1. Trainings must comply with applicable law.

In developing and conducting training under the award, recipients (and any subrecipients) shall not violate the Constitution or any federal law, including any law prohibiting discrimination.

2. The content of trainings and training materials must be accurate, appropriately tailored, and focused.

The content of training programs must be accurate, useful to those being trained, and well matched to the program's stated objectives. Training materials used or distributed at trainings must be accurate, relevant, and consistent with these guiding principles.

3. Trainers must be well-qualified in the subject area and skilled in presenting it.

Trainers must possess the subject matter knowledge and the subject-specific training experience necessary to meet the objectives of the training. In selecting or retaining a trainer, recipients (or subrecipients) should consider such factors as the trainer's resume and written materials, interviews with the trainer, observation of other trainings conducted by the trainer, feedback from other entities with which the trainer has worked, training participant feedback and evaluations, and the general reputation of the trainer.

4. Trainers must demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism.

Trainers must comport themselves with professionalism. While trainings will necessarily entail varying teaching styles, techniques, and degrees of formality, as appropriate to the particular training goal, professionalism demands that trainers instruct in the manner that best communicates the subject matter while conveying respect for all.

I. Selection

Selecting trainers is a crucial part of the course process. Be sure to select trainers who are experts in the course topics, are dynamic presenters, and have a track record of creating good rapport with participants.

All instructor names, affiliations, and résumés must be submitted to your COPS Office program manager for review and vetting at least 90 calendar days prior to conducting training. Instructors should not be hired to deliver training until your program manager provides approval. Once your program manager approves the course instructors, the instructors should be trained on delivering the course material.

If trainers are added to or removed from the training cadre, inform your COPS Office program manager so that new trainers can be reviewed, vetted, and trained.

Your COPS Office program manager will work with you to determine the minimum number of trainers needed to deliver the course. The instructor team should include experienced instructors who can support and institutionalize the material.

Selection of qualified instructors should be based on the following criteria:

- Education
- Experience / technical expertise
- Special qualifications
- Certifications and licenses
- Instructor competencies

Education

Each training provider should determine the minimum formal education that is required to instruct a particular course. In lieu of formal education, the training provider may substitute experience, occupation-related certificates, on-the-job training, etc., according to its established policies and procedures or practices. Minimum educational requirements should be established for each course. These standards should be realistic and related to the course instruction.

Experience / technical expertise

To select appropriate instructors, training providers should establish the type and level of expertise needed to instruct each course. Based on the level of expertise needed, training providers should establish the minimum years of experience required to instruct a particular course. Instructors should be chosen to deliver training based on knowledge and experience related to course technical requirements. As with educational requirements, technical expertise and years of experience should be realistic so as not to unnecessarily screen out qualified applicants. The COPS Office recommends training providers conduct interviews with agencies who have employed the applicant in the past. Requirements for experience and technical expertise must be clearly designated in the formal instructor requirements for each course.

Certifications/licenses

Some courses may require specific certifications or licenses. In such cases, requirements for certifications and licenses must be clearly designated in the formal instructor requirements for each course. If none are required, the instructor requirements should specify so. Training providers should establish procedures to verify credentialing for accuracy and currency and take steps to prohibit instructors whose credentials are dated or expired.

Instructor competencies

Prior to delivering COPS Office–funded courses, newly hired instructors should be required to (1) attend and participate in at least one class of the course(s) they have been designated to teach and (2) conduct a practice session of the assigned course(s) in which their knowledge and skills are evaluated by the training provider. The purpose of attending the course prior to teaching is to allow the new instructor to observe how the course is taught and to familiarize the new instructor with the course material and administrative procedures, for which the new instructor will be responsible.

The purpose of conducting a practice session is to provide feedback to instructors in areas where they need to improve. To accomplish this, the training provider should designate an approving official to observe the instructor conducting the course in a classroom setting prior to permitting him or her to instruct without supervision. The role of the approving official is to approve instructors that deliver COPS Office–sponsored courses.

Training providers must provide the COPS Office with a copy of their formal instructor requirements for selection and orientation prior to delivery of the first course.

II. Monitoring

Once instructors have met all of the requirements of selection and orientation, they should become part of an ongoing monitoring program designed to ensure that instructional skills are maintained and that instructors continue to meet the minimum standards specified in these guidelines. Training providers are responsible for establishing monitoring and remediation guidance and policy for their instructors, which may be more stringent than these guidelines. The providers' guidelines should establish quality assurance rating standards and associated remediation actions. The policy should provide clear guidance on how often instructors will be monitored, the competencies they are being rated against, and what actions will be required based on quality assurance results.

It is recommended that training providers conduct random instructor audits to ensure quality instruction of courses and that instructors continue to meet their standards. Instructors should complete a refresher course as needed to maintain instructional effectiveness.

At a minimum, instructors should be monitored and evaluated on the following:

Preparation

- Arrives on time and prepared to instruct.
- Ensures the physical training environment is appropriate for learning, to the extent possible.
- Introduces him/herself and the course structure.
- Allows students to introduce themselves.
- Covers the ground rules for the course, as well as student conduct.
- Connects new information with prior knowledge, experience, or lessons.
- Works to establish rapport with the course participants.
- Makes accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Content

- Clearly states lesson objectives.
- Briefly explains an overview of the course content.
- Avoids teaching objectives in introductions.
- Teaches content contained in the course materials as prescribed.
- Uses training aids and instructional materials specified in the instructor guide.

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- Refers participants to student materials when specified in the instructor guide.
 - Able to enhance the course with relevant subject matter expert examples.
 - Responds to participant questions confidently and accurately.

Delivery

- Displays respect to the participants' diversity; does not discriminate.
- Dresses appropriately.
- Establishes positive rapport; avoids defensiveness.
- Avoids open disagreements with law enforcement, DOJ, and COPS Office policies and procedures.
- Avoids distracters (e.g. excessive use of crutch words, distracting mannerisms, or unnatural pacing).
- Displays poise, enthusiasm, and confidence.
- Avoids reading lesson materials verbatim.
- Uses voice effectively.
- Uses movement and gestures appropriately.
- Pace is not too fast/slow for audience.
- Avoids excessive use of "war stories"/irrelevant examples.
- Uses training media, visual aids, and equipment effectively.
- Introduces and concludes videos and films.
- Provides interim or final summaries for reinforcement of content.
- Introduces and performs demonstrations in accordance with the course materials.
- Emphasizes importance of safety and judgment-free zones.
- Allows for student involvement or practice.
- Clearly reviews exercise directions and procedures.

Supervision

- Monitors all groups or individuals to facilitate exercises and activities.
- Debriefs activities and demonstrations by providing effective feedback.
- Uses effective intervention techniques.
- Reminds participants of ground rules when appropriate.
- Manages time according to schedule.

Reinforcement

- Paraphrases questions clearly and concisely.
- Repeats participant questions to ensure clarity.
- Responds appropriately to irrelevant questions.
- Includes questions to check retention.
- Includes thought-provoking questions to encourage discussion and interaction.
- Confirms participant answers.
- Gives participants the opportunity to respond before providing answers.
- Follows pre/post-test and course evaluation guidelines.
- Specifies materials that may be used during tests (if applicable).

The COPS Office will also monitor instructors. COPS Office monitoring will occur during the pilot testing of the course, as well as periodically throughout the delivery of the course. If at any time the COPS Office has a concern with a trainer, that trainer will no longer be allowed to deliver the COPS Office–sponsored course either for the duration of the course or until a COPS Office corrective action has occurred.

III. Professional Development

Professional development is critical to maintaining a highly effective cadre of instructors. Although resources may not always permit, training providers should consider providing professional development opportunities to their instructors through ongoing training, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

IV. Record Keeping and Documentation

Training providers will be responsible for maintaining records of instructors. These records should include the following:

- Résumés/CVs
- Formal instructional training or certifications
- A list of all of the approved instructors for COPS Office–sponsored courses
- Monitoring results and any remediation actions taken as a result of monitoring
- Professional development activities taken by instructors

At the request of the COPS Office, training providers are to submit records and documentation to the COPS Office.

V. Characterization of Employment

Instructors of COPS Office–sponsored courses should not say that they are employees of the U.S. Department of Justice or the COPS Office. They should not say that they represent the COPS Office or the U.S. Department of Justice or are delivering the course on behalf of either entity. Instructors should draw a clear line between their roles as instructors for the training provider and the sponsorship of the course. One option would be for instructors to say, “I am presenting this course, which is funded by the COPS Office, on behalf of [training provider].”



COPS

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To obtain details on COPS programs, call
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at cops.usdoj.gov.