

# AIARE Instructor and Course Leader Standards

The AIARE Instructor and Course Leader Standards describe the skills and proficiencies needed to work as an AIARE Instructor or an AIARE Course Leader. This document is designed a resource throughout an educator's development and career as an AIARE avalanche educator.

These standards are the basis for assessment for both the Instructor Training Course and Course Leader Training, however these courses do not instruct on nor evaluate all skills and proficiencies outlined. Instructor self-evaluation and assessment from AIARE Trainers occurs at multiple points before, during, and after AIARE training courses.

Instructors can use these standards to help direct their own professional development by identifying areas an Instructor would like to focus training and mentorship for the season. Note specific strengths, areas for growth, and plans for future development. Instructors can find a fillable self-evaluation on our website ([avtraining.org](http://avtraining.org)) in order to track progress and professional development from year to year.

New AIARE Instructors are not expected to be above proficiency in any category. Course Leaders should strive to be able to coach and mentor new instructors in any category.

**Evaluation Limitations:** AIARE Instructor and Course Leaders are assessed in a simulated course environment on an Instructor Training Course (ITC) and Course Leader Training (CLT) and will differ than an actual course. The competence of each new Instructor must be ultimately determined by the Course Provider at the workplace using formal employee performance evaluation. The AIARE feedback and evaluation criteria are designed for Instructor learning and continued professional development and not a substitute for employee performance evaluation.

CATEGORY: RISK MANAGEMENT
Skill: Professionalism in the context of avalanche education.
Proficiencies
<b>Fitness and movement skills:</b> Performs a full day tour/ride without physical strain. Possesses the fitness reserves required to move/tour in challenging conditions and lead a backcountry self-rescue. Possesses the skill to move safely and efficiently through terrain in any conditions, uphill and downhill, with travel tool of choice.
<b>Gear and safety equipment:</b> Carries avalanche safety gear current with industry best practices. Operates safety and rescue gear easily and efficiently. Uses backcountry travel gear/tools that are current. Possesses technical clothing and layers appropriate for the conditions and stated emergency plan. Cares for and maintains all gear and equipment.
<b>Personal presentation, attitude and demeanor:</b> Communicates with a professional, friendly, and open demeanor. Conveys respect for peers and students. Prepares in advance for each day's lessons and activities. Maintains good self-care and personal presentation.
<b>Route planning, navigation and route finding:</b> Performs well with both digital (apps, mapping, imagery) and analog (map, compass, pencil and paper) tools and techniques for tour and route planning. Navigates effectively in the terrain with and without GPS and other digital tools.
<b>Information exchange, individual and operational:</b> Records and shares relevant observations and information with other professionals and the public. Employs multiple outlets for information sharing. Identifies the value of info sharing to peers and students.

Skill: Implementation of operational risk management practices

Proficiencies

**Understand and apply best practices for a systems approach to operational risk management:**

Demonstrates fluency with best practices for operational risk management. Utilizes terrain and avalanche atlases, incorporates seasonal snowpack history into instructor preparation, participates in information exchange, applies run lists or terrain resources to open or close terrain, implements an emergency response plan, implements a communication plan, conducts daily meetings and debriefs, conducts accident/incident reviews, maintains CPD and participates in staff training.

**Identify and manage uncertainty within the avalanche hazard forecast:** Tracks, quantifies, and locates sources of uncertainty in the snowpack, the terrain, the weather, and the group. Connects unknowns to confidence in the hazard forecast. Links unknowns to mindset, route choice, and margins. Verbalizes unknowns and uncertainties in instructor/group discussions and records them in trip plan tools and field checklists.

**Create options and select appropriate routes for educational objectives:** Utilizes clear parameters to plan and choose appropriate routes and terrain for the respective programs in the AIARE recreational education stream. Analyzes complexity of terrain to generate options and route choices. Incorporates the use of margins and models terrain choices with an eye to students' post-course behavior.

**Understand sources of bias and apply strategies to mitigate biases:** Identifies sources of bias amongst professionals, both as individuals and when working together. Applies mitigation strategies to manage biases among instructors and between instructors and students. Links biases to operational risk management practices.

**Demonstrate effective rescue response in small group or companion rescue skills:** Assesses the safety of an avalanche scene. Interviews a witness to obtain info. Assesses scenario and applies appropriate methods based on resources. Demonstrates competency in small party rescue response by completing scenario.

Skill: Field-based risk management; group management in avalanche terrain

Proficiencies

**Balance educational goals with exposure to avalanche terrain; model and apply terrain margins and group management in field travel:** Maintains a balance between exposure to avalanche terrain and in-field risk management. Applies appropriate margins in the field for on-course risk management and modeling for students' post-course behavior. Models appropriate pacing and terrain choices in the field.

**Apply operational tools for route selection and route finding during field travel:** Applies the planning process to route selection in the field; applies operational tools (terrain atlas, run list) to field decisions. Reads terrain and conditions on small, medium, and large scale; chooses a route that is consistent with the plan and goals of the day.

**Implement error correction and demonstrate adaptability during field travel:** Recognizes errors in the field. Utilizes options generated in planning stages when applicable. Adjusts routes, plans, actions to correct errors before they compound.

**Administer client care in the educational context:** Ensures students are fed, hydrated, and comfortable enough to have the bandwidth for learning. Monitors students' ability to absorb and apply skills in the outdoor environment. Applies appropriate pacing to support course goals of communication and group decision making.

**Manage student-led tours to optimize learning within risk management best practices:** Clearly defines appropriate terrain and conditions for students to be in the lead, including terrain complexity, consequence, level of uncertainty/quantity of unknowns, existence of options. Plans and implements tours that allow for student leads when conditions allow.

Skill: Technical Skills and Knowledge

Proficiencies

**Conduct field observations - snowpack, weather, avalanches - to SWAG standard:** Conducts and records field weather and surface snow observations using SWAG methods. Conducts a field (test) profile and correctly identify important layers/interfaces and link to bulletin/hazard forecast. Conduct small and large column tests and correctly identify results (fracture character, propensity for further propagation). Observes, records, and evaluates avalanche occurrence data.

**Translate and apply the SWAG standard to the AIARE recreational course context:** Convey the importance of collecting good information while avoiding student (and instructor) fixation on details. Convey goals for each observation (the 'why') in language that is accessible and resonates with student audiences.

**Connect observations with relevance to hazard forecast and avalanche problems:** Maintain focus on which field observations are relevant for which avalanche problems in the hazard forecast. Draw written, visual, and verbal links between observations, the hazard forecast, and snowpack variability.

Choose and explain relevant 'site selection' for field tests. Qualify results of field tests with respect to variability, what is known/unknown, what is observable/not observable.

#### **CATEGORY: CURRICULUM FAMILIARITY**

Skill: Apply the AIARE curricula effectively to each respective audience within the educational stream.

Proficiencies

**Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of content for AIARE Awareness, AIARE 1, AIARE 2 and Avalanche Rescue courses:** Knows the learning objectives of each program. Makes connections between the programs and accurately describes AIARE education as a lifelong process with multiple points of engagement

**Maintain currency with additions and developments to AIARE resources and curriculum:** Creates and delivers written and verbal assignments showing currency with AIARE resources, curriculum, and tools. Utilizes current AIARE tools and checklists.

**Demonstrate fluency with the AIARE risk management process by appropriately applying AIARE tools and processes:** Creates lesson plans and delivers sessions that indicate an understanding of the theory behind risk management processes. Presents AIARE curriculum as a process to increase students' situational awareness and improve decision making in the backcountry. Creates and delivers classroom and field lessons which build connections between theory (why risk management systems are important) and practice (how the AIARE tools meet these needs).

**Understand the needs, limitations, and education paths for each audience in the AIARE programs. Adapt the AIARE risk management process to match the scope and audience of a given program:** Accurately compares and contrasts needs and limitations for an Awareness audience, an AIARE 1 audience, an AIARE 2 audience. Adjusts classroom and field lesson plans to meet the needs and limitations of each audience while still remaining within the scope of each course. Tailors messaging around AIARE tools and curriculum for each different audience in the rec educational stream. Able to match students with the AIARE program that best suits their needs.

<p>Skill: Apply AIARE tools and resources to help students prepare for their AIARE course</p>
<p>Proficiencies  <b>Demonstrate an understanding of the AIARE Elearning tools. Utilize AIARE Awareness and Pre- course E-Learning tools:</b> Uses the tools provided by AIARE Online to assess their students understanding of the pre-course content. Effectively tailors lesson plans and delivery to meet student needs. Appropriately links classroom and field instruction to online curriculum and students' prior knowledge.</p>
<p>Skill: Identify sources of bias for individuals and groups of backcountry travelers. Link AIARE tools as means to mitigate biases.</p>
<p>Proficiencies  <b>Understand and explain links between sources of bias and tools/techniques to mitigate bias:</b> Creates lesson plans for classroom and field sessions that explain the cognitive biases at play in risk- related decision making processes, and relates these to students' experiences in the backcountry. Delivers lessons which present the practical use of AIARE processes and tools according to recommendations from cognitive theory to manage and mitigate these biases.</p>
<p><b>Demonstrate application of <i>The AIARE Framework</i> to mitigate bias in each:</b> Creates lessons and activities highlighting how the design and intended application of <i>The AIARE Framework</i> in each phase are intended to mitigate bias and errors in decision making. Builds links in written, verbal, and visual lessons that show specifically how <i>The AIARE Framework</i> are designed to mitigate biases as they are applied in each of the four phases.</p>
<p><b>CATEGORY: LESSON PLANNING AND DELIVERY</b></p>
<p>Skill: Prepare and deliver indoor and outdoor lessons. Apply methods to check for student understanding.</p>
<p>Proficiencies  <b>Prepares lesson plans following the AIARE template:</b> Uses available AIARE tools and content to prepare lesson plans that initially check for student understanding (formative assessment); address the stated learning objectives; are responsive to audience (demographics and travel method), setting (indoor or outdoor) and time frame; and close with an opportunity for instructor and/or students to check understanding.</p>
<p><b>Deliver lesson plans effectively, indoors and outdoors:</b> Applies a variety of tools and strategies to monitor students' understanding and adjusts instruction in order to meet learning objectives. Assesses and recognizes students' skills and knowledge at the end of a lesson and course but needs coaching to recommend actions adapted to students' skills and knowledge for continuing education and post- course behavior and practice.</p>
<p>Implement operational risk management practices</p>
<p>Proficiencies  <b>Identify and manage uncertainty:</b> Identifies sources of uncertainty in the snowpack, terrain, weather, and group. Verbalizes unknowns and uncertainties in Instructor and group discussions. Connects identified sources of uncertainty to instruction of The AIARE Framework.</p>
<p><b>Select appropriate routes for educational objectives:</b> Using a predefined run list or terrain catalog, chooses appropriate routes and terrain options for the respective programs of the AIARE recreational education stream.</p>

Skill: Demonstrate effective delivery and teaching techniques as an AIARE Instructor

Proficiencies

**Demonstrate effective indoor teaching skills:** Speaks with a clear, concise and organized voice in instruction. Recognizes when students are engaged and adapts instructional style when they are not. Adjusts content, pace, and duration of activity according to learners' cues. Connects presentations to student's life experience and prior knowledge. Uses multiple instructional approaches appropriate to topic being taught. Solicits learner understanding and provides feedback. Differentiates between student topics of interest and stated learning objectives, steers discussions to focus on learning objectives. Is familiar with common learner misconceptions, recognizes indicators of misconceptions and anticipates where they occur.

**Demonstrate effective outdoor teaching skills:** Maintains a clear and organized instructional voice while outdoors. Moderates instruction to maintain engagement in various weather conditions. Uses modeling and demonstrations to clarify learning. Provides opportunities for students to practice skills. Assess effects of weather and fatigue on student engagement and is responsive in planning and instruction. Provides controlled practice and real-life practice (application) of new material.

### CATEGORY: COURSE LEADER SKILLS

Skill: Demonstrate effective instructional team leadership on AIARE programs

Proficiencies

**Lead instructor team through daily meetings and debriefs.** Meets with instructor team to discuss daily curricular objectives, how to meet those objectives in the classroom and the field, student learning or risk management issues, and planned terrain-use, communication and risk management tactics for the day. Meets with instructor team at the end of the day to review daily learning objectives, student outcomes, and to debrief risk management.

**Promote instructor teamwork to reduce personal biases in group decisions.** Defines a positive and inclusive tone on the instructor team that promotes collaboration and clear communication in order to deliver a high quality course that meets AIARE learning objectives and manages risk. Role models inclusivity and consensus to reduce personal bias in decision making both in the instructor team and for students.

**Oversee course content, agendas and delivery.** Ensures classroom and field lesson plans of all instructors meets the AIARE learning outcomes. Develops a course agenda that is organized and responsive to the needs of each student group, venue and instructor skill level. Adapts agendas and lessons as necessary to accommodate changing conditions, student understanding or skill level.

**Utilize the AIARE evaluation rubric to mentor the Instructor team.** Provides feedback to instructors on areas of strength and growth based on the AIARE evaluation rubric. Encourages and supports instructor self-reflection. Provides mentorship by sharing past successful strategies or lessons learned and specific suggestions or strategies for instructor improvement.

Skill: Implement and provide oversight of operation risk management on courses.

Proficiencies

**Facilitate risk management planning.** Utilizes, creates or modifies appropriate operational tools such as daily AM / PM forms, emergency response plans, venue specific run lists and communication plans to involve the instructor team in risk management planning.

**Manage and facilitate use of a run list for course instructors.** Utilizes, develops or modifies a run list for the course area that is organized by zone and scaled to expected terrain use patterns (machine versus human powered). Run lists include annotated photos and digital or hard copy maps. Ensures individual instructors use the run list and the terrain consistently.

**Oversee course route choices to ensure terrain margins accommodate uncertainty.** Oversee that all on-course route choices use terrain margins that accommodate uncertainty about student travel skills, weather, potential avalanches or other factors, while meeting instructional objectives.

**Arrange and oversee use of seasonal snowpack information.** Compile and present seasonal weather history to engage students in the seasonal factors that lead to the development of current avalanche conditions.

**Develop and implement strategies for managing challenging circumstances on-course.** Be practiced and prepared to handle unexpected situations that arise on course (instructional challenges, weather, logistics, accidents, etc.) in order to reasonably minimize the impact to the learning objectives of the course.