

EXPANDED COURSE OUTLINE
REGULAR BASIC COURSE
LEARNING DOMAIN 18
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WRITING

I. LEARNING NEED

A peace officer's ability to clearly document the facts and activities of an investigation not only reflects on the officer's own professionalism, but also on the ability of the justice system to prosecute the criminal case.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- A. Explain the legal basis for requiring investigative reports
 - 1. Prosecution of the offender
 - 2. Liability protection
 - 3. Compliance with law, policy, and training

II. LEARNING NEED

Peace officers must recognize that the information gathered during their initial investigation in the field will become the foundation for their investigative reports.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- A. Discuss the importance of taking notes in preparation for writing reports
 - 1. More reliable than memory
 - 2. Primary source of information
 - 3. Reduce need to re-contact involved parties
 - 4. Defend credibility of the report
- B. Apply appropriate actions for taking notes during a field interview
 - 1. Listen attentively (Phase I)
 - 2. Take notes and ask questions (Phase II)
 - 3. Verify information (Phase III)
- C. Distinguish between:
 - 1. Opinion
 - 2. Fact
 - 3. Conclusion

III. LEARNING NEED

Peace officers must recognize in order for an investigative report to be of use in the judicial process, the report must be well organized, and include facts needed to establish that a crime has been committed and all actions taken by officers were appropriate.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- A. Summarize the primary questions that must be answered by an investigative report
 - 1. Who?
 - 2. What?
 - 3. What?
 - 4. When?
 - 5. Where?
 - 6. How?
 - 7. Why?

- B. Identify the fundamental content elements in investigative reports, including:
 - 1. Initial information
 - 2. Identification of the crime
 - 3. Identification of involved parties
 - 4. Victim/witness statements
 - 5. Crime scene specifics
 - 6. Property information
 - 7. Officer actions

IV. LEARNING NEED

Peace officers must recognize that an effective report must exhibit the writer's command of the language and be relatively free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and other writing mechanics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- A. Apply guidelines for recommended grammar used in investigative reports, including use of:
 - 1. Proper nouns
 - 2. First person pronouns
 - 3. Third person pronouns
 - 4. Past tense
 - 5. Active voice

- B. Organize information within a paragraph for clarity and proper emphasis
 - 1. Time
 - 2. Place
 - 3. Order

- C. Select language that will clearly convey information to the reader of the investigative report
 - 1. Paragraph orientation
 - 2. Transitional words
 - 3. Concrete vs Abstract

- D. Distinguish between commonly used words that sound alike but have different meanings
 - 1. Words that sound alike

2. Definitions
3. Proofread

E. Proofread for content and mechanical errors, including:

1. Spelling
2. Punctuation
3. Grammar
4. Word choice
5. Syntax

V. REQUIRED TESTS

A. A report writing test that requires the student to prepare an investigative report including the arrest of one or more suspects as described below:

Given a depiction of a criminal situation, which requires investigation and the arrest of one or more suspects based upon a presenter-developed video re-enactment, simulation, or scenario, the student will write an acceptable report in class.

To be of sufficient complexity, the investigation must reflect an investigative report including the arrest of one or more suspects which minimally incorporates:

1. Elements of a crime
2. Reasonable suspicion or probable cause to stop
3. Justification for a pat down search
4. Probable cause to search/seize
5. Discovery, recovery, and disposition of evidence
6. Probable cause to arrest
7. Miranda admonishment and response of the suspect, if appropriate
8. Statements of victim(s) and/or witness(es)
9. Pertinent crime scene details

To be considered acceptable, the report must meet the following criteria:

1. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized to clearly communicate to the reader
2. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report
3. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice) that significantly diminishes its evidentiary value or usefulness
4. The time required to complete the report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program

The student will demonstrate competency in the following performance dimensions:

1. Knowledge of Report Forms
2. Elements of Crime(s)
3. Narrative Organization
4. Narrative Content

5. Writing Mechanics

Presenters must use the POST-developed Investigative Report-Writing Competency Test Form or a presenter-developed form, which minimally includes the performance dimensions used for this exercise test.

The POST-developed Investigative Report Writing Competency Test Form provides two available grading processes

1. Pass/Fail using the LD 18 Investigative Report Writing Competency Test Scoring Matrix
2. Point deduction using the LD 18 Investigative Report Writing quantitative/numerical deduction scoring system based on overall award of 100 points per written exercise with the minimum pass point set by the presenter

The presenter will determine which grading method will be used, and what the pass point is for the test report.

VI. REQUIRED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- A. Students will participate in a learning activity that requires the writing of five practice reports based on either POST-developed video re-enactments of crimes, investigations or law enforcement-related incidents, or based upon equivalent simulations, scenarios or videotape depictions developed by the presenter.

The events selected should require reports reflecting a progressive level of difficulty (e.g., from a simple incident or crime to more complex events involving the articulation of probable cause to stop, probable cause to arrest, statements of witnesses, etc.)

Each learning activity must incorporate:

1. Generation of appropriate field notes narrative
2. Formal feedback to the student regarding the quality of student writing. The purpose of requiring feedback is to provide ongoing evaluation and documentation of student strengths and weaknesses so that the student is able to progressively improve.

Assessment of the practice reports should address:

- a. The adequacy of the decisions made by the student regarding the incident/crime. This includes:
 - (1) The determination of the existence or nonexistence of a crime
 - (2) If a crime has been committed, the proper identification of that crime
 - (3) The taking of proper safety measures
 - (4) The preservation of evidence
 - (5) The capturing of all essential information

- b. The ability of the report/narrative to communicate with the reader and employ proper format and conventions. This includes:
 - (1) The organization and development of the report
 - (2) The inclusion of relevant information
 - (3) The anticipation of possible defenses that might be asserted by the suspect
 - (4) The use of the active voice
 - (5) The use of the first person
 - (6) The proper use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice

B. The student will participate in one or more learning activities from the POST-developed *Instructor's Guide to Learning Activities for Leadership, Ethics and Community Policing* or other comparable sources regarding investigative report writing. At a minimum, each activity, or combination of activities must address the following topics:

- 1. Written communication as an expression of integrity, reliability, fairness and credibility
- 2. Effective reports as a demonstration of an officer's character, decision making, and courage
- 3. Potential stakeholders that may be positively or adversely affected by a well-written report (e.g., victims, suspects, courts, witnesses)
- 4. Consequences of an ineffective/inaccurate report to the officer, officer's agency, policing profession and the community

Description	Hours
POST Minimum Required Hours	<u>48</u>
Agency Specific Hours	<u>9.5</u>
Total Instructional Hours	<u>57.5</u>