



**TRAINING LEADERS** *of* **CADETS**  
BASIC COURSE  
**LESSON PLAN**

### 3.4 Quality Cadet Units

- VERSION:** April 2016 *please verify this is the latest version by visiting [capmembers.com/TLC](http://capmembers.com/TLC)*
- DURATION:** 50 minutes approximately, and subtopic times shown in margins below are also approximate
- INSTRUCTOR:** A master-rated cadet programs officer or highly experienced CC or DCC is suggested
- KEY QUESTION:** How can we be sure our squadron is on track?
- OBJECTIVES:**
1. Describe what compliance measures can say about a squadron's health.
  2. Describe the ten key compliance processes in a local cadet program.
  3. Describe ways that peer support efforts can help keep a squadron on track.
  4. Describe self-assessment tools available to monitor squadron performance.
  5. Discuss the importance of SMART goals in tracking a squadron's performance.
  6. Describe the purpose of the QCUA program.
  7. Describe how the Commander's Dashboard can be used to monitor unit performance.
  8. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the QCUA program by analyzing unit data and creating "smart" goals leading to QCUA attainment.
- SIMPLE OUTLINE:**
1. Starter: The climbing expedition
  2. Compliance measures
  3. Peer support measures
  4. Self-assessments
  5. Mission effectiveness (emphasis on Commander's Dashboard and QCUA)
  6. Conclusion
- CLASS ACTIVITIES:** Group discussion and best practices exchange, guided tour of the Commander's Dashboard, and exercise where students figure their unit's QCUA status
- EQUIPMENT:** QCUA data (.pdf for whole wing suggested), web access, whiteboard and markers
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## Welcome & Starter

2 min

Consider this image of climbers ascending Mount Everest. There are lots of ways they could gauge their success.



- *Do we have the permits and the right gear? (Compliance)*  
*If we're non-compliant (not enough oxygen tanks) we might die up there.*
- *What's our elevation compared to where we're scheduled to be? (Service standard / output)*  
*At 3pm, no matter where we are, we must turn back and go home.*
- *How does our performance compare to other groups'? (Benchmarking / peer reference)*  
*Other groups are moving faster than we are; let's speed up.*
- *How am I feeling? What's the team's general attitude? (Subjective self-assessment)*  
*We have everything we need, we're on schedule, but we're fighting among ourselves so we must change our attitudes.*



## Measuring Squadron Performance

2 min

In this next hour, we'll think about how we measure our squadron's performance, how we can know if our squadron is on track toward success. There are at least four basic ways we can do that: compliance, peer support, self-assessments, and outcome metrics. We'll spend a little time on each, but will focus on outcome metrics like the Commander's Dashboard and Quality Cadet Unit Award program.

Here are those four basic approaches to checking a squadron's overall health and journey toward success. For each approach, we'll mention two tools available to you.

If you possess sophisticated business acumen, wonderful, but realize during this hour we're simplifying the complex world of program evaluation.



## Compliance Metrics

3 min

**Q1:** What does compliance mean? What does a compliance review look at, and what important aspects of a squadron does it not even try to gauge?

**A:** Answers may vary; compliance generally considers how well the squadron abides CAP regulations. Compliance does not look at program content.

Are we following the rules? If our climbers' safety manual requires them to carry oxygen, food, an ice axe, etc., compliance with those rules is important. Compliance is another way of saying "without meeting these requirements, you won't be successful." In CAP, our source our regulations prescribe the compliance requirements.

**Q2:** What's the event where the squadron's compliance is measured?

**A:** Inspections. Squadrons will undergo a subordinate unit inspection every 2 years. This visit by wing staff looks exclusively at compliance.

**Transition:** Let's look at what's recommended as the top ten key processes, the top ten tasks cadet units do to stay in compliance.



Mini-Exercise. Through group discussion have students replicate the table below.

5 min

### COMPLIANCE: Top 10 Key Processes

Item	Why	Measure	If non compliant . . .	Remember
<b>Adult Leadership</b>	Obvious key to success for any youth program	At least 2 TLC graduates on unit roster	Know when the next course is and identify people to attend	
<b>Annual Goals</b>	If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there	Produce written goals on demand	Set aside time to develop them	Your attainment of goals doesn't matter; the process of setting goals is what counts
<b>Recruiting Campaign</b>	Any youth program is effective only if it is reaching a sizable audience	Positive annual growth	Develop and implement a plan for an open house / recruiting campaign	
<b>Cadet Great Start</b>	Newcomers need special guidance	Produce graduation roster on demand	Develop and begin a plan for using Cadet Great Start	
<b>Attendance Roster</b>	Active participation is the mark of a healthy program	Produce attendance log on demand; document attempts to contact absentees.	Develop and begin a process for tracking cadet attendance	There are valid reasons for absences. The goal is to have a process that notices when someone's stopped attending so we can reach out to them.
<b>Meeting Schedules</b>	Exit surveys say that boring, poorly planned meetings contribute to membership lapses	Produce written schedules on demand	Develop and begin a process for drafting and coordinating a weekly schedule	
<b>Activities Calendar</b>	To aid in internal communications (cadets, parents, seniors), and for cadet protection purposes	Produce web-based calendar on demand	Develop and begin a process for maintaining a unit calendar	
<b>Weekend Activities</b>	Allows for deeper learning, time for more hands-on	Web calendar show that at least one "Saturday" event is offered monthly by unit, sister unit, or wing	Develop and begin a process for offering more "Saturday" activities	Participation at "Saturday" events is not the measure, opportunity is
<b>Orientation Flights</b>	An interest in aviation is the typical cadet's #1 or #2 reason for joining CAP	New cadets fly within 90 days of joining; all cadets fly once annually	Develop and begin a process for flying cadets on a regular basis	Scheduling flights is a wing responsibility
<b>Morale</b>	High morale is a leading indicator of a healthy program	Direct observation	Leadership issue	Consider using the Cadet Unit Climate Survey as a tool

**Transition:** Let's move beyond compliance and consider ways squadrons can ensure they're on the right track through some kind of peer support measures.



## Peer Support Measures

5 min

What works according to other knowledgeable people?

One way to ensure the squadron is on the right track is to consider how other successful units and leaders you respect do business. This is a search for best practices. A handful of tools are available to you.



First, the best practices webpage and the overall cadet library itself is a good source for ideas.

Second, visits from your wing staff or sister squadron commanders can help you validate your practices and collect new ideas.

**Q1:** Does anyone have any other secrets for collecting best practices?

**A:** *Allow students opportunities to share ideas.*

**Special Emphasis:** Perhaps most importantly, the Training Leaders of Cadets course is a great venue to collect new ideas and pursue continuing education. We're in the midst of the TLC Basic Course. After completing this, we encourage you to invest a day in the TLC Intermediate Course. The Basic Course prepares you to contribute to your local Cadet Program, while the Intermediate Course goes a step beyond and prepares you to lead your local Cadet Program as a commander or DCC. *Please have schedule information available.*

**Transition:** So far, to check whether our squadron is on track for success, we know we can look at regulatory compliance, and we can "steal" the best practices of our colleagues. We can also look within our squadron by making a self-assessment.



## Self-Assessment

7 min

How does your team think it's doing? Self-assessment isn't foolproof – you don't know what you don't know, so you can mistakenly believe you're doing great when really you're not – but self-assessment is a good tool to use in conjunction with some of the other tools we've mentioned.

Setting and reviewing annual goals is arguably a form of self-assessment. Each unit sets its own goals, and each unit evaluates its progress toward those goals.

**Q1:** Who wants to briefly share their process for setting and monitoring annual goals?

**A:** *Allow students opportunities to share ideas.*



The "SMART" method is recommended. Again, every squadron is required to set annual goals and revisit them quarterly, but your lack of attaining those goals does not trigger any penalty; the assumption is that by deliberately thinking about your goals and keeping tabs on them a few times during the year, your squadron will become more successful, even if a couple goal items aren't fully realized.

*Read aloud each goal found on the slide, one at a time. Orally work through the SMART process. Is the goal specific, measurable, etc.? Each goal fairly models SMART principles, though as a "next step," local leaders should add some specificity to each, such as identifying the community events, dates, and points of contact associated with the first goal (color guards).*



The Cadet Unit Climate Review is an optional tool that takes a subjective look at the squadron's culture and the leaders' soft skills / people skills. Think of it as a guided walk through your squadron that prompts you to consider how well leaders are mentoring cadets, whether the staff works together to plan activities, and whether the cadets truly display self-discipline, among other intangibles.

*Read through a couple of the survey items, just enough so students get a flavor for its subjectivity and focus on soft skills.*

**Q1:** Does anyone have experience working with the Cadet Unit Climate Review or something similar?

**A:** *Allow students opportunities to share ideas.*

**Transition:** Now, let's get to the real tools we want you to have a working knowledge of: the Commander's Dashboard and the Quality Cadet Unit Award program.



## Mission Effectiveness

10 min

While compliance measures, peer support measures, and self-assessments are useful, they're generally the sort of tools people use once a year. In contrast, the Commander's Dashboard and QCUA are tools you should use every month.



The Commander's Dashboard in eServices offers statistical snapshots of the squadron's performance in a number of areas, not just Cadet Programs.

*Show and tell around the Commander's Dashboard. Invite a student to identify one thing the profiled squadron should work on to ratchet up their game. (Select one of the wing's best squadrons to limit the likelihood that anyone gets embarrassed by weak performance metrics.)*



The Quality Cadet Unit Award is a program designed to make squadrons successful as they work toward the award. In other words, if you try to fulfill the award criteria, you cannot help but become an outstanding unit in the process. The criteria are presented cafeteria style - take those items that interest you and pass on those that don't. If your unit fulfills 6 of the 10 criteria, you will receive the award.\* For each criterion, the metric is slightly higher than the national average or regulatory requirement. For example, first year retention in most units is around 33%, so a unit that goes a bit beyond that in hitting 40% meets a criterion.

*\* Criteria changes slightly each year. See [capmembers.com/QCUA](http://capmembers.com/QCUA) for the latest criteria.*

Some encouraging things about the QCUA are that every unit is automatically entered in the program and NHQ automatically computes the winners annually. There's no paperwork involved on your end. Further, every squadron could win the award - you don't need to be the wing commander's favorite.



To understand this point about everyone being able to win, consider how the Oscars work compared to Baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

During some years, Hollywood produces a bunch of great films, yet only one will win the Oscar. Movie producers play politics and campaign for their film to win. It is a norm-referenced award. To get into Cooperstown, on the other hand, all you have to do is be an awesome ballplayer. Some years they induct a handful of players into the Hall, and sometimes it's just one guy or even nobody. Cooperstown is a criterion-referenced award, like the QCUA. If you work hard and put up great statistics, you win, no matter if another squadron is somehow "better."

*Provide the wing QCUA report. Show and tell the different criteria and ensure everyone understands how to read the report. Again, to avoid embarrassment, pick one of the wing's "best" squadrons and walk the students through the data for that squadron.*



## Exercise

12 min

Let's give everybody an opportunity to work with the QCUA data. For this next activity, you can work on your own or with a partner. Find your unit's data online, analyze it against the QCUA criteria, identify what criteria you've accomplished so far, and most of all, identify one criterion you want to work on next and write down some specific things you can do to work toward that criterion.

*Allow 5-10 minutes for this exercise, and then invite some students to show-and-tell their criteria and share their action plans.*



## Final Word

1 min

What's measured is what gets done. By using the compliance, peer support, self-assessment tools, and the Dashboard and QCUA tools especially, we'll be focusing on the sort of objectives and tasks that cannot help but put our squadron on track for success.