

Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course

Modernizing How IBOLC Assesses Leaders

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Recently, the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) at Fort Moore, GA, reviewed and restructured the way it assesses junior officers who attend the specialized Infantry course. The 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment (IBOLC) has a specific mission to train and develop Infantry lieutenants to become mentally, physically, and morally fit leaders who are prepared to lead Infantry platoons and win. For decades, this course has been dedicated to developing Infantry officers to lead and act right in any environment.

However, after an internal and comprehensive review of this product, it was evident that performance measures of the student officer were the only actions being evaluated with great weight. In his book *Infinite Game*, Simon Sinek conveys that valuing performance alone can potentially drive one to lead in a counterproductive manner. In other words, something more is needed for the leader to lead than just performance marks. Additionally, followers must know the depth of their leader is founded not in presentation alone but in a profoundness of uprightness, which not only compels the led to follow but establishes sincere trust between the leader and the led.

To this end, IBOLC developed a holistic or “full-person” approach to evaluate and consider the measure of the junior officers under their charge for development. Predicated on the Army officer’s Oath of Office where officers state they will “well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter,” leaders reviewed Aristotelian ethics and developed an assessment based on character and virtue combined with performance and execution. By gauging the civil, intellectual, moral, and performance qualities of the officer, they believe IBOLC will produce a better officer to lead and serve a platoon (and loved ones) in any environment.

Along with performance assessments such as land navigation, troop leading procedures, and the Army Combat Fitness Test, IBOLC added four points or virtues for consideration that strive to understand the character of the respective officer to their assessment method:

1. **Drive** (performance virtues): Do students desire achievement, growth, and to push/better themselves (as Infantry officers)?
2. **Integrity** (moral virtues): Do students’ actions align with Army values and leadership attributes (Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*)?



IBOLC students discuss team- and squad-level operations after conducting training in November 2023. (Photos courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment)

3. **Humility** (intellectual virtues): Do students ask for help/assistance? Do they look to grow?

4. **Teammate** (civil virtues): Do students look out for the best interest of others? Do they display service over self-interest?

This method of assessment, through these four virtues, assists IBOLC cadre in gauging if student officers understand their commitment made by their Oath of Office. This method also conveys whether student officers are pursuing leadership and service in a worthy manner to ultimately stand in front of Infantry formations. This is not an end-all method but rather a framework to develop our student officers to lead and serve with honor. It focuses them on being leaders in any environment — both on and off duty.

IBOLC cadre use this framework in counseling and coaching. Peer evaluations match the framework but are greater embedded in the Army Leadership Requirement Model. Counseling from the cadre, coupled with the feedback from the peer evaluations, provides student officers with 360-degree critique or commentary of their character and performance. This feedback can be used by officers to spur leader development and self-assess their individual leader needs and strengths. These assessments are useful to student officers in the course as they practice and are graded on leadership patrols, writing assignments (including a leader philosophy), and presentations. But even greater, these assessments are provided so every Army infantry platoon has an officer who is reliable and trustworthy in any and every environment.

LTC Tom Dull, an Infantry officer, currently commands the 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment (Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course) at Fort Moore, GA. He has served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, troop and company commander, aide-de-camp, and battalion and brigade executive officer. LTC Dull has deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Unified Response, Freedom Sentinel, and Atlantic Resolve.



CPT Conrad Jenne conducts an after action review with students in Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course 09-23 following an iteration of a team live-fire exercise.