

# Becoming an Entry Level GUE Instructor: The Two Signature Process

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*Contrary to popular belief, ITCs are not a required step in the instructor development process.*

### INTRODUCTION

**I**RRESPECTIVE of ratings from other agencies, anyone seeking to become a GUE Instructor must first qualify to teach GUE's Recreational 1 program, GUE's Fundamentals program, or both. This requires prospective candidates to meet a set of prerequisites outlined in GUE's Standards and Procedures

and then commit to an instructor development process. Because I am often asked to explain this process, in what follows I would like to do so, with special emphasis on the first of two earned signatures required to qualify for active status. In the course of my explanation I will also provide some recommendations as





*Guided by the GUE Intern Evaluation Form, candidates can work at their own pace to meet GUE's developmental outcomes.*

to how I believe candidates can best meet their goals.<sup>1</sup> As this process is also relevant to Fundamentals instructors seeking to earn Cave 1 or Tech 1 Instructor ratings, it is vital that it is properly understood so that candidates can maximize their resources.

## THE FIRST STEPS

### PREREQUISITES

As the desire to become a GUE Instructor starts to take shape, individuals should first consult GUE's Standards and Procedures to see whether they meet the prerequisites for this rating; for instance, have they conducted the requisite number of dives? Are they habituated to the use of the compulsory equipment? Have they passed all the prerequisite classes? Is their lifestyle and diving consistent with the principles endorsed by GUE? Are they comfortable enough with the GUE ethos outlined in the Standards to be able to communicate it to those who are unfamiliar with it or even resistant to it? If one has not met these prerequisites, then pursuing this objective should be postponed until they are; it is inefficient to pursue an Entry Level Instructor rating while concurrently trying to complete prerequisites. They are prerequisites for a reason; they are designed to provide a habituated set of aptitudes that facilitate more complex behaviors.

### REGISTRATION

Once an individual has met the prerequisites and is confident in their decision to pursue the goal of becoming a GUE instructor,

they should make their commitment known by registering as an intern on GUE's website. This is a key step in the process—though often deferred (to the detriment of candidates)—because it grants individuals institutional standing, allowing them to officially intern in classes, solicit training from Instructor Trainers (ITs) and Instructor Evaluators (IEs), as well as gain access to materials that they will be required to master in order to become instructors. The longer they wait to register, the longer they will lack access; moreover, any work done prior to registration will not count towards fulfilling the instructor-candidate requirements.

### THE FIRST INTERNSHIP: OBSERVING

Once registered, candidates should first familiarize themselves with all course materials for the courses they plan on qualifying to teach. Once they have done so, they should sign up to intern a complete class in the rating they are pursuing conducted by a GUE sanctioned instructor.<sup>2</sup> The organization's expectation of interns during this first internship is that they observe the class from start to finish from a non-student vantage point; they should not be concerned about teaching or assisting. Rather, their task should be to project themselves into the instructional role of the one responsible for *realizing* course outcomes rather than that of one for whom they are *realized*. As they observe the mentor, interns should focus on the instructional side of things; e.g., how are the logistics being managed, how are standards influencing the mentor's choices, how are skills graded relative to course standards, how is time structured, how is the material distributed to maximize resources and

<sup>1</sup> Any recommendations made here are my own. Interested parties should also consult with a GUE Instructor Trainer or Evaluator to craft the best course of action for them.

<sup>2</sup> Mentor, Trainer, or Evaluator





time, and so on. There will be plenty of opportunities for a candidate to learn how to properly teach a back kick or work with a particular student later. Selecting a suitable mentor will play a vital role in helping a candidate establish a true foundation for future success and should be chosen with care based on their track record in candidate development and success. It is one thing to train trainees; quite another to train trainers.

### THE FIRST SIGNATURE

Following the first internship, candidates are eligible to pursue the first of two signatures attesting to their readiness to teach a given entry-level curriculum.<sup>3</sup> Once earned, this first signature authorizes a candidate to undertake an instructor examination (IE) with novice trainees<sup>4</sup>, during which a candidate's readiness to teach a given curriculum is validated (or not) by earning or failing to earn a second signature. This second signature, then, is strictly designed to confirm the findings of the first signature, or, in its absence, to call attention to a possible breakdown in the assessment process, and is part of GUE's quality control process of evaluating candidate training. To earn this first signature, candidates must meet a documented set of performance objectives outlined in GUE's Intern Evaluation Form.<sup>5</sup>


The GUE Intern Evaluation Form guides the instructor development process and documents a specific set of performance objectives that must be met by an instructor candidate to show that he or she is able to properly represent GUE and to deliver the theory and practice of a particular discipline of diving to agency standards. During this process, the goal of the candidate is to test out of each performance objective by having it graded and initialed by an instructor trainer; *an earned initial on a component part, irrespective of numeric grade, represents the assessor's judgment that the candidate meets the standard required to teach the given component.* Once an assessor has initialed a component the outcome is fulfilled; after that *only* the candidate can request that it be reassessed.<sup>6</sup> Once all components are initialed a candidate

<sup>3</sup> Rec 1, Fundamentals, Cave 1, or Tech 1

<sup>4</sup> The only exception is the Recreational Program where a mock class can serve as the Final IE.

<sup>5</sup> There are currently three Intern Evaluation Forms: Rec 1/Fundamentals, Cave 1, and Tech 1, though a fourth specific to Rec 1 is likely to be adopted in the future.

<sup>6</sup> ITs and IEs cannot void the initials of their peers. One reason for requesting a reassessment would be if a candidate wanted to replace the initials of an IE with an IT so as to be able to use the former in a Final IE.



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## Fundamentals/Rec 1 Intern Evaluation Form

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ IE \_\_\_\_\_ Intern Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class Location(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor Trainer/Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Grading Scale

1-Requires Re-training   2-Poor   3-Good but needs improvement   4-Ready to teach   5-Exceeds Expectations  
 N/A-Not applicable (in cases where the student did not conduct a lecture or skill)

**\*\*If a signature is earned for a particular section, please initial beside the score, underneath the curriculum(s).**

Physical Fitness				SCORE	Initial (F)	Initial (R)	What aspects of the intern's fitness should be improved?
A	Overall fitness						
B	In-water fitness						
C	Swim test time: _____ (minutes)						

Professionalism				SCORE	Initial (F)	Initial (R)	How can the intern improve their level of professionalism?
A	Punctuality						
B	Effectively manages logistics						
C	Appearance/Presentation						
D	Demeanor						
E	Interest in student success						
F	Mastery of GUE Standards						

General Teaching Skills				SCORE	Initial (F)	Initial (R)	How can the intern improve their teaching skills?
A	Speaks clearly & confidently						
B	Satisfactorily answers questions						
C	Effective solutions to student problems						
D	Efficient use of class time						
E	Effective use of examples						
F	Presentation structure						
G	Promotes diving as enjoyment						

Classroom Performance				SCORE	Initial (F)	Initial (R)	
A	GUE Overview						
B	Buoyancy & Weighting						
C	Balance & Trim						
D	Propulsion Techniques						
E	Equipment Overview						
F	Decompression Basics						
G	Decompression Procedures						
H	Gas Properties						
I	Nitrox Diving						
J	Dive Planning						
K	Diving Safety						

Field Drills				SCORE	Initial (F)	Initial (R)	
A	Equipment Overview						
B	Gas Analysis						
C	Basic Five						
D	S-Drill						
E	Valve Drill						

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### GUE's modular evaluation form for Fundamentals/Rec 1 (Courtesy of GUE)

has *de facto* earned a first signature (because earning the first signature is cumulative, it does not require a named assessor's signature).

The first signature, then, is designed to be earned in a modular fashion. Guided by the GUE Intern Evaluation Form, candidates can work at their own pace with one or more authorized GUE ITs and IEs to meet the documented developmental outcomes and in the process earn the requisite initials. Documenting competency—i.e., earning initials—can be done in different ways: (1) by taking an Instructor Training Course (ITC); (2) by committing to a series of internships and/or private tutorials; and (3) more often by combining an ITC with a series of internships and/or private tutorials.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A not uncommon belief is that candidates are required to take an ITC to become a GUE entry-level instructor. This is incorrect. ITCs do provide concentrated opportunities to earn component signatures, but are not required.





*Distance-learning technologies can help candidates earn initials toward the fulfillment of their learning outcomes. (Courtesy of KUE)*

What strategy a candidate should adopt to develop aptitude and earn initials for all component parts (first signature) will depend on a number of factors; i.e., where they are based, the curriculum they are pursuing, IT/IE availability, and other factors. Here are some suggestions.

1. Candidates should use the different venues available to them for demonstrating aptitude and for securing initials: Earning component initials does not require participation in a GUE class with novice students, nor does it require an ITC. Initials can also be earned through distance learning technologies (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, and Google+ Hangouts), mock classes, private tutorials, and videography, as well as other venues. Because the dominant aim of the first signature phase of the instructor development process is to train the candidate, GUE endorses a variety of pedagogic platforms for preparing a candidate to realize the intended outcomes of a GUE class.<sup>8</sup> Distance learning technologies, for instance, are

<sup>8</sup> This does not mean that all venues are equivalent in value in preparing candidates for a final IE. For instance, securing the development outcomes for in-water training will be challenging using remote learning technologies. Nonetheless, the point is that they are all available, and can serve a function when used thoughtfully and judiciously. Success of venue will be contingent on a number of factors, including an ITs/IEs skill in managing them. One cannot undervalue the worth of an ITC in the instructor development process as a medium for concentrated training, community-building, and the opportunity for candidates to learn from each other and to demonstrate competency in course outcomes over consecutive days under the supervision of an IT/IE. It is simply vital to recognize that in order to realize all intended course outcomes, the ITC is not the only venue for earning a first signature and it makes little sense for a candidate to delay their training waiting for an ITC to be held in a location that is suitable for them. They can get

ideally suited for learning to lecture and fulfilling the lecture component of the GUE Intern Evaluation Form. Without stepping into a classroom or organizing a class, a candidate, under the instruction of an IT (or IE), can learn how to define and limit a topic, build an outline, learn to manage time, structure a presentation, develop clarity and precision, prepare a lecture, deliver a lecture, provide information in a usable fashion, use the right teaching aids, and so on. The IT (or IE) can ask all the challenging questions designed to determine competency, and when satisfied, they can award an initial for the component part; this can be done gradually and methodically until each and every lecture component is completed without concern for third parties (novice students) or time pressures. Once the lecture components of the GUE Intern Evaluation Form are completed, the candidate can opt to gain experience in more public fora—including classes—to cement their newly acquired skill (though it is not required). Though the lecture component is especially well-suited to distance learning, field drill competency and competency in a number of in-water components—with some planning and forethought—can be demonstrated and an initial earned using a blend of distance learning and mock instruction. For instance, one can video an in-water session or field drill using trained divers and upload it for review to

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substantive work done before they join an ITC (if that is their intent). For committed candidates in remote locations whose resources prevent them from enrolling in an ITC, there are other viable strategies they can pursue to meet their goals.



their IT of choice or work one-on-one in the water with an IT.<sup>9,10</sup>

2. Candidates

should secure as many initials as possible from ITs rather than IEs: Though both ITs and IEs can award component initials en route to the first signature, only IEs can award a second signature. This means that if a candidate's first signature is largely the result of an IE's evaluation (for instance during an ITC), then that IE

cannot be involved in the final IE; this may present a challenge in areas where IEs are underrepresented. As a result, it is vital for candidates to think ahead to the final IE and be mindful of whom they secure component initials from for their first signature.

3. Candidates should consider proofing their work: Though not required, once a candidate has earned his/her first signature, it would be prudent to consider doing a dry run of the class, start to finish, under live conditions, before undertaking an IE for the validating second signature. The main reason for this is that although candidates have demonstrated competence in each component course outcome, and have proved ready to teach every segment, it may be beneficial to rehearse a holistic grasp of the class. This, naturally, will be less true of a candidate who has significant teaching experience elsewhere. Whether teaching a class under supervision, teaching component segments while helping in class, or simply observing a class, joining a class prior to the final IE may prove useful to a candidate to get a better sense of the flow of the class, including logistical challenges, paperwork, grading, and so on. If any weaknesses are identified, these can be ironed out with a trainer prior to committing to a pass/fail assessment.

4. Candidates should be judicious in their use of time and resources: Though working with several ITs/IEs has its benefits, it can also be a source of confusion for novice candidates. Individual trainers will differ in terms of focus,



*Candidates should be judicious in their use of time and resources.*

9 Certainly, most ITs and IEs will require compensation for investing their time. The specific amount should be established privately and can range from an amount to bring the candidate to the first signature to an amount for a review of one or more components.

10 Some will opt to earn component initials in the context of officially run classes. I personally think that this is not an optimal learning environment for candidates. In an actual class with novices the instructor of record (IT/IE) must focus on the training of the novice rather than training the trainer (i.e., how to train). These are distinct aims/outcomes.

emphasis, style, structure, and so on, so switching from one to another can leave a candidate confused as to what exactly they should do and whom to emulate. Where it is an option, a prudent strategy would be to select one IT (or IE) and commit to training with them until the first signature is earned; after that candidates may choose to sit through any number of other presentations to identify other perspectives that may be of use to them towards the evolution of a personal style. If a candidate opts to work with multiple ITs/IEs, they should strongly consider having one be the primary signatory. In the same vein, candidates should avoid committing time and money to sitting through classes in which they cannot earn a component initial. The only time this is a good investment is when a candidate is struggling with a particular set of elements of a class and needs the guidance of a GUE mentor to remedy a shortcoming.<sup>11</sup>

5. Candidates should avoid repeating work: Once a candidate has earned an initial for a component segment they should move on to the next component in a linear fashion. Any polishing they would like to do can be undertaken later or with the aid of a mentor as the candidate makes progress through the GUE Intern Evaluation Form.<sup>12</sup>

6. Candidates should pursue the validating signature as soon as possible after the first signature is earned: If the training has been performed to the standards intended by GUE's instructor development process, once a candidate has earned their first signature they are in principle ready to go to the classroom. Consequently, candidates should schedule a class as soon as possible and have their training validated by an

11 This would be the proper role of a mentor in the current structure.

12 For example, if a candidate is awarded an initial with a grade of a 3 on a skill, it is clear that the skill, though considered passing, is "average" and on another day may not be performed to standard. Rather than reassess this skill, the more prudent strategy would be to leave the grade alone and improve the skill with a mentor. Going back to upgrade the 3 to a 4 or 5 does not strike me as a sensible use of resources. What counts is the initial.



IE (second signature). Don't delay beyond a dry run of the class; the candidate should be at his/her best once all the components are initialed. If a delay does occur, candidates should consider conducting additional dry runs and/or working with an IT or IE to refresh potentially deteriorated skills.

7. Candidates should ensure their documentation is in order: In a sequential process like this one there is always room for oversight if an initial is misplaced or a form not submitted. It is the candidate's responsibility to make certain that GUE HQ has the most up-to-date record of a candidate's progress so that it can be entered into an existing database. It is good practice to secure copies of all initials earned, and to maintain a running tally, in the event that some discrepancy emerges. ITs and IEs are required by standards to furnish candidates with copies of their assessments. Candidates can also view their uploaded forms on their student profile page on the GUE web site.

### THE SECOND SIGNATURE

Once a candidate has shown competence in each and every performance objective outlined in GUE's Intern Evaluation Form to the satisfaction of a GUE IT or IE, thereby earning their first signature, they are ready to seek out a validating signature for their training which will sanction them to teach a given GUE entry-level class. This second signature can only be earned during an instructor examination (IE), sometimes known as the Final IE, conducted in conjunction with one complete, uninterrupted GUE class comprised of novice students under the supervision of a GUE IE.<sup>13</sup> These are strictly pass/fail assessments during which candidate training is validated or not; no remedial work can or should be assigned to candidates to earn a passing mark—i.e., something analogous to GUE's provisional rating. Under examination conditions one candidate is responsible for

all facets of the class, including logistics, paperwork, and grading (i.e., no co-teaching).

### RATIFICATION

Once a candidate has earned both signatures attesting to their readiness to teach a given class to GUE standards, and before he or she is activated, the candidate must contact GUE HQ to confirm that all instructor development documents have been properly executed and submitted, all instructor-specific documents are in order, the necessary agreements signed, and all fees paid.

### CONCLUSION

I fully recognize that there are several moving pieces here and that there will not be universal agreement on one optimal course of action. There does not have to be. What is important is that different individuals—both trainers and trainees—be allowed to use their own talents under concrete conditions to measure up to GUE's performance standards. This flexibility and creativity will allow GUE to maximize its potential, most especially in areas where it is poorly represented. The end or outcome cannot be compromised; it is excellence. But there may be more than one road to get there. Creativity in an age like our own is critical.



<sup>13</sup> An exception to this rule is the Recreational 1 program; aspiring candidates can earn both signatures in either an actual or mock setting.

## GUE Affiliates

- WKPP - [www.globalunderwaterexplorers.org/projects/wkpp](http://www.globalunderwaterexplorers.org/projects/wkpp)
- Ocean Discovery - [www.ocean-discovery.org](http://www.ocean-discovery.org)
- MCEP - [www.gue.com/?q=en/node/136](http://www.gue.com/?q=en/node/136)
- BAUE - [www.baue.org](http://www.baue.org)
- AEG - [www.globalunderwaterexplorers.org/node/137](http://www.globalunderwaterexplorers.org/node/137)
- Rubicon Foundation - <http://archive.rubicon-foundation.org>
- GUE UK - [www.gue-uk.com](http://www.gue-uk.com)
- NEUE - [www.northeastunderwaterexplorers.org](http://www.northeastunderwaterexplorers.org)
- OUE - [www.oue-japan.com](http://www.oue-japan.com)
- TSRCP - [www.threshersharkproject.org](http://www.threshersharkproject.org)
- GUE Netherlands - [www.gue-nederland.nl](http://www.gue-nederland.nl)
- Entrada - [www.entrada.tv](http://www.entrada.tv)
- The Meadows Center - [www.meadowscenter.txstate.edu](http://www.meadowscenter.txstate.edu)
- Dubai Underwater Explorers - [dubaiunderwaterexplorers.com](http://dubaiunderwaterexplorers.com)
- DIRezioneLago - [www.direzionelago.it](http://www.direzionelago.it)
- Diverevolution - [www.diverevolution.it](http://www.diverevolution.it)
- GUE Ontario - [www.gueontario.com](http://www.gueontario.com)
- Project Baseline - [www.projectbaseline.org](http://www.projectbaseline.org)
- CPAS - [www.cpas.pt](http://www.cpas.pt)
- GUE Seattle - [www.gue-seattle.org](http://www.gue-seattle.org)
- Banyu Biru Explorers - [www.banyubiru.org](http://www.banyubiru.org)
- Korea Underwater Explorers - [www.kue.co.kr](http://www.kue.co.kr)
- GUE San Diego - <http://gue-sandiego.org>
- Ghost Fishing - [www.ghostfishing.org](http://www.ghostfishing.org)
- GUE British Columbia - [www.gue-bc.com](http://www.gue-bc.com)
- LAUE - [www.guelosangeles.org](http://www.guelosangeles.org)
- GUE France - [www.guefrance.com](http://www.guefrance.com)

