

# **COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

## **Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operator Promotion Examination**

### **Candidate Preparation Guide**

**Prepared By:**



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## INTRODUCTION

This Guide is intended to provide specific information to candidates regarding the 2025 examinations for Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operators.

The Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operator examinations will each consist of two components including:

- Technical Knowledge Test [TK]
- Situational Judgment Test [SJT]

The examination components are designed based on job analysis information obtained from Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operator incumbents from both Boston and Somerville. The job analysis identified the duties performed and the knowledge and competencies (abilities and personal characteristics) required to perform these duties effectively. The examination process is intended to assess the required knowledge and competencies in the context of important duties and tasks.

Although this Guide will provide general information about both test components, the focus of this Guide is assisting candidates in preparing for the Situational Judgment Test, as this is a new test component for these positions.

Accordingly, this Guide provides information about the Situational Judgment Test in terms of the:

- content,
- administrative logistics,
- evaluation methods,
- preparation strategies, and
- sample questions.

From the information presented in this Guide, candidates should be able to gain an understanding of the Situational Judgment Test, including the test procedures, the types of questions they will encounter, and suggested preparation strategies.

We encourage candidates to review this Guide carefully and to take advantage of all opportunities to prepare for the Situational Judgment Test.

## GOOD LUCK!

**NOTE:** In this Guide, an effort has been made to provide information about the intended format, content, logistics, and evaluation of the Situational Judgment Test. However, it is possible that minor alterations may be made in the testing procedures between the time this Guide is distributed and the administration of the test. We will work with the Human Resources Division to provide you with any updates that may be required.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROMOTIONAL EXAMINATION with emphasis on the SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT TEST

- I. **Date, Time, and Location:** The computerized online written exam which contains two examination components will be administered to Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operator candidates on Saturday, February 15, 2025. Testing will take place at multiple testing locations and different groups of candidates will be assigned to either a morning or an afternoon testing session. Two weeks prior to the exam date, you will receive a Notice to Appear that indicates the site where you will test and the arrival and testing times for your session. Please make note of your testing time to ensure you show up on time. Late arriving candidates may be disqualified from testing.
- II. **Technical Knowledge (TK) Content:** The Technical Knowledge Test will consist of 70 multiple-choice questions drawn from the sources listed on the Reading List. The TK Test consists only of closed-book questions. You will not be permitted to bring any Departmental reference sources (from the reading list) or any other documents or materials with you to the test facility. If any such materials are found in your possession once you are seated at a computer at the testing site, you may be disqualified from testing.
- III. **Situational Judgment Test (SJT) Content:** Candidates will be asked to consider the role of Senior or Principal Fire Alarm Operator and will be presented with a series of 10 job relevant scenarios. Each scenario will describe a job situation which a Senior or Principal Fire Alarm Operator might face. Following each scenario, candidates will be presented with 4 to 6 potential actions that the Senior or Principal Fire Alarm Operator in that scenario might take in response to the situation presented. Candidates will be asked to read, consider, and rate the effectiveness of each potential action using the following rating scale:

1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue

When rating the effectiveness of each potential action, candidates should consider only the information presented in the scenario. If knowledge of any department-specific policy or procedure is needed to determine appropriate responses to a scenario, that information will be explicitly provided in the scenario description.

- IV. **Situational Judgment Test Competencies:** The Situational Judgment Test was designed to assess a series of competencies found to be important to effective job performance in the context of situations encountered by Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operators in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Based on the job analysis results, the five (5) competencies to be assessed during the Situational Judgment Test are identified below. In other words, the Situational Judgment Test scenarios reflect or align with the competencies listed below:
  1. **Accountability/Dependability:** This competency involves adhering to and applying policies, procedures, and standards in an appropriate, consistent, and fair manner. This includes holding oneself and others accountable by addressing and correcting problem performance or discipline violations in a timely, consistent, and fair manner. This competency also involves setting a personal example by modeling the core values of the agency, taking responsibility for one's own mistakes, and working quickly to address them.
  2. **Adaptability/Composure:** This competency involves the ability to evaluate and modify

one's behavior to meet the needs of changing circumstances or priorities. This includes maintaining a calm and professional demeanor in both routine and stressful situations or crises. This competency also involves the ability to demonstrate resilience by persevering through adverse or difficult circumstances and by bouncing back from setbacks, disappointments, criticism, or emotionally challenging situations. It also includes being able to recognize potentially stressful or traumatic situations and respond accordingly though debriefing team members and referring them to appropriate programs or resources when needed.

3. **Analyzing and Deciding:** This competency involves the ability to select an appropriate and timely course of action by seeking out and analyzing information from various sources, evaluating the importance and relevance of information, and considering alternative approaches and their implications.
4. **Interpersonal Interactions:** This competency involves the ability to establish constructive working relationships with others. This includes demonstrating consideration and respect for others' feelings, needs, views, and contributions while maintaining the necessary balance to ensure that objectives continue to be met. This also includes the ability to foster a cooperative team environment and negotiate/reconcile conflict among others. It involves dealing with people politely and helpfully, regardless of social and cultural background. And it includes the ability to offer comfort, concern, or emotional support to others who may be disturbed or agitated.
5. **Initiative/Leadership:** This competency involves demonstrating "drive" and the tendency to take action without being prompted to achieve objectives. It also involves the ability to work with limited or no oversight while still recognizing when it is necessary to seek others' input before taking action. This competency also involves the ability to establish goals, plan activities, and identify and direct resources in an efficient and effective manner in order to achieve objectives. This includes developing strategies for accomplishing goals that include contingencies for anticipated obstacles, allocating authority and responsibility based on personnel capabilities and priorities, clearly explaining assigned tasks and performance expectations, and monitoring/measuring progress toward goals.

- V. **Administrative Logistics:** During a single testing session, candidates will complete both examination components. The tests will be administered on a computer in a controlled testing environment. At the start of the testing session, after a set of instructions, candidates will complete the Technical Knowledge Test. Once the Technical Knowledge Test is completed, candidates will proceed to review additional instructions regarding the Situational Judgment Test and then complete the Situational Judgment Test. The test period will be timed as a single testing session. Although this Guide provides guidance as to how much time a candidate should expect to spend on each portion of this examination, it is up to the candidate to keep track of time and ensure that he/she has sufficient time to complete each test component.

The timed session for this promotional examination will be 2 hours and 50 minutes. The recommended allocation of time is:

- 10 minutes to read the initial instructions for the examination
- 105 minutes (one hour and 45 minutes) to complete the Technical Knowledge Test
- 10 minutes to read the additional instructions for the Situational Judgment Test
- 45 minutes to complete the Situational Judgment Test

Please keep in mind that the examination timer will run continuously once the examination is initiated and it is up to each candidate to ensure he/she spends the time appropriately to be able to complete both test components before the timer expires.

- VI. **Situational Judgment Test Scoring:** All responses on the Situational Judgment Test will be scored against an established scoring key. Each response will be worth a minimum of zero points

and a maximum of two points. Note that candidates rate the effectiveness of each potential action the Senior or Principal Fire Alarm Operator in that scenario might take using a scale that ranges from Highly Ineffective to Highly Effective. Each potential action that is rated by a candidate is considered a “response” on the Situational Judgment Test.

The scoring key for each potential action (i.e., the “correct” or most appropriate effectiveness rating for that scenario response) was determined by a group of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) representative of the Boston and Somerville, Massachusetts jurisdictions. These SMEs determined the most appropriate effectiveness rating (i.e., the scoring key) for each potential action.

Candidates will receive one point for each response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate is on the same “side” of the effectiveness scale as the scoring key, plus one additional point per response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate matches the scoring key exactly. Zero points will be awarded for a response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate is on the opposite “side” of the effectiveness scale from the scoring key. Illustrative examples of the scoring process are provided below.

<b>Candidate Effectiveness Rating</b>	<b>Scoring Key</b>	<b>Points Awarded to Candidate</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Highly Effective OR Effective	Ineffective	0	The candidate’s response is on the “effective side” of the rating scale, and the scoring key is on the “ineffective side” of the rating scale. The candidate’s response is therefore on the opposite side of the scale from the scoring key, and 0 points are awarded.
Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	1	The candidate’s response is on the “ineffective side” of the rating scale, and the scoring key is on the “ineffective side” of the rating scale. The candidate’s response is therefore on the same side of the scale as the scoring key, and 1 point is awarded.
Ineffective	Ineffective	2	The candidate’s response is on the same side of the scale (“ineffective”) as the scoring key, so 1 initial point is awarded. In addition, the candidate’s rating of “Ineffective” matches the scoring key, so an additional 1 point is awarded. The candidate therefore receives 2 points for this response.

All scoring computations will be performed by Talogy using the scoring key established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts SMEs.

## PREPARATION STRATEGIES FOR THE SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT TEST

**VII. Preparation Strategies:** The Situational Judgment Test is designed to assess the underlying competencies as they contribute to the performance of Senior and Principal Fire Alarm Operators. Technical knowledge of policies, procedures, rules, and regulations is not the primary focus since knowledge is assessed as part of the Technical Knowledge Test. However, keep in mind that the competencies involve such things as analyzing information, considering alternative approaches and their implications, identifying and coordinating resources, and monitoring progress toward goals. The application of these competencies towards resolving a situation or problem must inevitably occur within the context of the relevant policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. Thus, it is essential to have a foundational understanding of acceptable behaviors and procedures, whether during an incident or in an administrative setting.

You can improve your performance on a Situational Judgment Test in a couple of different ways. First, know and understand the test situation so that you can avoid making mistakes caused by a failure to understand the meaning of test questions, test format, or test procedures. Second, you can try to gain an understanding of your own test-taking behavior. If you become aware of the kinds of errors that are common on Situational Judgment Tests, you can try to avoid them. This section of the Guide provides suggestions for improving your performance in each of these areas:

- **Situational Judgment Test-Taking Strategies - Understanding the Test Situation:** This section provides some strategies that you can apply when taking the Situational Judgment Test. These strategies include such suggestions as systematically breaking down the rating scale and answering easier questions first.
- **Common Pitfalls - Understanding Your Own Test-Taking Behavior:** This section provides information about common pitfalls in test-taking in general, in situational judgment tests in particular, and reasons why you might face such pitfalls. You are encouraged to identify the kinds of behaviors you might tend to engage in by reading through this list. In this way, you will be more aware of the tendency toward these pitfalls when you take the test and can determine what steps you can take to avoid them.

### **A. Situational Judgment Test-Taking Strategies**

The purpose of the Situational Judgment Test is to evaluate the competencies required to perform certain work-related situations, particularly as they relate to making decisions or judgments regarding effective versus ineffective behaviors in those situations. Because we want to directly evaluate these competencies, we are offering the following suggestions.

#### **1. Make sure you understand the test format and requirements.**

- a) Read all directions carefully.
- b) Read each scenario and all potential actions carefully before attempting to rate them. Scenarios and potential actions are brief, so re-reading may be a good use of your time to ensure you have not misunderstood anything in the scenario or potential actions.
- c) Make sure you know how to use the rating scale to rate the effectiveness of each potential action.

- d) Make sure you know how much time you have remaining to complete the test. As you take the test, check the timer on the computer periodically so that you can keep track of the amount of time remaining in the testing period.

## 2. Proceed through the scenarios strategically.

- a) Break down the rating scale. First, think about whether each potential action for the given scenario is generally “effective” or generally “ineffective.” Imagine the person in the situation responding in the way that is described in the given item. Then think about whether that action would generally make the situation better or worse. When thinking about the ramifications of the given action, you may want to consider the impact that action would have on others described in the scenario. Consider things such as whether the action promotes or inhibits safety, whether the action is consistent with any expressly stated rules or policies, and whether the action demonstrates strong levels of responsibility, adaptability, leadership, professionalism, etc. If you believe the given action would make the situation better, you should respond by selecting a rating on the “effective” side of the scale. If you believe the given action would make the situation worse, you should respond by selecting a rating on the “ineffective” side of the scale.

One question often asked by candidates is what constitutes “the situation” or “the issue” in the scenario – i.e., what if a given action resolves or improves some aspects of the situation but in the meantime, causes other issues or makes other aspects of the situation worse? You should consider every aspect of the situation in this case. If the net effect is for the action to help more than it hurts, then you should rate the action somewhere on the effective side of the scale. If the net effect is for the action to cause more issues than it resolves (or to hurt more than it helps), then you should rate the action somewhere on the ineffective side of the scale.

Once you have determined whether the potential action is effective or ineffective, then think about the degree to which that response is either effective or ineffective. If a given response is extremely or very likely to improve the situation, or likely to resolve most or all of the issue, then you should select the “Highly Effective” rating. If you believe a given response is somewhat likely to improve the situation, or if the response would resolve some or part of the issue, then you should select the “Effective” rating. Similarly, on the ineffective side of the scale, if you believe an action would be extremely or very likely to worsen the situation, or would be very unlikely to resolve the issue, you should select the “Highly Ineffective” rating. If you believe an action would be somewhat likely to worsen the situation, or somewhat unlikely to resolve the issue, you should select the “Ineffective” rating.

- b) Rate the “easier” potential actions first. As you read the potential actions for a given scenario, you may find that some of those actions are easy to rate (e.g., they are clearly “Highly Effective” or clearly “Ineffective”). Rate those potential actions first to get them out of the way, and then spend time thinking about the actions that may be a little more difficult to judge. Don’t forget to use the strategy described above in step (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of the potential actions.
- c) Take a mental break when needed. If you feel that your ability to concentrate is decreasing at points during the test, take a brief mental break. Close your eyes and take a minute to clear your mind and relax. Of course, you must keep in mind the time limit for the test, but the positive effects of a brief mental break may well be worth the few seconds or minutes it takes.
- d) Answer every question. You will not lose any more credit for an incorrect response than you will for no response, so even if you must guess, rate every potential action. If the test period is about to end, and you believe there will be several scenarios that you will not be



able to get to, reserve some time (e.g., 60 seconds) at the end of the test period to rate the scenario's potential actions, even if you must guess. While your guesses may not be correct, the alternative is to leave these actions blank and be guaranteed to get them wrong.

### 3. Use extra time wisely

Once you complete the test, go back and review your responses to make sure they still make sense to you as you read through them again. Pay particular attention to scenarios and potential actions where you may have initially questioned your responses. Re-read them, think through them again in a systematic way, and make sure you are comfortable with your responses. You will not get extra points for completing the test before the time limit expires, so if time remains, review as many of your responses as time allows.

Remember, test administrators will be available to help every candidate, but only to clarify procedures. If you have any procedural questions, ask for assistance before the test begins.

### **B. Common Pitfalls**

There are several common reasons candidates might choose an incorrect rating for a potential action. Eight of these reasons are presented below along with suggestions for avoiding these errors.

1. **Misreading the rating scale:** Candidates may mistakenly rate a potential action differently from how they intended to rate it, simply due to misreading the scale. Be sure to make note of the scale anchors (1 = Highly Ineffective, 2 = Ineffective, 3 = Effective, 4 = Highly Effective) and the directionality of the rating scale - lower ratings indicate ineffective responses and higher ratings indicate effective responses.

In a similar vein, note that the rating scale asks about the *effectiveness* of each potential action. You are NOT to rate the *likelihood* that someone (including you) might take the action listed. Instead, you are to rate, if the individual in that scenario did take the listed action, how effective that action would be.

2. **Misunderstanding the instructions or making false assumptions:** Candidates may fail to fully read the instructions or may assume they already know how to proceed without reading the instructions, especially when there is pressure to finish before the test time limit. The instructions for rating the potential actions will be presented with each new scenario. It is important that you understand the instructions before rating the potential actions. The instructions will be as follows:

"Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the Senior (or Principal) Fire Alarm Operator might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are not required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective."

Important Note: You do NOT have to select a different rating for every potential action to the same scenario. You may rate more than one action as Effective, more than one as Highly Ineffective, etc. Similarly, you do NOT have to use every rating point on the scale when evaluating the potential actions within a given scenario. In other words, it is NOT necessary to assume that every scenario will include at least one potential action at each of the four levels of effectiveness. Within any given scenario, you may find that there are no potential actions to

which you give a rating of “Highly Effective,” or no actions to which you give a rating of “Ineffective,” etc.

An example is provided below of a scenario with four potential actions. The darkened numbered circles indicate the effectiveness rating selected by the candidate for each potential action. Notice that, in this example, a rating of “Effective” is given to two of the potential actions, and the rating of “Highly Ineffective” is not used at all. As previously mentioned, there is no requirement to select a rating from each point on the scale for the potential actions for the same scenario.

### Scenario Example

A brief description of the scenario involving a Senior (or Principal) Fire Alarm Operator will be presented here.

Potential Actions		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
A)	Senior (or Principal) FAO Example takes action A in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
B)	Senior (or Principal) FAO Example takes action B in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
C)	Senior (or Principal) FAO Example takes action C in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
D)	Senior (or Principal) FAO Example takes action D in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④

3. **Viewing the potential scenario actions as interdependent:** Within any given scenario, the listed actions that the Senior or Principal Fire Alarm Operator might take in response to that scenario are NOT to be viewed as chronological or as interdependent in any way. The responses do NOT build on one another. Instead, each potential action listed for a scenario is meant to be viewed and rated independently from the other actions. Be sure to rate each potential action separately.

4. **Misreading part of the scenario or potential action by overlooking a keyword or phrase:** The solution to this problem is taking the time to read carefully and thoroughly, re-reading if there is time. Make note of key words or phrases that may indicate the most effective ways in which to respond to a situation. Be sure not to overlook critical words such as “not” – for example, “this individual has not been trained on this technique.” Overlooking the word “not” in this phrase could lead to faulty assumptions about the most effective actions to take in a scenario that involves assigning the best resources to manage a particular incident.
5. **Not knowing the meaning of one or more key terms:** Situational Judgment Test scenarios and potential actions will not include a great deal of technical terminology. Nevertheless, when taking the test, if you have difficulty with a term, re-read the sentence to determine its general meaning without worrying about the exact meaning of the particular word. Try to understand the general message of the sentence or paragraph. The meaning of the unfamiliar word should become clearer once you understand the general context within which it has been placed.
6. **Not sticking to the scenario as presented:** When evaluating Situational Judgment Test potential actions, it is tempting to make assumptions or jump to conclusions based on preconceived notions or past experiences related to the scenario being described. Be careful NOT to make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Focus on the information provided in the scenario. Do not assume or add information or think about “what ifs” such as, “If the immediate supervisor has this type of personality, I might respond differently,” or “If this has been an ongoing issue, then this might be an appropriate response,” etc. Focus solely on the information provided when reading and thinking about the scenario and potential actions. If there is added information that is needed (e.g., information about personality conflicts, background stating that an issue is ongoing or has occurred repeatedly), that information will be clearly stated in the scenario. If some challenge, problem, or conflict is not stated in the scenario itself, do NOT assume it exists and do NOT let such an assumption impact your responses.

Similarly, focus on the potential actions that are provided. It may be that the course of action that YOU would take is not listed as an option, or that you can think of other, more or less effective, alternative actions that are not listed as potential actions. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by thinking about alternative actions that are not provided. Focus on the potential actions that are listed, and the context provided around those actions in the scenario.

7. **Committing common rating errors or biases:** When using any kind of rating scale, such as the effectiveness rating scale that will be used to rate the potential actions, candidates often tend to have natural biases that lead them to only use specific portions of the scale. One common bias is to use only the extremities of the scale – in this case, only “Highly Effective” or “Highly Ineffective.” Another common bias is to avoid those extreme ratings and only use the middle points of the scale – in this case, only “Effective” or “Ineffective.” Other common biases involve being overly “lenient” by rating every potential action somewhere on the “effective” side of the scale, or instead being overly “critical” by rating every potential action somewhere on the “ineffective” side of the scale.

The key to overcoming these errors or biases is to re-read the meaning of each anchor, and systematically think through how effective each potential action is. Look back at strategy A2a (*Proceed through the scenarios strategically – Break down the rating scale*) as a reminder.

8. **Rushing or not taking enough time to think through your ratings:** When there is an overall time limit to the test, it is tempting to rush through the reading of the scenarios and the rating of the potential actions. Note, you should have sufficient time to read carefully through all the scenarios and potential actions. Do not agonize for several minutes over one potential action but do take the time needed to carefully read and consider the action. Some additional tips for systematically thinking through your ratings of the potential actions include:

- Have an answer in mind before you look over the potential actions. Thinking about the most effective action to a scenario may help you anticipate what effective versus ineffective actions might look like, which can aid you in rating the potential actions that are listed. Be careful, however, not to dismiss all listed potential actions as ineffective simply because they do not match exactly what YOU might do in that situation. Keep in mind there may be several effective (and by extension several ineffective) actions to addressing any given challenge.
- Consider the rationale behind your rating of each potential action. If someone were to ask you why you rated a particular action as Ineffective, as Highly Effective, etc., would you be able to provide a reason? If not, you may wish to re-think your rating.

## SAMPLE TEST ITEMS

Some samples are provided below to give you an idea of what to expect on the Situational Judgment Test. These scenarios and potential actions represent generic prototypes that are similar in format, length, and content to the types of scenarios and actions that will appear on the upcoming Situational Judgment Test.

### **VIII. Sample Situational Judgment Test Items:**

These sample scenarios and potential actions are meant to illustrate the nature of the test you will complete. The format (i.e., instructions, scenario description, listing of potential actions with associated effectiveness rating scale) mirrors the format you will see during the actual Situational Judgment Test.

For each example scenario, the scoring key (i.e., effectiveness rating that is considered most accurate) is provided on the page following the scenario. You may use the scenarios as practice items and then look to the page following the scenario for the answer key.

The final Situational Judgment Test items that appear on the actual exam have been vetted/approved by Commonwealth of Massachusetts experts, who have also determined the official scoring key for each potential scenario response. The sample items below have been through this same vetting process, and the scoring key indicated for these example items been officially determined/approved by Commonwealth of Massachusetts experts. The scoring key provided for the sample items therefore follows the same logic and judgment process as that used by the experts to develop the key for the actual SJT.

## Senior FAO Example 1

Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the Senior FAO might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are not required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective.

### Scenario

The Chief of the Department has issued a special order notifying all Operators of a change in procedure. Every Operator is required to print and sign off on the order to acknowledge they have received it. Senior FAO Smith is aware that FAO Brown has not yet signed off on receipt of the order.

		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
Potential Actions					
A)	Senior FAO Smith prints a copy of the order for FAO Brown and makes sure Brown signs it.	①	②	③	④
B)	Senior FAO Smith reminds FAO Brown that he needs to print and sign the order.	①	②	③	④
C)	Senior FAO Smith says nothing to FAO Brown, as it is Brown's responsibility to take the appropriate action.	①	②	③	④
D)	Senior FAO Smith stresses to FAO Brown the importance of understanding and complying with the order, and why it is critical to acknowledge that he has read it.	①	②	③	④
E)	Senior FAO Smith warns FAO Brown that if he does not sign off on receipt of the order, Smith will have to report him up the chain of command.	①	②	③	④

In Senior FAO Example 1 listed on the previous page

- Option A is considered Highly Effective (4; Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue) because Senior FAO Smith is making certain that the order is printed and gets signed by FAO Brown.
- Option B is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because Senior FAO Smith is reminding FAO Brown of his responsibility, which is likely to help the situation, even though it is not guaranteed that FAO will ultimately sign off on the order.
- Option C is considered Highly Ineffective (1; Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue) because saying/doing nothing is very unlikely to help resolve the issue. If Brown were going to take responsibility to sign off on the order, he likely would have done so already.
- Option D is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because, similar to response B, Senior FAO Smith is reminding FAO Brown of his responsibility. He is even stressing why it is important to follow through on that responsibility, which is likely to help the situation, even though it is not guaranteed that FAO will ultimately sign off on the order.
- Option E is considered Ineffective (2; Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue) because, although there may indeed need to be consequences for FAO Brown if he ultimately refuses to sign off on the order, Senior FAO Smith resorting to a threat as an initial way to spur Brown to action is unlikely to improve Brown's sense of responsibility in the situation and may even be likely to harm the relationship between Smith and Brown.

## Principal FAO Example 2

Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the Principal FAO might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are not required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective.

### Scenario

Principal FAO Taylor has an FAO on shift, FAO Martin, who is a very difficult employee. FAO Martin does not violate policy, but is not helpful to colleagues, is curt with people, and does not get along with other staff. Other staff complain about having to work with FAO Martin.

Potential Actions		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
A)	Principal FAO Taylor tells FAO Martin he will have to change his behavior or face discipline.	①	②	③	④
B)	Principal FAO Taylor asks FAO Martin questions to try and discover if there are underlying reasons for his behavior.	①	②	③	④
C)	Principal FAO Taylor tells the other staff members that there is nothing she can do because Martin is not violating any policies.	①	②	③	④
D)	Principal FAO Taylor recommends that FAO Martin be reprimanded for his behavior.	①	②	③	④
E)	Principal FAO Taylor meets privately with FAO Martin, explains how his behavior negatively affects those around him, and tries to create an agreed-upon action plan for improving his interactions.	①	②	③	④



In Principal FAO Example 2 listed on the previous page

- Option A is considered Ineffective (2; Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue) because, although there may indeed need to be consequences for FAO Martin if he ultimately cannot find a way to work effectively with others, Principal FAO Taylor resorting to a threat as an initial way to address Martin's behavior is unlikely to improve Martin's desire to work well within the team. It may even be likely to prevent a good relationship between Taylor and Martin.
- Option B is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because Principal FAO Taylor is attempting to understand the reasons behind FAO Martin's behavior. This is a good first step toward understanding how the situation could be improved.
- Option C is considered Highly Ineffective (1; Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue) because saying/doing nothing is very unlikely to help resolve the issue. In fact, telling the other staff that there is nothing to be done is likely to make the situation worse by angering, or at best disappointing, the rest of the staff and harming Taylor's reputation as a leader.
- Option D is considered Highly Ineffective (1; Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue) because reprimanding FAO Martin is inappropriate as an initial step when there has been no attempt to discuss the situation with Martin, understand the reasons behind his behavior, or even determine if Martin is aware of his behavior.
- Option E is considered Highly Effective (4; Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue) because Principal FAO Taylor is addressing the situation directly and openly with FAO Martin, attempting to ensure he understands the impact of his behavior, and seeking agreement from Martin on actions he can take to improve his interactions with others.

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope that this Guide gives you a better understanding of what to expect for the Situational Judgment Test (including the logistics and scoring procedures) and provides you with some suggestions for preparation. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive; we encourage you to engage in additional preparation strategies that you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively on the Situational Judgment Test.

**BEST OF LUCK!**