

POLAR QUALIFICATION

Operations in Polar Bear Environments (Tourism or Field Operations)

2022 Edition



**POLAR
TOURISM**
Guides Association
guiding guiding

DEFINITIONS:

- Scope:** Outlines who the Test is for.
- Element:** Outlines the overall **skill set** to be Tested.
- Range:** The **specific skills** to be examined. An examination **may or may not** include all of the range items. It is at the discretion of the Assessor if the Candidate shows confidence and ease in other range items as to whether they examine them or no

SCOPE:

Operations in Polar Bear Environments (OPBE) is an awareness, behaviour and deterrent competency for any guides, field staff, scientists, sailors and hiker or any personnel who guide or work with OPBE's individually or with groups of peers or clients.

- Special Notes:*
- i. *Firearms and firearms skills are covered in the Firearm Skills for Polar Bear Operations training award. This award is considered a highly desirable co-qualification but both are able to be used or obtained as stand-alone qualifications.*
 - ii. *High Risk Areas (HRA) are acknowledged areas, attractants or geographic features that are commonly associated with polar bears. There is no assumption there will be a bear, just that HRAs are prioritised as part of a management strategy or when moving through bear habitat.*
 - ii. *This award (as of 2022) has only been awarded through Recognition of Current Competency, Cross Credit from industry courses or interview-based testing. PTGA acknowledges this is a difficult qualification to assess in the field but that processes used so far are sufficiently robust.*

- PREREQUISITES:**
- Current First Aid Certificate
 - PQ Communications for Polar Operations

ELEMENTS & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

Element 1 – Demonstrate knowledge of polar bears and their environment

1.1 High Risk Area (HRA) knowledge

Range: Polar bear abundance knowledge, seasonal variation and risk factors, common HRA factors, and HRA terrain traps.

1.2 Polar bear body language, behaviour and condition

Range: Common body language, common approach and charging strategies, physical condition matrix, and mothers with cubs.

1.3 Polar bear attack statistics knowledge

Range: Statistics of polar bear attacks and review of causal factors.

Element 2 – Demonstrate knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of commonly used non-lethal deterrent strategies

2.1 Non-lethal deterrent strategy knowledge

Range: Rubber bullets, flares, cap guns, screamers, pepper spray, improvised deterrents (i.e., banging rocks/pots etc., dropping clothes/gear during retreat), and which actions/deterrents appropriate at different distances.

Element 3 – Prepare for an excursion in polar bear environment

3.1 Personal preparation

Range: Pre-knowledge from any other operators and/or locals about site/terrain suitability, local HRA's known, knowledge of local laws and regulations for given location, safety equipment organised and accessible, communications checked and operational, and scouting strategies (if possible).

3.2 Deterrent preparation

Range: Obtains deterrents as required, performs standard safety checks, packages deterrents for given conditions and ease of access.

Element 4 – Undertake an excursion in polar bear environment

4.1 Individual excursion

Range: Excursion intentions registered, continuous checking and scouting, movement strategies around/within terrain traps, use of warning indicators (shout, whistle, bell, noise-makers), deterrents checked, appropriately carried for the activity and efficiently accessible.

4.2 Group excursion

Range: Excursion intentions registered, plan for avoiding conflict, continuous scanning, checking and scouting, movement strategies around/within terrain traps group management strategies communicated to everyone, pre-brief of behaviour in an encounter, use of warning indicator (shout, whistle, bell, other noise-makers), final safety checks of personnel and deterrents, appropriately carried for the activity and efficiently accessible.

Advanced Operations in Polar Bear Environments

* These endorsements (as of 2022) have only been awarded through Recognition of Current Competency, Cross Credit from industry courses or interview-based testing. PTGA acknowledges these are difficult qualifications to assess in the field and that processes used so far are sufficiently robust.

Endorsement 1 – Large Group Management

SCOPE: This endorsement is for mass tourism expedition leaders or ground staff in charge of larger groups (more than two groups/two guides) with attendant staff/guides in polar bear environments. It is primarily a management and strategy qualification.

PREREQUISITES:

- PQ Operations in Polar Bear Environments
- PQ Communications for Polar Operations

ELEMENTS & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

Element 1 – Manage a large group excursion in polar bear environment

1.1 Prepare a site for visitors

Range: Pre-knowledge from any other operators' and/or locals about site suitability/risks, plan a site management strategy, plan a site clearance, outline any laws or regulations governing the site, brief staff of any HRA issues or traps, pre-landing scouting, execute site clearance and begin operations.

1.2 Demonstrate strategy for polar bear encounter and withdrawal

Range: Theoretical exercise outlining an orderly departure from the site/bear and strategies to maintain process.

1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of an emergency response strategy

Range: Laws and regulations in case of real incident, internal communications with the involved company or group, and resolution phase strategies.

Endorsement 2 – Camping Operations

SCOPE: This endorsement is for guides, field staff, scientists, sailors or personnel who must camp or are in charge of groups camping in PBE's. This qualification is for land-based operations and is outside the scope of larger mass/ship tourism operations.

PREREQUISITES:

- PQ Operations in Polar Bear Environments
- 5 nights logged camping/overnighting in polar bear environment
- PQ Communications for Polar Operations
- PQ Lead a Hike in Non-technical Terrain
- Firearm Skills for Polar Bear Environments Training

ELEMENTS & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

Element 1 – Manage a camping excursion in polar bear environment

Range: Laws and regulations governing the activity for the given area, functional camp layout, field of view, camp utility access routes, bear safe containers, and appropriate storage of food/hygiene articles.

Element 2 – Demonstrate knowledge of management strategies for overnight stays

Range: Watch system, electric fences, trip wires, and appropriate briefings for watchkeepers.

Element 3 – Demonstrate knowledge of HRAs that might coincide with campsites

Range: Known travel routes, water, noise, obvious sign, pre-existing camps, known carcasses, beaches, narrow valleys and passes.

DATE:	REVIEWERS:
2017	Prepared by Graham Charles
1/12/17	Rupert Krapp/Graham Charles
16/1/18	Rupert Krapp
23/12/18	Theres Horntrich
16/3/20	Qualification Review Meeting
2021	Qualifications Review Meeting
2022	Qualifications Review Meeting