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| IALA Guideline |

G1027

Simulation in VTS Training

Overview ITG7

* Finalized chapter 8
* Proposed annex on debriefing (taken from G1103) but no further annexes
* Use of participant instead of student or trainee
* Use of training objectives instead of learning objectives

For VTS57

* Review Input document + ITG report
* Finalize introduction + harmonize it with introduction in remote learning GL
* Discuss definition chapter
* Discuss open items and remaining inputs
* Tidy up
* Final review

Submit to VTS Committee for approval

Edition 1.2

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# INTRODUCTION

A major factor in the effective delivery of VTS is the competence of its personnel. VTS personnel should only be considered competent when appropriately trained and qualified. IALA Recommendation R0103 states that competent authorities and VTS providers implement and establish VTS training and certification in a standardized and harmononized manner in accordance with IALA guidelines and model courses.

In delivering VTS training simulated excercises offer an excellent technique which complements other training methods. Simulation is a training tool which provides realistic training of practical skills, knowledge and competencies which can be transferred into the operational environment.

OR

Simulation training provides a structured and effective method for developing and maintaining competencies by replicating real-world scenarios in a safe and controlled setting. Specifically:

* It allows VTS personnel to practice technical skills, refine their decision-making, and enhance operational competence without the risks associated with real VTS operations.
* It emphasizes teamwork, communication, and adaptability.
* It allows VTS personnel to build confidence in undertaking both routine day-to-day tasks as well responding to developing situations or emergencies.

# DOCUMENT PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for training organizations and VTS providers on implementing, developing and conduction simulation in their VTS training. It aims at describing the various types of simulation, the harmonization of the practices of simulation training, instructional techniques and the use and benefits of simulation training.

This Guideline is associated with *IALA* *Recommendation R0103 (V-103) Training and Certification of VTS Personnel,* a normative provision of IALA *Standard 1050 Training and Certification*. To demonstrate compliance with the recommendation the practices described in this guideline should be taken into account.

## Relationship to other documents

This Guideline should be read in conjunction with all IALA documents related to VTS training, and in particular:

* IALA Recommendation R0103 Training and Certification of VTS Personnel
* IALA Guideline G1156 Recruitment, Training and Certification of VTS Personnel
* IALA Model Course C0103-1 VTS Operator Training
* IALA Model Course C0103-2 VTS Supervisor Training
* IALA Model Course C0103-3 VTS On-the-Job Training
* IALA Model Course C0103-4 On-the-Job Training Instructor
* IALA Model Course C0103-5 Revalidation Training

# SIMULATION TRAINING

Simulation training is the use of a simulated activity to develop and improve specific skills and competencies in a safe, realistic and controlled environment. It is aimed at enhancing operational performance and assessing the associated levels of competence.

Therefore, the purpose of simulation training is:

• To train VTS personnel in a safe and realistic environment;

• To assess and maintain the levels of competencies of new and existing VTS personnel.

Suggestions from Kerrie

Simulation training comprises of two interconnected components; simulation and interaction. . Interaction refers to the active engagement of the learner with the simulated environment, while simulation provides the framework for that engagement to occur.

**Simulation** - is an artificial, often digital environment designed to replicate real-world situations, allowing individuals to practice and develop their competency without the risks or constraints associated with actual experiences. It allows personnel to practice skills, make decisions, and learn from their actions in a controlled and safe environment.

**Interaction** - is the process through which learners engage with the simulation, either by manipulating objects, making decisions, or responding to dynamic situations within the simulated environment. This interaction is key to making the simulation an effective learning environment.

In a VTS environment, simulation training enables the creation of complex and high-risk situations that replicates the interaction between VTS, ships, ports, allied services, and other organizations as appropriate, to manage and monitor ship traffic and respond to developing unsafe situations.

Simulation training effectively combines realistic, immersive environments with active engagement and decision-making. Learners not only gain hands-on experience but also develop confidence with critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills that they can apply in real-world scenarios. The more interactive and immersive the simulation, the more valuable it becomes as a training tool.

# USE AND BENEFIT OF SIMULATION

Simulation training is a widely adopted tool for training and assessing VTS personnel, making training more effective, realistic and consistent.

Training organizations as well as VTS providers should use simulation to assist in VTS training. Simulation should be included in VTS training as part of the C0103 model courses and the process of maintaining qualifications to:

* verify to what extent the competence levels of VTS model courses have been met;
* evaluate performance as part of the maintaining qualification, skills and development training and revalidation training;
* Assess the effectiveness for VTS personnel to respond to developing unsafe situations and emergencies.

Additionally simulation may also be included for other purposes than training, such as:

* assessing a candidate’s suitability to operate in a VTS during the recruitment process;
* testing, analyzing and improving new procedures or equipment;
* performing risk analysis and routeing design;
* conducting incident/near miss debriefings;
* supporting/carrying out joint operation training.

Simulation offers a range of benefits oto developi skills, improve performance and prepare VTS personnel with real-world challenges such as equipment operation, procedural knowledge, reactive capabilities and responses in emergency situations.

The benefits of simulation training includes:

* Realistic experience: simulations provide a realistic environment where participants can practice skills and scenarios that closely mirror real-world situations, enhancing their preparedness for actual tasks.
* Safe learning environment: in simulations participants can learn from their mistakes without the risks associated with real-life errors. This method allows trial and error and learning in a risk-free environment.
* Immediate feedback: simulations often include mechanisms for immediate feedback, allowing participants to quickly understand and correct mistakes, which accelerates the learning process.
* Enhanced engagement: interactive and immersive simulations can increase engagement, and make the learning experience more enjoyable and effective. It also promotes the participant’s critical thinking by enabling them to view situations objectively.
* Complex scenario practice: participants can train complex, rare, or high-risk scenarios that might be difficult or impractical to replicate in real life.
* Scalable: simulations can be used for both individual and team training, and they can be tailored to various levels of expertisce, from beginners to experienced personnel.

Simulation helps stakeholders gain a broader understanding of situations from multiple perspectives by switching roles(role play). This facilitates mutual understanding and enables the analysis of problem scenarios from various view points.

# APPROACHES TO SIMULATION TRAINING

Simulation may be conducted in many different ways and using many different techniques. The type of simulation technique depends on the learning objectives or the expected outcomes. Simple training objectives may not require complex and technical simulation techniques. Where as, other simulations may involve a full-mission simulator offering a training environment almost identical to the VTS centre itself.

Any training that reflects a work environment or a part of it could be used to develop a simulation[[1]](#footnote-2). It is up to the training organization or the VTS provider to determine what simulation type is suitable to meet the training objectives.

## Simulation training types

Different types of simulation training may include:

* Table top exercises – using group discussions, drawings, models, traffic charts, etc.
* Role play exercises – using scenario’s where every participant will take part in a specific role.
* Communications simulator – such as verbal, face-to-face, telephone, VHF and/or electronic communications, etc.
* Computer programs aimed at specific tasks or exercises (link to GL on remote training)
* VTS equipment operated in simulation mode, to simulate the operational environment of the VTS such as poor visibility, responding to developing situations. It is important that simulation training is not conducted in a real VTS environment.
* Mobile simulators where systems are portable and training can take place in various locations.
* Basic set-up of an instructor computer linked with a participant computer.
* Full-mission VTS simulator – designed to replicate the work environment comprising most of the above
* Cloud-based or virtual simulation allowing online and remote training;
* Joint operational training environment where multiple parties on different simulators (VTS simulator, bridge simulator, …) are participating, such as VTS, tugs, pilots, response agencies, … .

## EXTRA DEVICES FOR SIMULATION TRAINING

Simulation may be complemented with equipment or techniques that provide deeper insight in the participant’s performance or facilitate the simulator training, such as:

* Eyetracking
* E-learning
* Automatic broadcasting
* Rate of speech monitoring
* Heart rate monitoring
* Speech to text technology
* Camera network
* Non-verbal reports
* Virtual and augmented reality technology

## uSE OF aRTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelliegence (AI) provides an opportunity to create or enhance simulation exercises by making them more interactive, realistic, and adaptive to the individual. It allows scenarios to dynamically adjust in real-time based on the individuals actions, skill levels, or decisions which creates a more responsive and engaging learning environment.

The future will see more simulations using AI to enhance realism and interactions through the use of predictive modelling to simulate potential outcomes or risks to help individuals understand the consequences of their actions.

Include the potential risks of AI. (IALA G1178 dec 2022)

# REALISM IN VTS SIMULATION

VTS simulation should provide sufficient behavioural realism to allow personnel to acquire skills appropriate to the training objectives. VTS simulation should have the amount of realism for the trainee to believe it is real.

VTS simulation could be augmented with equipment to enhance realism and provide experience of the operating capabilities of the VTS equipment concerned. The level of physical realism should be appropriate to training objectives and include the capabilities, limitations and possible errors of such equipment.

To achieve realism in simulation, the following should be considered:

* Simulation training should be developed by training staff with adequate experience in the provision of VTS.
* Simulation exercises or scenarios could be fictive but should provide sufficient realism. If possible, simulation exercises or scenarios could be based on events that actually occurred, or derived from imported (digital) data (e.g. snapshots, recordings, …).
* Training in a fictive area may be appropriate if, e.g. the real VTS area is too complex. Although not similar the fictive area should provide sufficient realism.
* Simulation equipment could differ from the equipment used in the simulator. “simulation mode” of equipment?
* If required the working environment of the simulation training should, as far as practicable, be similar to the real VTS Operator workstation. The simulated environment should include all necessary equipment to meet to training objectives. Such as land-line telephones, decision support tools, VHF, traffic image displays, environmental, meteorological and hydrological sensors, logging and replay equipment, monitoring systems and electronic data systems.
* Role-play is a major aspect of simulation and should be undertaken by instructors and the individual.

# INSTRUCTORS

Simulation training should be developed, delivered, reviewed and updated by instructors who meet the requirements as identified in IALA G1156 Recruitment, Training and Certification of VTS Personnel. The training organization or VTS provider should determine the additional qualifications and experience required for instructors delivering simulation training.

An instructor conducting VTS simulation training should have

* A detailed understanding of the training programme and its objectives;
* Ability to translate training objectives into a simulation exercise;
* Practical instructional experience;
* Ability to create realistic and challenging training scenarios;
* Knowledge of the technical capabilities and limitations of the simulator to be comfortable with the tool or technique;
* Skills in identifying and resolving technical issues within the simulation environment;
* Capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and unexpected situations;
* knowledge of, or experience in the provision of VTS;
* Skills to carry out briefings and debriefings;
* Skills to analyse performance and coach participants to enhance performance.
* skills to collaborate other team members to ensure the simulation meets the learning outcomes

If more than one instructor conducts a simulation exercise the different roles (communication, assessment, conduct the exercise, technical, …) should be clear to avoid

# DEVELOPMENT OF SIMULATION EXERCISES

Simulation could be identified to be the most appropriate type of training for the purposes mentioned in chapter 4. For each of these purposes (e.g. IALA VTS model courses, G1156 revalidation process, recruitment process, incident/near miss debriefings, …) objectives will have been identified. These objectives should ensure students obtain the minimum levels of competence set out.. While various teaching methods can be used to meet these competence levels, certain skills and knowledge are best developed through simulation exercises.

Once simulation is agreed to be the most suitable the development of exercises will start. The process of the development of simulation exercises is shown in Figure 1. Each step requires time and a structured approach from the training staff.

OR

Simulation is often the most effective way to develop the skills and knowledge required to meet the required competence levels and training objectives. Once it’s determined that simulation is the most appropriate type of training, a structured process is followed to develop the simulation exercises as shown in Figure 1.

MODEL COURSE/TRAINING NEED

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

PLANNING

DESIGN

DEVELOPMENT & VALIDATION

CONDUCT OF EXERCISES

DOCUMENTATION

Pre-exercise briefing & preparation

Management of exercise

Debriefing

Feedback

Trainee evaluation/assessment

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

1. Phases of the development of a simulation exercise

## Planning

The planning phase is essential for laying the groundwork of the simulation exercise.  It involves a thorough needs analysis based on the training objectives to identify the skills or knowledge gaps. This phase also defines the specific content of the exercise and outlines the required time, budget, technology and support tools, ensuring that all elements are in place for successful implementation.

The planning phase provides instructors with

* a clear focus to align the content, activities and assessments with the desired outcomes;
* guidance in deciding what type of simulation training is most appropriate;
* guidance in deciding the equipment required;
* an indication of the duration of the training;
* number of participants in the training;
* approval of the deployment of the resources required;
* the time required to develop the simulation training, especially for computer based simulation training;
* an indication of the staff and other resources required to carry out the training.

## Design of simulation exercises

The design of simulation exercises refers to the creation of the structure and the content of the exercise, based on the planning previously defined. The design should indicate how the training objectives will be met and what will be necessary to carry out the training.

Design of simulation exercises includes:

* Deciding on the type of simulation that is appropriate;
* Deciding on the method to how the exercise will be delivered
* Deciding on the equipment, the staff and the time required;
* Assessing if there are any individual needs and skill gaps that need to be addressed
* Identifying scenarios suitable for the exercise by outlining key situations or challenges that need to be simulated;
* Outlining how the exercise will flow;
* Deciding how exercises will be debriefed and, if included, how assessment will be conducted.

A simulation exercise should be designed with the intention of delivering specific outcomes. The exercise environment may be real or fictitious, with consideration given to the following:

* Defining the sea area or waterway including local features and navigation aids;
* Typical traffic patterns appropriate to allow an induvial to organise, monitor and manage ships;
* Vessels types. Where practical, this may include a database of ship names that actually participate in the VTS;
* The effects of meteorology and hydrographic factors on vessels;
* Integration of allied services (e.g. Search and rescue, Pilotage, Tugs, Agents, Customs);
* Operational procedures used to maintain a safe and efficient waterway including responding to developing situations;
* Relevant International, National and Local Regulations.

## Creation of simulation exercises

During this phase simulation exercises are created and upon completion of this phase the simulation exercise should be ready to be conducted.

The development of the simulation exercise involves:

* Scenario story boarding to create a detailed and realistic plot that aligns with the training objectives. The scenario should include a timeline, key events and challenges;
* Configuring the simulation tools to replicate the relevant VTS environment;
* Preparing training materials such as instructor guides, scripts and scenarios, presentations;
* Preparing participant information and hand-outs;
* Developing debriefing and assessment tools such as rating scales, checklists, evaluation forms, …;
* Pilot testing prior to to conducting the training to participants to verify its effectiveness and if futher adjutstments are required;

## Conduct of simulation exercises

The conduct of simulation training is when the exercise will be carried out with the participants. Sufficient time should be taken into account prior to, and after the exercise to enable thorough preparation and effective debriefing.

### Preparation

Prior to running the simulation exercise all necessary arrangements should be made to assure a flawless start. This includes a detailed briefing to inform the participants of the primary goals of the simulation exercise and how these training objectives align with the overall training program/course. A thorough pre-exercise briefing ensures that all participants are well-prepared and understand their roles, the scenario, and the objectives of the exercise. This will contribute to a more effective and valuable training experience. Other elements to be included during the preparation/set-up of a simulation exercise are:

* Consider the trainee’s outcomes/results from previous training, including previously identified areas of improvement;
* Consider allowing participants to become familiar with new skills or learning objectives prior to the simulation exercise
* Explain the functionality of the simulator and any relevant tools, interface, controls and communication systems;
* Assignment of specific roles and responsibilities to each participant, especially if different from previous exercises;
* Outline procedures to be followed and possible constraints of limitations;
* Exercise rules (respectful communication, active participation and constructive feedback) and expectations;
* Explain the debriefing process and how the trainee will be assessed;
* Provide an overview of the exercise scenario. This may include details of
  + The time period and weather conditions
  + The traffic situation
  + The potential challenges and hazards that may arise
* Ensure all equipment is operational and functioning;
* Ensure all members in the instructor team (if any) are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

### Running of the exercise

The running of the exercise happens from the moment where the scenario starts. All involved in the exercise will take on the role(s) that has/have been identified and discussed for the length of the exercise.

Key elements of the running of the exercise for the instructor include:

* Begin the simulation exercise with clear communication when it starts;
* Actively monitor the participant’s actions throughout the simulation;
* Consider that the participant’s performance during the simulation training may differ from the operational performance; (mentioned under assessment too)
* Observe trainee behaviour (tone and speed of speech, body language, …);
* To improve realism informal communication by the instructor may be considered. However, this should not influence the participant’s use of communication procedures;
* Take into consideration the trainee’s stress, fatigue, pressure, …;
* Make notes of key teaching points for debriefing and if possible the exercise should be recorded to facilitate key points playback;
* Make notes for trainee assessment;
* Avoid interrupting the exercise;
* Decrease/increase exercise difficulty if required (scalability);
* Observe and note any deviations from the scenario or expected outcomes;
* Adjust the simulation environment if required (e.g., introduce new conditions, change vessel movements);
* Ensure the trainee understands the evolving nature of the scenario and adapts accordingly;
* Finish the simulation exercise with clear communication when it ends

### Debriefing

Debriefing is a crucial aspect in simulation and is as important as the exercise itself. Through feedback the trainee gains insight on his/her performance and to what extent the expectations/learning goals have been met. Ideally the debriefing should be carried out by an instructor immediately after each exercise. The exercise should be discussed thoroughly with outcomes and lessons to be learned from them. Ideally after the debriefing the participant will have learned how to perform better in future training or operations/operational work.

The following points are particularly relevant to debriefing sessions:

* Debriefing should be carried out in a structured, co-ordinated and well prepared way;
* Debriefing should be trainee-centred;
* Consider an appropriate location and approach of debriefing, preferably in a group environment to increase learning effect;
* Ensure trainee participation/involvement;
* Encourage self-analysis;
* Ensure a focus on key outcomes that should be learned from the exercise:
* emphasize the good points
* explain thoroughly what could have been done better
* Sum up and evaluate performance against objectives;
* Summarize the end results of the participant performance;
* Document and report the results of the participant performance.

### Assessment

The assessment of participant performance is important to assess whether the competency requirements and learning objectives have been met.  It will identify the participant’s strengths, areas for improvements as well as possible shortcomings.

Assessors conducting evalutions should meet the requirements mentioned in G1156 (section 7.4) and have sufficient knowledge of the principles of simulation training.

Results from simulation exercises may also be used for periodic assessments of VTS personnel, which are part of the revalidation process to maintain VTS qualification mentioned in IALA G1156. This ensures that established standards continue to be met and indicates whether other training (e.g. update training) is required. It should be noted that the particpant’s performance during the simulation training may differ from the operational performance.

Assessment results should be recorded and retained in accordance with national and/or organizational requirements as evidence to indicate the competence levels that have been attained. Documentation is important for accountability, liability, and legal purposes, and should include details of simulator exercise conduct, the participants, duration, and results. Further, these results should be reviewed prior to future simulation exercises or other training activities.

## Revision of the simulation Exercise

Revision of the simulation exercise is necessary. For example:

* To verify whether the exercise meets the objectives defined in the planning phase;
* To identify ongoing improvements based on participant feedback and observations;
* To update exercises when changes have occurred in the VTS environment (procedures, area, …)
* Reviewing requirement for equipment modifications to meet training objectives.
* Other

# DEFINITIONS

The definitions of terms used in this Guideline can be found in the International Dictionary of Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA Dictionary) at http://www.iala-aism.org/wiki/dictionary and were checked as correct at the time of going to print. Where conflict arises, the IALA Dictionary should be considered as the authoritative source of definitions used in IALA documents.

# ABBREVIATIONS

CBT Computer based training

CD-ROM Compact Disc Read-Only Memory

OJT On-the-Job Training

TMS Training management system

VHF Very high frequency (30 MHz to 300 MHz)

VTS Vessel traffic Service or vessel traffic services (dependent on context)

WBT Web based training

# REferences

1. IALA. G1156 Recruitment, Training and Assessment of VTS Personnel
2. IALA. R0103 Training and Certification of VTS Personnel
3. IALA. C0103-1 (V103/1) Vessel Traffic Service Operators Training

1. Debriefing process

This ANNEX is a practical tool to be used in the debriefing of exercises.

**Make the debriefing trainee‐centred.**

During the debriefing process, trainees (not the instructors) analyse and reflect on their performance. This enhances the learning process. During the exercise itself trainees are very busy processing information. During the debriefing they have the opportunity to reflect and comment on their performance. Instructors facilitate this process and encourage trainees in their analysis, without taking over the analysis. A trainee‐centred approach not only stimulates learning, but also improves the trainees’ ability to analyse, reflect on and evaluate their own performance.

Instructors should restrict themselves to the learning objectives of the exercise. If an exercise was unsatisfactory, the debriefing process should only focus on a few major points. In such a case it is especially important to give positive feedback as well. Facilitation does not mean that instructors cannot give their opinion.

**Encourage the trainee to be active during the debriefing.**

The logic behind this form of debriefing is that adults learn and retain information better when they are active. Talking about their performance generally forces them to ‘relive’ the exercise thus processing the exercise for a second time. When trainees listen passively to their instructors their brain may have a lower activity mode. Furthermore, this technique gives trainees the opportunity to consider alternative solutions.

**Encourage self‐analysis.**

In a debriefing, the objective for instructors is to lead the self‐analysis. Trainees do most of the talking and analysing. It is the responsibility of instructors to ensure that the trainees’ analysis is correct. This may differ from the instructors’ opinion. During a good debriefing, trainees usually will come up with a better solution.

The ability to analyse their own performance varies amongst trainees. When trainees fail to make a good analysis, instructors should not take over. By asking questions they lead the student towards a good analysis. The technique to enable this is described below.

The task of the instructor is to ask questions. The debriefing may start with the following questions:

* What went well?
* What could have gone better?
* How could you have done things differently?
* How would you improve your performance?

The instructor gives the student enough time to mention all relevant points.

**What instructors do:**

* complete missed learning goals;
* correct erroneous statements of the trainees;
* provide necessary information;
* give positive feedback;
* encourage quiet trainees;
* provide all (including high‐performing) trainees with sufficient time for their analysis;

**What instructors avoid:**

* making it an instructor‐oriented session
* analysing before the student has done so;
* giving the impression that the student is guided towards an answer as this will reduce their motivation to self‐analyse significantly.
* giving the impression that only the opinion of the instructor counts;
* interrupting the student;
* making it a cross‐examination.

**Advantages of this method of debriefing**

Trainees become accustomed to reflecting on and evaluating their performance. Trainees will not only answer

the ‘what‘ question but especially the ‘why’ question (more in‐depth analysis). Trainees may more easily apply

what is learned.

**Disadvantage of this method of debriefing**

This method of debriefing can be more time consuming.

Example 1 ‐ A good example

Trainee: I don’t know what went wrong. Did I see it too late?

Instructor: Did you see it too late?

Trainee: Well I saw it, but I thought he was going to starboard?

Instructor: Why did you think that?

Trainee: Well, I told him that, I assumed that he would do it?

Instructor: What would you do differently next time?

Trainee: Well I'd rather check whether he really is going to do it.

Example 1 ‐ A bad example

Trainee: I don’t know what went wrong. Did I see it too late?

Instructor: Well I think so. Next time check whether he really intends to go starboard.

Example 2 ‐ A good example

Trainee: I thought it was going well in the traffic separation scheme.

Instructor: Yes? Why did it go well?

Example 2 ‐ A bad example

Trainee: I thought it was going well in the traffic separation scheme.

Instructor: Yes, I agree. Next point then.

Example 3 ‐ A bad example

Trainee: I think that it went well with that tanker. What do you think?

Instructor: Yes, I agree.

Example 3 ‐ A good example

Trainee: I think that it went well with that tanker. What do you think?

Instructor: Why do you think it went well?

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)