



## TEACH THE FUTURE

Gen. Gary Brito, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's commanding general, discusses the importance of understanding the military decision-making process with a Logistics Captains Career Course at the Army Sustainment University, in March 2024. (Photo by Ryan Sharp, U.S. Army Combined Army Support Command)

# FUTURE-PROOF TALENT

Army introduces mandatory Cognitive Assessment Battery for Captains Career Courses in 2025.

by Angela Sanson

The Army is set to implement a groundbreaking change in the way officers are selected for functional areas (FAs) with the introduction of the Captains Career Courses' Cognitive Assessment Battery-Revised (C3AB-R). Starting in early 2025, the operational pilot for this mandatory assessment will be administered to officers attending Captains Career Courses across all branches, marking a significant shift in the Army's approach to acquisition talent management and officer placement.

## COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT EVOLUTION

The concept of cognitive assessments within the Army isn't entirely new. The Army Talent Management Task Force initially used these assessments as tools to aid officers in determining their career paths during the branching process. The new iteration—now known as the C3AB-R—has been tailored specifically for FAs, beginning with FA 51 (Acquisition) and FA 30 (Information Operations).

“The Army initially developed assessments to aid in determining the right basic branch for cadets, but we evolved to make these assessments available for functional areas,” said Jason Pitts, acquisition workforce proponent chief in the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center’s Director of Acquisition Career Management Office. “Our focus is now on ensuring that officers can make informed decisions about their careers, especially after completing their company command.”

The C3AB-R, developed by the Army Research Institute, aligns with the Army Talent Attribute Framework and measures key knowledge, skills and behaviors (KSBs) identified through an Army-wide job analysis. The assessment provides a predictive tool to identify officers’ fitness for functional areas and assists in their recruitment and Volunteer Transfer Incentive Program decisions.

### A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR BETTER PLACEMENT

The C3AB-R will assess captains, particularly around their six-to-eight-year mark of service. This timing coincides with their attendance at the Captains Career Course—a critical point for professional development. The assessment evaluates key factors like job fit, satisfaction and performance prediction within a specific functional area.

“Historically, officers transitioning into a new functional area like acquisition had limited information about their potential success or satisfaction,” Pitts explained. “The C3AB-R changes that by offering data-driven insights, allowing both the Army and the officers to make better, more informed decisions.”

The assessment groups FAs into clusters based on KSB importance ratings. For example, FA 51 is evaluated based on critical KSBs like communication, analytical thinking and critical thinking. The assessment measures cognitive, non-cognitive and communication skills, providing a holistic profile of each officer’s strengths and fitness for these FAs.

### VALIDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The validation of the C3AB-R involved extensive data collection, where current FA officers completed the assessment and provided feedback on their satisfaction and fit within their roles. Supervisors also contributed by rating the officers’ performance across 17 dimensions. The results demonstrated that the C3AB-R effectively predicts officer fitness for FAs, supporting its use as a reliable tool for talent management.

Following the successful validation, the Army plans to roll out the C3AB-R as the Occupational Aptitude Battery (OAB) starting in

2025. This transition will include integrating scoring algorithms into automated tools, finalizing feedback reports for Captains Career Course students, and establishing data pipelines to ensure seamless communication of results to functional area proponents.

### CONCLUSION

The Army’s implementation of the OAB is not just about enhancing the officer selection process; it’s also about future-proofing the Army’s talent management strategies. By 2025, the OAB will be a standard component of the Captains Career Course, with the potential to influence a wide range of FAs beyond FA 51.

Moreover, efforts are already underway to develop a similar predictive assessment for noncommissioned officers within Military Occupational Specialty 51 (Contracting), reflecting the Army’s commitment to expanding cognitive assessments across different ranks and roles.

“By introducing these assessments, we’re not only improving our selection process but also providing our officers with the tools they need to succeed in their chosen careers,” Pitts emphasized. “These assessments empower officers to make informed decisions about their future, which is crucial for retaining the talent the Army needs to stay mission ready.”

As the Army prepares for the full rollout of the OAB, the program promises to bring a new level of precision and personalization to the Army’s talent management efforts, ensuring that officers are placed in roles where they can thrive and contribute most effectively to the Army’s mission.

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