CONCEPT

# Crisis Simulation and Exercise Design: Tabletop and Live Exercise Planning

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**Technical depth:** Practitioner · **Practical mode:** Simulation

## Introduction

Plans that are never exercised tend to fail in their first real use, yet many exercises are scripted walk-throughs that test attendance rather than capability. Objectives are vague, scenarios ignore the organisation's real risks, injects arrive without control and findings are never tracked to closure. This Core Concept course equips resilience practitioners to design, deliver and evaluate crisis and continuity exercises using ISO 22398 and established exercise tools. Participants build and run a live simulation in design teams and leave with an Exercise Design Package for their own organisation.

## Course Objectives

- Position exercising within a continuity and crisis programme and plan a multi-year exercise calendar against ISO 22301 and ISO 22398
- Set SMART exercise objectives and build scenarios grounded in the organisation's risk profile
- Construct master scenario events lists, injects and participant materials for discussion-based and operations-based exercises
- Organise control and evaluation teams and run an exercise safely to its timeline
- Facilitate debriefs and convert findings into after-action reports and tracked improvement plans
- Produce an Exercise Design Package ready for sponsor approval and delivery

## Target Audience

- Business continuity and emergency planning coordinators who run exercises
- Crisis management team secretariat and support officers
- Health, safety and emergency response officers organising drills
- IT service continuity and security incident coordinators testing response plans
- Learning and development specialists supporting resilience training
- Risk and resilience analysts responsible for validating plans

## Course Outline

## Day 1: Exercising Foundations and Programme Context

- Validation, Training and Testing Purposes Under ISO 22301 Clause 8.5
- ISO 22398 Exercise Principles and Terminology
- Exercise Types: Seminar, Tabletop, Drill, Functional and Full-Scale
- Existing Exercise Programme Review and Capability Gap Matrix
- Multi-Year Exercise Programme Calendar Design

## Day 2: Exercise Design Frameworks

- ISO 22398 Exercise Project Cycle: Identify, Plan, Conduct, Evaluate and Improve
- SMART Exercise Objectives Linked to Plans and Capabilities
- Scenario Development from the Risk Register and ISO 31000 Assessments
- Exercise Specification: Scope, Participants, Assumptions and Constraints
- Exercise Safety Plan and Real-Emergency Stop Protocol

## Day 3: Building the Exercise

- Master Scenario Events List Construction
- Inject Writing: Format, Timing, Source and Expected Action
- Situation Manual, Participant Briefing Pack and Simulated Media Feeds
- Control Staff Roles: Exercise Director, Controllers, White Cell and Role Players
- Exercise Evaluation Guides and Observer Checklists

## Day 4: Advanced Design, Evaluation and Pitfalls

- Branching Injects and Dynamic Scenario Adaptation
- Multi-Organisation Exercise Coordination Using ISO 22320 Principles
- Red Teaming and No-Notice Exercise Design
- Hot Debrief Facilitation Using the After-Action Review Four Questions
- After-Action Report and Improvement Plan Tracking

## Day 5: Simulation Delivery and the Exercise Design Package

- Tabletop Simulation Delivery by Participant Design Teams
- Live Inject Control and Timing Adjustment During the Simulation
- Evaluator Findings Consolidation and Cold Debrief
- Exercise Design Package Drafting for an Own Organisation
- Peer Review of Exercise Design Packages

## Skills You Will Gain

- Exercise Programme Planning
- Scenario Development
- MSEL and Inject Construction
- Exercise Control
- Exercise Evaluation
- Debrief Facilitation
- Improvement Plan Management

## Why Attend This Course

- Leave with an Exercise Design Package ready to run in the organisation, already reviewed by peers
- Design and control a live tabletop simulation with other participants rather than only studying one
- Write injects and evaluation criteria that show whether plans work, not merely whether people attended
- Exchange scenarios and exercise formats with planners from energy, healthcare, finance and public services

## Conclusion

An exercise is only as useful as the lessons it produces and the actions that follow. This course moves from the purpose and types of exercising, through objective setting, scenario development and exercise specification, to injects, control, evaluation, debriefing and improvement tracking. The final day has participants deliver and control a simulation they designed and turns the experience into an Exercise Design Package, giving them a repeatable method for validating plans and building response capability across their organisation.