Part 1: The AMGA Ski Standard

Goals

The following descriptions are intended to help both candidates better self-assess their skiing skills as well as aid instructors/examiners in assessing skiing skills and providing objective criteria for marking and providing feedback. This standard ensures that the candidate:

- Demonstrates inspirational and motivational skiing to their clients. “Makes it look easy”

- Skis at a level that will make them a competitive candidate to be hired as a ski guide worldwide, including ski touring, ski mountaineering, and mechanized ski programs.

- Clearly represents the AMGA Skiing Standard in the US and compared with other IFMGA member countries.

General Skiing Standard

- Demonstrates more control, efficiency, fluidity, and balance than the average skiers on black diamond and double black diamond runs at national class ski resorts including off-groomed and variable conditions.

- Can employ skiing and guiding tactics at a level that will instill respect from national class ski athletes, team skiers and other high-end professional skiers.

- Consistently demonstrates ability to appropriately apply a repertoire of turn types, variations in speed, intensity, and turn radius in order to meet the need of the clients.

- The guide must be able to adjust to variations in terrain and conditions and ski for their clients from both a motivational as well as risk management perspective.

- Shows good rhythm and flow in fall line skiing with a guide’s pack or multi-day pack.

Part 2: Specific Skills

AMGA has chosen to adopt the *Visual Cues To Effective Skiing* to reference the mechanical priorities of the AMGA Ski Standard.

(See PSIA Alpine Movement Assessment Pocket Guide – second edition)

Reference: See PSIA Video, “Movement Matrix”
Alpine Education Resources: http://www.thesnowpros.org/index.php/PSIA-AASI/snow-day/alpine/alpine-education-resources/

1. Balance and Stance

Effective: the skier is in balance when he or she can access and effect in any of the skills throughout each turn

- The entire body is involved and participates in balancing.
- Flexing activity originates from the ankles and is supported by the knees, hips and lower back
- The hips are centered throughout the turn, promoting a movement forward through the finish and into the next turn.
- The inside leg shortens as the outside leg lengthens, setting up alignment and balance with weight on the outside ski.
- The upper body remains more vertical than the lower body throughout eht shaping and finishing phases of the turn, creating body angles which align balance over the outside ski.
- The inside hand, shoulder and hip lead the turn shaping and finish resulting in a countered relationship between the upper and lower body (degree of counter is related to turn size and shape)
- The skiers hands are in front of the body to aid balance.

Ineffective: lack of proper balance and stance makes it difficult to access other skills and learn new movements.

- Some of the skier's joints flex too much, and others not enough. For example, too little ankle flex causes the hips to say behind the knees (weight too far back), with too much ankle flex causes the skier to be too far forward.
- The upper body is tipped to the inside throughout the turn
- The inside ski bends more than the outside ski
- The skiers is still or static and gets bounced around by the terrain
- The skier's hands and hips are behind the feet.

2. Rotary Movement

Effective: Rotary movements involve turning some part of the body relative to the other parts. Combined with other skills, rotary movements allow the skier to change the direction more efficiently

- The skier's legs turn underneath a strong/stable torso to help to guide the skis through the turn.
- Both skis and legs turn together throughout a parallel turn, with the femurs turning in the hip sockets (instead of the entire hip coming around).
- The skis are tipped and turned an appropriate amount to create a smooth, C-shaped arc.
- Rotary (steering) movements which re-direct the skis at turn initiation are matched in timing and intensity by tipping the skis to prepare for increased forces caused by edge engagement.

Ineffective: Without proper rotary movements, control deteriorates in difficult terrain because the skier cannot use the legs properly.

- The shoulders and/or torso initiate the turning of the skis.
- One ski stems or steps to begin the turn.*
- The skis pivot or skid throughout the turn, creating a Z-shaped turn
- The skis turn too quickly, causing overturning, or do not turn fast enough, causing under-turning

*Converging and diverging steps or stemming maneuvers may be appropriate in certain ski guiding applications, including variable conditions, obstructions or steep terrain.

3. Edging Movements

Effective: Edging allows the skier to direct the skis to control turn radius, shape, and speed

- Edges are released and re-engaged in one smooth movement.
- Both skis tip the same amount early in the turn, with the strongest angles developing in or near the fall line
- The shins make forward and lateral contact with the boot cuffs as the skier rolls the skis onto the new edges.
- Tension of the inside leg helps maintain alignment. Flexion of the inside ankle directs movement forward and laterally for edge-angle adjustments.

Ineffective: without appropriate edging skills, the skier is unable to control the radius, shape, or speed of the turn.

- The skis tip onto an edge late in the turn (in or after the fall line), creating a fast and heavy edge set at the end of the turn.
- The skier stands straight up before moving into the turn or moves up and back instead of in a diagonal direction toward the new turn.

4. Pressure Control Movement

Effective: Pressure control provides the element of touch that promotes a smooth ride at any level of skiing.

- The skis flow evenly and smoothly over the terrain, aided by the skier's joints working together to manage the ski-snow interaction. This requires effective pressure management, including both the application and release of pressure (sometimes resulting in one or both skis being off the snow.
- The skis bend progressively throughout the turn, with the entire length engaged.
- The amount of flexion and extension of the skier's legs changes in response to the terrain and pitch of the slope.
- Pressure adjustments during the turn will alter the timing, intensity, and amount of pressure redistribution along the skis and from foot to foot.
- The pole touch or pole plant complements the turn.
- The skier's upper body remains quiet and disciplined.

Ineffective: When pressure control is lacking, the skier looks as if she or he is fighting the terrain rather than working with it.

- The skis and the skier get bounced around by the terrain
- The skier is mostly on the back or front of the skis throughout the turn rather than balanced in the middle of the skis.
- The legs do not exhibit flexion and extension in response to changes in terrain.
- The legs do not exhibit flexion and extension in response to forces in the turn.
- The pole plan is erratic in timing and direction
- The upper body is flailing and undisciplined.

5. Directional Movement

Effective: Directional movement entails moving toward the new turn with gravity and with the skis.

- The skier extends into the direction of the new turn to change edges.
- The ski continues forward along its edge during the turn.
- The ankle, knee and hip roll forward laterally to move into the new turn.
- The skier keeps his or her vision forward, looking ahead in the intended direction of travel.
- The pole swings smoothly in the direction of travel.

Ineffective: The skier who doesn't use directional movement moves against gravity or away from the turn.

- The skier moves vertically up before moving into the new turn.
- The ski pivots or skids as it moves through the turn.
- The skier's outside (or downhill) hand, shoulder, and hip lead throughout the turn.
- The skier is looking directly at the ski tips or down at the snow, which limits his or her vision.
- The pole swing takes place too close to the tip of the ski or too far behind the foot instead of in the direction of the new turn.

Part 3: Task List

Reference: AMGA Ski Standard video

Candidates should be prepared to demonstrate the ski skills described above in 'Specific Skills" in any of the following:

1. AMGA Guide Turn Types

1. **Wedge Turns**
2. **Wedge Christie**
3. **Stem Christie**
4. **Parallel Turn**
5. **Dynamic Parallel Turn**
6. **Hop Parallel Turn**
7. **Pedal Hop Turn**

2. Classic Skiing (Low to moderate angle skiing)

With a day pack and an overnight pack in a variety of snow conditions:

1. **Powder skiing**

2. **Hardpack – Icy**
    a. **Controlled skidded turns**
    b. **Dynamic turn –** small and medium radius
    c. **Dynamic carving technique -** medium and large radius
3. **Variable conditions**
4. **Breakable crust**

3. Steep Skiing (minimum 500 – 1000 vertical where average slope angle is greater than 40 degrees

With a day pack and an overnight pack in a variety of snow conditions:

1. **Powder skiing**
2. **Hardpack – Icy**
    - **Parameters: narrow corridor (natural or designated)**
3. **Variable conditions**
4. **Breakable crust**

4. Further notes on Situational Skiing

Variable Conditions
Adjusts skill blending and skiing intensity to variable conditions including firm, breakable crust, isothermal, uneven snow surface or other.

Controlled Steep Skiing
Can fluidly manage steep (up to 50°), narrow passages with the ability to turn to a stop at any moment of the descent.

Big Mountain Freeride
Can ski top to bottom, large radius, open turns with two-footed ski pressure in appropriate conditions.