CHECKLIST FOR ROCK DESCRIPTION

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING OFFICE, HKSAR

1. STRENGTH

Term	Identification
Extremely weak	Easily crumbled by hand; indented deeply by thumbnail.
Very weak	Crumbled with difficulty; scratched easily by thumbnail; peeled easily by pocket knife.
Weak	Broken into pieces by hand; scratched by thumbnail; peeled by pocket knife; deep indentations (to 5 mm) by point of geological pick; hand-held specimen easily broken by single light hammer blow.
Moderately weak	Broken with difficulty in two hands; scratched with difficulty by thumbnail; difficult to peel but easily scratched by pocket knife; shallow indentations easily made by point of pick; hand-held specimen usually broken by single light hammer blow.
Moderately strong	Scratched by pocket knife; shallow indentations made by firm blow with point of pick; hand-held specimen usually broken by single firm hammer blow. Point load strength (PLS) 0.5 - 2 MPa.
Strong	Firm blows with point of pick cause only superficial surface damage; hand-held specimen requires more than one firm hammer blow to break. PLS 2 - 4 MPa.
Very strong	Many hammer blows required to break specimen. PLS 4 - 8 MPa.
Extremely strong	Specimen only chipped by hammer blows. PLS > 8 MPa.

2. COLOUR

Parameter	Terms
Value	Light, Dark
Chroma	Pinkish, Reddish, Yellowish, Orangish, Brownish, Greenish, Bluish, Purplish, Greyish
Hue	Pink, Red, Yellow, Orange, Brown, Green, Blue, Purple, White, Grey, Black

For uniform colour distribution, choose a hue, supplemented by a value and/or chroma if necessary.

For non-uniform distribution, repeat this procedure using one of the following descriptors: spotted, mottled, dappled, streaked, striped (e.g. light pinkish grey spotted with black).

State whether sample was wet or dry when described.

3. TEXTURE/FABRIC

Texture Terms (Applicable Mainly to Igneous Rocks)
Equigranular, Inequigranular, Megacrystic, Porphyritic, Crystalline, Cryptocrystalline, Aphanitic

Fabric
Describe preferred orientation of grains/crystals where apparent.

Describe intensity, spacing, continuity and any preferred orientation of microfractures where apparent.

4. MATERIAL WEATHERING/ALTERATION

Decomposition Term	Grade Symbol	Typical Characteristics
Residual Soil	VI	Original rock texture completely destroyed; can be crumbled by hand and finger pressure into constituent grains.
Completely Decomposed	V	Original rock texture preserved; can be crumbled by hand and finger pressure into constituent grains; easily indented by point of geological pick; slakes in water; completely discoloured compared with fresh rock.
Highly Decomposed	IV	Can be broken by hand into smaller pieces; makes a dull sound when struck by hammer; not easily indented by point of pick; does not slake in water; completely discoloured compared with fresh rock.
Moderately Decomposed	III	Cannot usually be broken by hand; easily broken by hammer; makes a dull or slight ringing sound when struck by hammer; completely stained throughout.
Slightly Decomposed	II	Not broken easily by hammer; makes a ringing sound when struck by hammer; fresh rock colours generally retained but stained near joint surfaces.
Fresh Rock	I	Not broken easily by hammer; makes a ringing sound when struck by hammer; no visible signs of decomposition (i.e. no discolouration).

This classification is applicable to igneous and volcanic rocks and other rocks of equivalent strength in fresh state.

Disintegration
Describe small-scale cracking and fracturing caused by mechanical weathering, where apparent.

Alteration
Describe state of alteration (e.g. mineralised, kaolinised) where apparent.

5. ROCK NAME (Including Grain Size)

Igneous	:	Coarse- (6-20 mm), Medium- (2-6 mm) & Fine- (0.06-2 mm) grained GRANITE; GRANODIORITE. Very Fine-grained (< 0.06 mm) RHYOLITE; BASALT. (Common types only, see Geoguide 3 for others).
Pyroclastic	:	PYROCLASTIC BRECCIA (> 60 mm), Lapilli TUFF (2-60 mm), Coarse ash TUFF (0.06-2 mm), Fine ash TUFF (< 0.06 mm).
Metamorphic	:	Foliated - SCHIST (> 0.06 mm), PHYLLITE (< 0.06 mm). Non-foliated - MARBLE, QUARTZITE, FAULT BRECCIA.
Sedimentary	:	CONGLOMERATE, BRECCIA (> 2 mm), SANDSTONE (0.06-2 mm), MUDSTONE (< 0.06 mm) = SILTSTONE (0.002-0.06 mm) + CLAYSTONE (< 0.002 mm). (Common types only).

If rock name cannot be identified, describe grain size quantitatively, including textural term where appropriate.

6. STRUCTURE

Structural Term	Rock Type
Bedded, Laminated, Massive	Sedimentary
Massive, Flow-banded	Igneous, Pyroclastic
Foliated, Banded, Cleaved	Metamorphic

Spacing of Planar Structures
Very thick (> 2 m), Thick (0.6-2 m), Medium (200-600 mm),
Thin (60-200 mm), Very thin (20-60 mm),
Thickly-laminated (Sedimentary) (6-20 mm) or Narrow (Igneous, Metamorphic) (6-20 mm),
Thinly-laminated (Sedimentary) (< 6 mm) or Very narrow (Igneous, Metamorphic) (< 6 mm).

Examples: Thickly-bedded SANDSTONE. Narrowly flow-banded RHYOLITE.

7. DISCONTINUITIES

Nature (Type of Discontinuity)

Fault zone	Cleavage	Fissure	Bedding
Fault	Schistocity	Tension crack	
Joint	Shear plane	Foliation	

Location and Orientation
Record location as co-ordinates or relative position along datum line, preferably on map or plan.

Record orientation as dip direction/dip in degrees (e.g. 032/55).

Spacing
Extremely widely-spaced (> 6 m), Very widely-spaced (2-6 m),
Widely-spaced (0.6-2 m), Medium-spaced (200-600 mm),
Closely-spaced (60-200 mm), Very closely-spaced (20-60 mm),
Extremely closely-spaced (< 20 mm).

In exposures, supplement spacing with description of rock block shape where possible. Descriptors: Blocky, Tabular, Columnar, Polyhedral.

Persistence (Areal extent or size of a discontinuity within a plane)
Measured maximum persistence dimension should be used where possible (e.g. the discontinuity trace length on the surfaces of rock exposures). For general descriptions of different discontinuity sets, relative terms should be used.

Roughness
Waviness (large-scale): Estimate/measure wavelength and amplitude in metres.
Unevenness (small-scale), use one term from the following:

Rough stepped	Smooth stepped	Slickensided stepped
Rough undulating	Smooth undulating	Slickensided undulating
Rough planar	Smooth planar	Slickensided planar

Aperture Size
Wide (> 200 mm), Moderately wide (60-200 mm), Moderately narrow (20-60 mm), Narrow (6-20 m), Very narrow (2-6 mm), Extremely narrow (> 0-2 mm), Tight (zero).

Infilling (Nature)

Clean	Surface staining	Decomposed/ disintegrated rock
Non-cohesive soil	Cohesive soil	
Calcite	Manganese	Quartz
Other (Specify)		Kaolin

Give full description of infill materials/minerals where appropriate.

Seepage
Dry Damp/wet Seepage present (estimate quantity in 1/sec or 1/min)

Fracture State
In borehole cores, measure the following: Total Core Recovery (TCR), Solid Core Recovery (SCR), Rock Quality Designation (RQD), Fracture Index (FI). See Geoguide 3 for definitions.

8. MASS WEATHERING

Term	Zone Symbol	Typical Characteristics
Residual Soil	RS	**Residual soil derived from insitu weathering; mass structure and material texture/fabric completely destroyed: 100% soil**
Partially Weathered Rock	PW	**Less than 30% rock**
	0/30	**Soil retains original mass structure and material texture/fabric (i.e. saprolite)** Rock content does not affect shear behaviour of mass, but relict discontinuities in soil may do so. Rock content may be significant for investigation and construction.
	PW	**30% to 50% rock**
	30/50	Both rock content and relict discontinuities may affect shear behaviour of mass.
	PW	**50% to 90% rock**
	50/90	Interlocked structure.
	PW	**Greater than 90% rock**
	90/100	Small amount of the material converted to soil along discontinuities.
Unweathered Rock	UW	**100% rock** May show slight discolouration along discontinuities.

9. ADDITIONAL GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Record geological formation name if known. Avoid conjecture. Refer to HKGS maps & memoirs for further information.

NOTES:

1. Rock material description normally includes: strength, colour, texture/fabric, material weathering/alteration and ROCK NAME.
2. Rock mass description normally includes: strength, colour, structure, mass weathering , ROCK NAME, discontinuities and additional geological information. Can be supplemented with more detailed information on texture/fabric and material weathering/alteration of different materials within the mass where necessary.

CHECKLIST FOR SOIL DESCRIPTION

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING OFFICE, HKSAR

1. STRENGTH (Compactness & Consistency)

Soil Type	Term	Identification
Very Coarse (COBBLES & BOULDERS)	Loose	By inspection of voids and particle packing in the field.
	Dense	
Coarse (SANDS & GRAVELS)	Very loose	SPT 'N' value 0-4.
	Loose	SPT 4-10; can be excavated with spade; 50 mm peg easily driven.
	Medium dense	SPT 10-30.
	Dense	SPT 30-50; requires pick for excavation; 50 mm peg hard to drive.
	Very dense	SPT > 50.
Fine (CLAYS & SILTS)	Very soft	Undrained shear strength (USS) < 20 kPa; exudes between fingers when squeezed in hand.
	Soft	USS 20-40 kPa; moulded by light finger pressure.
	Firm	USS 40-75 kPa; can be moulded by strong finger pressure.
	Stiff	USS 75-150 kPa; cannot be moulded by fingers; can be indented by thumb.
	Very stiff or hard	USS > 150 kPa; can be indented by thumbnail.
Organic (ORGANIC CLAYS, SILTS SANDS & PEATS)	Compact	Fibres already compressed together.
	Spongy	Very compressible and open structure.
	Plastic	Can be moulded in hand and smears fingers.

Terms applicable only to transported soils. For soils derived from insitu rock weathering, record actual values of quantitative tests (e.g. SPT 'N' value) as part of the description, where appropriate.

2. COLOUR

Parameter	Terms
Value	Light, Dark
Chroma	Pinkish, Reddish, Yellowish, Orangish, Brownish, Greenish, Bluish, Purplish, Greyish
Hue	Pink, Red, Yellow, Orange, Brown, Green, Blue, Purple, White, Grey, Black

For uniform colour distribution, choose a hue, supplemented by a value and/or chroma if necessary.

For non-uniform distribution, repeat this procedure using one of the following descriptors: spotted, mottled, dappled, streaked, striped (e.g. light yellowish brown mottled with red).

State whether sample was wet or dry when described.

3. PARTICLE SHAPE & COMPOSITION

Characteristic	Terms
Form	Equidimensional, Flat, Elongate, Flat & Elongate
Angularity	Angular, Subangular, Subrounded, Rounded
Surface Texture	Smooth, Rough, Glassy, Honeycombed, Pitted, Striated

Describe composition of coarse particles where appropriate. Gravel and larger particles are usually rock fragments (e.g. granite, tuff); sand particles are usually individual minerals (e.g. quartz, feldspar).

4. STRUCTURE

Soil Type	Term	Identification
Coarse & Fine	Homogenous	Deposit consists essentially of one type.
	Interstratified (Interbedded or Interlaminated)	Alternating layers of varying types or with bands or lenses of other materials.
Coarse	Heterogenous	A mixture of types.
Fine	Fissured	Breaks into polyhedral fragments along fissures.
	Intact	No fissures.
Organic	Fibrous	Plant remains recognizable & retain some strength.
	Amorphous	No recognizable plant remains.

Describe spacing of bedding planes, fissures, shell bands, etc using the spacing terms given in items 6 & 7 for rock description (see other side).

Above terms applicable only to transported soils. For soils derived from insitu rock weathering, describe relict structures in accordance with item 6 of rock description (see other side).

5. WEATHERING

Soils Derived from Insitu Weathering of Rocks

There are two main types: saprolites (rock texture/structure retained) and residual soils (rock texture/structure completely destroyed). Describe state of weathering in accordance with items 4 & 8 for rock description (see other side).

Sedimentary (Transported) Soils

Coarse soils: Describe overall discolouration of soil and degree of decomposition of gravel and larger particles (see item 4, other side). Also note any signs of disintegration of large particles where apparent.

Fine Soils: Describe overall discolouration of soil where apparent.

6. SOIL NAME

A. Basic Soil Types

Soil Type	Particle Sizes (mm)		Identification
BOULDERS	--	> 200	Only seen complete in pits or exposures.
COBBLES	--	60 - 200	Often difficult to recover from boreholes.
GRAVELS	Coarse	20 - 60	Easily visible to naked eye; particle shape and grading can be described.
	Medium	6 - 20	Well-graded: wide range of grain sizes.
	Fine	2 - 6	Poorly-graded: not well-graded (split further into uniform or gap-graded).
SANDS	Coarse	0.6 - 2	Visible to naked eye; very little or no cohesion; grading can be described.
	Medium	0.2 - 0.6	May be well-graded or poorly-graded (uniform or gap-graded) as for gravel.
	Fine	0.06 - 0.2	
SILTS	Coarse	0.02 - 0.06	Only coarse silt barely visible to naked eye; exhibits little plasticity and marked dilatancy; slightly granular or silky to the touch. Disintegrates in water; lumps dry quickly; possesses cohesion but can be powdered easily between fingers.
	Medium	0.006 - 0.02	
	Fine	0.002 - 0.006	
CLAYS	--	< 0.002	Dry lumps can be broken by hand but not powdered between the fingers. Disintegrates in water more slowly than silt; smooth to the touch; exhibits plasticity but no dilatancy; sticks to the fingers and dries slowly; shrinks appreciably on drying, usually showing cracks. These properties more noticeable with increasing plasticity.
ORGANIC CLAYS, SILTS OR SANDS	--	varies	Contains much organic vegetable matter; often has a noticeable smell and changes colour on oxidation.
PEATS	--	varies	Predominantly plant remains; usually dark brown or black in colour, often with distinctive smell; low bulk density.

B. Composite Soil Types (Mixtures of Basic Types)

Principal Soil Type	Terminology Sequence	Term for Secondary Constituent	% of Secondary Constituent
Very coarse (BOULDERS & COBBLES) (> 50% of soil > 60 mm)	Secondary constituents (finer material) ▲ after principal	With a little	< 5
		With some	5 - 20
		With much	20 - 50
Coarse (GRAVELS & SANDS) (> 65% gravel & sand sizes)	Secondary constituents before principal (excluding cobbles & boulders) +	Slightly (silty, clayey or silty/clayey) ❋	< 5
		- (silty, clayey or silty/clayey) ❋	5 - 15
		Very (silty, clayey or silty/clayey) ❋ AND/OR	15 - 35
		Slightly (gravelly or sandy) ❋	< 5
		- (gravelly or sandy) ❋	5 - 20
		Very (gravelly or sandy) ❋	20 - 50
Fine (SILTS & CLAYS) (> 35% silt & clay sizes)	Secondary constituents before principal (excluding cobbles & boulders) +	Slightly (gravelly or sandy or both) ❋	< 35
		- (gravelly or sandy) ❋	35 - 65

▲ Full name of finer material should be given (see examples below).

❋ Secondary soil type as appropriate; use 'silty/clayey' when a distinction cannot be made between the two.

\+ If cobbles or boulders are also present in a coarse or fine soil, this can be indicated by using one of the following terms relating to the very coarse fraction after the principal: 'with occasional' (< 5), 'with some' (5-20), 'with many' (20-50), where figures in brackets are % very coarse material expressed as a fraction of the whole soil (see examples below).

Examples: Slightly silty/clayey, sandy GRAVEL. Slightly gravelly, sandy SILT. Very gravelly SAND. Sandy GRAVEL with occasional boulders. BOULDERS with much finer material (silty/clayey, very sandy gravel).

For fine soils, plasticity terms should also be described where possible, viz: 'non-plastic' (generally silts), 'intermediate plasticity' (lean clays), 'high plasticity' (fat clays).

7. DISCONTINUITIES

Full description of discontinuities, where necessary, should be made using the methods and terms given in item 7 for rock description (see other side).

8. ADDITIONAL GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Record geological name which indicates geological origin or soil type (e.g. Alluvium, Colluvium, Marine sand etc.). Refer to HKGS maps & memoirs for further information.

NOTES:

1. Mass characteristics of soils (i.e. structure, weathering, discontinuities) can only be described satisfactorily in undisturbed field exposures or large undisturbed samples.
2. For full descriptions of soils derived from insitu rock weathering:
   (a) saprolites - describe as rocks, supplemented by soil strength and soil name terms in brackets,
   (b) residual soils - describe as soils, supplemented by name of parent rock where apparent from field evidence.