

ROCK > field guide sheet

FIELD DESCRIPTION OF ROCK

SEQUENCE OF TERMS – weathering – colour – fabric – rock name – strength – discontinuities – additional

SCALE OF ROCK MASS WEATHERING

Term	Grade	Abbreviation	Description
Unweathered (fresh rock)	I	UW	Rock mass shows no loss of strength, discolouration or other effects due to weathering. There may be slight discolouration on major rock mass defect surfaces or on clasts.
Slightly Weathered	II	SW	The rock mass is not significantly weaker than when fresh. Rock may be discoloured along defects, some of which may have been opened slightly.
Moderately Weathered	III	MW	The rock mass is significantly weaker than the fresh rock and part of the rock mass may have been changed to a soil. Rock material may be discoloured and defect and clast surfaces will have a greater discolouration, which also penetrates slightly into the rock material. Increase in density of defects due to physical disintegration.
Highly Weathered	IV	HW	Most of the original rock mass strength is lost. Material is discoloured and more than half the mass is changed to a soil by chemical decomposition or disintegration (increase in density of defects/fractures). Decomposition adjacent to defects and at the surface of clasts penetrates deeply into the rock material. Lithorelicts or corestones of unweathered or slightly weathered rock may be present.
Completely Weathered	V	CW	Original rock strength is lost and the rock mass changed to a soil either by decomposition (with some rock fabric preserved) or by physical disintegration.
Residual Soil	VI	RS	Rock is completely changed to a soil with the original fabric destroyed (pedological soil).

ROCK STRENGTH TERMS

Term	Field Identification of Specimen	Unconfined uniaxial compressive strength q_u (MPa)	Point load strength $I_{5/50}$ (MPa)
Extremely strong	Can only be chipped with geological hammer	> 250	>10
Very strong	Requires many blows of geological hammer to break it	100 – 250	5 – 10
Strong	Requires more than one blow of geological hammer to fracture it	50 – 100	2 – 5
Moderately strong	Cannot be scraped or peeled with a pocket knife. Can be fractured with single firm blow of geological hammer	20 – 50	1 – 2
Weak	Can be peeled by a pocket knife with difficulty. Shallow indentations made by firm blow with point of geological hammer	5 – 20	<1
Very weak	Crumbles under firm blows with point of geological hammer. Can be peeled by a pocket knife	1 – 5	
Extremely weak (soil description required)	Indented by thumb nail or other lesser strength terms used for soils	<1	

Note: • No correlation is implied between q_u and $I_{5/50}$

SPACING OF DEFECTS/ DISCONTINUITIES

Term	Spacing
Very widely spaced	>2 m
Widely spaced	600 mm – 2 m
Moderately widely spaced	200 mm – 600 mm
Closely spaced	60 mm – 200 mm
Very closely spaced	20 mm – 60 mm
Extremely closely spaced	<20 mm

APERTURE OF DISCONTINUITY SURFACES

Term	Aperture (mm)	Description
Tight	Nil	Closed
Very Narrow	> 0 – 2	
Narrow	2 – 6	
Moderately Narrow	6 – 20	
Moderately Wide	20 – 60	Open
Wide	60 – 200	
Very Wide	> 200	

BEDDING THICKNESS TERMS

Term	Bed Thickness
Thinly laminated	< 2 mm
Laminated	2 mm – 6 mm
Very thin	6 mm – 20 mm
Thin	20 mm – 60 mm
Moderately thin	60 mm – 200 mm
Moderately thick	0.2 m – 0.6 m
Thick	0.6 m – 2 m
Very thick	> 2 m

BEDDING INCLINATION TERMS

Term	Inclination (from horizontal)
Sub-horizontal	0° – 5°
Gently inclined	6° – 15°
Moderately inclined	16° – 30°
Steeply inclined	31° – 60°
Very steeply inclined	61° – 80°
Sub-vertical	81° – 90°

ROUGHNESS AND APERTURE

I	rough	STEPPED
II	smooth	
III	slickensided	
IV	rough	UNDULATING
V	smooth	
VI	slickensided	
VII	rough	PLANAR
VIII	smooth	
IX	slickensided	

