

# **Defense Information School**



## **Course Syllabus**

### **Public Affairs and Communication Strategy Qualification Distance Learning Non-Resident Course 020-22**

Feb. 28 – Aug. 26

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## PACS Directorate Leadership Contact Information

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## PACS-Q-DL-R 020-22 Instructor Contact Information

### Team Lead:

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### Instructors:

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Ms. Jocelyn Rich-Pendracki: [jrichpendracki@dinfos.edu](mailto:jrichpendracki@dinfos.edu)

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## Course Overview

The Public Affairs and Communication Strategy Qualification Course provides entry-level public affairs and communication strategy training for the Department of Defense, U.S. government agencies, and selected foreign military professionals. Instruction focuses on the foundational elements of the communication planning process, principles and techniques associated with implementing effective communication strategies, and the processes involved in integrating communication into military planning and operations.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

- Provide communication strategy counsel to command and higher headquarters.
- Leverage relationships with the command, the community, the media, partners and stakeholders [influencers] to accomplish a mission.
- Employ a communication team in accordance with DoD and service policies and tactics, techniques and procedures to achieve the commander's desired end state.
- Communicate in steady-state and event-driven scenarios in order to accomplish missions.
- Execute communication tactics in alignment with the commander's desired state and higher-level guidance.

## Course Structure

This course is divided into two academic phases, or Functional Areas (FAs): *Foundations* and *Scenario*. Throughout these phases, students will learn writing, communication operations skills, and

comprehensive use of communication techniques and strategies, with a focus on communication synchronization and critical thinking. A combination of facilitated discussions, scenarios, and exercises create an active learning environment, with the use and application of social media techniques integrated throughout the course.

- FA 1: Foundations (Weeks 1-24): online

Foundations introduces students to the overall concepts and learning objectives for the course by engaging them in the analysis of real-world events and case studies, comprehensive decision-making exercises, and active classroom-based learning experiences. Everything that the students experience in this functional area is intended to prepare them for hands-on immersive learning in Scenario; therefore, students practice critical skills that they will need to be successful such as: research, nesting and alignment, communication planning, and crafting operational documents. Time is also set aside to allow students the opportunity to get their feet wet engaging in more tactical skills, specifically: media capture and accessioning, writing for both internal and external purposes, and news media engagement.

- FA 2: Scenario (Weeks 25-26): in person at DINFOS

Scenario provides students with an authentic learning opportunity to put the knowledge and skills they learned in Functional Area 1 to the test by simulating a joint public affairs and communication strategy shop operating out of eastern Europe. The students will be confronted with a mixture of steady-state and event-driven injects that they must respond to, all while attempting to manage their team operations and mission with efficiency. In Functional Area 2, proper military communication practices and habits will be honed. Solid research methods, savvy relationship building, and thorough analysis and planning skills will be crucial for students to successfully navigate the scenario.

Students must attend FA 2 within two years of completion of FA 1 in order to graduate from the course.

### **Technical Requirements/Skills**

To participate in this course, you will need a computer and internet access. At a minimum, you will need access to Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, a PDF reader, and a web browser. DINFOS recommends Google Chrome for the most efficient experience. Additionally, it is best if you have video capabilities.

You should come to this course proficient in basic writing and grammar skills.

## Participation & Attendance

- You are expected to give your best effort throughout the course, including discussions, classwork, and assignments. You will be assessed by instructors, your peers and by yourself on the quality of participation and preparedness that you have demonstrated during practice and performance exams, group assignments, Blackboard discussions and more. A participation grade will be assigned by your instructor in the final week of class.
- You are expected to check your email daily during the week, and respond to instructors within one business day. Instructors may not be available on weekends.
- PACS-Q-DL-NR is **not a self-paced course**. It is a challenging, calendar-driven course.
- This course is structured by academic weeks, which will begin each Wednesday and end the following Tuesday at midnight.
- You are responsible for logging into Blackboard each week and completing assignments on time. Weekly assignments may include:
  - Readings, videos and/or multimedia
  - Discussion board posts
  - Exercises, exams and other activities
- Absences that will impact your ability to complete the weekly course load should be communicated to your instructor as soon as possible. Excessive absences or inability to complete the assignments in a timely manner may result in elimination from the course.
- While we do not anticipate changes to deadlines, if any occur your instructor will let you know.

## Key Dates

- **June 29 – July 5:** Break in training for summer exodus (students and instructors).
- Instructors will not be available on the following non-training days:
  - **March 11:** Instructor Training Day
  - **April 29:** Instructor Training Day
  - **May 30:** Memorial Day
  - **June 20:** Juneteenth
  - **Aug. 19:** DINFOS Organizational Day
- **Aug. 26:** End of FA1

## Navigating Blackboard

Throughout this course, you will be using the Blackboard learning management system to complete and submit assignments. To access Blackboard, log onto [dinfos.blackboard.com](https://dinfos.blackboard.com).

Even if you are familiar with Blackboard, take the time to watch the brief tutorials in the Welcome -

Start Here folder. They will help you navigate the course.

Stay on top of your assignments by checking the course's agenda page early each week.

Follow the steps below to view the agenda page in Blackboard:

1. Log into **Blackboard**
2. Select the **Courses** tab located on the left hand navigation menu
3. Select the **PACS-Q Distance** course
4. You will land on the **Course Content** page. This page contains folders for each week of the course. These weekly folders house agenda, assignments and weekly activity information. From the Course Content page, select the weekly folder you wish to view.
5. Once you have selected the desired folder, it will expand to display the training week's content.
6. Select the **Agenda** link to view content for the week.

### **Blackboard Tools & Functions**

- **Discussion Board:** Discussion board posts help you interact with fellow classmates and immerse yourself into the week's subject matter. Some weeks you will be required to respond to a series of course-related questions. Also, you may be required to respond to a fellow classmate's post. You can view the discussion board instructions and due dates for each week on the Course Content page.
- **Assignment Submission:** You are required to submit Practice Exercises and Performance Exams to their designated locations in Blackboard. There you will find the exercise/exam instructions and grading rubric. Use both of those tools to ensure you understand the exercise and exam requirements.
- **Gradebook:** Assignments and results can be accessed through the gradebook feature.

### **Assignments & Grading**

You should expect to spend 10-15 hours a week to complete the readings, activities and assignments. The weekly agenda in Blackboard will outline all of the requirements each week. In addition to discussion posts and activities, you may have practice exercises and performance exams due.

You must achieve and maintain a 70 percent or better academic average in each phase to graduate from the course.

### **Critical Competencies**

There are three critical competency performance exams you **must pass** to remain in the course:

- English and Writing Proficiency Test (Week 1)
- Individual Communication Plan (Week 22)
- Capabilities Board (Week 23)

You will complete the **English and Writing Proficiency Test** during Week 1. You will have an hour and a half to complete the test, which includes two sections: *English Usage* and *Writing*. In the first section, you must answer 25 multiple-choice questions in 30 minutes, testing the following elements of grammar and mechanics:

- Active vs. passive voice
- Comma use
- Quotation use
- Capitalization
- Sentence structure

In the second section, you will have one hour to write a three-to-five paragraph response to a writing prompt that asks you to use history, personal experience and a selected quotation to support your thesis. Your test score will not be counted toward your overall course grade, but you must achieve a minimum of 68 percent to continue in PACS-Q.

The Purdue Online Writing Lab at <https://owl.purdue.edu/> has several useful resources that can help you brush up on your English and writing skills.

For the second critical competency, you will use the Communication Plan Proposal that you complete in Week 8 to develop a detailed **Individual Communication Plan** in response to a real-world issue facing your command. Your plan should be well-developed, focused, and reflect your ability to effectively engage in the Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (RPIE) process. To be successful on this assignment, you must demonstrate analytical skills and the ability to create an effective plan for communicating with all stakeholders while aligning with your commander's desired state.

In your final critical competency, you will conduct a **Capabilities Board** to demonstrate your communication leadership skills. You will deliver a persuasive brief to a board of instructors that explicitly articulates how you will use your capabilities to support your command's lines of effort and accomplishment of the mission. As a communication leader, you must demonstrate your understanding of the function of military communication, the capabilities of your staff, the commander's desired state and mission, the organization's role within higher strategy, the local information environment, and the development of communication products, plans, and COAs.

Your 10-minute brief should provide examples and highlight your public affairs and communication strategy leadership skills to the board. Describe your personal communication capabilities based on the work you have done throughout the course. Use appropriate examples that reveal your specific Public Affairs/Communication Strategy capabilities and strengths as a leader. In addition,

persuasively articulate the value/capabilities you will bring back to your unit/command (or the unit/command you are going to after PACS-Q). You must achieve a minimum of 70 percent on this performance exam to continue in PACS-Q.

### **Remediation & Retest**

If you receive less than a 68 percent on the EWPT or less than 70 percent on your Communication Plan or Capabilities Board, you must go through the remediation process before attempting the performance exam a second time. Instructors will provide you personalized resources based on your scores to help you prepare for the retest. You should take time outside of class to study. Be aware that failure on the second attempt may result in your removal from the course.

### **Late or Missed Work**

You are expected to turn in all assignments on time. If an assignment is turned in up to 24 hours late, you can only achieve a maximum grade of 70 percent on that assignment. Assignments turned in later than 24 hours after the due date will receive a zero, unless a prior agreement with your instructor has been made.

### **Group Assignments**

You will complete individual and small-group assignments for this course. Small groups will be organized in the second week of the course. The deadlines for submitting assignments are indicated in Blackboard. All deadlines are in Eastern time. Uploaded assignments received any time after their due dates will be marked late by the Blackboard system.

When submitting assignments, make sure you follow the formatting requirements. For example, scanned documents should be saved as .pdf files.

Group assignments receive group grades. Each group member is expected to do his or her fair share of the work. Group assignment grades are based on the overall quality of the project and individual participation. A student who fails to make a meaningful contribution to the effort will receive a zero.

### **Academic Probation**

Any time your academic average drops below 75 percent in any one of the functional areas, you will be placed on academic probation and will be counseled in writing. You will remain on probation until there is no longer a risk that you will not graduate from the course.

You may resubmit a failed assignment for a maximum score of 70 percent. The opportunity to resubmit any assignment will be determined by your instructor, team lead and academic director. This option may only be exercised twice.

## Additional Training (Make Up/Remedial)

Instructors may hold additional training sessions for students who need extra practice, remediation, or to make up missed work. These sessions will be scheduled as needed so as not to interfere with regularly scheduled lessons or classwork.

## Academic Recognition

Students are recognized for their success during the course in a variety of ways. Students who score in the top 10 percent will be recognized as honor graduates, while the student with the highest overall grade point average will be recognized as the distinguished honor graduate.

Additionally, the **Bob Brus Award** may be awarded to the distance learning student who most consistently demonstrates a positive attitude, steadfast motivation, strong team building and unwavering professionalism. One Bob Brus Award is given per resident session.

## Ethics & Plagiarism

DINFOS enforces a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, copyright infringement, fabrication, and cheating. Plagiarism is clearly defined on the plagiarism statement you signed during in-processing.

- You will complete all assignments and exercises individually as original work unless otherwise assigned as a group project. Your work must be authored by you in response to PACS-Q DL assignments. At no time will you submit work that was originally intended to support your unit/job.
- You may use appropriate facts, ideas or news events, quotations, copyrighted or credited material, as long as appropriate attribution is provided. DINFOS uses Associated Press (AP) and American Psychological Association (APA) style for citations, as appropriate.
- You will not share any work, including test or exercise materials, with other students or anyone outside DINFOS. Do not take any screenshots or otherwise try to capture online exercise and/or test materials. If you're not sure if something is allowed, ask.
- Intellectual development requires honesty, responsibility and doing your own work. Each performance exam should represent your own work and ideas without the use of unauthorized aids and resources, such as input from your peers and the input of past PACS-Q students.
- Your work will be analyzed by Blackboard's *Safe Assign* feature to detect recycled content.

## Creating an Environment for Learning

- Be respectful of your instructors and fellow classmates. The learning environment should be a place where students can share ideas and different points of view. It is not necessary to agree, but it is necessary to be respectful. Debate is healthy; state your viewpoint and back it with

evidence. Be respectful of fellow students' views. Focus your disagreements on ideas, not on people.

- Feel free to ask questions at the appropriate times, especially if you don't understand something, and listen to the questions of other students. Instructors want you to ask questions relevant to the material, and answer questions they have asked, but be mindful and respectful of others who may want to share.
- Avoid distracting other students or interrupting learning.

## **General Standard of Conduct**

You are responsible for adherence to the highest standard of official personal behavior while attending DINFOS, according to service regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Officers, NCOs and civilian students will at all times conduct themselves in a professional and uncompromising manner in their dealings with DINFOS students, staff and faculty.

## **Fraternization**

The relationship between permanent party personnel and students will remain strictly professional. Instructors and students will refer to each other using ranks or courtesy titles and last names. Unofficial socializing and undue familiarity, real or perceived, degrade leadership and interfere with command authority, mission effectiveness and morale. Conduct both on and off duty must reflect an appropriate professional relationship. Any action or relationship that gives the appearance of impropriety is in violation of the DINFOS and DOD policy. Common sense and sound judgment must prevail in all business, social and personal contacts among school staff, faculty and students.

Students and instructors should not associate privately through social media during the course. Students may send instructors friend requests on social media once they have graduated; however, instructors are not allowed to send requests to current or former students.

If you have an established relationship with any instructor prior to your attendance in this course, please notify your lead instructor.

## **Gift Giving**

Instructors are only allowed to accept gifts from students at graduation. Gifts cannot exceed the cash value of \$20, nor contain alcohol or contraband, in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations and Joint Ethics Regulation.

## **Administrative Probation**

Students who violate the standards of conduct or fraternization will be disciplined and may be placed on administrative probation. Administrative probations will be reviewed weekly; students will be removed from probation status at the discretion of PACS leadership.

## Course Elimination

Disciplinary counseling(s) and/or academic or administrative probations may lead to elimination from the course.

If at any time it becomes mathematically impossible for you to raise your grade above 70 percent, you will be recommended for elimination from the course.

## Crisis Contact Information

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255, Press 1
- DoD Safe Helpline (available 24/7): 877-995-5247
- Military OneSource: 800-342-9647
- DINFOS Equal Opportunity POC: USA Staff Sgt. Marlon Styles, 615-397-9222
- DINFOS Chaplain: USA Lt. Col. Sid Taylor, 301-677-4426, [staylor1@dinfos.edu](mailto:staylor1@dinfos.edu) / [sid.a.taylor.mil@mail.mil](mailto:sid.a.taylor.mil@mail.mil)
- DINFOS Sexual Harassment/Assault Prevention (SHARP) Representatives:
  - Army Staff Sgt. Summer Woode, [summer.c.woode.mil@mail.mil](mailto:summer.c.woode.mil@mail.mil)
  - Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Debonee Beamon, [debone.e.beamon.mil@mail.mil](mailto:debone.e.beamon.mil@mail.mil)
  - Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Raymond Minami, [rminami@dinfos.edu](mailto:rminami@dinfos.edu)