



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY
DEFENSE INFORMATION SCHOOL
6500 MAPES ROAD
FORT MEADE, MD 20755-5620

Public Affairs & Communication Strategy Qualification Course Welcome Letter

Welcome to the Public Affairs & Communication Strategy Qualification Course (PACS-Q). At the entry-level, Public Affairs Officers, senior noncommissioned officers and civilians attend the newly launched and redesigned PACS-Q course. The three-month course is divided into three functional areas. Functional area 1 [Foundations] is 23 training days of flipped-classroom, foundational studies, which include communication theory and planning, research and analysis, issues management, media engagement, public affairs writing, joint planning and communication integration in military operations. FA 2 [Scenario] is 15 training days in an immersive scenario during which students act as public affairs/communication strategy officers focused on steady-state and event-driven injects. FA 3 [Integration] is seven training days of culminating activities, reflection and forward thinking during which students are required to submit a portfolio of communication products and deliver a capabilities board, where they will present their work and persuasively articulate their value to a board of instructors. **PACS-Q is rigorous and demanding, focused on staff coordination and operational planning.**

PACS-Q students will report to the Defense Information School and be in the classroom no later than 7:55 a.m. on the first day of class. Normal classroom hours are 7:55 a.m. to 4 p.m. **There are no evening or weekend classroom hours; however, students may have class assignments that require attention after 4 p.m on school days and weekends. Students should plan on spending approximately 2-3 hours each weekday, after class, on homework and reading. Some weekend time will also be consumed by homework and class requirements.**

On the afternoon of Day 1, all PACS-Q students will take the English & Writing Proficiency Test (EWPT). The EWPT is designed to assess a student's use of standard written English and their ability to assemble facts into a coherent written argument. Students will have an hour and a half to complete the test, which includes two sections: English Usage and Writing. The first part of the test, which is timed at 30 minutes, presents grammar, sentence structure and punctuation problems in a multiple-choice format. The second part of the test, which is timed at 60 minutes, requires each student to compose an essay in response to a prompt. Each student will be encouraged to use examples from his or her personal and professional experience to support a thesis. Any students who do not achieve a passing score will be offered remediation and will be scheduled for a retest. **Anyone who does not pass the EWPT on the second attempt may be academically eliminated from PACS-Q.**



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LATE ARRIVALS:

Students arriving late risk losing their course reservation to a person on the "standby" list. If you are going to be late, contact the DINFOS Registrar's Office at (301) 677-4343.

ABSENCE POLICY:

Absences for non-emergency, personal reasons are not normally approved. Clear your schedule now. Absence requests will be reviewed individually and granted for emergencies only. Refer to the **course syllabus** for more details on the official schoolhouse policy.

KEY COURSE EVENTS

- The course includes a day trip, contingent upon COVID-19 pandemic conditions, to the Pentagon as part of the Service Unique course curriculum. Students may drive, carpool or use public transportation (MARC/Metro). Students should keep all receipts for reimbursement on their final travel voucher.
- **Graduation** is scheduled for the afternoon of the last day of the course, and it is a mandatory formation. **Do not schedule your return flight any earlier than 4 p.m. the day of graduation. You will not be released early to accommodate a flight booked prior to 4 p.m.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students not familiar with joint planning are encouraged to read Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Planning, as well as Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations, to become more familiar with operational terminology.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

You are not required to bring a computer, but it is encouraged if you have one at your disposal. **You will be provided a DINFOS-issued laptop on Day 1.** Wi-Fi will be available inside of DINFOS. If you do bring a computer, it should be loaded with Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and a web browser (preferably Google Chrome). We will be using Blackboard as the primary course delivery method. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard, we will give you an overview of its use. The Google Suite is also used as the primary form of electronic communication between PACS-Q faculty and students.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

If you require reasonable accommodations, please inform the Registrar (dma.meade.dinfos.list.academic-records@mail.mil) as soon as possible, so the office can work with the training department and logistics to provide needed resources on training day one.



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UNIFORM AND CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS

DINFOS military students are expected to maintain their personal appearance in accordance with applicable service regulations. Officers and senior enlisted personnel are role models for the junior students in both appearance and conduct. Civilians are expected to be professional in appearance. Students will observe DINFOS policy of wearing the Class B uniform or service equivalent on the last Friday of the month.

For Daily Wear:

- All Services: Current Duty Uniform. Flight suits are not an authorized uniform at DINFOS.
- Civilians: Business casual. No jeans.

For Graduation:

- **Summer** (generally when Daylight Saving Time is in effect):
 - USA: Class B with ribbons (short sleeve shirt)
 - USMC: Service "C" (short sleeve shirt)
 - USN: Summer White with ribbons
 - USAF: Service Uniform "Blues" (short sleeve shirt)
 - USCG: Tropical Blue Long
 - Civilians: Conservative business suit
- **Winter** (generally when Standard Time is in effect):
 - USA: Army Service Uniform (ASU)
 - USMC: Service Alpha (with jacket)
 - USN: Service Dress Blues (with ribbons)
 - USAF: Full Service Dress
 - USCG: Service Dress Blue
 - Civilians: Conservative business suit

DIRECTIONS TO FORT GEORGE G. MEADE

The address for DINFOS is: 6500 Mapes Road, Fort Meade, MD, 20755. You will need a valid DOD identification card to enter the base.

Caution: Mapping software like Google Maps may recommend a route through an unauthorized part of the base (i.e., National Security Agency). Do not proceed past signs saying "NSA EMPLOYEES ONLY." Even with a DOD ID card, you are not allowed to traverse through NSA areas, and you may be detained. To be safe, we recommend you enter through one of these three gates: Rockenbach Road, also known as MD-713 or Route 713 (on the northern part of the base), off of MD-175; or Mapes Road, off of MD-32 or Route 32 (on the southern part of the base). The Reece Road gate, off of MD-175, is closed to automobile traffic; however, the visitor center remains open.



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Flying: If you arrive by commercial air, we recommend you fly into Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI). Fort George G. Meade is about 10 miles south of the airport. Military transportation is not available. Taxi service is available from BWI to Fort Meade at an estimated cost of \$20 for one person. A rental car may be beneficial if it is authorized on your orders. The other two major airports in the region, Ronald Reagan Washington National (DCA) and Washington Dulles International (IAD) airports, are a considerable distance from Fort Meade. Taxi fare from DCA is approximately \$65, while a taxi from IAD can run as high as \$150.

BILLETING

Candlewood Suites (an IHG hotel) is located on Fort Meade. Please contact the hotel for reservations (<https://m.ihg.com/hotels/armyhotels/us/en/home>). If lodging is full, the staff will work with you to secure reservations at a hotel located off post. If you encounter problems with your reservation or have other questions about billeting, please contact your appropriate military detachment.

RENTAL CARS

The Candlewood Suites hotel on base is located within walking distance of DINFOS. However, if you are billeted outside of the installation, a rental car is strongly recommended. Rental cars are funded by your unit. The DINFOS/Registrar's Office does not provide statements related to or recommending rental car requirements.

HEALTH CARE

Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center (KACC), located on Fort Meade, is not a full-service hospital and may not be able to provide the health care you require. However, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the Malcolm Grow Medical Clinics and Surgery Center at Andrews Air Force Base are within driving distance. If you have specific healthcare issues, it would be best to call Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center and/or your regional Tricare representative before you arrive. For government civilians who are enrolled in a health benefits plan, most plans are accepted at civilian facilities in this area. It is strongly recommended that you contact your insurance provider prior to arrival, in case medical care is needed while you are away from home. You may have to change your Tricare region prior to arrival at Fort Meade. Ensure you bring an adequate supply of any prescription medications.

REPORTING TO YOUR SERVICE DETACHMENTS

U.S. Army (if you are unvaccinated and ROM is required): Upon arrival, you will send an email to PACS-ROM@dinfos.edu for accountability purposes. This will be the email used to



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communicate with you while you are in ROM, so it is important to check your email for updates and reporting instructions. Below is a template for your response:

Subject: [Rank/Title, F/L Name] reporting for PACS-Q (Enter course number here)

[Body of email] [Rank/Title, F/L Name] reporting for PACS-Q (Enter course number here). I am starting ROM and can be reached at

[Phone and email address]

[Hotel/Domicile - complete with phone, Room number and address]

[Army active duty, Army National Guard or Army Reserve; Branch and MOS]

U.S. Marine Corps:

Bldg. 8545, 6th Armored Cavalry Rd., Fort Meade, MD 20755

Phone: (301) 677-7662/5188

Website: www.dinfos.dma.mil/Student-Info/Service-In-processing/Marines/

U.S. Navy: Bldg. 8479, 6th Armored Cavalry Rd., Fort Meade, MD 20755 Phone: (301) 677-6260/6283/6287

Website: www.dinfos.dma.mil/Student-Info/Service-In-processing/Navy/

U.S. Air Force: Bldg. 8478, 6th Armored Cavalry Rd., Fort Meade, MD

20755 Phone: (301) 677-5053/5039/5055

Website: www.dinfos.dma.mil/Student-Info/Service-In-processing/Air-Force/

Coast Guard: Bldg. 8545, 6th Armored Cavalry Rd., Fort Meade, MD 20755 Phone: (510) 890-6086

Website: www.dinfos.dma.mil/Student-Info/Service-In-processing/Coast-Guard/



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ARMY STUDENTS ACFT TEST/WEIGH-IN

Army height and weight standards are being enforced. Physical fitness tests are waived until further notice. All regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve students are required to meet the Army's body-fat standards as outlined in AR 600-9. Students must wear their APFU (shorts, t-shirt, white/black socks and sneakers) for the weigh-in. PACS-Q is an MOS-producing course, and therefore all students will be required to meet height and weight standards. For further information on this requirement, please review Army Regulation 350-1 and 600-9.

DINING FACILITY/COMMISSARY/EXCHANGE USE

Civilian students wishing to use the dining facility, the commissary or the post exchange will need to submit a copy of their orders to the detachment as well as to the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will endorse orders for such access. All Service members on TDY orders MUST follow their orders in regards to MEALS and LODGING.

PAY

Ensure your pay is properly arranged through your unit/organization before you arrive. There is a very limited finance center located on Fort Meade.

QUESTIONS

Please work with your training POC in your organization with any questions or concerns. You can also contact the DINFOS Registrar's Office at (dma.meade.dinfos.list.registrar@mail.mil) and your student service detachment on Fort Meade for any orders/logistics/DTS/service-related concerns.

Strength Through Truth