

Defense Information School



Course Syllabus

Public Affairs and Communication Strategy Qualification Distance Learning Non-Resident Course (PACS-Q-DL-NR)

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PACS Directorate Leadership Contact Information

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Course Overview

The Public Affairs and Communication Strategy Qualification Course (PACS-Q) provides entry-level public affairs 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.

PACS-Q DL-NR is a self-paced course operating on a fixed timeframe, composed of 5 modules. The instructor sets specific milestones for students and students must complete certain assignments or assessments by those milestones. All course materials are made available to the students, but they must complete the modules and units in sequential order.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to achieve the following terminal learning objectives:

- 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 functional areas: the online (non-resident) and the in-resident portion at the Defense Information School (DINFOS).

Functional Area 1: Online (non-resident)

This functional area is broken up into 5 modules. Each module has lessons called units. You must complete each unit in all five modules in the sequence they appear on the Google Site. The total time to complete the online coursework is nine to ten months.

The course sequence follows the Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (RPIE) process, guiding public affairs professionals through essential steps: determining the organization's function and purpose, and how PA supports these; researching stakeholders affected by the organization's Lines of Effort and mission, including their interests, concerns, and preferred communication channels; developing a targeted communication plan to change stakeholder Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors (KABs) using these channels; creating strategies and tactics to engage stakeholders; and establishing evaluation criteria to measure the effectiveness of the communication campaign. As the culminating activity, you will develop and present your capabilities board.

- **Foundations**: In this module, you will learn the foundations of public affairs, including overall concepts and the language of military planning.
 - Allotted time for completion: 1 month
 - Estimated time to complete: 20.25 hours
- **Communication Plan**: In this module, you will learn the Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (RPIE) process which you'll apply to develop a detailed individual communication plan. This module provides the basic process for approaching a command problem and/or initiative from a public communication perspective.
 - Allotted time for completion: 3-4 months
 - Estimated time to complete: 55.5 hours
- **PA Operations**: In this module, you'll learn the key aspects of public affairs/communication strategy operations.
 - Allotted time for completion: 2 months
 - Estimated time to complete: 18 hours
- **Tactics**: This module addresses the handling of media queries, planning and executing news releases, incident response strategies, media engagement and preparation of commanders for public interactions. Additionally, the module introduces AP Style and other guidelines for clear and familiar formats, covering issues like security, accuracy, propriety and policy.
 - Allotted time for completion: 1.5 months
 - Estimated time to complete: 23.25 hours
- **Capstone**: In this module you will complete a Self-Assessment and the Capabilities Board.
 - Allotted time for completion: .5 months
 - Estimated time to complete: 8 hours

Functional Area 2: Scenario (resident at DINFOS)

Scenario provides a learning opportunity to put the knowledge and skills learned in Functional Area 1 to the test by simulating a joint public affairs and communication strategy shop operating within the notional lands of Pirtuni, Donovia, and Ussel. You will be presented with a mixture of steady-state and event-driven injects that you must respond to, all while attempting to manage your team operations and mission. You will develop and hone military public communication practices and habits. Research methods, relationship building, and analysis and planning skills will be needed for you to successfully navigate the scenario.

You must attend FA 2 within two years of completion of FA 1 to graduate from the course. No credit is given to students for completion of just the distance learning material.

Technical Requirements/Skills

To participate in this course, you will need a computer and internet access. At a minimum, you will need access to the following programs on the Google Suite:

- Google Docs (similar to Microsoft Word)
- Google Slides (similar to PowerPoint)

In addition, you will need a PDF reader and a web browser. DINFOS recommends Google Chrome for the most efficient experience. Additionally, you must have video and audio capabilities, including a camera for face-to-face meetings and assignments.

It is expected you come to this course with basic grammar and writing skills.

Participation & Attendance

You are expected to give your best effort throughout the course. You will be assessed by instructors and by yourself on the quality of participation and preparedness that you have demonstrated during practice and performance exams.

You are expected to check your email daily during the week, and respond to instructors within one business day. Instructors will not be available on weekends.

PACS-Q-DL-NR is a **self-paced course** within a nine-month (maximum) period from October to July. We recommend following a timeline to plan your time and ensure that you complete each module within nine months. All times are estimates and individual times may vary.

You are responsible for using the PACS-Q DL Google Site and Google Classroom. Assignments may include:

- Readings, videos and/or multimedia
- Exercises and quizzes
- Writing assignments

All assignments in this course are individual assignments.

Navigating Google

During this course you will be assigned a dinfos.edu account (Google) and will be expected to use that account to access the course's Google Suite, access course materials and complete assignments. Even if you are familiar with Google Suite, take the time to watch the Google tutorial under the **Welcome (Start Here)** tab.

Course Tools & Functions

- **Google Site (PACS-Q-DL):** This Google Site has all the content you must review (in order).
- **Google Classroom:** You are required to submit all assignments to their designated locations in Google Classroom. There you will find the exercise/exam instructions and grading rubrics.
- **Pear Assessment:** Some units have a Knowledge Check Quiz. In order to pass the quiz, you must achieve at least an 80%. These quizzes are conducted through Pear Assessment.
- **AP Stylebook Online:** You will use this online tool during Module 4. The DINFOS Library will provide you with access during the course. You'll receive two emails; one from the DINFOS librarian notifying you that access has been provisioned and a second from the AP Stylebook Online with instructions for how to activate your account and access the online tool.

Assignments & Grading

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

Critical Competencies

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

- Individual Communication Plan (Module 2)
- Capabilities Board (Module 5)

For the first critical competency, you will 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 participate in a **Capabilities Board** to demonstrate your communication leadership skills. You will deliver to a board of instructors a brief that 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 the higher strategy, the local information environment, and the development of communication products, plans, and Courses of Action (COAs).

Your 10-minute brief should provide examples and highlight your public affairs and communication strategy leadership skills to the board. Describe your communication capabilities based on the work you have done throughout the course. Use examples that reveal your specific Public Affairs/Communication Strategy capabilities and strengths as a leader. In addition, 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 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 with personalized resources based on your scores to help you prepare for the retest. Be aware that failure on the second attempt may result in your removal from the course.

Academic Probation

Any time you fail a graded and recorded assignment, or if 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 including critical competency assignments.

Additional Training (Make Up/Remedial)

Instructors can hold training sessions for students who need extra practice, remediation, or to make up missed work. These sessions will be scheduled as needed.

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 a distinguished honor graduate. These honors are based on the cumulative score a student receives for the non-resident and resident phases of the course. Students will be recognized after the resident phase of the course. There is no recognition given at

the end of the non-resident phase.

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 (Phase II) session.

Ethics & Plagiarism

DINFOS enforces a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, copyright infringement, fabrication, and cheating.

- You will complete all assignments and exercises individually as original work. You must author your work 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, and copyrighted or credited material, as long as appropriate attribution is provided. DINFOS uses the 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.

Artificial Intelligence Usage

All content generated or edited by generative AI tools is to be understood and identified as “co-authored” by the user and the AI tool/platform; therefore, proper citation will be required. Students may use Chat GPT or Quillbot for paraphrasing material to assist in comprehension. But do not summarize any reading material containing CUI, Joint Publications, or anything behind a DoD CAC wall. Permission to summarize reading material does not mean that Chat GPT or Quillbot summaries can be used in an assignment. If a student wishes to use ChatGPT or Quillbot outside of the parameters mentioned, the student must submit a request to the instructor and receive approval from the designated academic director prior to the use of such technology.

Creating an Environment for Learning

During any virtual meetings you have with instructors and other students, be respectful of your instructors and 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 other students' questions.

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 professionally and 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 violates 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.

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 you do not pass the second attempt at a critical competency or it becomes mathematically impossible for you to raise your grade above 70 percent, you will be recommended for elimination from the course.

Failure to complete the material in any module inside of the assigned timeline will also result in a student being eliminated 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: SFC Sherrod Percell, spercell@dinfos.edu
TSgt Eboni Reece, ereece@dinfos.edu
- DINFOS Chaplain: USN Lt. Jose Jimenez, 301-677-4426, jjimenez@dinfos.edu
- DINFOS Sexual Harassment/Assault Prevention (SHARP) Representative:
MSgt Donnie Sheppard, dsheppard@dinfos.edu