



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1500.27
28 JAN 2021

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1500.27

Subj: PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVANCED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ref: (a) Performance, Training and Education Manual, COMDTINST M1500.10 (series)
(b) Coast Guard External Affairs Manual, COMDTINST M5700.13 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction establishes policy and provides guidance for Coast Guard members selected to attend undergraduate and graduate college and university programs of study under the Coast Guard’s Public Affairs Advanced Education (PA_AE) Program as set forth in References (a) and (b).
2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit Commanders, Commanding Officers, Officers-In-Charge, Deputy/Assistant Commandants, and Chiefs of Headquarters staff elements must comply with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.
4. DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
5. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.
 - a. Commandant (CG-092) reviewed the development of this Instruction and the general policies contained within it, and determined that this policy falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) categorical exclusion A3. No further environmental analysis is necessary in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1 (series).

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION

- b. This Instruction will not result in any substantial change to existing environmental conditions or violation of any applicable federal, state, or local laws relating to the protection of the environment. It is the responsibility of the action proponent to evaluate all future specific actions resulting from this policy for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), other applicable environmental mandates, and the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1(series).
6. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located on the following web sites. Internet: <http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/directives>, and CGPortal: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
7. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Instruction has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements, in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. 3101 et seq., NARA requirements, and Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series).
8. POLICY. The Coast Guard must invest in formal education programs for the Public Affairs Program. Advanced education opportunities must be afforded to public affairs officers (PAO). Advanced education opportunities must be afforded to enlisted public affairs specialists (PA).
9. BACKGROUND.
 - a. Education programs provide opportunities that fulfill present and future needs. Officer and enlisted members within the PA Program must be afforded the opportunity to develop the necessary knowledge and skill sets, which are best attained through advanced education at colleges and universities, to meet present and future strategic challenges.
 - b. The integration of formal education into the career development of Coast Guard PAO and enlisted PA specialists is essential to readiness and meeting future challenges of the organization. Each year the Coast Guard selects two to three officers to attend graduate school to attain a master's degree in a public relations or communication-related discipline. The Coast Guard also selects one enlisted member to attend a college or university to attain a bachelor's or master's degree in the same disciplines. The exact number of selections is determined annually based on the allocation of training allowance billets. Reference (a) governs this process.
 - c. The PA_AE program provides the foundational education for the External Affairs Officer (CG-SEI13) sub-specialty certification. This competency cannot be attained without a master's degree or extensive experience in lieu of education. Selected candidates receive scholarly instruction in the disciplines of Communication, Journalism, Public Relations, and Mass Communication to conduct external affairs missions IAW 14 U.S. Code, section § 93. PAO billets are predominantly assigned to flag officer command cadre, including the Commandant's Advisory Group, and as such serve in a flag officer advisory capacity.

- d. The enlisted AE program provides the foundational education needed for assignment to deputy PAO positions, the Public Information Assist Team (PIAT), and PA staff assigned to the office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. Traditional PA training does not provide the education in communication law, strategic communication, crisis communication, issues management, executive writing, and similar disciplines necessary to successfully carry out public affairs activities for these positions. Deputy PAO positions are responsible for planning, developing and directing operation of public information activities, and developing communication strategies and products for command cadre and senior executives.
 - e. Public affairs professionals manage and shape the social identity of the Coast Guard and must receive formal education to successfully conduct executive-level public relations engagement and execute strategic communication objectives. To ensure public support of our operations, public affairs is mission-essential.
10. ELIGIBILITY. Eligibility criteria will be promulgated by annual solicitation message. Officers and enlisted members must have an undergraduate degree, and show favorable ability to complete a master's degree, to be selected for a master's level, 24-month program of study. Enlisted members who do not have an undergraduate degree must have an associate's degree, or show favorable ability to complete a bachelor's degree, to be selected for a 24-month program of undergraduate study.
 11. SCHOOL SELECTION. The program manager for the Coast Guard's PA_AE Program is Commandant (CG-0922). Members selected to attend formal training through the Public Affairs Advanced Education Program must attend an accredited, research-producing university or college. Preferably, those institutions have curricular pathways to attaining an Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) certification. The normal course of study for a master's degree is 24 months. The PA_AE program manager must approve all school selections before orders are issued. Members will attend schools that are within close proximity to a military installation that can provide personnel-support services (medical, administrative, DEERS, etc.). Members will attend schools that have historic institutional research focus on military-related communication or public relations issues.
 12. CURRICULUM. Members selected to attend the PA_AE Program will attend educational programs that will place them in the best position to make significant contributions to the Coast Guard PA Program. Students will be expected to focus in academic areas of study specifically relating to Public Relations, Mass Communication, Media Studies, Communication Theory, Communication Planning, Digital Media, and Crisis Communication.
 13. PAY-BACK ASSIGNMENTS. Graduates should expect a follow-on assignment at a District PA office. Later assignments may include Area or Headquarters PAO positions and senior leadership responsibilities in the External Affairs Program. An enlisted graduate of this program should expect a follow-on assignment in any of the aforementioned positions that will benefit from an advanced education degree, as determined by CG-0922 and CG-PSC-EPM.

14. SERVICE OBLIGATION. Per Reference (a), the service obligation for attending an AE program is three months of obligated service for every month a student is assigned to a training allowance billet for the first year, and one month of obligated service for every month thereafter. For the majority of PA_AE students, there will be a three- to four-year obligation of active-duty service after completion of the program.
15. FORMS/REPORTS. None.
16. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Units and individuals may recommend changes in writing via the chain of command to Commandant (CG-0922), U. S. Coast Guard Stop 7103, 2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE, Washington, DC 20593-7103.

/J. P. HICKEY/
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Director of Governmental and Public Affairs