



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
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2/APPA
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ACADEMIC DEAN AND PROVOST INSTRUCTION 5420.29K

From: Academic Dean and Provost

Subj: PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND VISITING COMMITTEE PROGRAM

Encl: (1) Information for Visiting Committee Members
(2) Components of a Self-Study
(3) General Guidance Regarding Academic Program Preparations for Self-Studies and Visiting Committees
(4) Travel, Honoraria, and Hosting Information

1. Purpose. The periodic review and visiting committee program exists to provide academic departments and supporting areas an opportunity to reflect on their processes and offerings and to receive advice from external experts on the department's needs, future direction, and priorities within the Naval Academy's mission and constraints. The program is most useful when the self-study is used to identify a small number of areas where disciplinary experts from outside of the Academy can provide insights and non-binding guidance to improve the quality of academic experiences provided to Midshipmen. Midshipmen academic experiences are a result of instruction within and support provided to majors, minors, core courses, and other educational opportunities. Components of this experience typically include instruction, curriculum, academic support services, and assessment, but should be altered to accommodate support areas.

2. Cancellation. ACDEANINST5420.29J

3. Background and discussion. A regular program of self-reflection followed by departmental visiting committees has existed at the Naval Academy since the early 1990s to provide an opportunity for internal evaluation, external review, and independent, non-binding feedback. A formal self-study and memorandum of understanding was added to the program in 2014.

4. Components of the Periodic Program Review and Visiting Committee Program

a. Departmental identification of focal areas. No later than October 31st, of the academic year in which the visit is to be held, departments shall provide their School or Division and the Associate Provost for Planning and Assessment (APPA) with the focal areas that will guide the writing of the self-study report and visiting committee. Focal areas are determined by identifying and examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the department.

Of greatest importance are focal areas that address future directions and priorities of the department in order to ensure that support to midshipmen and excellent educational offerings are sustained and where feasible improved. Focal areas should be developed in consultation with the School or Division, the Office of the Academic Dean & Provost, and others as appropriate.

b. Determination of the visiting committee members

(1) A typical visiting committee consists of three members selected by the Provost. Departments shall provide their School and APPA with briefs for a panel of no fewer than five nominees of potential members to serve on the department's visiting committee. The panel will be submitted by Friday of the week prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.

(2) Briefs should consist of short descriptions of the nominees' relevant experiences. Nominees should be individuals who can provide advice with regard to the focal areas identified by the departments, possess expertise and experience common to the department and to the Naval Academy, and whose geographic location is within a reasonable proximity to USNA or requires minimum funds for travel and support.

(3) Departments should avoid nominees with whom there may be a conflict of interest with the Naval Academy, the department or program, or any individual faculty members. Perceived conflicts of interest should be included with the nominee names and additional information.

(4) The institutional expectations of each member of a visiting committee are included in Enclosure (1).

c. Writing the Self-Study Report. A draft of the self-study report shall be provided to the School and the APPA no later than the Monday of the last week of class in the fall semester. Final versions of the self-study report should be provided to members of the visiting committee, the School, and the APPA about four weeks prior to the date of the visit. In preparation for the visiting committee the department or support area will prepare a self-study following guidance provided in Enclosures (2) and (3).

d. Scheduling the visit. Dates of the self-study visit are ideally determined by the Monday of the last week of class in the fall semester. Visits typically take place during February or March. Once the schedule is known departments can begin making arrangements and determining the agenda for the visit, see Enclosure (4) for additional information. The visit generally includes:

(1) Day 0, out of area travelers arrive at their lodgings. Typically a small number of department faculty have dinner with the visiting committee members to orientate the committee members to unique aspects of USNA and receive any requests for additional information.

(2) Day 1, the visiting committee has an early in-brief (typically before 1000) with Provosts, School Deans, and Department leadership to review the process and expectations.

After the in-brief the department ensures that the visiting committee has access to resources, faculty, staff, and, as appropriate, midshipmen so that they can review and provide advice regarding the department and programs; e.g., a tour of departmental spaces; arranged focus groups with midshipmen from the department's core offerings and majors (generally meeting separately with various demographics; e.g., 1/C, 4/C); town halls with faculty members (generally meeting separately with various demographics; e.g., junior and senior faculty,); meetings with departmental committee members (program review, curriculum, assessment, etc.); and one-on-one meetings with support and administrative areas as needed. Tours and meetings should help the members of the visiting committee examine the departmental focus areas. Attending class is not required nor is it recommended.

(3) Day 2, the visiting committee has additional meetings as scheduled or by request and team time to prepare for the outbrief with Provosts, School leadership, and Department leadership in which the team provides individual observations and highlights. Consensus recommendations are not expected and will not be sought. Frequently, departments include time to complete paperwork for reimbursements.

e. Visiting Committee Report. The visiting committee provides a non-binding report with their best independent advice. The report is sent to the chair of the department within 4-weeks of the visit. No specific format is dictated for this report, and it should include insights, observations, and advice from all committee members regarding the extent to which the department supports midshipmen educational development and opportunities for improvement. The Chair forwards the report, as is, to the School and APPA. Consensus recommendations resulting from group deliberations are not expected nor will be solicited. Hence, USNA visiting committees are not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

f. Memorandum of Understanding. After the visiting committee report is received, the chair, deans, and provosts will determine an appropriate plan of action based on the self-study report and visiting committee report that will culminate in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Approximately a year after the MOU a status update will be provided to the APPA.

5. Point of Contact. The APPA will serve as the overall point of contact for the periodic program review and visiting committee instruction. The contact information for this instruction is APPA at cermak@usna.edu.

6. Records Management

a. Records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of media and format, must be maintained and dispositioned for the standard subject identification codes (SSIC) I 000 through 13000 series per the records disposition schedules located on the Department of the Navy/ Assistant for Administration (DON/AA), Directives and Records Management Division (DRMD) portal page at <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-Information-Management/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this instruction or the records disposition schedules, please contact USNA records manager or the DON/ AA DRMD program office

7. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 52 15.7 1 A, the Associate Provost for Planning and Assessment will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of the effective date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, DoD, SECNAV, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNA V 5215/40 Review of Instruction.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

S.L. FIREBAUGH
Provost

Releasability and distribution: This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via the Provost Issuance Website,
<https://www.usna.edu/Academics/Provost/Rules-Regulations/Instructions.php>

Enclosure 1: Information for Visiting Committee Members

1. Information visiting committee members need to be aware of regarding the United States Naval Academy:

a. As the undergraduate college of our country's naval service, the Naval Academy prepares young men and women to become professional officers and leaders of sailors and Marines. Naval Academy students are midshipmen on active duty in the U.S. Navy. They attend the Academy for four years, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degrees and commissions as ensigns in the Navy or second lieutenants in the Marine Corps.

b. Through an act of Congress, the USNA program is 47 months (8 semesters) of study, no more. Summer school courses are offered as needed primarily for midshipmen who are behind in their studies or for midshipmen taking additional courses to facilitate study abroad or participation, during their senior (1/C) year, in the Voluntary Graduate Education Program (VGEP). It is not permissible to add an additional year or even an additional semester.

c. For most midshipmen the entirety of the freshman (4/C) year is devoted to the "core" (general education) curriculum. The core is the centerpiece of a Naval Academy education, and provides the basis for a sound general education and strong professional development. It is the core program that allows any midshipman, regardless of major, to prepare for any warfare community in the Naval Service. Modification of the core is very difficult to accomplish and therefore any curricular changes need to be within a department's ability to effect.

d. Majors are selected in the spring of the 4/C year and midshipmen begin their majors in their sophomore (3/C) year. As a result, there are only six semesters to begin and complete a major.

e. The balance of moral, mental, and physical is important for the development of each midshipman. Majors are approximately 140 credit hours (~½ devoted to the core) and midshipmen typically take 18-19 credits each semester. Additionally, midshipmen participate in a non-credit bearing physical education course each semester and many professional requirements. Summers are largely devoted to professional training for the Naval Service.

2. Expectations of visiting committee members. A typical visiting committee consists of three individuals chosen from a panel nominated by the department, and approved by the Academic Dean and Provost (AcDean), for their particular expertise and contributions to the area(s) being reviewed. The institutional expectations of each visiting committee member include:

a. Careful independent review of materials (e.g. the self-study) provided before and during the visit.

b. Robust interaction with faculty, staff, midshipmen, and administrators during a two-day visit to the Yard.

c. General attention to the following questions:

(1) How close to the state of the art is the program curriculum among undergraduate programs? Are we missing essential elements? Does our program contain dated content?

(2) As a teaching institution, are we following the best pedagogical practices in the discipline with regard to teaching strategies, classroom technology, and interdisciplinary approaches?

(3) Are we as effective as possible in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty (including underrepresented groups) and promoting an environment of inclusive excellence?

(4) Are we effective in promoting an environment of inclusive excellence to all midshipmen (including underrepresented groups)? Is mentoring and support sufficient to retain students within their majors?

(5) Every department has ways in which it could use additional resources (positions, facilities, funds, etc.). In the absence of additional resources, what is the best advice for focusing/prioritizing existing resources?

3. With committee consensus being neither expected nor sought, a final written report provide to the chair of the department within four weeks of the completion of the visit that includes:

a. Independent, external, and non-binding perspectives regarding the extent to which the departmental offerings support Midshipman educational development.

b. Identification of strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities within the programs, in light of best practices known to each expert reviewer and suggestions to advance the department.

c. Suggestions for addressing the focal areas identified by the department.

d. Suggestions for addressing areas identified by the School or Provost's Office.

Enclosure 2: Components of a Self-Study

1. In preparation for the visiting committee the department prepares a self-study generally no more than 35 pages (not including front or back matter) focused on the quality of academic programs organized by items listed below.
 - a. Example charge to the visiting committee members: The program of periodic review and visiting committees was established by the Office of the Academic Dean and Provost to improve the quality of academic experiences provided to midshipmen. Visiting committee members include experts from academic institutions, and as appropriate government and military professionals, who are asked to independently propose non-binding suggestions regarding the focal areas and questions put forward by the department. Members of the visiting committee provide an out-brief at the conclusion of the visit followed, within four weeks, by a written report. The out-brief and corresponding written report provides independent, external observations and non-binding suggestions. While committee members are encouraged to share their perspectives, a consensus perspective is neither required nor sought; hence, the visiting committee is not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).
 - b. A short list of focal areas the visiting committee should consider as they read the report.
 - c. Additional areas to include:
 - (1) Mission, Goals, and Outcomes
 - (a) Provide mission Statement, goals, learning outcomes, and other foundational information or program planning documents that guide the department's actions.
 - (b) A brief description of how this information guides departmental plans and aligns with institutional priorities (e.g., strategic plans, attributes of graduates).
 - (2) Background and Essential Information
 - (a) Curriculum and Educational Offerings. Including information about how the course offerings and educational opportunities contribute to the development of midshipmen who take core courses and/or constitute a challenging program for majors.
 - (b) Teaching and Learning. Provide information about the teaching strategies endorsed by the department, support to student learning, and what the department has learned from the assessment of learning outcomes.
 - (c) Faculty/Staff Profile and Productivity (including laboratory staff):
 - i. Table of faculty information by rank and appointment type.

ii. Summary of research/scholarship specialties and creative work.

(d) Information on recruitment processes, recent hires, retention plans and results.

(e) Actions taken or anticipated to increase diversity of members of the department.

(f) Enrollment Information: Recent trends in enrollment and demand for programs, minors, and tracks (as appropriate).

Enclosure 3: General Guidance Regarding Academic Program Preparations for Self-Studies and Visiting Committees

1. The Self-Study

- a. Self-Study Committee membership should be considered strategically and be forward leaning
 - (1) Involve different cohorts of USNA faculty (consider opportunities for staff contributions as well).
 - (2) Consider involving USNA faculty members who will implement and, in the long-run, live with changes that may occur as a result of the program review process.
- b. The self-study should be strategic, focused, and maintain the department as the locus of control to ensure that program improvement is feasible.
 - (1) The purpose of the program review is self-improvement, and the self-study should be constructed in a way to promote self-reflection specifically on the academic program(s) offered by the department; the self-study should not focus on non-academic matters or on general government bureaucratic processes.
 - (2) By and large it is expected that departments will not experience significant change as the result of a program review visit; however, the process is intended to provide an external perspective in order to facilitate meaningful program and process improvement and innovation. The self-study report itself should focus visiting committee members toward areas in which the department desires outside perspectives or suggestions with regard to creating changes, and it should not excessively strive to validate existing practices.
 - (3) It is a fact that departments are affected by factors that are outside of their control. Visiting committees should be aware of the larger context and the impact that these factors have on the department. In some instances, the visiting committee members will be able to assist USNA by offering varied experiences and creative approaches to managing these issues.
 - (4) Program reviews involving a significant or repeated focus on an area outside the department should include meetings between members of the visiting committee and USNA representatives who can provide perspective on that area.

2. The Visiting Committee

- a. The typical visiting committee consists of three (3) external reviewers
 - (1) Experts in area(s) useful to the department.
 - (2) Two (2) of the three (3) team members possess a teaching background from an institution with a strong undergraduate program.
 - (3) As appropriate, a relevant military (typically community specific) or industry background.
- b. In order to arrive at this team, departments are asked to nominate at least five (5) potential reviewers to the Office of the Academic Dean & Provost with resumes or C.V.s and information describing the preferred make-up of the team.
 - (1) The criteria the department used to arrive at the potential reviewers.
 - (2) Order of preference or priorities.

- (3) Disclose potential conflicts of interest.
 - (4) Describe existing relationships with potential external reviewers.
- 3. The Visit
 - a. Consult department and visiting committee members when creating the agenda for the visit.
 - (1) Determine if there are specific groups that should be included on the schedule:
 - (a) Midshipmen focus groups (e.g., be careful about mixing 4/C and other years).
 - (b) If classroom visits are going to be part of the visit, determine if there are criteria to determine what courses should be observed (core/major).
 - (c) Appropriate faculty focus groups or interview groupings (military/civilian, rotational/permanent, assistant/associate/full).
 - (d) Faculty who teach follow-on courses served by the department being visited or external staff who support the department.
 - b. In-Brief and Out-Brief
 - (1) Include department and school leadership during both the in-brief and out-brief. If it is not possible to include the school in the briefs with the provosts, arrange for separate meetings with the school leadership.
 - (2) The out-brief is an opportunity to hear from the members of the visiting committee and, time permitting, to request that ideas be elaborated on. In addition to the provosts and deans, the audience should include the department chair and typically no more than two (2) additional representatives from the department, often selected because of their involvement in the program review process.

Enclosure 4: Travel, Honoraria, and Hosting Information

1. Travel area governed by [USNAINST 4651.2H](#), TRAVEL ADMINISTRATION, and honoraria and invited travel governed by [USNAINST 7200.2A](#), PAYMENT OF HONORARIA AND TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR INVITED NON-GOVERNMENT GUESTS.

a. Government Employee/Local Area (residence within the local travel area defined in USNAINST 4651.2H)

(1) Mileage, tolls, and parking (enter on travel scratchpad)

b. Non Government/Local Area (residence within the local travel area defined in USNAINST 4651.2H)

(1) Mileage, tolls, and parking (enter on travel scratchpad).

(2) Honorarium \$500 per day not to exceed \$1,000 total for the visit. [Honorarium Request Form](#) must be received and approved by the Budget Director of the Office of the Academic Dean and Provost three weeks prior to visit to allow sufficient time for routing.

c. Government Employee/Outside Local Area

(1) Transportation is arranged via DTS by the department and billed to the individual's Government Travel Card (GTC). If the government employee does not have a GTC then the department should charge to the Centrally Billed Account (CBA).

(2) Per Diem

(3) Contact AcDean Finance, acdeanbudget-group@usna.edu, for determining lodging arrangements, within per diem, for the duration of the visit. The department will assist government travelers with DTS and lodging will be charged to the government traveler's GTC. Only if the government traveler does not have a GTC should lodging be charged to a Unit Travel Card.

d. Non Government/Outside Local Area

(1) Transportation is arranged via DTS by the department and charged to the CBA.

(a) Travel should be cost effective and reasonable

(a) Rental cars are generally not approved

(2) Per Diem

(3) Contact AcDean Finance, acdeanbudget-group@usna.edu, for determining lodging arrangements, within per diem, for the duration of the visit

(4) Honorarium \$500 per day not to exceed \$1,000 total for the visit. [Honorarium Request Form](#) must be received and approved by the Budget Director of the Office of the Academic Dean and Provost three weeks prior to visit to allow sufficient time for routing.

1. Hosting/entertainment requests should be submitted to the Budget Director, Office of the Academic Dean & Provost allowing sufficient time for routing and approval and follow [USNAINST 7000.4A](#), GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF GIFT FUNDS FOR ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSES IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY MISSION.

a. To supplement costs associated with hosting visiting committees please adhere to the following guidelines:

(1) Up to \$150 per program review may be authorized per department hosting a visiting committee.

(2) Requests must be made and approved in advance, using the [Entertainment Expenses for USNA Hosted Events Request/Approval Form](#) and clearly indicate the purpose of the event and the individuals who will be present.

(3) Requests must be received and approved by the Budget Director of the Office of the Academic Dean and Provost two-weeks prior to visit to allow sufficient time for routing.

(4) The use of the hosting/entertainment expense funds should first be used to defray meal costs for visiting committee members who are not receiving per diem (local) and/or honoraria (government employees).

(5) Remaining funds may be used to defray the costs of meals of Naval Academy employees who are hosting visiting committee members at events/meals prior to formal start of the visit. Typically the evening before the visiting committee in-brief with the AcDean.

(6) During the visit (between the in-brief and the out-brief) meals should generally be reserved for the team to work privately. Exceptions may occur; e.g., scheduling midshipman focus groups.

(7) Generally, the intent of these pre-visit gatherings is to acquaint the members of the visiting committee with the Naval Academy, identify previously unknown needs or requests, ensure that the visit goes smoothly, and to establish collegial relations typical of this type of activity.