



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
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ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND 21402-1300

PROVOSTINST 5420.29M
APPA
12 Jun 2026

PROVOST INSTRUCTION 5420.29M

From: Provost, U.S. Naval Academy

Subj: PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND VISITING COMMITTEE PROGRAM

Encl: (1) Information for Visiting Committee Members
(2) Self-Study and Visiting Committee Procedures
(3) Travel, Honoraria, and Hosting Information

1. Purpose. To establish policy and prescribe procedures for the Periodic Program Review and Visiting Committee Program. This revision emphasizes the alignment between curricula and the needs of the naval service; clarifies that reviews should reflect the complete educational contribution of the department, specifically the core and major(s) programs; requires that the panel of candidates must have at least two military or national security experts and two disciplinary experts; and combines two previously separate enclosures into a single enclosure providing Self-Study and Visiting Committee Procedures.
2. Cancellation. PROVOSTINST 5420.29L. This directive is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety.
3. Background and Discussion. A regular program of self-reflection followed by departmental visiting committees has existed at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) since the early 1990s to provide an opportunity for internal self-evaluation, external review, and independent, non-binding feedback. A formal self-study and memorandum of understanding was added to the program in 2014. The periodic program review and visiting committee program provides academic departments and supporting areas with a process for internal self-reflection followed by external expert review. Visiting committee members provide suggestions regarding departmental offerings, future directions, and priorities. The program is most beneficial when the self-study is used to identify a small number of focal areas where experts can provide insights and non-binding guidance to improve the quality of the midshipman educational experience – including instruction, curriculum, and assessment – that balances best practices in higher education aligned with the needs of the Navy and Marine Corps. Components of this process should be modified as appropriate to accommodate support areas.

4. Action

a. Department Chair

(1) Identify focal areas. By October 31st, of the academic year in which the visit is held, departments will 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 selection of the visiting committee members. Departments determine these areas by identifying and examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Departments should prioritize focal areas that address their future directions and priorities, ensuring they can sustain and improve support to midshipmen and educational offerings. The Office of the Provost, the school or the division, and other appropriate parties will develop the focal areas in consultation.

(2) Identify potential visiting committee members. Departments will 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. Potential committee members should include at least two military or national security experts and at least two disciplinary experts. The panel will be submitted by Friday of the week prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. A typical visiting committee consists of three members and will be selected by the Provost.

(a) 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.

(b) 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.

(c) The institutional expectations of each member of a visiting committee outlined in enclosure (1) will be provided to the selected members.

(3) Write Self-Study Report. Submit a draft of the self-study report to the school dean and APPA by the Monday of the last week of class in the fall semester. Submit the final version of the self-study report to members of the visiting committee, the school, and the APPA four weeks prior to the date of the visit. Prepare self-study following guidance provided in enclosure (2).

(4) Schedule the visit. Dates of the self-study visit should be determined by the Monday of the last week of class in the fall semester. Visits should take place during February or March. Once the dates of the visit have been set, departments shall begin making arrangements and determining the agenda for the visit as outlined in enclosure (3).

(5) Forward Visiting Committee Report. The visiting committee provides a non-binding report with their best independent advice. The chair of the department should receive the report within 4-weeks of the visit. No specific format is dictated for this report, but 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 will forward the report, as submitted, to the school dean or division director 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.

(6) Memorandum of Understanding. After the visiting committee report is received, the chair, deans or directors, 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 is signed, a status update will be provided to the APPA.

b. School Deans and Division Directors. Deans and directors shall review the drafts of the focal points, potential visiting committee members, and the self-study for the purpose of providing sound advice to the department and provosts prior to the visit.

c. APPA

(1) The APPA will serve as the overall point of contact for the periodic program review.

(2) During the planning stages of the program review, the APPA reviews drafts of the focal points, potential visiting committee members, the self-study, and other relevant materials. The APPA will provide feedback to the school or division and department and advice to the Provost.

(3) The APPA will, in consultation with the provosts, school dean or division director, and department chair determine an appropriate plan of action and write a MOU to be signed by the Provost, school dean or division director, and department chair. Approximately a year after the MOU is signed, a status update will be provided to the APPA from the above signatories.

6. Records Management

a. Records created as a result of this notice, regardless of format or media, must be maintained and dispositioned per the records disposition schedules located on the DON Assistant for Administration, Directives and Records Management Division portal page at <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/doni/Records%20Management%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this notice or the records disposition schedules, please contact your local records custodian or the USNA Records Manager.

7. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.17A, APPA will review this instruction annually around the anniversary of its issuance date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 10 years, unless revised or canceled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 10-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST 5215.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the need for cancellation is known for the following guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1, of May 2016.

S. L. FIREBAUGH

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>

Information for Visiting Committee Members

1. U.S. Naval Academy Background Information

a. As the undergraduate college of our country's naval service, the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) prepares young men and women to become professional officers and leaders of Sailors and Marines. USNA students are midshipmen on active duty in the U.S. Navy. They attend the academy for four years, graduating with Bachelor of Science degrees and commissions as ensigns in the U.S. Navy or second lieutenants in the U.S. Marine Corps. It is crucial that USNA prepare midshipmen for the current and future needs of the naval service.

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. A typical visiting committee consists of three individuals chosen from a panel nominated by the department, and approved by the Provost, for their particular expertise and contributions to the area(s) being reviewed including alignment of the core and majors curriculum with the needs of the naval service that are balanced with best practices in higher education. The institutional expectations of each visiting committee member include:

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

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

b. Visiting committee members should attend to the following questions:

(1) How well do the core curriculum objectives in the department being reviewed align with Fleet needs for newly commissioned officers and commonly accepted general education requirements.

(2) How close to the state of the art is the curriculum in the major(s) being reviewed in terms of meeting the needs of the naval service and among undergraduate programs? Are we missing essential elements? Does our program contain dated content?

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

(4) Are we as effective as possible in recruiting and developing the best faculty to educate and train midshipmen? Do faculty understand the needs of the Navy and Marine Corps? Are we effective in promoting an environment where all faculty receive appropriate mentoring and support?

(5) Are we effective in promoting an environment in which midshipmen receive the support and mentoring needed to succeed in their majors and in the naval service?

(6) 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 provided 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.

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- c. Suggestions for addressing the focal areas identified by the department.
- d. Suggestions for addressing areas identified by the school or Provost's Office.

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 Office of the Provost established the program of periodic review and visiting committees to improve the quality of educational experiences provided to midshipmen. Visiting committee members include experts from military or national security settings and academic institutions 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.

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, core and majors 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 and Staff Profile and Productivity (including laboratory staff).

1. Table of faculty information by rank and appointment type.
 2. Summary of research/scholarship specialties and creative work.
- (d) Information on recruitment processes, recent hires, development plans and results.
- (e) Enrollment information. Recent trends in enrollment and demand for programs, minors, and tracks (as appropriate).

Self-Study and Visiting Committee Procedures

1. The Self-Study Authors. Self-Study Committee membership should be considered strategically and be forward leaning.

- a. Involve different cohorts of U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) faculty and consider opportunities for staff contributions.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 to ensure alignment with the needs of the naval service and improvement of the educational program. The self-study should be constructed to promote self-reflection on the academic program(s) offered by the department; the self-study should avoid focusing on non-academic matters or on general government bureaucratic processes.

(2) A program review visit is intended to provide an external perspective in order to ensure alignment with the needs of the naval service and to facilitate meaningful program improvement and innovation. The self-study report itself should guide visiting committee members toward areas in which the department desires outside perspectives and suggestions with regard to creating changes.

(3) Departments are affected by factors that are outside of their control. Visiting committees should consider the larger context and how these factors impact a department. In some instances, the visiting committee members will assist USNA by offering varied experiences and creative approaches to managing these issues.

(4) Program reviews involving a significant or repeated focus on a USNA office or department outside the department being reviewed should include meetings between members of the visiting committee and USNA representatives who can provide perspective on that area.

2. Self-Study Length and Contents. 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 Office of the Provost established the program of periodic review and visiting committees to improve the quality of educational experiences provided to midshipmen. Visiting committee members include experts from military or national security settings and academic institutions 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.

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, core and majors 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 and naval service 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):

1. Table of faculty information by rank and appointment type.

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

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

(e) Enrollment information. Recent trends in enrollment and demand for programs, minors, and tracks (as appropriate).

3. The Visiting Committee. The visiting committee consists of a small number of experts with backgrounds in the military, national security, or disciplinary areas. Care should be taken

to ensure that the committee members invited to USNA are appropriate for the context of the Navy's flagship undergraduate school.

a. The typical visiting committee consists of three (3) external reviewers

(1) Experts in area(s) useful to the department.

(2) At least one of the three (3) team members should be an expert that brings naval, military, or national security perspectives applicable to the department's core and majors curriculums.

(3) At least one of the three (3) team members should possess a teaching background from an institution with a strong undergraduate program.

b. In order to arrive at this team, departments will nominate at least five (5) potential reviewers to the Office of the Provost with resumes or C.V.s and information describing the preferred make-up of the team.

(1) Candidates that include at least two with a relevant military or national security back ground and at least two with disciplinary expertise from a strong undergraduate program.

(2) The criteria the department used to arrive at the potential reviewers.

(3) Order of preference or priorities.

(4) Disclosure of actual or potential conflicts of interest.

(5) Descriptions of any existing relationships with potential external reviewer.

4. 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 thoughtful about mixing 4/C and other years).

(b) To determine if classroom observations are part of the visit and if there are criteria to discern what courses to observe (core/major).

(c) Appropriate faculty and staff 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.

c. Typical schedule

(1) Day 0, out of area travelers arrive at their lodgings. The department chair, and possibly a small number of faculty, are encouraged to meet 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 out brief 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.