



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

PROVOSTINST 1531.68E
DoRI
21 Jul 2026

PROVOST INSTRUCTION 1531.68E

From: Provost, U.S. Naval Academy

Subj: TRIDENT SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Ref: (a) PROVOSTINST 1531.60B Grades and Report

1. Purpose. To establish procedures for the Trident Scholar Program.
2. Cancellation. PROVOSTINST 1531.68D
3. Scope and Applicability. This instruction applies to academic faculty and staff and midshipmen.
4. Background. The Trident Scholar Program was instituted at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) in 1963 to provide an opportunity for a limited number of exceptionally capable midshipmen to engage in independent study and research during their First Class (1/C) year. Research and completion of a thesis constitute the major part of the scholar's academic program for the year and each Trident Scholar carries a reduced number of formal course offerings both semesters. The freedom from normal classroom schedules allows a responsible and motivated midshipman committed to excellence to conduct independent research in collaboration with one or more faculty advisers.
5. Eligibility. Application to the Trident Scholar Program is open to Second Class (2/C) midshipmen who are in the top 20 percent of their class by academic order of merit and in the top 50 percent by military order of merit at the end of the first semester of 2/C year. Potential candidates must have space in their matrices to fit 9-12 credit hours of Trident research into each semester of their 1/C year (without overloading), and meet all the requirements for on-time graduation.
6. Action
 - a. Provost. The Provost will appoint a Trident Scholar Committee to review all applications and recommend qualified midshipmen. The Trident Scholar Committee members are nominated by the Trident Scholar Committee Chair after consultation with the Dean of Research and Innovation and school associate deans. Authority to appoint Trident Scholars, the Trident Scholar Committee, and the Trident Scholar Committee Chair resides with the Provost. The

Provost will publish annually, in the fall semester, a notice which announces the committee members and chair for that academic year and which provides the annual schedule of deadlines for Trident program applicants. Approved scholars, faculty advisers, and sponsoring departments will be announced in the spring semester.

b. Trident Scholar Committee

(1) Duties. During the approval process, the Trident Scholar Committee will review the applications of eligible 2/C midshipmen applying to the Trident Scholar Program and will interview each midshipman and their respective faculty advisers. During the academic year, the committee will administer the Trident Scholar Program and monitor the progress of all Trident Scholars, providing an assessment of their work to the Provost at the end of each semester. During the final weeks of the fall semester prior to the start of final examinations, the chair will assign members of the Trident Scholar Committee to meet with Trident Scholars and their faculty advisers to evaluate each midshipman's work to date. During these meetings, the scholars and their faculty advisers should apprise the Trident Scholar Committee representatives of the progress made in the project during the fall semester, problems encountered, and expected outcomes. Based on the report from each committee representative, the written report submitted by the individual Trident Scholars (described below in section 7a) and discussions with their advisers, the Trident Scholar Committee will make recommendations to the Provost for each scholar's continuance in, or removal from, the program. The recommendations of the committee will be made in January, prior to the start of the spring semester.

(2) Membership. The Trident Scholar Committee will consist of Naval Academy faculty members with special interest in midshipman scholarship and research. Typically, membership will be from among the more senior faculty at the Naval Academy and will include those who have demonstrated experience in directing midshipmen research efforts. The committee will include in its membership four representatives from each of the schools: Engineering, Computing, and Weapons; Humanities and Social Sciences; and Mathematics and Science. No one department will have more than 2 members on the Trident Scholar Committee at one time. Members of the committee are appointed for three-year terms, renewable only after a one-year absence. In order to avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest, members of the Trident Scholar Committee who become Trident Scholar advisers should resign from the committee and a replacement member nominated by the committee member's department chair, adhering to the membership requirements outlined above. Nominations for sabbatical replacements should also come from the committee member's department chair. Any replacement committee member must be approved by the Provost.

c. School Deans and School Trident Scholar Review Committees

(1) Each school dean will establish a School Trident Scholar Review Committee, with equal representation by all departments in the school. This committee will interview applicants and evaluate their applications early in the spring semester of applicants' 2/C year. School

Trident Scholar Review Committee actions should comply with the dates announced in the published Provost Notice, see paragraph 6a, above.

(2) During this review process, the School Trident Scholar Review Committee is expected to provide assistance to the midshipmen applicants and their advisers by offering suggestions for improvements to the application, research proposal, and oral presentation. At the conclusion of the review process, the committee will make recommendations to the school dean to approve or disapprove proposals or provide a priority ranking of proposals, with critiques including strengths and weaknesses of each midshipman application provided as supporting documentation. The chair of the School Trident Scholar Review Committee will forward the final application package of each candidate along with the school recommendations to the chair of the Trident Scholar Committee by the stated due dates.

d. Trident Scholar Advisers

(1) Faculty members are urged to support the Trident Scholar Program by encouraging qualified midshipmen to apply, suggesting appropriate projects and advisers, and serving as Trident Scholar advisers. Mentoring of Trident Scholars directly supports the academic mission of the Naval Academy and the administration views these teaching efforts very favorably. However, before agreeing to become a Trident Scholar adviser, a faculty member must be committed to providing the time and effort necessary to guide the midshipman scholar for an entire academic year.

(2) Each Trident Scholar adviser must serve as expert academic guide, critic, editor, and role model to develop the scholar as an independent researcher. From the initial preparation of the proposal, through the completion of the actual research work and the submission of a well-written and proofread final report, each adviser must actively nurture the scholar, foster the midshipman's potential for independence, and demand accountability and responsibility.

(3) Each Trident Scholar adviser is expected not only to work closely with the scholar on the research aspects of the project, but also to assist the midshipman in completing the administrative requirements of the program. These requirements include, at a minimum, the timely submission of project information to the chair of the Trident Scholar Committee and the careful review of draft and final versions of the Trident Scholar's research reports, presentations, and posters. In addition, if the Trident Scholar is requesting travel to present results at a meeting or conference, the Trident adviser must work with the scholar to complete the necessary paperwork. Trident Scholar advisers must sign the formal cover page of the final report after they have reviewed the report and approved its contents for publication.

(4) Trident Scholars may have more than one Trident Scholar adviser. Secondary advisers can be from any academic department but must have a vital role in supporting the project. External collaborators, who contribute significantly to the Trident project, can also be included on the project team. However, one adviser must be designated as the primary adviser

and be a current faculty member of USNA. If the primary adviser is not from the Trident Scholar's major department, at least one secondary adviser must from the scholar's major department. The primary adviser is the lead mentor and is designated to enter grades for the Trident Scholar via the Midshipmen Information System (MIDS), after discussions with the other advisers as appropriate.

e. Trident Scholar Candidates

(1) Preliminary consultation. In the fall of their 2/C year (or earlier), midshipmen applicants to the Trident Scholar Program must consult with a prospective faculty adviser(s) in planning their project and in preparing their formal application. Applicants must also develop, with their advisers and department chairs, a proposed Trident Scholar schedule of courses, as well as an alternative schedule of courses if the application is not approved. Trident Scholars are expected to complete all required professional courses shown in their majors' course matrices. Trident project credit must total 9-12 credit hours per semester. Project credit hours will be established for both the fall and spring semesters of the 1/C year by the end of the spring semester of the 2/C year, following the approval of the midshipman as a Trident Scholar. The classroom course load for Trident Scholars will normally not exceed 9 credit hours per semester. This reduced classroom load is accomplished through prior validation, summer school, overloading, or waiver of requirements in the midshipman's course of study.

(2) Application. A formal application for the Trident Scholar Program is due from each midshipman candidate to the chair of the sponsoring department in accordance with the schedule of deadlines established in the Provost notice published annually in the fall semester. The format requirements for the application and the detailed instructions for its completion must be followed. Application information is available on the Trident Scholar website or from the chair of the Trident Scholar Committee. As part of the application process, department chairs will certify that the applicant meets class standing requirements, and that completion of the proposed Trident project and accompanying schedule of courses will satisfy the requirements for the applicant's academic major. The department chair may also provide, as an enclosure to a Trident Scholar's application, a separate endorsement of the candidate which may include opinions of faculty within the sponsoring department. Incomplete or incorrectly prepared applications must be revised before forwarding to the chair of the Trident Scholar Committee, see paragraph 6c(1), above, for guidance regarding school endorsements.

(3) Interview. The Trident Scholar Committee will conduct a formal interview of each midshipman applying for the program. This interview will include an oral presentation by the midshipman, outlining the goals of the project, details of the proposed work, and their participation in it. At the same time, the committee will interview the individual faculty advisers. Through this interview process, the Trident Scholar Committee will examine the quality of the proposed project, and seek evidence of independent thought and preparation on the part of the applicant. The committee will judge the oral and written expression of the midshipman, and assess each midshipman's potential to develop as an independent researcher.

The committee will also evaluate the feasibility of completing the project in view of the applicant's military and extracurricular responsibilities and proposed involvement.

(4) Acceptance and Recognition. In April of their 2/C year, Trident Scholar candidates will be notified of the outcome of their candidacy review by letter from the Provost. Each midshipman selected for the Trident Scholar Program will be designated a "Trident Scholar" and receive a Trident Scholar pin to be worn on the uniform of the day. Their transcript will bear the designation "Trident Scholar" and will record the academic program followed by the title of the project. Each designated scholar who successfully completes the Trident Scholar program will receive a Certificate of Participation from the Provost and will be acknowledged at graduation.

(5) Trident Scholar Prize. Based on recommendations from the Trident Scholar Committee, the Provost will award the Trident Scholar Prize to the midshipman who, in their judgment, has completed the best Trident project among all submissions for the academic year. This midshipman will be recognized at the Academy Prizes and Awards Ceremony each May. In addition, the name of the prize winner will be engraved on an award plaque located in the Nimitz Library.

(6) Special Support and Privileges. The Dean of Research and Innovation has limited resources to support approved Trident Scholar projects. Generally, financial support can be spent only on consumables, supplies, and small equipment, and is subject to availability of funds. The Dean of Research and Innovation or Trident Scholar Committee Chair will review requests for travel expenses on a case-by-case basis. Trident Scholars are accorded three-striper liberty during the fall and spring semesters of their project year. Any other special access or privileges will be addressed via the chain-of-command on a case-by-case basis.

7. Program Requirements

a. Interim Report. After 1 December during the fall semester, Trident Scholars will submit to the Trident Scholar Committee Chair, via their respective advisers, a report summarizing project progress to date. These individual interim reports, together with the committee members' evaluations from the interview meetings (described in section 6b(1), above) and discussions with the research advisers, will be reviewed by the Trident Scholar Committee when considering the midshipman's continuation in the program. If the committee is satisfied with the midshipman's progress, the midshipman may continue as a Trident Scholar in the spring semester. The Trident Scholar Committee may recommend to the Provost that a midshipman return to a standard academic program if it is not satisfied with the progress to date.

b. Final Trident Report

(1) Frequent, in-depth interaction between the Trident Scholar and faculty adviser(s) throughout the project year is essential for the completion of a successful final report. Each

project must meet, in the form of a final report, the high level of excellence expected of Trident Scholar Program participants. Final reports will be evaluated for content, clarity, format, and appearance. With the assistance of their faculty advisers, the individual Trident Scholars will address all modifications to the report suggested by the Trident Scholar Committee. The format for the cover page of the final report, the standards for the report layout, and the number of copies from each scholar required will be announced to each midshipman by the Trident Scholar Committee Chair. The writing style and the standards for footnotes and bibliography in the final report will conform to the scholarly journal format in the Trident Scholar's respective academic field. See paragraph 6d(3), above, for additional guidance on draft and final versions of the Trident report.

(2) Midshipmen who fail to meet the stated deadline for the submission of the final report to the Trident Committee Chair may expect a lowered grade for their Trident course.

(3) Procedural requirements for the submission of the reports will be announced by the Trident Scholar Committee Chair.

c. Trident Scholar Presentations and Banquet. Annually, the Provost will sponsor the Trident Scholar Presentations and Trident Scholar Banquet as formal occasions for scholars to report their work. The Trident Scholars will present their research by means of talks and poster displays to Trident Scholar Committee members, advisers, faculty, staff, and other guests. The dates of the presentations and banquet, and the format for the talks and posters will be distributed by the Trident Scholar Committee Chair. All scholars will also participate in the Yard-wide Midshipman Research Poster Session to disseminate their work.

d. Grades. The Trident Scholar faculty adviser(s) will assign their respective scholar's semester interim and final grades based on their assessment of the scholar's efforts and progress, and their interactions with the individual midshipman under their supervision. Advisers should take into account comments from the Trident Scholar Committee during their interviews and how well the scholar met stated deadlines. In the spring semester, evaluation of the scholar should include the Trident presentation and poster in the grade determination. Per reference (a), grades must be submitted via MIDS following the same schedule that applies to all other courses.

e. Appeals

(1) The Provost's selection of Trident Scholars, in consultation with the Trident Committee, is final. Those candidates not accepted into the Trident program are encouraged to pursue their projects in departmental research courses (XX495/6).

(2) A Trident Scholar who wishes to appeal the grades assigned in either academic semester should follow the grade appeal procedure described in reference (a).

f. Distribution of Final Trident Reports. The Trident Committee Chair will submit the final Trident Scholar reports to the Naval Academy Library Director, who is responsible for binding, cataloging, and preserving the reports. The Library Director will also distribute reports as follows: Naval Academy Archives, Defense Technical Information Center, and Nimitz Library.

8. Records Management

a. Records created as a result of this instruction, 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 instruction or the records disposition schedules, please contact your local records custodian or the USNA Records Manager.

9. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.71A, the Director of Research and Innovation will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of the 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 5214.17A, 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 following the 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 via the Provost Instructions internet website:
<https://www.usna.edu/Academics/Provost/Rules-Regulations/Instructions.php>