DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SCHOOL OF CHOICE (SOC) PROGRAM
POLICY/PROCEDURES

1. **REFERENCES:** SEE APPENDIX 1.

2. **APPLICABILITY:** This policy and procedures applies to all current civilian Army Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (AL&T) workforce members. All instructions in the SOC policy and the annual announcement must be followed. Failure to comply will result in non-selection or removal from the program.

3. **PURPOSE:** This document establishes the policy and procedures for application and selection of AL&T workforce members to the SOC program and supersedes any previous versions.

4. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

a. The Deputy Director, Acquisition Career Management (DDACM).

(1) Provides oversight and management of the announcement and board process.

(2) Serves as final approval authority for AL&T workforce members selected to participate in the program.

(3) Serves as approval authority for SOC Program Relative Standing List (RSL).

b. United States Army Acquisition Support Center (USAASC), Workforce Management Division. Coordinates with Organizational Acquisition Points of Contact and Acquisition Career Management Advocates to ensure target audience is notified.

c. SOC Program Manager.

(1) Develops, issues and implements the SOC program policy and procedures.

(2) Markets the SOC program to the AL&T workforce.

(3) Publishes the SOC program announcement on the USAASC website and ensures the widest dissemination of information.

(4) Provides assistance with submission of SOC applications in the Army Acquisition Professional Development System (AAPDS).

(5) Plans, organizes and conducts the SOC program selection process.

(6) Reviews and determines eligibility of all SOC program applications.

(7) Ensures each application meets the course requirement standards set forth in the policy.

(8) Provides DDACM with the Review Board's RSL for approval.

(9) Notifies board members and students once RSL is approved by the DDACM.

(10) Manages the SOC program budget and processes all requests for tuition assistance and reimbursement.

(11) Tracks the progress of each SOC program student ensuring that grade requirements in each class ("B" graduate level and "C" undergraduate level) are maintained and changes to schedules or funding requirements are approved.

(12) Ensures a minimum of 12 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours of classes are taken by the students each term.

d. USAASC, Resource Management Division.

(1) Completes fund-cite information on the SF182s and returns all documents to the SOC Program Manager for dissemination to students.

(2) Submits SF182s, SF1034s and invoices to DFAS for disbursement of payments.

e. Organization/Current Supervisor.

(1) Continues funding employee's salary during SOC program participation by retaining participant on organization's Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA).

(2) Ensures employees have met current position certification requirements prior to participation in any Acquisition Education, Training and Experience (AETE) program.

(3) Completes Post Utilization Plan by describing in 1500 characters or less the utilization and benefit of the applicant to participate in the SOC program. The current supervisor should also comment on the applicant's demonstrated potential for positions of increased responsibility and how their lack of education has impeded their career progression. This document must be physically signed and dated by the current supervisor and uploaded into the AAPDS. (Note: This physically signed and dated document endorses the applicant's participation, if selected).

(4) Ensures all college courses for the SOC program are listed and approved on the Individual Development Plan (IDP) of the applicant.

(5) Ensures the participant is released from work responsibilities to participate in the selected opportunity. If approved for SOC program funding, educational requirements and commitments are first priority; therefore, participants should not be recalled for work responsibilities unless for school breaks and when enrolled in less than 12 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours during the program.

(6) Ensures the SOC Program Manager is notified immediately when a change in employment no longer qualifies the student for program participation.

(7) Approves Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) earned through participation in AETE opportunities by approving the recommended CLPs on the employee's IDP at the completion of each academic term.

(8) Notifies the SOC Program Manager if an employee fails to complete the obligated service period specified on the Continued Service Agreement. In the event the student moves to another organization, the current supervisor is responsible for notifying the gaining organization that a service obligation agreement is in effect.

(9) Notifies the student and SOC Program Manager immediately with a decision of the student to remain in school or return to duty if enrolled in less than the minimum courses requirement until degree completion. Otherwise, the student will risk being removed from the program.

(10) Informs employee that he or she must return to duty during all school breaks, and leave must be requested through current supervisor or organization.

f. SOC Participant.

(1) Ensures current position certification requirements have been met prior to participation in any AETE program.

(2) Provides a firm letter of acceptance or verification of enrollment from the enrolled college or university dated within one year of the SOC program application submission deadline date. Institution of higher learning must have accreditation recognized by the United States Department of Education. Accreditation information may be found on http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html. Furthermore, students must apply and be accepted to the college or university prior to applying for the SOC program. (Note: Conditional, out-dated letters of acceptance and verifications of enrollment will not be accepted).

(3) Ensures the program of study meets the course requirement standards as stated in the SOC program policy.

(4) Submits application and supporting documentation as outlined in the current SOC program announcement.

(5) Directs questions concerning the SOC program announcement and application process to the SOC Program Manager.

(6) Notifies the SOC Program Manager immediately if approved for an alternate

funding source. Participants are allowed funding from only one USAASC tuition assistance program at a time.

(7) Notifies the SOC Program Manager immediately when a change in employment no longer qualifies the participant for program participation or if acceptance into another training opportunity will interfere with the completion of the existing SOC program.

(8) Enrolls and attends a minimum of 12 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours of classes each term.

(9) Contacts current supervisor and SOC Program Manager immediately for approval to remain in school or return to duty if remaining courses for degree completion are less than the minimum courses requirement or risk removal from the program.

(10) Maintains a minimum grade of a "B" in all graduate courses and a "C" in all undergraduate courses. Participants must reimburse the program for the tuition and book costs of each incomplete, failed or withdrawn course before proceeding with the next semester or quarter. Two withdrawals, failures or incompletes from SOC program funded course(s) will result in the removal from the SOC program with a one-year restriction on reapplying.

(11) Provides final course grades to the SOC Program Manager within 30 days of course completion. Failure to provide grade information or status may result in loss of future funding and removal from the program.

(12) Reimburses the government for the tuition and book costs for each class resulting in an incomplete, failure, withdrawal, or grade below a "B" in graduate courses and below a "C" in undergraduate courses. Reimbursement is also required upon departure from Federal Government service prior to completion of the service agreement. This reimbursement does not include unusual circumstances, such as sudden death or serious illnesses as deemed by a medical physician. All reimbursements for the SOC will be made by money order or certified check and payable to the U.S. Treasury and mailed to: United States Army Acquisition Support Center, ATTN: School Of Choice, 9900 Belvoir Road, Bldg 201, Suite 101, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5567.

(13) Ensures current supervisor and the SOC Program Manager are made aware of any academic or other problems that might interfere with success in the educational program.

(14) Selects courses from the original program of study that underpin an acquisition function. When planned courses are cancelled or are unavailable, provides appropriate substitutes from the current university to the SOC Program Manager prior to course commencement, or return to duty until courses are offered. In addition, the appropriate substitutes must be added to the IDP and approved. Failure to provide

appropriate substitutes, notify SOC Program Manager and update IDP prior to course commencement may result in the loss of future funding or removal from the program.

(15) Coordinates with the current supervisor to list all courses on the IDP to be funded by the SOC program prior to participation. Furthermore, the IDP must be in an approved status and should include current and projected courses. For each course listed on the IDP, "AETE" must be selected as the planned funding source. (Note: All SOC funded courses until graduation must be listed).

(16) Ensures start and end dates for each course match the dates identified by the college or university and the IDP during the application process.

(17) Ensures SF 182s are submitted to the SOC Program Manager for approval at least 2 weeks prior to the start of each course or risk a delay in receiving the approved SF 182s for school payment.

(18) Ensures the approved SF 182s are provided to the school for payment and to organizational training points of contact for reporting and recording purposes.

**5. POLICY:**

a. SOC Program. The SOC program is a highly competitive 18 to 24 months full-time degree granting program that provides civilian members of the AL&T workforce an opportunity to keep their current acquisition position while completing a Bachelors or Masters degree during duty hours. Annually, the USAASC announces and conducts the SOC program selection process. The target audience for the SOC program is the highest performing workforce members who have been identified by their organization as demonstrating the potential for positions of increased responsibility and their lack of education is impeding their career progression. Applicants who do not meet this criterion or cannot take the minimum required courses each term should apply for part-time tuition assistance through the Acquisition Tuition Assistance Program (ATAP): http://live.usaasc.info/career-development/programs/acquisition-tuition-assistance-program/.

b. SOC Program of Study. The SOC program will support the completion of a Bachelors or Masters degree for AL&T workforce members GS-11 through GS-15 and equivalent pay bands within a Demonstration Project who have met their current position certification requirements. All degrees must be completed within 18 to 24 months and follow the disciplines that underpin the functions of the AL&T workforce. Changes to the approved course of study are not permissible except under extreme circumstances (e.g. new course requirements for degree completion, family emergency, or deployment). Such cases must be justified and endorsed in writing by the student and current supervisor and sent via email to the SOC Program Manager. If changes occur, other than by extreme circumstances, individuals may be removed from the SOC program with a one-year restriction on reapplying. A second Bachelors or Masters degree may be considered for

funding; however, priority will be given to those going for a first-time degree. (Note: One-year restriction is set from the date of removal).

c. Learning Institutions.

(1) The SOC program will fund traditional classroom pursuits through schools that are nationally or regionally accredited by the U.S. Department of Education: http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html. Additionally, the SOC program will support the use of the Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support (DANTES) exams in lieu of approved SOC program funded courses. A failing grade on any DANTES exam will require reimbursement by the participant.

(2) Not more than one quarter of the program curriculum may be completed via online or distance learning. The DDACM (via the SOC program manager) may approve exceptions to this policy on a case by case basis.

d. Academic Standards. The SOC program participants must complete all courses with at least a grade of "B" for each graduate course and a "C" for each undergraduate course. The participant must reimburse the government for all costs associated with withdrawn, failed, or incomplete SOC program funded courses. Two withdrawals, failures, or incompletes from a SOC program funded course(s) will result in removal from the SOC program with a one-year restriction before reapplying. All reimbursements for the SOC will be made by money order or certified check and payable to the U.S. Treasury and mailed to: United States Army Acquisition Support Center, ATTN: School Of Choice, 9900 Belvoir Road, Bldg 201, Suite 101, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5567. Full repayment must be received by the SOC Program Manager before participant can proceed with additional courses. If full reimbursement is not received within 30 business days after the withdrawn, failed, or incomplete funded course(s), the student's supervisor will be notified and the student will risk removal from the SOC program with limited future program participation. Once full payment is received, the student may resume taking courses. This reimbursement does not apply to unusual circumstances, such as sudden death or serious illnesses as deemed by a medical physician.

e. SOC Participation.

(1) Students will remain on their organization's TDA. The student's organization is responsible for his or her salary, administration of leave and maintenance of leave records. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure his or her organization is aware of recess periods and leave taken during program participation. Annual leave will be charged if a student does not return to their position during any recess periods unless prior approval from the student's supervisor is obtained. Sick leave will be requested from the student's supervisor for days missed due to illness.

(2) The USAASC will not provide funding for backfills of students in the SOC program. Backfills are the sole responsibility of the individual's organization.

(3) For completion of a Bachelors or Masters degree, each student must take a minimum of 12 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours of classes each term.

(4) The SOC program will not fund prerequisite course work required for admission into the degree program, such as the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

(5) Electives must underpin the functions of the AL&T workforce or be required as part of the program of study. SOC program participants may be required to provide documentation of actual course requirements if the legitimacy of a course is questioned by USAASC. Direct any questions on electives to the SOC Program Manager.

(6) Any SOC program participant not attending scheduled courses for a period of one semester without prior coordination with the SOC Program Manager will be removed from the SOC program and required to reapply after one year from the date of removal. Students will automatically be removed from the program if they have not taken a class within 45 days from the last recorded course. Due to funding constraints, there is no guarantee that funds will be available at the time of reapplication.

(7) Applicant must contact their current supervisor and the SOC Program Manager immediately if remaining courses for degree completion are less than the minimum courses requirement. If a student has less than the minimum courses required in completing a degree, the student is considered a part-time student and should report back to duty while completing the program. The student and his or her supervisor will be notified by the SOC Program Manager via email regarding the part-time status. The current supervisor must notify the SOC Program Manager about the student's approved work status and whether the student will return to work while completing the degree. The supervisor's failure to notify the SOC Program Manager will initiate removal of the student from the program.

f. Program Completion. Upon completion, it is desirable that the individual assume a position of increased responsibility or one that will benefit from the degree completion.

g. Funding.

(1) Funding for the SOC program will be centrally managed by the USAASC for Army AL&T workforce members. SOC program funds will not be provided as reimbursement for funds expended by the student or another organization without prior approval from the SOC Program Manager.

(2) Funding for tuition is limited to $1,550 per course for a total of 20 courses or 60 credit hours for Bachelors degrees, and to $2,050 per course for 15 courses or 45 credit hours for Masters degrees. Funding above these tuition limits will not be funded by the USAASC regardless of the number of courses taken.

(3) Funding for books is limited to $150 per course. Funding above this limit is the responsibility of the SOC program participant. Book costs should be included on each SF182. If the bookstore or school does not accept a SF182 for book payment, book reimbursement is authorized by completing and submitting a SF1034, a copy of the purchase receipt, and method of payment with required course and/or book information to the SOC Program Manager via email.

(4) Lab fees and technology fees required for course completion will be considered as part of the tuition and count as part of the total yearly funding limit. Registration fees, parking costs, travel expenses, entrance exams and all other expenses will not be funded by the SOC program. These expenses are the responsibility of the SOC program participant.

## 6. PROCEDURES:

a. Application.

(1) The SOC program announcement and policy may be found on the USAASC website: http://live.usaasc.info/career-development/programs/school-of-choice/.

(2) The SOC program application is an automated process using AAPDS. To access AAPDS, please login to the Career Acquisition Management Portal at https://rda.altess.army.mil/camp/. Once you log in, click Career Acquisition Personnel and Position Management Information System (CAPPMIS). Once in CAPPMIS, click the "AAPDS" tab, then select "Apply" link and select the SOC program opportunity.

(3) To be considered for the SOC program, Bachelors applicants must request an official transcript from the accredited college or university that will validate completion of at least 60 credit hours and upload in AAPDS before the closing date of the announcement. Masters applicants must request an official transcript from the accredited college or university that will validate being a 4-year graduate and upload in AAPDS before the closing date of the announcement.

(4) Applicant must ensure Resume and Acquisition Career Record Brief (ACRB) information matches prior to application submission in AAPDS.

(5) Applicant must upload in AAPDS the Statement of Interest describing the reasons for participating in this training opportunity and the benefits to the organization and the Army upon graduation.

(6) Applicant must upload in AAPDS the Post Utilization Plan completed and physically signed and dated by the current supervisor. The Plan must describe the applicant's demonstrated potential for positions of increased responsibility, how his or her lack of education has impeded his or her career progression and the utilization and benefits

of the completed degree to the organization and the Army. (Note: This physically signed and dated document endorses the applicant's participation, if selected).

(7) Applicant must document all planned courses on the IDP for all fiscal years that the SOC program funding is requested. Courses should be listed in the Education Plan section of the IDP, with AETE-SOC selected as the planned funding source. In addition, each course must be approved in the IDP by the current supervisor prior to application submission through AAPDS.

(8) Individuals must complete and submit the application through AAPDS by the closing date indicated in the applicable SOC program announcement in order to be considered for acceptance in the program. Applications not completed or submitted before the closing date of the announcement will not be reviewed.

(9) Individuals applying for the SOC program must ensure their application is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the announcement and that all information is accurate and truthful to the best of their knowledge.

(10) Any changes to the SOC program participant's curriculum must be coordinated and approved by the SOC Program Manager prior to the curriculum change or risk losing the opportunity to participate in the program.

b. SOC Selection Board Process.

(1) The SOC Program Manager receives and reviews all submitted application packages for completeness and eligibility. The SOC Program Manager then forwards eligible application packages to the Final Review Board for review and selection recommendations.

(2) The Final Review Board reviews, ranks and compiles a RSL of qualified applicants for approval by the DDACM.

(3) The SOC Program Manager will compile application statistics and provide the RSL from the selection board to the DDACM for final decision.

(4) Based on the availability of funds, the DDACM will approve applicants for acceptance into the SOC program.

(5) Upon approval of the RSL by the DDACM, the SOC Program Manager will notify review board and applicants of the final results.

c. SOC Acceptance.

(1) Upon acceptance, selectees must acknowledge receipt of

acceptance via email or phone no later than 14 business days from notification or risk having to reapply for the next opportunity. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure contact information is current on the ACRB and Resume or risk not being selected.

(2) Selectees must ensure their IDP has the correct course information for each term and SF182s match the information in their IDP.

7. **EFFECTIVE DATE AND IMPLEMENTATION:** This document is effective immediately and will remain in effect until rescinded. This signed policy supersedes all previous SOC program policy and procedures.

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APPENDIX 1.

1. DoDD 5000.01, "The Defense Acquisition System," November 20, 2007 - http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/500001p.pdf.

2. DoDD 5000.52, "Defense Acquisition Technology and Logistics Workforce Education, Training, and Career Development Program," January 12, 2005 – http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/500052p.pdf.

3. DoDI 5000.66, "Operation of the Defense Acquisition Technology, and Logistics Workforce Education, Training and Career Development Program," December 21, 2005 – http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/500066p.pdf.

4. Department of Army, "Acquisition Career Field Certification Policy and Procedures," June 1, 2010 – http://asc.army.mil/docs/policy/acq_career_field_cert.pdf.

5. Memorandum, "Business Transformation & Acquisition Certification Standards," May 3, 2008 - http://asc.army.mil/docs/policy/Bus_Trans_Acq_Cert_Standards_Memo.pdf

6. FY12 "DAU Acquisition Certification Standards-Army Implementation Guidance," October 5, 2011 - http://asc.army.mil/docs/programs/dau/FY12_DAU_Acquisition_Certification_Standards-Army_Implementation.pdf

7. Memorandum, "Enforcement of Mandatory Acquisition Certification Requirements," August 18, 2010 – http://asc.army.mil/docs/policy/Enforcement_Mandatory_Certification_Requirements.pdf.

8. Department of Army, "Continuous Learning Policy and Implementation Guidelines, April 11, 2011 - http://asc.army.mil/docs/policy/Army_CLP_Implementation.pdf

9. Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Catalog – http://icatalog.dau.mil/.

10. Acquisition, Education, Training and Experience Catalog – http://live.usaasc.info/career-development/programs/acquisition-education-training-and-experience/

11. Memorandum, "Director of Acquisition Career Management Guidance (Focus of the Acquisition Workforce) Memorandum #1," December 22, 2006 – http://asc.army.mil/docs/policy/AAC_Policy_Memorandum_IDP_Accountability.pdf.