

Army Acquisition Active Component Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) Program
Policy and Procedures

Summary of Changes

PARA	SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS POLICY
1	Updated the reference list
1	Expanded applicability to include Active Component 51C NCOs; merges and supersedes the FA51 Officer ACS Policy (02 June 2022) and 51C NCO ACS Policy (25 April 2025).
2	Clarified DACM Office responsibilities to include NCO ACS oversight.
4	Background: Changed Leadership Development Division (LDD) to Advanced Education Program Branch (AEPB).
5.a	Responsibilities: Changed LDD to AEPB.
5.b	Responsibilities: Changed the ACS Program announcement delivery to email.
5.b (5)	Responsibilities: Included an implied responsibility and duty to manage Doctorate Students
5.c (4)	Responsibilities: Changed this responsibility to read “Coordinates budget and tuition with AEPB and AMB.”
5.e (4)	Responsibilities: Updated the US Army Student Detachment (USASD) website.
8.d	Scholastic Institutions and Program of Study: Included budgetary constraints to educational funding for Doctorate Students.
8.f	Scholastic Institutions and Program of Study: Updated reference



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MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Army Acquisition Active Component Advanced Civil Schooling Program Policy

1. References:

a. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (ASA(ALT)), SFAE-ASC memorandum (Army Acquisition Corps Active Component Advanced Civil Schooling Program Policy and Procedures), 14 January 2022 – hereby superseded.

b. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology, SFAE-ASC memorandum (Army Acquisition Non-Commissioned Officer Advanced Civil Schooling Policy and Procedures), 24 April 2025 - hereby superseded.

c. U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC), Advanced Education Programs - Policy and Procedures.

d. Army Regulations (AR) 350-100 (Officer Active Duty Service Obligations).

e. AR 621-1 (Advanced Education Programs and Requirements for Military Personnel).

f. U.S. Army HRC, Fully Funded Graduate Programs Policy and Procedures, Appendix A - ACS Student Handbook. This document can be accessed through the HRC website (<https://www.hrc.army.mil>) for users with a valid Common Access Card (CAC).

2. Purpose. This memorandum establishes responsibilities, policy and procedures for application, selection and participation in the Department of the Army's Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) Program for active component Functional Area 51 (FA51) Officers and Military Occupational Specialty 51C Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs). It merges and supersedes references 1.a and 1.b. Failure to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this document may result in non-selection or removal from the program.

3. Applicability. This memorandum applies to active component FA51 Officers and MOS 51C NCOs. When guidance pertains to only one group, this document will use the specific designation "FA51 Officer" or "51C NCO."

4. Background. As the proponent for the entire Army Acquisition Workforce (AAW), the Army Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM) Office partners closely with the U.S. Army HRC's Advanced Education Program Branch (AEPB) and Acquisition Management Branch

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(AMB) to manage the ACS Program for FA51 Officers and 51C NCOs. The ASA(ALT) Director, Army Acquisition Corps (DAAC) strongly supports the ACS Program, recognizing it as a top priority for career development and education. The program goal is to provide an opportunity for officers and 51C NCOs to receive a high-quality, acquisition-relevant graduate degree in a timely and cost-effective manner, which will enhance military AAW's competence and technical expertise as acquisition professionals and business advisors.

5. Responsibilities.

a. U.S. Army HRC, AEPB.

- (1) Serves as the overall administrative coordinator for the Army's ACS Program.
- (2) Maintains the Army Educational Requirements System (AERS) and approves ACS quotas each year.
- (3) Receives and processes all final Department of the Army (DA) Forms 1059-1 (Civilian Institution Academic Evaluation Report).

b. U.S. Army HRC, AMB. Performs the actions below to support FA51 Officers:

- (1) Announces the availability of ACS opportunities via email in conjunction with the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) cycle mover's message.
- (2) Drafts and distributes the ACS Program announcement to the FA51 officer population and conducts a competitive selection board in support of the PCS move cycles. Staffs the program announcement and selection board's Order of Merit List (OML) through the Army DACM Office for final approval prior to release.
- (3) Coordinates personnel issues with the U.S. Army Student Detachment (USASD) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.
- (4) Maintains ACS students' program data in the AERS.
- (5) Explains, obtains signature and maintains a Memorandum for Record that outlines duties and responsibilities for any FA51 Officer pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. Follow-up with FA51 Officers pursuing PhD degrees is necessary to ensure academic timelines are met and mitigate unexpected academic tuition costs.

c. Army DACM Office.

- (1) Provides oversight of the ACS Program.
- (2) Appoints ACS Program Managers (PMs) from the Army DACM Office to administer and oversee the program.

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- (3) Establishes ACS Program policies and procedures.
 - (4) Coordinates with AMB for additional marketing and promotion of the ACS Program to the FA51 Officer population, in complement to AMB's official announcement.
 - (5) Identifies and submits program funding requirements.
 - (6) Provides oversight and execution of program funding.
 - (7) Coordinates budget and tuition with AEPB and AMB.
 - (8) Drafts and posts the ACS Program announcement for 51C NCOs and promotes the program to 51C NCO population.
 - (9) Staffs the 51C NCO OML to the DACM for approval. The DACM is the final selection approval authority for the program.
 - (10) Assists USASD and/or AMB with student personnel issues.
 - (11) Initiates the establishment, control and execution of training program for 51C NCOs through a review of the proposed program and validation of each 51C NCO's academic progress through the DA Form 2125 (Report to Training Agency).
- d. USASD. Provides command and control of administrative and pay-related matters of all assigned ACS students, including issues concerning TRICARE. ACS students remain assigned to the USASD while stationed at their academic institution.
- e. FA51 Officers and 51NCOs.
- (1) Meets all eligibility requirements as outlined in the program announcement and reference 1.c (HRC Fully Funded Graduate Programs Policy and Procedures) prior to the closing date of the announcement.
 - (2) Completes and submits the ACS packet in accordance with requirements set forth in the program announcement, reference 1.c, and this ACS Policy.
 - (3) Identifies a primary and at least one alternate institution to attend. FA51 Officers and 51C NCOs must select the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) as their primary or alternate institution. 51C NCOs who select NPS as their primary institution are not required to list an alternate institution. Please see paragraph 8.b of this policy for more information about the degree programs offered at NPS to FA51 officers.
 - (4) Upon receipt of assignment instructions, visits the USASD website (<https://armyeitaas.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/TR-CIMT-LTB-USASD>) for in-processing information, informs USASD of placement in the ACS Program and planned arrival date at the institution, and reviews reference 1.c.

(5) Selects courses from the approved program of study which underpins an acquisition, business or technical function. When planned courses are cancelled or become unavailable, provides appropriate substitute classes to HRC no later than 60 days prior to the expected course start. Failure to provide substitute classes prior to course start may be grounds for removal from the program; the DACM Office may require the student to reimburse tuition and fees to the federal government.

(6) Maintains a minimum grade of "B" in all courses. Two withdrawals, failures or incompletes (or combination thereof) from ACS Program funded course(s) may result in removal from the program and/or reimbursement of tuition and fees.

6. Application Eligibility. To be considered for the program, Soldiers must meet all the following eligibility requirements at the time of application submission:

a. All Applicants.

(1) At a minimum, possess a Secret security clearance.

(2) Must have a competitive performance file, demonstrated scholastic aptitude and positive career potential. Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in ACS Program announcement and the requirements in paragraph 6.b or 6.c (whichever is applicable) at the time of application.

(3) Completed baccalaureate degree with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.5. Officers with a GPA less than 2.5 may request a waiver through HRC.

(4) Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are not required to be submitted with the ACS packet; however, these tests may be required by specific colleges or universities for admission and enrollment purposes.

(5) Acceptance into a full-time, resident graduate program which has no prerequisites. If prerequisites are needed, Soldiers must complete them before entering the ACS program.

b. FA51 Officers.

(1) Have no more than 17 years of active federal service prior to the start of schooling. Officers must be able to fulfill the Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) that will be incurred through their funded participation in the ACS Program. Participants incur an ADSO of three days for every one day spent in graduate school. The entire schooling period counts toward the ADSO, to include weekends, holidays, leave taken during school, etc. Officers incur an ADSO regardless of whether they graduate, in accordance with reference 1.d (AR 350-100).

(2) Have demonstrated potential for future military service. Officers must not be at risk or potentially at risk for promotion to the next higher grade.

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(3) Officers who already possess a master's degree may be selected to pursue a second master's degree, if approved by the DACM. Preference will be given to officers without an acquisition-relevant master's degree.

(4) Officers must complete their degrees within 18 months for a master's or 36 months for a PhD degree. Waivers will not typically be approved to attend programs longer than these established durations.

c. 51C NCOs.

(1) Hold the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSG) through Master Sergeant (MSG). MSGs selected for the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy are ineligible to apply to the ACS Program.

(2) Be able to complete the required ADSO. This eligibility criteria means NCOs must not be close enough to their Retention Control Point (RCP) that they cannot complete their ADSO. Promotion to the next rank to avoid the RCP cannot be assumed. The maximum time in service (TIS) allowed for 51C NCOs at the start of the program is as follows:

(a) Applicants in the rank of SSG, with or without an OML number may not have more than 14 years TIS.

(b) Applicants in the rank of SFC, with or without an OML number may not have more than 18 years TIS.

(3) Obtain Colonel/O-6 command endorsement for approval of early departure (if required) and acknowledgment that a backfill may not be immediately available.

(4) Be Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) certified Professional in Contracting.

(5) Do not already possess a graduate degree in a business or acquisition-related discipline. NCOs with graduate degrees in non-business or non-acquisition disciplines may be considered.

(6) Have at least 24 months of experience as a 51C NCO in a valid acquisition-coded workforce position, immaterial of time in grade. This requirement will be validated using NCO Evaluation Reports (NCOERs). The NCO may submit a supplemental memorandum, signed by the first Colonel/O-6 in their chain of command, if they are awaiting a qualifying NCOER (for example, if their NCOER is not finished yet). The NCO's Solider Talent Profile (STP) will not be the primary source of determining eligibility regarding this requirement.

(7) Degrees must be completed within 18 months after the start of the program. Waivers will not be approved to attend programs longer than 18 months in duration.

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7. Funding. The three annual cost categories are: Low (\$0 to \$28,000); Medium (\$28,001 to \$48,000); and High (\$48,001 to \$60,000). Cost categories are the actual expense for the individual program (tuition and fees), calculated for one complete academic year and reflected on the officer's acceptance/tuition letter. NCOs may only apply for low or medium-cost alternative among the top ranked business schools with approval from the DACM Office.

a. Other costs (such as but not limited to health insurance, parking passes, student identification card, registration, transcripts, graduation, application, deposit, enrollment, cap and gown, recreation, technology, orientation, reservation, prerequisite work, exams, books, thesis and dissertation) will not be paid or reimbursed. They are the sole responsibility of each student.

b. In all cases, students must request in-state tuition rates and attempt to negotiate a reduced tuition agreement with the academic institution that will place it within the cost categories listed above. Please see reference 1.c for tuition negotiation guidance.

c. Students are not authorized to pay any tuition "out of pocket" or make up the difference in tuition to attend a higher cost category academic institution as defined in paragraph 7 above.

d. Program funds will not be provided as reimbursement for monies expended by the student or another organization without prior approval.

8. Scholastic Institutions and Program of Study. The primary focus of education must be an acquisition relevant Master of Science in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) field, a Master of Business Administration (MBA), or a Master of Science in Systems Engineering Management.

a. The School of Choice (SOC) option is highly encouraged. Typically, SOC is applicable to officers who are pursuing an acquisition, business or technical related area of study of particular importance (e.g. STEM) or are accepted by a top-tier academic institution for an acquisition, business or technical degree.

b. FA51 Officers may apply to three NPS programs, while only one NPS Program is open to 51C NCOs:

(1) NPS Master of Science (MS) in Systems Engineering Management (Curriculum 522) provides acquisition officers with a curriculum to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities to lead and manage more effectively through advanced concepts, methodologies and analytical techniques necessary to manage successful programs and projects within complex organizations.

(2) NPS MS in Defense Contract Management (Curriculum 815) provides acquisition officers and 51C NCOs with the skills to serve effectively in systems buying offices, field contracting offices, contract administration offices and contracting policy offices.

(3) NPS MS in Defense Program Management (Curriculum 816) integrates business principles, program leadership and management theory, operations analysis and systems engineering applications. It is tailored to federal government acquisition management and

provides acquisition officers with intensive exposure to the fundamental principles of the acquisition environment.

c. Doctor of Philosophy Opportunity. Army Acquisition Corps provides a path for select FA51 Officers to earn a doctorate degree and become acquisition technical experts. A technical expert supports the Army's scientific and engineering needs across a broad spectrum of assignments. These officers must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in paragraph 6.a and 6.b above and be willing to potentially accept a deferment for consideration by a promotion selection board. Acquisition-relevant doctorate degrees include cyber and networks, computer science and engineering, robotics, physics, aerospace engineering, artificial intelligence/machine learning, autonomous systems, directed energy, material engineering, aeronautical engineering, mechanical engineering, and biotechnology.

d. The ACS Program will fund only accredited institutions for full-time programs. Funding for Doctoral Programs ends after three years in residence from the date of enrollment, in accordance with reference 1.e (AR 621-1).

e. Weekend programs, online courses (to include hybrid courses, in which some traditional face-to-face "seat time" has been replaced by online learning activities) or attendance at a "satellite campus" are not within the intent of AR 621-1 and are not supported by HRC. "Executive" programs will be closely scrutinized for appropriate academic rigor.

9. Program Acceptance. Successful candidates will be notified of their program acceptance via their government enterprise e-mail accounts.

10. Changes to Institutions or Program of Study.

a. Once approved, changes to the institution and/or program of study are not permissible except under extreme circumstances such as new course requirements for degree completion (must be documented), a serious medical issue, a family emergency or a deployment. Exceptions must be justified in writing by the student and sent via e-mail to the HRC POC. Changes to the institution and/or program of study that are not approved in advance may result in the removal of the student from the ACS Program and repayment of tuition and fees.


b. Officers who are accepted and start a NPS program (Curriculum 522, 815 or 816) are expected to stay and graduate from the approved program. They may ask to switch to a different Army DACM-sponsored NPS program if the curriculum proves too rigorous, and their request will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may not be approved. The request requires approval from the DACM Office, as well as concurrence from NPS and AMB.

11. Removal from the ACS Program. Non-attendance at scheduled courses for a period of 30 days or more may result in removal from the ACS Program and subject the student to reimburse tuition and fees. Soldiers who fail to complete their enrolled program will be responsible to reimburse all costs and may receive an adverse AER. Removal from the program will still incur a three-to-one ADSO for the actual time spent in the ACS Program.

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12. For questions about this policy or the ACS Program, please contact the Army DACM Office ACS PM at usarmy.belvoir.usaasc.mbx.dacm-policies@army.mil.

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