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Points Change for Soldiers Seeking NCO Status

By C. Todd Lopez

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Soldiers competing for sergeant in January will no longer have 16 promotion points available to them for completing the online “Structured Self-Development I” course.

Additionally, Soldiers who have not completed SSD-I will not be eligible for promotion to sergeant for the Jan. 1 promotion cycle.

The new rules were laid out in a Nov. 25 MILP-ER message involving structured self-development and semi-centralized promotions. The message says that beginning in December, Soldiers who complete the SSD-I course will not get any points for it. The message also makes it clear that the SSD-I course is a requirement for promotion to sergeant.

Sgt. Maj. Jonathan A. Uribe-Huitron, chief of the Enlisted Promotion Branch at Army Human Resources Command, said SSD-I is a requirement to attain eligibility for promotion recommendation to E-5, and a prerequisite for attendance at the Warrior Leader Course. That requirement is one reason the points awarded for completion of the course were dropped.

“It is a mandatory requirement for all Soldiers to have it, so there is no need for us to award points for a requirement that they need to have,” he said.

In the past, he said, promotion points were offered for SSD-I because it was a correspondence course. Soldiers had earned four points for each week of the four-week course.

Soldiers can still earn points elsewhere to make themselves competitive when they go before a promotion board, Uribe-Huitron said. He explained those Soldiers need to realize that they are competing against peers in their own military occupational specialty, known as an MOS, for promotion.

Competition with MOS

“Their promotion potential will depend on what the rest of their peers are doing in that same MOS,” Uribe-Huitron said. “Soldiers must familiarize themselves with how the Army awards promotion points. This is where non-commissioned officers come into play as they coach and mentor their Soldiers. NCOs, having experienced this process, will have a thorough understanding of how Soldiers can earn more points to become more competitive.”

How many Soldiers can be promoted depends on how many slots within an MOS that the Army needs to fill, Uribe-Huitron said. If the Army needs to fill a lot of empty slots in an MOS at a particular grade, it will set the promotion points requirement low. If it needs to fill fewer slots, the promotion points requirement will be higher.

Other promotion points

Soldiers can earn up to 255 promotion points in military training, Uribe-Huitron said, and that includes weapons qualification and the Army Physical Fitness Test.

They can earn as many as 195 points for awards and decorations. Up to 280 points can be earned for military education, which in the past included completion of SSD-I. They can also earn up to 100 points for civilian education. An additional 30 points may be earned for airborne advantage.

Soldiers also earn 80 promotion points for attending the Warrior Leader Course. They may earn more than that through exceptional performance in the course. Those Soldiers who make the commandant’s list, for instance, will instead earn 92 promotion points. Graduates of the course who earn “Distinguished Honor Graduate” status or “Distinguished Leadership Award” will now receive 104 pts.

While Soldiers will no longer earn points for attending SSD-I, no changes were announced for the points earned by completing SSD-III or SSD-IV. The SSD-V course is still under development, Uribe-Huitron said, and is not available at this time.

Changes to command list integration

Not all promotion-eligible Soldiers have their commander’s recommendation to go before a promotion board. But those Soldiers could still be promoted by being placed on “command list integration,” or CLI.

Soldiers on CLI are on the promotions standing list along with Soldiers who went before a promotion board. But those CLI Soldiers do not appear on the list with all the promotion points they earned. Instead, they are ranked on the list with either 39 points, if they are seeking promotion to sergeant, or 14 points if they are seeking promotion to staff sergeant.

When the Army needs to fill more spots in an MOS than the number of Soldiers sent before a promotion board for sergeant, for instance, it drops the promotion requirement for that MOS to 39. This allows the Army to fill its manning requirements by picking up for promotion all the Soldiers who went before a board, and to then also pick up additional Soldiers for promotion who did not go before the board.

The CLI was recently “automated,” Uribe-Huitron said. He explained the CLI policy was written so that Soldiers could be put on the CLI if they did not go before a board. But if those same Soldiers become non-promotable for some reason, like being barred from enlistment or by failing their physical fitness test, their unit would have to notify Human Resources Command to take them off the CLI. Many units failed to make that notification.

There was a “very substantial” number of Soldiers on CLI that were not actually promotable,” Uribe-Huitron said. “The most notorious reason was for not taking an APFT or for failing an APFT.”

Now, he said, inclusion in CLI is automated. As of Nov. 21 Soldiers who become ineligible for promotion for some reason are automatically taken off CLI.

“It gives us a more accurate number of who we have eligible to fill promotion requirements,” he said.



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