



Noncommissioned officers must comprehend that they play a vital role in the success of the joint operational environment. Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education courses offer NCOs the opportunity to learn how to think critically and creatively as they prepare to serve in a joint environment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Chandler Baker)

Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education

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“The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence (formerly the Sergeants Major Academy) is acknowledged by military and civilian organizations as the world’s premiere institution for the education of noncommissioned officers.”

– *The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence [NCOLCoE] (2024a, para. 7)*

Within the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Leadership Center for Excellence (NCOLCoE), the Division of Curriculum Development (DCD) provides a professional curriculum that is “rigorous, current, relevant, sequential, and progressive” and that “helps educate and develop Soldiers and [NCOs] in support of

lifelong learning” (NCOLCoE, 2024b).

So, after the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC) Troy E. Black asked NCOLCoE to analyze the joint learning continuum to ensure it was sequential and progressive, the DCD team took the lead in identifying gaps in the continuum.

Past

In the early 2000s, command senior enlisted advisors identified gaps in their readiness concerning NCOs in joint assignments. Without formal joint education, NCOs had to become self-directed learners using on-the-job training (OJT) or continuity books to accomplish their duties.

Relying on OJT created an inconsistent learning process as different unified commands (combatant commands) each had different requirements. The lack of a standard joint NCO education created knowledge and skills gaps with their commissioned officer counterparts in joint assignments.

“Service and Unified Command Senior Enlisted Advisors suggest that NCOs, without the benefit of a joint education program, lack the ability to quickly assimilate into and more effectively contribute to their joint organizations.”

– Joint Staff J7 (2000-2001, p. iv)

This revelation provided significant insight into the issues facing senior NCOs coming into joint assignments. These senior NCOs were already great leaders within their respective services, as considered by their joint selection.

The Joint Staff J7 Directorate, responsible for joint education, directed a 2000-2001 study to address command senior enlisted advisors’ concerns. From this study, the Joint Staff J7 Directorate initiated a command senior enlisted advisor capstone course to close the gap in senior NCOs’ joint education.

Present

The Joint Staff J7 Directorate further expanded joint education to address concerns with Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education (SEJPME) “as a pilot in 2007 at the Joint Forces Staff College as part of the National Defense University (NDU). This is a two-week course at NDU” (J. Hernandez, personal communication, May 21, 2024).

In 2010, SEJPME was piloted online to support a larger joint education population. In 2015, Joint Staff J7 piloted SEJPME II to build on SEJPME.

In 2022, the “Senior” was removed, with SEJPME becoming Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education (EJPME) I and II. EJPME I consists of 40 hours of online learning and EJPME II consists of 45 hours, illustrating a sequential joint learning continuum.

The continuum includes:

- EJPME I online learning
- Gateway classroom seminars
- EJPME II online learning
- Keystone classroom seminars.

These four courses provide the framework for enlisted professional development in the joint environment. These courses allow NCOs to learn “how to think” critically and creatively as they prepare to serve in a joint environment.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1805.01C, 2021, established joint learning areas as broad fields of knowledge and joint learning outcomes as overarching desired outcomes for what learners should know and be able to do at the end of the course.

The joint learning areas and outcomes aren’t standardized across the four courses. They change as learners progress through the joint learning continuum.

Future

Under the Directorate of Training and Education (DOT-E), DCD began using the Analysis, Development, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation (ADDIE) model to update the joint learning areas and the entire curriculum in April 2024.

During the analysis, DCD’s working group determined eight joint learning areas and 174 learning outcomes across the joint learning continuum. The working group was able to reorganize them into four areas and 11 outcomes.

In April 2024, Director of DOT-E William R. Ogletree briefed Strategic Command (STRATCOM) CSEL Sergeant Major Howard L. Kreamer on the proposed reorganization. Kreamer gave NCOLCoE’s DOT-E approval to move forward on Black’s behalf.

“EJPME complements the development of credible and innovative enlisted professionals who can think critically and creatively to employ joint leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities in support of national strategies and globally integrated military operations.”

– CJCSI 1805.01C (2021, p. 3)

The DCD working group continues the joint learning continuum analysis by taking a deeper dive into EJPME I and II topics to determine if learning content is sequential and progressive.

The analysis intends to produce a framework for the joint learning continuum, like the NCO Professional Development System (NCOPDS).

The joint operational environment constantly changes to keep ahead of the peer threat posed by China and the near-peer threats of Russia, Iran, and North Korea. This analysis will determine what knowledge and skills gaps exist in the joint learning continuum.

Conclusion

As NCOLCoE’s DCD examines the joint learning continuum’s past, present, and future, a thorough

analysis must be conducted to identify and mitigate any knowledge and skills gaps.

The lack of a standard joint NCO education created a knowledge and skills gap with NCOs' commissioned officer counterparts regarding joint assignments. NCOs must understand and visualize how they are part of the joint operational environment and contribute to the joint forces' success. NCOs must think critically and creatively to learn "how to think" instead of relying on rote memory skills telling them "what to think"

Outcomes-based education transforms learners from

dependent (pedagogy) to self-directed (andragogy). NCOLCoE uses a learner-centric methodology through the Army's Experiential Learning Model.

The joint learning continuum must stay ahead of peer and near-peer threats and create NCOs who know "how to think." What NCOs have in common is the ability to solve problems and think creatively and tactically.

This strength will become the framework for future EJPME as the joint operational environment expands beyond 2030. ■

References

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