



From the Desk of the Field Artillery CSM

Future of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System

What to Expect with NCOPDS *How we got to this point*

Army Executive Order (EXORD) 236-15 directed the Army-wide implementation of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) from the NCO Education System during the last quarter of FY17. The NCOPDS initiatives involved renaming the Warrior Leader Course to the Basic Leader Course and adding a Master Leader Course for noncommissioned officers selected for promotion to Master Sergeant. Subsequent fragmentary orders added the implementation of Deferment policy updates, the Select, Train, Educate, and Promote (STEP) policy, the delivery of the Digital Ruck Sack, and enhancing the Army Career Tracker. These directives guided change to the entire NCO professional military education (PME) learning continuum. These changes consist of the creation of the Distributed Leader Courses (DLC), which is the complete overhaul of the legacy Structured Self-Development-(SSD) program, linking the DLC to the resident NCO PME, and ensuring the entire learning continuum is sequentially and progressively linked.

Structured Self Development (SSD) to Distributed Leader Course(DLC)

In November 2016, the TRADOC CSM directed the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) to redesign and rebrand the legacy SSD and create the Distributed Leader Course (DLC). The redesigned DLC links self-development education with the resident professional military education (PME) courseware and is a prerequisite for the next level of resident NCO PME. The USASMA is currently in the initial phase of redesigning the legacy five levels of structured self-development, which average

80 academic hours of curriculum. The new Distributed Leader Course program will consist of six levels averaging 43 academic hours. The projected delivery of DLC I to the force is June 2018 and DLC II to follow during the month of August 2018. Levels III, IV, V, and VI will activate sequentially in 3 to 4 month increments following August 2018. Soldiers currently enrolled in their requisite level of SSD will remain in those courses until they are completed. Upon full implementation of DLC, HRC will automatically enroll Soldiers into the new course after their selection for promotion.

Basic Leader Course (BLC) Redesign

The training in BLC focuses on basic leadership training; instilling leader skills, knowledge, and experience needed to lead a team/squad size unit; providing the foundation for further training and development; and building functional leadership attributes and competence. The current BLC program of instruction includes 30 lessons, 9 assessments, and 3 multiple-choice examinations. The USASMA is conducting the content validation of the redesigned BLC with a target completion date of March 2018. The goal of delivering the redesigned BLC is 14 June 2018. BLC will remain a 22-day, non-live-in course consisting of 169 hours. The BLC redesign will have 22 lessons, 5 assessments, and no multiple-choice examinations. The new BLC curriculum increases the educational rigor, requires more student collaboration in the classroom, and replaces the multiple-choice examinations with written assessments.

Leader Core Competencies (LCC)

TRADOC determined that there are six Leader Core Competencies (LCC), which all NCOs should

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develop while in PME. The six LCCs are Readiness, Leadership, Training Management, Army and Joint Operations, Program Management, and Communications. These Leader Core Competencies fill the educational gaps from the subjects formally known as common core in the NCOES. All levels of PME in the learning continuum will have the Leader Core Competencies in the curriculum.

Advanced and Senior Leader Course Leader Core Competencies

The redesigned LCCs in the NCOPDS will even provide the proponent Advanced Leader Courses (ALC) and Senior Leader Courses (SLC) with educational curriculum that builds upon the leadership competencies required of all Army NCOs. Using the Leadership Requirements Model (LRM), leaders collaborate and exchange ideas on innovative approaches to leadership and training. Leaders will examine management techniques, analyze Mission Command systems, construct a persuasive essay, create platoon training and leader development plans, and learn basic negotiation principles. As a result, leaders will gain an understanding of the significance of becoming a senior noncommissioned officer and the responsibilities inherent in that role. The USASMA will deliver the 55-hour framework for the ALC and SLC Leader Core Competencies to the proponent schools and centers. The proponent schools and centers will infuse the LCCs into their programs of instruction. The ALC and SLC Leader Core Competencies prepare NCOs for the duties associated with being Staff Sergeants and Sergeants First Class.

CMF 13 Advanced and Senior Leader Course Revision

The changes to NCOPDS provided us an opportunity to relook the effectiveness of our Field Artillery technical and tactical training and how we are delivering the instruction. Our analysis was conducted within the framework of relevancy (is it what a Field Artillery NCO needs at skill level and MOS), currency (is it aligned with current force needs), is it doctrinally correct (does it align with current Field Artillery doc-

trine, is it focused on Unified Land Operations) and is it performance oriented v. classroom/lecture (are we effectively using the time we have available while students are attending the course).

The results, coupled with the implementation of LCCs, determined we could get a whole lot better. The first step is we will go to a six day training week in the Active Component (AC) ALC and SLC courses. This not only gives us more time to get after the critical tasks and implement the LCCs, but it also aligns the AC NCOPDS course length with the Army National Guard Regional Training Institutes (RTIs) NCOPDS courses to better facilitate One Army School System (OASS) attendance. The amount of time students spend at Fort Sill will remain the same for their respective courses, but we will use that time more effectively.

We have undertaken a complete re-write of every ALC and SLC Program of Instruction (POI) in CMF 13, which has not occurred in years. The intent is to eliminate common core not accredited through LCC, remove “good to know tasks” and eliminate outdated, unnecessary instruction. The time gained will be used to conduct more performance oriented training and evaluation (hands-on) for critical tasks and where applicable, more repetition. The new POIs will place emphasis on those tasks that are primary to the training of the Field Artillery NCO at skill level and by MOS and focus efforts on creating effective Field Artillery NCOs through repetition, reinforcing expertise of the appropriate tasks to ensure students have mastered the application and theory of each. Our end state is not to produce mere graduates of ALC and SLC, but to create validated, competent Section Chiefs and Platoon Sergeants capable of training, certifying and qualifying their section or platoon on METL tasks and are able to execute their craft in the Decisive Action environment.

We will begin to implement these new POIs in the near future, with a target of complete implementation across all ALC and SLC courses no later than 3rd Quarter, FY18. I expect there may be a higher attrition rate for academic failure in the initial stages, due

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to the amount of rigor we will inject. Our NCOs must understand that we will expect more from them, so they should be prepared.

Master Leader Course (MLC)

As of October 1 2017, USASMA delivered and implemented the resident Master Leader Course (MLC). The purpose of the MLC is to prepare selected senior noncommissioned officers for positions of greater responsibility throughout the Army and Department of Defense, utilizing a synchronous instructional strategy. The course develops the professional skills and competencies required of Master Sergeants in the 21st century, accomplished in a rigorous learning environment. The course serves to challenge and educate selected Sergeants First Class in the areas of professional writing, communication skills, public speaking, critical thinking, organizational and command leadership, management skills, joint and operational level of war fighting, discipline, readiness, health, and administrative requirements. Additionally, MLC students cover topics like national security, Joint Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIM) and strategic thinking. Ten NCO Academies currently deliver

the resident MLC. Starting in November 2017, the USASMA will start the instructional delivery validation of a non-resident version of the Master Leader Course (MLCNR). HRC will enroll eligible Soldiers into the MLC and MLCNR courses, based on the Soldier's selection for promotion to Master Sergeant. Current projections have the non-resident course coming online on or about May 2018.

With the exception of four levels of DLC, the USASMA expects to deliver all NCO PME redesigns to the Army by 1 October 2018. By putting the "Leadership" back into the NCO PME courses, the intent of the learning continuum redesign is to revolutionize NCO professional leader development that will better educate and train noncommissioned officers to become agile, adaptive, creative, innovative, critical thinking and problem solving leaders who will meet the challenges of an ever changing and complex operating environment.

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