
January 2020

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Programs Are
Accredited, but
Additional Information
is Needed to Assess
Effectiveness

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-323](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD relies on PME and JPME to prepare its military personnel throughout their careers for the intellectual demands of complex contingencies and major conflicts that typically involve more than a single military service. However, according to DOD's summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, PME "has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity."

The Conference Report accompanying the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 included a provision for GAO to evaluate DOD PME and JPME institutions. This report examines the extent to which (1) the military services' PME programs have met civilian and JPME accreditation requirements, (2) OSD has assessed the effectiveness of the military services' PME programs, and (3) USD (Comptroller) has monitored the military services' PME program budget data. GAO analyzed applicable laws and policy, analyzed accreditation and budget information, and interviewed officials from the military services' intermediate- and senior-level resident PME programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that DOD take steps to determine its ability to assign Navy officers to PME programs of other services, implement performance measures – including tracking of costs, and issue guidance for service reporting of PME budget request data. DOD

View [GAO-20-323](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell, 202-512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

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Programs Are Accredited, but Additional Information Is Needed to Assess Effectiveness

What GAO Found

All of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level officer Professional Military Education (PME) programs have met civilian and met or partially met Joint PME (JPME) accreditation requirements. However, not all of the military services' PME programs met the JPME seminar student mix requirement of at least one student from the nonhost military department. For example, the Army's intermediate-level PME program did not meet its Sea Service (i.e., Navy, Marine Corps, and, in certain instances, Coast Guard) requirement (see table). GAO's analysis found that the Navy could have assigned officers to Air Force and Army programs while not harming participation in its own seminars. Without taking steps to improve Sea Service participation, students lose opportunities to interact with students from other military departments, which officials have identified as critical to joint acculturation.

Air Force and Army Professional Military Education (PME) Intermediate-level Seminars without Required Sea Service Representation, Academic Years 2016-2018

PME program	Total		Total number of military students in seminars	Military students in seminars without required Sea Service representation
	number of seminars	Seminars without required Sea Service representation		
Air Command and Staff College	120	29 24%	1,191	288 24%
Army's Command and General Staff College	216	48 22%	3,021	664 22%
Total	336	77 --	4,212	952 --

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | [GAO-20-323](#)

Note: For the purposes of Joint Professional Military Education, Navy, Marine Corps, and, in certain instances, Coast Guard officers can count towards meeting the Sea Service seminar student mix requirement.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has taken steps to improve its oversight of the military services' PME programs, but is limited in its ability to assess their effectiveness. Department of Defense (DOD) guidance states that performance measurement is a means of evaluating efficiency, effectiveness, and results and that a balanced performance measurement scorecard includes nonfinancial and financial measures such as quality and costs. While OSD is in the process of developing some performance measures, it is not planning to require the military services to track program costs as a performance measure. Implementing its planned measures and establishing costs as a performance measure will better position OSD to assess the effectiveness of PME programs.

The Under Secretary of Defense (USD) (Comptroller's) ability to monitor the military services' PME programs is limited by incomplete and inconsistent reporting of service budget request data. DOD guidance does not require the Marine Corps to submit an annual budget request data exhibit for its senior-level PME program and existing guidance for programs that are reported does not specify how to uniformly account for costs. Without complete and uniform budget request data, USD(Comptroller) is challenged in monitoring these programs.

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Abbreviations

CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction
DOD	Department of Defense
DASD(FE&T)	Deputy Assistance Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
OPMEP	Officer Professional Military Education Policy
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PAJE	Process for the Accreditation of Joint Education
PME	Professional Military Education
USD(Comptroller)	Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)
OUSD(P&R)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

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February 13, 2020

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jackie Speier
Chairwoman
The Honorable Trent Kelly
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
Military Personnel Subcommittee
House of Representatives

The Department of Defense (DOD) relies on professional military education (PME) and joint professional military education (JPME) to prepare its military personnel, throughout their careers, for the intellectual demands of complex contingencies and major conflicts that typically involve more than a single military service. The military services are responsible for overseeing PME at their respective staff and war colleges, and for educating their personnel in service-specific core competencies. For example, the Air Force focuses on air and space warfare, while the Marine Corps focuses on maneuver warfare. JPME, a subset of PME overseen by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Chairman), prepares leaders from all four military services to operate as a joint force, such as at a combatant command. In practice, at the in-residence military service colleges, JPME is embedded within the PME curricula. For purposes of this report, we generally refer to each of these programs collectively as the military services' PME programs, unless otherwise noted. In 2018, about 2,500 military personnel attended in-residence

military service PME and JPME programs, each of which generally last about 10 months.

However, according to DOD's summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, PME "has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity."¹ The Conference Report accompanying the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 included a provision for us to evaluate DOD PME and JPME programs.² In addition, the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Military Personnel requested we review DOD's PME and JPME accreditation processes and performance measures, among other areas.³ In this report, we assess the extent to which (1) the military services' PME programs have met civilian and JPME accreditation requirements, (2) the Office of the Secretary of Defense has assessed the effectiveness of the military services' PME programs, and (3) the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) has monitored the military services' PME program budgets. Additionally, in appendix I we describe the status of the Joint Special Operational University (JSOU) pursuing additional civilian and JPME accreditation.

We focused our review on officer in-residence intermediate- and senior-level military service PME programs. Intermediate- and senior-level PME and JPME programs are designed for officers at pay grades O-4 through O-6.⁴ These programs include content on warfighting and leader development; joint planning, doctrine, and joint force requirements; national security and theater strategy; and civil-military relations.

¹Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Jan. 19, 2018). According to DOD information, the National Defense Strategy outlines how DOD will contribute to achieving the President's National Security Strategy objectives in order to maintain security and prosperity worldwide.

²See H.R. Rep. No. 115-874, at 961 (2019).

³PME programs within our scope are accredited by regional civilian accreditation bodies in order to grant master's degrees. JPME programs are accredited by the Joint Staff through a process called the Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE).

⁴An O-4 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a major; in the Navy, an O-4 is a lieutenant commander. An O-5 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a lieutenant colonel; in the Navy, an O-5 is a commander. An O-6 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a colonel; in the Navy, an O-6 is a captain.

For our first objective, we reviewed applicable civilian accreditation regulations established by the Department of Education and how the standards established by civilian accreditation bodies are in compliance with those regulations. In addition, we reviewed and analyzed the most recent civilian accreditation results. We also analyzed and compared the military services' student, faculty, and seminar data against Joint Staff accreditation requirements for awarding JPME credit.⁵ Based on responses to data reliability questionnaires from the Joint Staff and the military services, as well as our examination of the data, we determined that the student and seminar data for academic years 2014 – 2018 was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of understanding service representation in the seminars. We met with officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD(P&R)), the Joint Staff, each of the military services, and civilian accreditation officials to discuss civilian and Joint Staff accreditation requirements and challenges to meeting these requirements.

For our second objective, we reviewed and analyzed applicable DOD policies and compared them to relevant federal statutes and DOD guidance concerning PME and JPME. Where appropriate, we also considered select training and development leading practices (which include education), *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, and the DOD Financial Management Regulation to assess OUSD(P&R) oversight of these programs.⁶ We also met with officials from OUSD(P&R), the Joint Staff, and each of the military services to discuss the Office of the Secretary of Defense's (OSD) PME roles and responsibilities.

For our third objective, we analyzed relevant statutes and applicable sections of DOD's Financial Management Regulation.⁷ Further, we analyzed the military services' budget request data for fiscal years 2014 – 2020 submitted in support of DOD's annual budget request to assess the data for completeness and uniformity. We also met with officials from the

⁵A seminar refers to a cohort of students that, for the most part, collectively attend the same sequence of PME and JPME courses for the duration of the program.

⁶GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2004); GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 2014); and Department of Defense 7000.14-R, *Financial Management Regulation*, vol. 4, ch. 19, *Managerial Cost Accounting* (December 2017).

⁷Department of Defense 7000.14-R, *Financial Management Regulation*, vol. 2B, ch. 19 (September 2008).

Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense(Comptroller), OUSD(P&R), the Joint Staff, and each of the military services to discuss monitoring of the military services' PME program budget request data.

To address all three reporting objectives, we conducted site visits and interviewed officials at each of the following military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME and JPME programs:

- College of Naval Command and Staff, Newport, Rhode Island;
- College of Naval Warfare, Newport, Rhode Island;
- Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama;
- Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama;
- Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia;
- Marine Corp War College, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia;
- Army's Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and
- Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

In addition, to describe the status of the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) pursuing additional accreditation, we reviewed the most recent JSOU accreditation report and civilian accreditation standards. We also met with JSOU and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict officials to determine what actions, if any, JSOU had taken towards additional accreditation. This information is presented in appendix I of this report.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2018 to January 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Overview of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and Relevant PME Statutes

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, in part, was intended to improve joint officer management policies, otherwise enhance the effectiveness of military operations, and improve DOD's management and administration.⁸ With the Goldwater-Nichols Act, Congress also intended to, consistent with the congressional declaration of policy in section 2 of the National Security Act of 1947 and among other things, reorganize DOD and strengthen civilian authority in DOD.⁹ The Goldwater-Nichols Act, as amended, also:

- established various joint officer management policies, including requiring JPME for certain joint assignments and promotion categories;
- required officers to successfully complete an appropriate program at a JPME school, among other things, to be designated as joint qualified—a prerequisite for promotion to brigadier general or rear admiral lower half rank;¹⁰ and
- required the Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to periodically review and revise the curriculum of JPME schools to enhance the education and training of officers in joint matters.¹¹

⁸Pub. L. No. 99-433, § 3(7)-(8) (1986) (codified at 10 U.S.C. § 111 note (Goldwater-Nichols Act)).

⁹Pub. L. No. 99-433, § 3(1) (1986) (codified at 10 U.S.C. § 111 note). Section 2 of the National Security Act of 1947, Public Law 80-253, is codified, as amended, at 50 U.S.C. § 3002

¹⁰Pub. L. No. 99-433, § 401(a) (1986) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 661). The Goldwater-Nichols Act referred to officers in the "joint specialty" as those particularly trained in, and oriented toward, joint matters. As codified and amended at 10 U.S.C. § 661(a), such officers are today identified or designated as joint qualified officers.

¹¹Pub. L. No. 99-433, § 401(a) (1986) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 2152(b)).

In addition, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 required the Secretary of Defense to implement a comprehensive framework for officer JPME.¹²

Overview of the Intermediate- and Senior-level Officer PME Continuum, Programs and Locations

The PME continuum consists of five military educational levels that correspond to the five phases of a military officer's career: (1) precommissioning, (2) primary, (3) intermediate, (4) senior, and (5) general/flag officer. As figure 1 indicates, intermediate- and senior-level PME and JPME programs—the focus of our review—are designed for officers at pay grades O-4 through O-6.

¹²Pub. L. No. 108-375, § 532(a) (2004) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 2152(a)). Further, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 amended title 10, U.S. Code, to add a new chapter 107, "Professional Military Education." Chapter 107, as amended, contains, among other things, general requirements for officer PME and JPME, a definition of JPME, and a definition of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level schools that provide PME and JPME.

Figure 1: DOD Professional Military Education Continuum for Intermediate- and Senior-level Officers

5	General/Flag Officer
4	Senior Who attends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior level officers in pay grades O-5 and O-6 Professional Military Education (PME) focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on national security strategy, theater strategy and campaigning, civil-military relations, joint planning processes and systems, and joint interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities and integration. Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Phase II^a focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on the operational and strategic levels of war. Required elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> national security strategy theater strategy and campaigning joint planning processes and systems joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities and the integration of those capabilities (as well as subjects specified in JPME Phase I)
3	Intermediate Who attends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate level officers in pay grades O-4 (senior level officers in pay grades O-5 and O-6 can attend JPME Phase I) PME focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on warfighting and leader development within the context of the operational art. Expands understanding of joint force deployment and employment at the operational and tactical levels of war, as well as knowledge of joint and military service perspectives. Also, introduces joint plans, national military strategy, joint doctrine, joint command and control, and joint force requirements. JPME Phase I^a focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on tactical and operational levels of war. Required elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> national military strategy joint planning at all levels of war joint doctrine joint command and control joint force and joint requirements development operational contract support
2	Primary
1	Precommissioning

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense policy. | GAO-20-323

Note: An O-4 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a major; in the Navy, an O-4 is a lieutenant commander. An O-5 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a lieutenant colonel; in the Navy, an O-5 is a commander. An O-6 pay grade in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps is a colonel; in the Navy, an O-6 is a captain.

^aDOD is required by 10 U.S.C. §§ 2154 – 55 to include these elements in JPME.

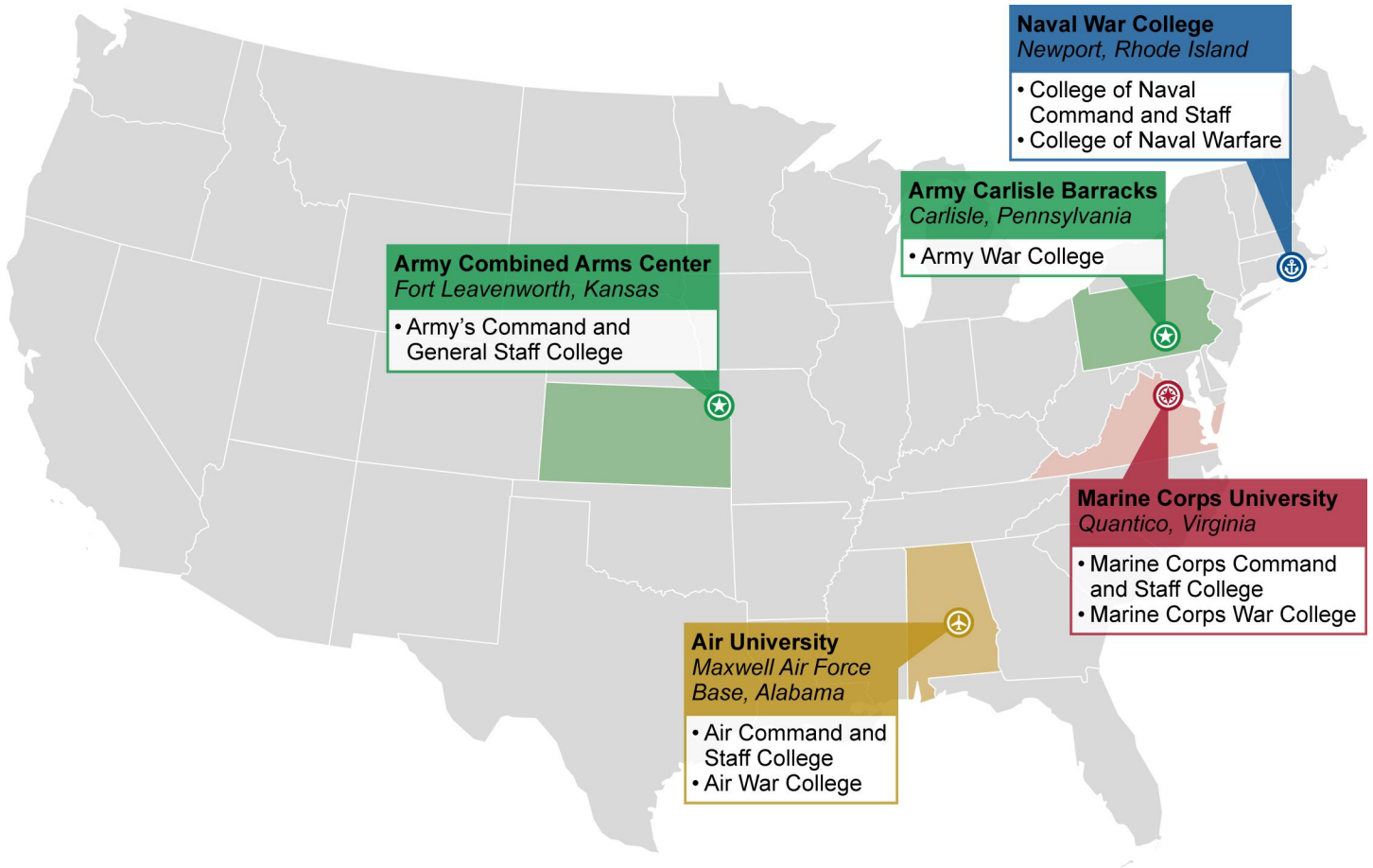
As Identified in figure 2 below, the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs tailor curricula according to their respective

services' needs. For example, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps PME programs focus on land, maritime, and maneuver warfare, respectively. Further, the Chairman's instruction concerning officer PME and JPME (hereinafter referred to as the Officer Professional Military Education Policy, or "OPMEP") requires that JPME be integrated across a diverse array of academic topics, including history and political science, and, where appropriate, be offered in conjunction with PME.¹³ Collectively, PME and JPME prepare officers, throughout their careers, to increase their knowledge and develop the necessary skills to operate in joint environments, such as a combatant command. PME and JPME are also offered through distance learning and satellite education programs for non-resident students.¹⁴

¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01E, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy*, (May 29, 2015). The Chairman issued the first version of the OPMEP in 1996, replacing a 1993 Chairman's manual on military education policy.

¹⁴CJCSI 1800.01E.

Figure 2: Location of the Military Services' Intermediate- and Senior-level Colleges that Provide Professional Military Education and Joint Professional Military Education



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-20-323

Office of the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Military Service PME and JPME Oversight Responsibilities

The OSD, Chairman, and military services are responsible for overseeing the services' PME and JPME programs.

- **OSD:** Within OSD, the Secretary of Defense has delegated responsibility for, among other things, military readiness, total force management, and military and civilian personnel training to the Under

Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.¹⁵ Under DOD Directive 5124.02 the Under Secretary is responsible for, among other things, developing education policies, plans, and programs for the education of all DOD personnel, including PME and JPME programs.¹⁶ Within OUSD(P&R), the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training (DASD(FE&T)) was established in 2015. The DASD(FE&T) is responsible for developing policies, plans, programs, budgets, and other activities necessary to develop, guide, measure, implement, assess, and oversee all aspects of education and training for military personnel following basic officer and enlisted training, which includes PME and JPME programs.¹⁷

The USD(Comptroller) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on budgetary and financial matters. The USD(Comptroller) focuses on budgetary formulation and execution; financial management and oversight; and accounting policy; among other things. The USD(Comptroller), among other things, directs the formulation and presentation of DOD budgets; and establishes and supervises the execution of uniform DOD policies, principles, and procedures, including terminologies and classifications, as necessary for certain budgetary and financial matters.¹⁸

- **Chairman:** With the advice and assistance of the Chairman, the Secretary of Defense periodically reviews and revises the JPME curriculum to enhance the education and training of officers in joint matters.¹⁹ The OPMEP outlines the Chairman's roles and responsibilities as they relate to PME and JPME. According to the OPMEP, the Chairman formulates policies for coordinating military education and advises and assists the Secretary of Defense through

¹⁵The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 established the position of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and assigned the under secretary duties and authority to exercise such powers as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. Pub. L. No. 103-160, § 903(a) (1993) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 136(a)-(b)).

¹⁶DOD Directive 5124.02, *Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))* (June 23, 2008).

¹⁷Deputy Chief Management Officer Memorandum, *Implementation Plan for the Reorganization of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness* (Oct. 29, 2015).

¹⁸DOD Directive 5118.03, *Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Defense (USD(C)/CFO* (Apr. 20, 2012).

¹⁹10 U.S.C. § 2152(b).

the designation and certification/accreditation of JPME. The Chairman accredits military service programs through periodic Process for the Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE) reviews. Further, the Joint Staff Directorate for Joint Force Development is responsible for, among other things, reviewing the Chairman's PME policies, overseeing the Military Education Coordination Council, and coordinating PAJE reviews.²⁰

- **Military services:** The military services provide PME to develop officers with expertise and knowledge appropriate to their grade, branch, and occupational specialty. Each military service is responsible for funding, developing curriculum for, and administering their respective PME programs. In addition, for programs accredited to award JPME, each military service is responsible for meeting the Chairman's PAJE accreditation requirements and providing qualified military students and faculty to the other military services' PME programs in accordance with the OPMEP. Membership on PAJE teams, which accredit military services' PME programs, will be tailored to provide the appropriate balance of expertise in JPME learning areas, objectives, criteria, and standards.²¹

²⁰The Military Education Coordination Council is an advisory body to the Director, Joint Staff on joint education issues, and consists of council principals and a supporting working group. The purpose of the Military Education Coordination Council is to address joint scholarship and key educational issues of interest to the joint education community, promote cooperation and collaboration among its member universities and colleges, and coordinate joint education initiatives. Council principal members include the Joint Staff Director for Joint Force Development; presidents, commandants, and directors of the joint and military services' colleges; and the heads of other JPME-accredited programs. The council working group, which is chaired by the Joint Staff Deputy Director for Joint Force Development, is comprised of dean- and O-6-level representatives of the council principals.

²¹CJCSI 1800.01E.

The Military Services' PME Programs Are Accredited, but Not All Programs Met the JPME Seminar Student Mix Accreditation Requirement

The Military Services' Intermediate- and Senior-level PME Programs Are Accredited to Award Master's Degrees

All of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs are accredited to award master's degrees. Each program undergoes a Department of Education-governed civilian accreditation process generally every 10 years, depending on the accreditor and the program. Civilian accreditation for the military services' PME programs occurs at the institution level and includes multiple programs. For example, the civilian accreditation of Marine Corps University includes the Marine Corps' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs, as well as other programs such as its School for Advanced Warfighting. According to PME program and civilian accreditation officials, the civilian accreditation process starts with the institution conducting a detailed self-evaluation of its performance and preparing and providing a self-evaluation report to the accreditation officials. This is followed by a site visit by the accreditation officials and a report describing the institution's compliance with applicable academic quality standards. The accreditation process concludes with the accreditor's decision on the institution's accreditation status. Table 1 shows when each of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME program was last accredited (at the institutional-level) for civilian accreditation.

Table 1: Date of Most Recent Accreditation for the Military Services' Intermediate- and Senior-level Professional Military Education (PME) Programs

Military service PME program	Civilian accreditation body	Accreditation date (month/year)
Army's Command and General Staff College	Higher Learning Commission	May 2016
Army War College	Middle States Commission on Higher Education	March 2019
Naval War College ^a	New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ^d	April 2015
Marine Corps University ^b	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	December 2015
Air University ^c	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	December 2009

Source: GAO analysis of information from civilian accreditation reports. | GAO-20-323

Note: Each program undergoes a Department of Education-governed civilian accreditation process at least once every 10 years.

^aU.S. Naval War College includes the College of Naval Command and Staff (intermediate-level) and the College of Naval Warfare (senior-level).

^bMarine Corps University includes the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (intermediate-level) and the Marine Corps War College (senior-level).

^cAir University includes the Air Command and Staff College (intermediate-level) and the Air War College (senior-level).

^dThe New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Commission on Institutions of Higher Education changed its name and is now referred to as the New England Commission of Higher Education.

Accreditation bodies assess academic quality by applying and enforcing standards in, generally, the following areas required by the Department of Education: (1) success with respect to student achievement; (2) curricula; (3) faculty; (4) facilities, equipment, and supplies; (5) fiscal and administrative capacity; (6) student support services; (7) recruiting and admissions practices; (8) measures of program length and objectives of the degrees or credentials offered; (9) record of student complaints received by, or available to, the accreditation body; and (10) record of compliance with certain federal student loan program responsibilities.²²

Within these areas, civilian accreditation bodies develop their own accreditation standards, which can vary (See table 2). The military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs are assessed against the applicable accreditation standards to enable the PME programs to award master's degrees.

²²20 U.S.C. § 1099b(a)(5).

Table 2: Civilian Accreditation Standards

Civilian accreditor	Civilian accreditation standards
Higher Learning Commission	Criterion 1: Mission Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement Criterion 5: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness
Middle States Commission on Higher Education Accreditation	Standard I: Mission and Goals Standard II: Ethics and Integrity Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Commission on Institutions of Higher Education	Standard 1: Mission and Purposes Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation Standard 3: Organization and Governance Standard 4: The Academic Program Standard 5: Students Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship Standard 7: Institutional Resources Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness Standard 9: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure
The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	Section 1: The Principle of Integrity Section 2: Mission Section 3: Basic Eligibility Standards Section 4: Governing Board Section 5: Administration and Organization Section 6: Faculty Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Section 8: Student Achievement Section 9: Educational Program Structure and Content Section 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices Section 11: Library and Learning/Information Resources Section 12: Academic and Student Support Services Section 13: Financial and Physical Resources Section 14: Transparency and Institutional Representation

Source: GAO analysis of information from civilian accreditation standards. | GAO-20-323

There is no Chairman or OSD requirement for the military services' PME programs to have civilian accreditation status, but officials reported several benefits related to civilian accreditation. Specifically, DOD and

civilian accreditation officials stated that civilian accreditation provides additional assurance from a recognized external authority that the military services' PME programs are meeting educational standards required of DOD and non-DOD programs alike. In addition, we previously reported that the U.S. accreditation system's use of peer review offers the relevant expertise to assess academic quality and provides institutions with feedback for improvement as a key strength of the system.²³ Furthermore, DOD officials said that the ability to award master's degrees from an accredited program helps the programs attract and retain high-quality faculty.

The Military Services' Intermediate- and Senior-level PME Programs Are Accredited to Award JPME Credit, but Not All Programs Met the Seminar Student Mix Requirement

All Military Service Intermediate- and Senior-level PME Programs Are Accredited to Award JPME Credit

All of the military services' PME programs have been accredited by the Chairman to award JPME credit. The OPMEP outlines the JPME program accreditation requirements and processes that are to occur at least every 6 years. DOD's process for accrediting the military services' JPME programs is through the Chairman's PAJE. The PAJE is based on accepted civilian accreditation standards and practices. According to the OPMEP, the PAJE serves three purposes: (1) oversight, (2) assessment, and (3) improvement. Once JPME programs are initially accredited, accreditation is reaffirmed through subsequent PAJEs every 6 years.²⁴ In advance of a PAJE accreditation, the military service PME program submits an OPMEP-required self-assessment, which the PAJE team reviews prior to conducting the on-site accreditation. The PAJE team prepares a report on its findings, and includes a full, conditional, or no accreditation determination.

PME programs receiving a conditional accreditation or reaffirmation must demonstrate improvements in particular areas within a specific timeframe

²³GAO, *Higher Education: Expert Views of U.S. Accreditation*, [GAO-18-5](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 22, 2017).

²⁴To conduct these accreditations, the Joint Staff Directorate for Joint Force Development forms a PAJE team consisting of education subject matter experts from OSD, the Joint Staff, and the military services.

in order maintain their accreditation. Any program that fails to achieve accreditation, reaffirmation, or conditional accreditation/reaffirmation is no longer a JPME provider. According to the OPMEP, accreditation or reaffirmation is awarded when programs are judged satisfactory overall and have no significant weaknesses.²⁵ Table 3 shows the date of the most recent JPME accreditation for each of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs.

Table 3: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Most Recent Accreditation of the Military Services' Professional Military Education (PME) Programs that Offer Joint Professional Military Education

Military service PME program	Most recent accreditation (month/year)
Intermediate-level	
Army's Command and General Staff College	February 2014
College of Naval Command and Staff	November 2015
Marine Corps Command and Staff College	September 2014
Air Command and Staff College	January 2014
Senior-level	
Army War College	September 2015
College of Naval Warfare	May 2015
Marine Corps War College	July 2018
Air War College	October 2014

Source: GAO analysis of information from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff PME accreditation reports. | GAO-20-323

Notes: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01E outlines the Joint PME program accreditation requirements and processes that are to occur at least every 6 years.

Additionally, the military services' PME programs have (1) met or partially met all of the required joint learning areas, such as Joint command and control; and (2) met or partially met all required common educational standards, such as periodically assessing their JPME programs. First, the OPMEP requires intermediate- and senior-level PME programs to fulfill the appropriate joint learning areas and objectives and common educational standards, and generally have a curriculum that includes the required JPME content prescribed in statute.²⁶ The PAJE review of the joint learning areas and common educational standards included a

²⁵According to Joint Staff officials, the PAJE team uses professional judgement to determine what constitutes a significant weakness in one or more of the standards.

²⁶10 U.S.C. §§ 2151, 2155.

combination of objective and subjective assessment based on peer expertise.

Specifically, the OPMEP requires intermediate-level PME programs to fulfill the following six joint learning areas: (1) National military capabilities strategy, (2) Joint doctrine and concepts, (3) Joint and multinational forces at the operational level of war, (4) Joint planning and execution processes, (5) Joint command and control, and (6) Joint operational leadership and the profession of arms. The OPMEP requires senior-level PME programs to fulfill the following five joint learning areas: (1) National strategies; (2) Joint warfare, theater strategy and campaigning for traditional and irregular warfare in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment; (3) National and joint planning systems and processes for the integration of joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational capabilities; (4) Command, control and coordination; and (5) Strategic leadership and the profession of arms. According to the most recent Joint Staff PAJE accreditation reports, each of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs fully met or partially met these mandatory joint learning areas. All of the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs met all of these mandatory joint learning areas, with the exception of the Marine Corps intermediate-level PME program which received a partially meets in the joint learning area for joint planning and execution processes.

Second, the OPMEP also requires intermediate- and senior-level PME programs to meet seven common educational standards that the Chairman considers essential in awarding JPME credit. Table 4 describes these seven common educational standards.

Table 4: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Common Educational Standards Required of Intermediate- and Senior-level Professional Military Education Programs to Award Joint Professional Military Education Credit

Common educational standard	Description of standard
Standard 1: Develop Joint Awareness, Perspective, and Attitude	Joint Professional Military Education curriculum should prepare graduates to operate in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment and bring a total force perspective to bear in their tactical, operational, strategic, and critical thinking as well as professional actions. The missions of colleges, as well as their goals, objectives, educational activities, and the mix of students and faculty should reflect joint educational requirements, encourage critical analyses of current and emerging national strategies from a joint perspective, and foster a commitment to joint and interagency cooperation. The leadership, faculty, and students should demonstrate an appropriate commitment to jointness.
Standard 2: Employ Predominately Active and Highly Effective Instructional Methods	Instructional methods should be appropriate to the subject matter and desired level of learning, and should employ active student learning whenever feasible. The goals of the educational offerings are rigorous and challenging, requiring students to engage in critical thinking and active interaction.
Standard 3: Assess Student Achievement	Each college should aggressively assess its students' performance. Educational goals and objectives should be clearly stated, and students' performance should be measured against defined standards by direct and indirect assessment tools to identify whether desired educational outcomes are being achieved.
Standard 4: Assess Program Effectiveness	Schools and colleges should conduct surveys of students, graduates, and their supervisors to determine the educational effectiveness of their academic programs. Colleges should ensure leadership periodically assesses the intended educational outcomes of the JPME accredited programs for currency, relevancy, and completeness. Results of these analyses should be used to refine or develop curricula that continue to meet evolving mission requirements in the context of an ever-changing world. Curricula should be the product of a regular, rigorous, and documented review process.
Standard 5: Conduct Quality Faculty Recruitment: Selection, Assignment, and Performance Assessment Program	Faculty should have the academic credentials, teaching skills, and experience in joint and professional matters needed to teach in the colleges. Faculty roles and responsibilities should be clearly documented. Colleges should hold faculty accountable to clearly defined and measurable performance criteria and standards.
Standard 6: Conduct Faculty Development Programs for Improving Instructional Skills and Increasing Subject Matter Mastery	Each college should have a faculty development program to refine teaching skills, improve instructional methods, maintain currency in subject areas, and encourage further professional development. Policy and resources must support the faculty development program.
Standard 7: Provide Institutional Resources to Support the Educational Process	Each institution (that the college is a part of) must have a library or learning resource center, informational resources, financial resources, and physical resources that meet the needs of all users and supports the mission and programs of the institution.

Source: GAO analysis of information from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Officer Professional Military Education Policy, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E (May 29, 2015). | GAO-20-323

The most recent Chairman's accreditation review found that each of the military services' PME programs met or partially met all seven OPMEP-required common educational standards, as shown in table 5. According to Joint Staff officials, to be assessed as "met," the program must meet all of the criteria for that common educational standard. On the other hand, if a program does not meet all of the criteria then it "partially met" the criteria for the accreditation standard. When a PAJE team determines that a program "partially met" a standard, the team suggests corrective actions for the program to consider. Receiving a "partially met" on a particular

standard does not exclude a program from being accredited, as accreditation is based on the program being judged satisfactory overall and having no significant weaknesses.

Table 5: Most Recent Joint Professional Military Education Accreditation Results for the Military Services’ Professional Military Education (PME) Programs

Educational standard	Intermediate-level PME program				Senior-level PME program			
	Army’s Command and General Staff College	College of Naval Command and Staff	Marine Corps Command and Staff College	Air Command and Staff College	Army War College	College of Naval Warfare	Marine Corps War College	Air War College
Standard 1: Develop Joint Awareness, Perspective, and Attitude	Met	Met	Met	Partially Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Standard 2: Employ Predominately Active and Highly Effective Instructional Methods	Partially Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Standard 3: Assess Student Achievement	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Standard 4: Assess Program Effectiveness	Partially Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Standard 5: Conduct Quality Faculty Recruitment: Selection, Assignment, and Performance Assessment Program	Met	Partially Met	Met	Met	Met	Partially Met	Met	Partially Met
Standard 6: Conduct Faculty Development Programs for Improving Instructional Skills and Increasing Subject Matter Mastery	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Standard 7: Provide Institutional Resources to Support the Educational Process	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Partially Met	Met	Met

Source: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff accreditation reports. | GAO-20-323

Notes: Joint Staff officials said in order to meet an accreditation standard, the program must meet all of the criteria for that standard. In order to partially meet an accreditation standard, the program did not meet all of the criteria for that standard.

We identified the following examples of common educational standards that were met or partially met by the military services’ intermediate- and senior-level PME programs during our analysis of the Chairman’s most recent accreditation reports for those programs.

- **Standard 2: Employ Predominantly Active and Highly Effective Instructional Methods** – The PAJE team found that the College of Naval Warfare met this standard during its most recent review in May 2015. This standard states that instructional methods should be appropriate to the subject matter and desired levels of learning, and should employ active student learning whenever feasible. In addition, the standard requires that the goals of the educational offerings be rigorous and challenging, requiring that students engage in critical thinking and active interaction. Specifically, the PAJE team found that the College of Naval Warfare employed a preponderance of active instructional methods to achieve desired learning outcomes. The team found that the effective combination of Socratic discussion, case studies, practical exercises, written assignments, and lectures followed by seminar discussions, engaged students in critical thinking and were appropriate to the desired levels of learning. The PAJE team also found that active student discourse occurred both inside and outside of seminars. Lastly, the team found that the effectiveness of the curriculum in refining critical thinking skills was reflected in both student and alumni surveys.
- **Standard 3: Assess Student Achievement** – The PAJE team found that the Marine Corps Command and Staff College met this standard during its most recent review in September 2014. This standard states that each college should aggressively assess its students' performance, clearly state educational goals and objectives, and measure students' performance against defined standards using direct and indirect assessment tools to identify whether desired educational outcomes are being achieved. Specifically, the PAJE team found that the Marine Corps Command and Staff College clearly identified program outcomes, student learning outcomes, and lesson educational objectives. The PAJE team also found that student assessments were directly linked to student learning outcomes, joint learning areas, and joint learning objectives. Additionally, the team found that results were carefully tracked and used for educational outcome achievement verification, curriculum improvement, and faculty development feedback. Lastly, the PAJE team found that the College used a variety of student assessments—including research papers, exams, staff papers, oral presentations, exercises, practicums, oral defenses, and seminar participation—to provide feedback and verify learning outcome achievement.
- **Standard 4: Assess Program Effectiveness** – The PAJE team found that the Army's Command and General Staff College partially met this standard during its most recent review in February 2014. This standard states that colleges should survey students, graduates, and

their supervisors to determine curricula and educational effectiveness of their academic programs. The standard also states that leadership should periodically assess the intended educational outcomes of programs for currency, relevancy, and completeness, and the results of these analyses should be used to refine or develop curricula that continue to meet evolving mission requirements in the context of an ever-changing world. Specifically, the PAJE team found that there is a robust evaluation and assessment process for the common core courses but that neither the electives nor the Command and General Staff College-level outcomes were assessed. Additionally, the PAJE team found that there did not appear to be a process for evaluating the overall curriculum either directly or indirectly. The PAJE team suggested that the Army's Command and General Staff College develop a capstone evaluation to assess outcomes of its common core curriculum. Army's Command and General Staff College officials told us that in 2016 the college developed a capstone evaluation for its common core curriculum, consisting of an online examination and a faculty member oral examination.

- **Standard 5: Conduct Quality Faculty Recruitment: Selection, Assignment, and Performance Assessment Program** – The PAJE team found that the Air War College partially met this standard during its last review in October 2014. This standard states that faculty should have the academic credentials, teaching skills, and experience in joint and professional matters necessary to teach in the colleges. This standard also states that faculty roles and responsibilities should be clearly documented, and that colleges should hold faculty accountable to clearly defined and measurable performance criteria and standards. Specifically, the PAJE team found that the Air War College did not meet the OPMEP standard for its student-to-faculty ratio, but acknowledged that the college had a plan to meet this requirement by the spring of 2015. The Air War College met the student-to-faculty ratio in academic year 2015. The review also found that delays in hiring presented challenges in maintaining the requisite number of qualified faculty. The PAJE team suggested that the Air War College continue its efforts to reduce the time to complete civilian hiring actions. Air War College officials stated that as part of a wider Air University effort to streamline the civilian hiring process they were able to ameliorate this challenge by making the process more transparent, predictable, and shorter.

Most Military Services Senior-level PME Programs Met the JPME Seminar Student Mix Accreditation Requirement, but Some Intermediate-level Programs Did Not

Most of the military services senior-level PME programs met the OPMEP JPME seminar student mix accreditation requirement, which is part of the develop joint awareness, perspective, and attitude common educational standard (Standard 1) that pertains to joint acculturation. However, not all of the military services' intermediate-level PME programs met the seminar student mix accreditation requirement. The OPMEP requires that each intermediate- and senior-level JPME seminar contain at least one student from each of the two non-host military departments: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy (which includes the Marine Corps), and the Department of the Air Force.²⁷ DOD defines joint acculturation as the process of understanding and appreciating the separate military service cultures resulting in joint attitudes and perspectives, common beliefs, and trust.²⁸

All but one of the military services' senior-level PME programs met the seminar student mix accreditation requirement from academic years 2014 through 2018. During that timeframe there were approximately 300 senior-level seminars, and only one did not meet the requirement. Specifically, during academic year 2017, the Air Force's senior-level PME program lacked sufficient Navy representation for one seminar.

However, not all of the military services' intermediate-level PME programs met the seminar student mix accreditation requirement. Specifically, the Air Force's and the Army's intermediate-level PME programs had less than the required Sea Service representation for 3 years between academic years 2014 and 2018.²⁹ For academic years 2016 and 2018, the Air Force's intermediate-level PME program had less than the OPMEP-required Sea Service representation for about 24 percent of its seminars (totaling 288 students), as shown in table 6 below. During the 3-

²⁷A seminar refers to a cohort of students that, for the most part, collectively attend the same sequence of PME and JPME courses for the duration of the program.

²⁸See Chairman's Guide to Joint Awareness (Standard 1) and Instructional Methods (Standard 2) during a PAJE Review.

²⁹For the purposes of JPME, Navy and Marine Corps officers count toward a Sea Service student requirements. Coast Guard officers may count toward either Sea Service or interagency student requirements at the discretion of the military service or program.

-year timeframe, the Army’s intermediate-level PME program had less than the required Sea Service representation for about 22 percent of its seminars (totaling 664 students).³⁰ On the other hand, the Navy’s and the Marine Corps’ intermediate-level PME programs generally met their respective seminar student mix accreditation requirement for each of the last 5 academic years (2014 – 2018).³¹

Table 6: Air Force and Army Professional Military Education (PME) Intermediate-level Seminars without Required Sea Service Representation, Academic Years 2016-2018

PME program	Total Number of seminars	Seminars without required Sea Service representation		Total Number of military students in seminars	Military students in seminars without required Sea Service representation	
		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Air Command and Staff College	120	29	24%	1,191	288	24%
Army’s Command and General Staff College	216	48	22%	3,021	664	22%
Total	336	77	—	4,212	952	—

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data. | GAO-20-323

Notes: An academic year at the military services in residence PME programs is generally 10 months in length from the fall through the spring of the following year. A seminar refers to a cohort of students that, for the most part, collectively attend the same sequence of PME and Joint Professional Military Education courses for the duration of the program.

According to Navy officials and documentation, the Navy stated that it was unable to provide the other military services’ intermediate-level PME programs with the required numbers of officers during academic years 2016 – 2018 because of competing staffing priorities, such as its forward presence mission. However, we found that the Navy provided sufficient officers to its own intermediate-level PME program (College of Naval Command and Staff) during each of these academic years so that it could have instead assigned the required number of officers to the Air Command and Staff College and the Army’s Command and General Staff College to meet their respective Sea Service requirements. For example, the Navy sent 121 Navy officers to the College of Naval Command and Staff in academic year 2018 for 27 seminars when the Air Command and Staff College and the Army’s Command and General Staff College

³⁰An academic year at the military services’ in-residence PME programs is generally 10 months in length from the fall through the spring of the following year.

³¹In academic years 2014 and 2015, the College of Naval Command and Staff did not meet its requirement for Air Force officers for two (3%) and three (4%) classes, respectively.

needed a cumulative total of 32 officers to meet their OPMEP seminar student mix requirement. As a result, most of the College of Naval Command and Staff's seminars would have only been reduced by one Navy Officer.

Officials from all of the military service PME programs told us that students interacting with students from other military departments is critical for joint acculturation. Officials from the Joint Staff Directorate for Joint Force Development reinforced the importance of the seminar student mix requirement, stating that satisfying the OPMEP common educational standard of developing joint awareness, perspective, and attitude (Standard 1) is dependent on time and intensity of student interaction with students from other military departments. Military service and Joint Staff officials stated it was difficult for Air Force and Army officers to gain a full appreciation of the Navy's contribution to joint military operations when there were no Sea Service students in the seminar. In the situations where a seminar did not have Sea Service representation, Joint Staff officials told us that a decision was made to award students with JPME credit. Furthermore, officials told us that it was decided to not "punish" military service PME programs for not meeting the OPMEP's JPME seminar student mix requirement as military services' programs cannot control the number of in-bound students assigned by the other military services.

Officials from the Air Force's and the Army's intermediate-level PME programs told us that when they are unable to meet the OPMEP seminar student mix requirement, they take steps to compensate for the lack of Sea Service student representation, such as using faculty to provide Sea Service perspectives. Similarly, a 2010 Congressional report noted the value of in-residence officer PME programs because of the acculturation opportunities that they offer.³²

Other than Joint Staff officials requesting that the Navy meet the OPMEP's JPME seminar student mix requirement, no other actions have been taken by the Chairman, OSD, or the Navy to resolve the issue concerning Navy participation in the Air Force's and Army's intermediate-level PME programs. Specifically, according to DASD(FE&T) officials, as of November 2019, OSD has not been involved in addressing the Navy's

³²U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 111th Cong., *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, Comm. Print 111-4 (April 2010).

failure to meet the OPMEP's JPME seminar student mix requirement. Additionally, Joint Staff officials told us that the Chairman cannot direct a Secretary of a military department to comply with provisions of a Chairman's publication.

However, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* state that management should identify, analyze, and respond to risks related to achieving defined objectives. Given that joint acculturation is a key component of intermediate-level PME programs, the lack of action to resolve or mitigate the issues at hand has the potential to negatively affect students' opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop the necessary skills to operate in joint environments. Without DOD taking steps to determine whether the appropriate number of Navy officers can be assigned to intermediate-level PME programs of the Air Force and Army, the officers participating in these programs lack the perspectives of Sea Service participants which diminishes the quality of the educational experience.

Furthermore, neither the Chairman nor OUSD(P&R) has evaluated or approved the mitigation steps, either before or after-the-fact, when a PME program lacks representation to meet the joint acculturation requirement. Although the OPMEP requires that each intermediate- and senior-level JPME seminar contain at least one student from each of the two non-host military departments, the OPMEP does not contain guidance on what PME programs should do when they do not meet this requirement. Developing guidance concerning actions, if any, the military services can take to mitigate JPME seminar student mix shortfalls and still meet the intent of the OPMEP's joint awareness common educational standard could better position DOD and the military services to ensure that DOD's JPME programs are meeting their objectives.

OSD Is Taking Steps to Exercise Oversight of the Military Services' PME Programs, but Its Ability to Assess the Effectiveness of These Programs Is Limited

OSD has had PME and JPME statutory oversight responsibilities for more than 30 years; however, while it has taken some steps to strengthen its oversight, it is not well-positioned to assess the effectiveness of the military services' PME programs. The Goldwater-Nichols Act, as

amended, states that the Secretary of Defense shall, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, periodically review and revise the curriculum of JPME schools, and require that the PME schools periodically review and revise their intermediate- and senior-level PME curriculums to strengthen the focus on joint matters and preparing officers for joint duty assignments.³³ Moreover, DOD Directive 5124.02 requires the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to develop policies, plans, and programs for educating DOD personnel.³⁴

According to several DOD officials with whom we spoke, prior to the establishment of DASD (FE&T), OUSD(P&R) unofficially relinquished its responsibilities for PME and JPME to the Chairman, whose office issued the first version of the OPMEP in 1996. As mentioned earlier, the OPMEP outlines the Chairman's process for meeting statutory responsibilities for overseeing officer JPME, which is a subset of PME.³⁵ For example, the OPMEP states that JPME represents the Chairman's approved objectives and outcomes to support joint educational requirements for officers.

As recently as 2017, OUSD(P&R) reported to Congress that it had no formal process for exercising its authority to periodically review and revise the curricula of officer JPME.³⁶ In the same report, OUSD(P&R) stated that DOD was reviewing JPME and the DOD Joint Officer Management Program. OUSD(P&R) also reported that with the reorganization of its office to include a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training (DASD(FE&T)) in 2015, OSD was now organized to exercise its statutory authorities with respect to PME and JPME and would do so in line with the Secretary of Defense's direction in the

³³Pub. L. No. 99-433, § 401(a) (1986) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 2152(b), (c)). Later, in 2004, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 required the Secretary of Defense to implement a comprehensive framework for officer JPME. Pub. L. No. 108-375, § 532(a) (2004) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. § 2152(a)).

³⁴DOD Directive 5124.02.

³⁵CJCSI 1800.01E.

³⁶Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness), *Department of Defense Report*:

A Review of Joint Professional Military Education Programs (Nov. 14, 2017). Senate Report 114-255 directed the Secretary of Defense to submit this report to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. S. Rept. 114-255, at 153 (2016).

National Defense Strategy.³⁷ According to the 2015 implementation plan detailing the reorganization, the Deputy Assistant Secretary's responsibilities include measuring, assessing, and overseeing all aspects of education and training, which includes PME and JPME.³⁸ In 2019, DOD issued guidance stating that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on all matters related to the readiness of the Total Force, including by developing policies and plans, providing advice, and making recommendations for PME to include alignment to the National Defense and National Military Strategies and talent management and utilization.³⁹

OUSD(P&R) is drafting its first DOD instruction (the draft instruction) that covers PME and JPME, which DASD(FE&T) officials told us it plans to issue in February 2020. According to DASD(FE&T) officials, once issued, the DOD instruction will be the prevailing policy document for PME and JPME at the OSD-level. While we believe these steps will improve OSD's oversight of the military services' PME and JPME programs, we identified areas that could continue to impede DOD's ability to assess the effectiveness of these programs. Specifically:

- **DOD lacks a mission statement and performance measures for its PME and JPME programs.** DASD(FE&T) officials stated that prior to the draft policy OUSD(P&R) had not developed a mission statement and performance measures for PME, but told us that the draft instruction would include a mission statement and examples of performance measures. However, we did not identify a mission statement for PME that clearly defines the respective key purposes for

³⁷Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness), *Department of Defense Report:*

A Review of Joint Professional Military Education Programs (Nov. 14, 2017).

³⁸Deputy Chief Management Officer Memorandum, *Implementation Plan for the Reorganization of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness* (Oct. 29, 2015).

³⁹DOD Directive 5124.11, *Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness (ASD(R))* (Sep. 6, 2019). As previously stated, according to DOD information, the National Defense Strategy outlines how DOD will contribute to achieving the President's National Security Strategy objectives in order to maintain security and prosperity worldwide. The National Military Strategy outlines how DOD will distribute and apply military power to attain National Security Strategy and Defense Strategic Guidance objectives. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Mar. 25, 2013) (incorporating change 1, effective July 12, 2017).

this program when we reviewed the draft instruction. According to leading training and development practices, a mission statement is important to an organization's success because it explains the organization's purpose and goals and is the basis for goal-directed performance measures.⁴⁰ The draft instruction proposes the performance measures the military services should track and assess as part of their required annual program reviews, such as graduate assignments and retention rates. Performance measures are important because they assess an organization's progress toward achieving results that are aligned with its mission.⁴¹ However, without a department-wide mission statement for PME and JPME, OUSD(P&R) is not well-positioned to propose performance measures for the military services to track and enable OUSD(P&R) to assess the effectiveness of these programs.

Further, our review of the draft instruction found no examples of cost-related performance measures. DASD(FE&T) officials confirmed that cost-related performance measures were not included in the draft instruction, but told us that they planned to coordinate with officials from the Joint Staff Directorate for Joint Force Development to refine the performance measures sometime in the future. DOD's Financial Management Regulation states that performance measurement is a means of evaluating efficiency, effectiveness, and results, and that a balanced performance measurement scorecard includes nonfinancial and financial measures focusing on quality and cost.⁴² Moreover, leading training and development practices state that performance measures should include both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess training results, and include the identification and tracking of costs.⁴³ These same leading practices state that organizations should compare associated costs and monetized benefits of training programs to determine return on investment. DASD(FE&T) officials told us that having cost information on the military services' PME and JPME programs to determine return on investment would enable their office to compare and make well-informed decisions about these programs.

⁴⁰GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2004).

⁴¹[GAO-04-546G](#).

⁴²DOD 7000.14-R, *Financial Management Regulation*, vol. 4, ch. 19, *Managerial Cost Accounting* (December 2017).

⁴³[GAO-04-546G](#).

- **DOD lacks a requirement for the military services to report periodically on PME and JPME programs.** OUSD(P&R) has not established a requirement for the military services' to periodically report information to its office on the military services' respective PME and JPME programs. For example, the Chairman's PAJE reports that document accreditation findings and include a full, conditional, or no accreditation determination are not provided to OUSD(P&R). According to the OPMEP, PAJE reports will be forwarded to the Chief of the applicable military service, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, or the President of the National Defense University for appropriate action. A Joint Staff official confirmed that PAJE reports are not provided to OUSD(P&R).

Our review of the draft instruction found no requirement for the Chairman to provide PAJE reports to OUSD(P&R), nor is there a requirement for the military services to report information on their PME and JPME programs—such as their annual program reviews—to OUSD(P&R). According to DASD(FE&T) officials, reporting requirements were omitted from the draft instruction because their office lacks the personnel to review and assess the information the military services would be required to collect and report. However, without a requirement for the military services' to periodically report information on their PME and JPME programs, OUSD(P&R)'s ability to assess the effectiveness of these programs and perform meaningful oversight will continue to be limited.

Leading training and development practices state that organizations should collect appropriate performance data during implementation and establish accountability for the results of these efforts.⁴⁴ Additionally, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* state that management relies on quality information to make informed decisions and evaluate the entity's performance in achieving key objectives and addressing risks.⁴⁵ These same standards state that management should receive quality information about the entity's operational processes to help management achieve the entity's objectives. Because OUSD(P&R) does not require the military services to periodically report information on their respective PME programs, it does not have information that would help it assess the effectiveness of these programs.

⁴⁴[GAO-04-546G](#).

⁴⁵[GAO-14-704G](#).

We believe that addressing these limitations will enhance the ability of OUSD(P&R) and its subordinate office (i.e., DASD(FE&T)) to oversee and assess the effectiveness of the military services' PME programs.

USD(Comptroller's) Ability to Monitor the Military Services' PME Program Budgets Is Limited

USD(Comptroller's) ability to monitor the military services' PME programs is limited because the military services' budget request data are incomplete and lack uniformity. DOD's Financial Management Regulation requires the military services to submit separate budget request data on PME programs in support of DOD's annual budget request, and this data is included in DOD's annual congressional budget justification exhibits. While the Financial Management Regulation requires the military services to submit separate annual budget request data exhibits for most of their intermediate- and senior-level PME programs, it does not require the Marine Corps to submit an exhibit for its senior-level PME program, the Marine Corps War College.⁴⁶ Based on our review of the Marine Corps' fiscal years 2014 through 2020 budget request data exhibits and according to the USD(Comptroller) and Marine Corps officials, the Marine Corps did not submit a budget request data exhibit for the Marine Corps War College during this 7-year period.⁴⁷ USD(Comptroller) and Marine Corps officials could not explain why the Marine Corps War College was omitted from the DOD Financial Management Regulation, where DOD last updated the chapter requiring this submission in September 2008.

In addition, the data the military services include in their annual budget requests varies. DOD Directive 5118.03 outlines USD(Comptroller) responsibilities, requiring the Comptroller to, among other things: (1) direct the formulation and presentation of DOD budgets; and (2) establish and supervise the execution of uniform DOD policies, principles, and procedures, including terminologies and classifications, as necessary, for

⁴⁶DOD 7000.14-R, *Financial Management Regulation*, vol. 2B, Chapter 19, *Other Special Analyses* (September 2008). Specifically, the Financial Management Regulation requires each military service to submit a separate data exhibit for each of the individual schools it lists, including the Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, and Air War College.

⁴⁷According to the 2019 Marine Corps University Fact Book, the Marine Corps War College spent \$610,000 in fiscal year 2018.

budget formulation, presentation, and execution and certain other topics.⁴⁸ Additionally, section 2162 of title 10, U.S. Code, requires the Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to promulgate a uniform cost accounting system for use by the Secretaries of the military departments in preparing budget requests for the operation of PME schools.⁴⁹ However, the DOD Financial Management Regulation does not specify how the military services should account for the data required for the military services' budget request data submissions. Consequently, the budget request data reported by the military services varies. For example, in their fiscal year 2020 budget request data submissions the Army and the Air Force combined distance education and in-residence education programs, the Navy reported this data in separate exhibits, and the Marine Corps omitted distance education costs for its intermediate-level PME program. Additionally, according to DOD officials, the extent to which the military services accounted for costs to operate and maintain their PME colleges—such as security, facility maintenance, and information technology support—varies.

In 1987, the year following the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the House Armed Services Committee established a panel on PME led by Representative Ike Skelton (the Skelton Panel). The Skelton Panel undertook a comprehensive congressional review of PME, and published its findings and recommendations in a 1989 report (the Skelton Report).⁵⁰ Although the Skelton Panel did not take a comprehensive look at how well PME institutions were funded to accomplish their mission, the panel inquired into cost per student at each school and reported receiving from OSD raw data submitted by each PME institution, which included considerable differences in scope and cost methodology used by the PME institutions. The Skelton Report recommended that DOD establish a uniform cost accounting system for the PME schools, and that the annual report of the Secretary of Defense provide data on PME costs beginning in 1990. A 2010 congressional report focused on PME developments since the Skelton Panel's review, investigated whether a uniform cost

⁴⁸DOD Directive 5118.03.

⁴⁹10 U.S.C. § 2162(a).

⁵⁰U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, 101st Cong., *Report of the Panel on Military Education of the One Hundredth Congress of the Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives*, Comm. Print 101-4 (April 21, 1989).

accounting system existed, among other things.⁵¹ The congressional report found that DOD did not have a uniform cost accounting method for PME schools, and that it had not provided cost data to support useful comparisons among PME schools. The report included a recommendation for DOD to report its PME funding to Congress using a standardized accounting method for cost per student at each of the PME institutions, as recommended by the Skelton Panel in 1989. According to DASD(FE&T) and Joint Staff officials, the department has not collected or reported PME program cost information to Congress as the 1989 Skelton Report and the 2010 congressional report both recommended.

Without complete and uniform budget request data, USD(Comptroller)'s ability to monitor the military services' PME programs, identify program trends within the Marine Corps and among the other military services' PME programs, and formulate meaningful inter-service comparisons is limited.

Conclusions

DOD relies on PME to prepare its military personnel for the intellectual demands of complex contingences and major conflicts that typically involve more than a single military service. While all the military services' intermediate- and senior-level PME programs have met or partially met the accreditation requirements established by civilian accreditation bodies and the Chairman to award master's degrees and JPME credit, respectively, not all service programs have met the seminar student mix requirements. The Navy, for example, has not provided the requisite representation of officers in Army and Air Force intermediate-level seminars during the 2016 – 2018 academic years. Requiring DOD to determine whether the requisite number of Navy officers can be assigned to the military department's JPME programs and to develop policy to mitigate student mix shortfalls would address persistent student mix imbalances and align with the joint acculturation goal of JPME.

OUSD(P&R)'s draft DOD instruction, expected to be finalized in February 2020, will be the prevailing policy document for PME and could improve OSD's oversight of the military services' PME and JPME programs.

⁵¹U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 111th Cong., *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, Comm. Print 111-4 (April 2010).

However, OUSD(P&R)'s ability to assess the effectiveness of the military services' PME programs is limited by the absence of a department-wide mission statement that explains the purpose and goals of PME that aligns with the proposed performance measures in the draft instruction; the absence of a requirement for the military services to track program costs as a performance measure; and the absence of a requirement for the military services to report data on their PME and JPME programs—such as their annual reviews of PME programs. Addressing these limitations would better position OUSD(P&R) to oversee and assess the effectiveness of the military services' PME and JPME programs.

Finally, USD(Comptroller)'s ability to monitor the military services' PME programs is limited because the services' budget request data are incomplete and lack uniformity. Although the military services are required to submit separate budget request data exhibits for most PME institutions, the Financial Management Regulation does not require the Marine Corps to submit an annual budget request data exhibit for its senior-level PME program. Moreover, the data the military services include in their annual budget requests vary because the Financial Management Regulation does not specify how to account for costs. Requiring the Marine Corps to report budget request data on its senior-level PME program annually, and specifying how to account for costs in the exhibits would enhance the USD(Comptroller)'s ability to monitor the military services' PME programs and also enhance Congress's ability to identify trends among these programs.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making a total of seven recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. Specifically:

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of the Navy, determine whether it can assign the required number of Navy officers to the other military departments' JPME programs, consistent with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff guidance. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the military services, develop policy concerning actions, if any, the military services can take to mitigate JPME

seminar student mix shortfalls and still meet the intent of the OPMEP's joint acculturation requirement. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, develop and issue a department-wide mission statement for PME that will explain the program's purpose and goals, and serve as a basis for performance measures. (Recommendation 3)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issue and implement performance measures—to include the tracking of costs—that align with the department-wide mission statement for PME. (Recommendation 4)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, require the military services to periodically report information to its office about the military services' PME and JPME programs—such as results of program reviews. (Recommendation 5)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) updates the DOD Financial Management Regulation to require the Marine Corps to include a budget request data exhibit for the Marine Corps War College in support of DOD's annual budget request. (Recommendation 6)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), in coordination with the military services and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issue guidance to standardize the cost data that the military services should include in their annual PME budget request data submissions. (Recommendation 7)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this product to DOD for comment. In its comments, reproduced in Appendix II, DOD...

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. In addition, the

report will be available at no charge on the GAO Website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

Brenda S. Farrell
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Status of the Joint Special Operations University Pursuing Additional Accreditation

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) was established in September 2000 and is located at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The mission of JSOU is to prepare special operations forces to shape the future strategic environment by providing specialized Joint Professional Military Education (JPME); developing applicable undergraduate- and postgraduate-level equivalent curriculum; and fostering special operations research, analysis, and outreach in support of Special Operations Command objectives. JSOU staff and faculty include active duty, active reserve, and temporary duty reserve military personnel; government civilians; civilian contractors; private consultants; and guest lecturers and speakers. JSOU's active duty military personnel are assigned to the university by Special Operations Command and the military services. JSOU's professional military education vision is to prepare warfighters to solve ambiguous, complex problems across the spectrum of conflict by providing dynamic and adaptive professional education opportunities.

In August 2015, the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training accredited JSOU through December 2019. As of January 2020, officials stated that they are currently undergoing reaccreditation and expect reaffirmation notification by the end of February 2020. While JSOU offers a number of courses, seminars, and programs, officials from JSOU and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict stated the university has no near-term plans to award master's degrees; therefore, no additional civilian accreditation is necessary. JSOU officials said that they are contemplating offering senior-level JPME in the future, but stated that such an endeavor would take approximately at least 10 years to accomplish.

Consistent with its mission of preparing special operations forces to shape the future strategic environment, JSOU laid out the following seven goals in its 2019 academic guidance:

1. Continue to refine target audiences in all courses, assuring the right curricula is provided to the right student at the right time.
2. Implement a title 10, U.S. Code, civilian faculty hiring process that leverages the DOD professional military education community, fully supports the JSOU vision, and retains control to rapidly hire faculty with expertise in required disciplines.
3. Establish and complete a comprehensive building improvement plan that provides a quality learning environment conducive to educational excellence and student success.
4. Establish and complete a comprehensive education technology plan that brings all classrooms and auditoriums up to planned capability inherent in a state-of-the-art learning institution.
5. Facilitate the Technology Review Committee to define and develop the JSOU advanced classroom concept, capable of a wide variety of innovative teaching methodologies.
6. Develop and sustain academic programs in the emerging mission areas of artificial intelligence/machine learning, countering weapons of mass destruction, cyberspace, sensitive activities, and joint unconventional warfare that directly support special operations.
7. Develop highly effective academic instructors and distinguished experts in their individual fields of knowledge. Remain sensitive to individual needs and career development as JSOU embarks on new hiring processes and classroom innovations.

According to the JSOU Fact Book for 2018, the newly authorized title 10, U.S. Code, civilian faculty hiring authorities will allow JSOU faculty to attain new heights of excellence with expertise not normally found within the military or civil service communities. The handbook states that the title 10, U.S. Code, faculty hiring authority will have a major impact on shaping JSOU's curriculum, and will directly add to special operations forces' readiness and capability.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



READINESS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JAN 31 2020

Ms. Brenda Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Farrell:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report GAO-20-323, "PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION: Programs Are Accredited, but Additional Information is Needed to Assess Effectiveness," dated December 20, 2019 (GAO Code 103052).

Attached is DoD's response to the subject report. My point of contact is Dr. Gary Schaub Jr., who can be reached at gary.j.schaub.civ@mail.mil, and (703) 614-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Constable".

Thomas A. Constable
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of
Defense for Readiness

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED DECEMBER 20, 2019
GAO-20-323 (GAO CODE 103052)**

**“PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION:
PROGRAMS ARE ACCREDITED, BUT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO
ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of the Navy, determine whether it can assign the required number of Navy officers to the other military department’s JPME programs, consistent with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff guidance.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of the Navy, will determine whether Navy can assign the required number of Navy officers to the other military department’s JPME programs, consistent with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff guidance delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” dated 29 May 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the military services, develop policy concerning actions, if any, the military services can take to mitigate JPME seminar student mix shortfalls and still meet the intent of the OPMEP’s joint acculturation requirement.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the military services, will develop policy concerning actions, if any, the military services can take to mitigate JPME seminar student mix shortfalls and still meet the intent of the joint acculturation requirement delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” dated 29 May 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, develop and issue a department-wide mission statement for PME that will explain the program’s purpose and goals and serve as a basis for performance measures.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military departments, has developed and will soon issue Department of Defense Instruction 1322.pb, Volume 1, “Military Education (ME): Program Management and Administration,” that will include a Department-wide mission statement for PME that explains the purpose and goals of military education programs and serves as a basis for performance measures. It complements the mission statement and performance measures delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” dated 29 May 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issue and implement performance measures—to include the tracking of costs—that align with the department-wide mission statement for PME.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of the Military Departments, has developed and will soon issue Department of Defense Instruction 1322.pb, Volume 1, “Military Education (ME): Program Management and Administration,” that serves as a basis for the development of performance measures that can be used to align professional military education programs with the department-wide mission statement. It complements the performance measures delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” dated 29 May 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, require the military services to periodically report information to its office about the military services’ PME and JPME program—such as results of program reviews.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of the Military Departments, will require the Military Services to periodically report information to its office about the military services’ professional military education (PME) and joint professional military education (JPME) programs—such as results of program reviews—in Department of Defense Instruction 1322.pb, Volume 1, “Military Education (ME): Program Management and Administration,” which will be issued soon. It complements the reporting requirements delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” dated 29 May 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) updates the DOD Financial Management Regulation to require the Marine Corps to include a budget request data exhibit for the Marine Corps War College in support of DOD's annual budget request.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) will update the DOD Financial Management Regulation to require the Marine Corps to include a budget request data exhibit for the Marine Corps War College in support of DOD's annual budget request.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), in coordination with the military services and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issue guidance to standardize the cost data that the military services should include in their annual PME budget request data submissions.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), in coordination with the Military Services and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will issue guidance to standardize the cost data that the military services should include in their annual PME budget request data submissions.

Agency Comment Letter

Text of Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

Page 1

January 31, 2020

Ms. Brenda Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548 Dear Ms. Farrell:

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Sincerely,

Thomas A. Constable
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of
Defense for Readiness

Page 2

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED DECEMBER 20, 2019 GAO-20-323 (GAO CODE
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Page 3

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Instruction 1322.pb, Volume 1, "Military Education (ME): Program Management and Administration," that will include a Department-wide mission statement for PME that explains the purpose and goals of military education programs and serves as a basis for performance measures. It complements the mission statement and performance measures delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, "Officer Professional Military Education Policy," dated 29 May 2015.

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The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issue and implement performance measures-to include the tracking of costs-that align with the department-wide mission statement for PME.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of the Military Departments, has developed and will soon issue Department of Defense Instruction 1322.pb, Volume 1, "Military Education (ME): Program Management and Administration," that serves as a basis for the development of performance measures that can be used to align professional military education programs with the department-wide mission statement. It complements the performance measures delineated in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E, "Officer Professional Military Education Policy," dated 29 May 2015.

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Page 4

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DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), in coordination with the Military Services and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will issue guidance to standardize the cost data that the military services should include in their annual PME budget request data submissions.

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Brenda S. Farrell, (202) 512 -3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Marc Schwartz (Assistant Director), Norris “Traye” Smith (Analyst in Charge), Rebecca Guerrero, Edward Malone, Stephanie Moriarty, Patricia Powell, Carter Stevens, and Lillian M. Yob made significant contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

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(Washington, D.C.: Dec. 22, 2017).

*Higher Education: Education Should Strengthen Oversight of Schools and
Accreditors.* [GAO-15-59](#). Washington, D.C.: December 22, 2014.

*Joint Professional Military Education: Opportunities Exist for Greater
Oversight and Coordination of Associated Research Institutions.*
[GAO-14-216](#). Washington, D.C.: March 10, 2014.

*Joint Military Education: Actions Needed to Implement DOD
Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development.* [GAO-14-29](#).
Washington, D.C.: October 23, 2013.

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