Chapter 1

The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Degree Network System

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SOC Degree Network System

The SOC Degree Network System consists of institutions selected by the Military Services to deliver specific associate and bachelor's degree programs to servicemembers and their families. Institutional members of the SOC Degree Network System agree to special requirements and obligations that provide military students and their adult family members with opportunities to complete college degrees without suffering loss of academic credit due to changes of duty station or other demands of military career. The SOC Degree Network System includes:

- Degree Network System-2 for associate degrees; and
- Degree Network System-4 for bachelor's degrees.

The SOC Degree Network System-2 and the Degree Network System-4 function as separate network systems. An institution may participate in the SOC Degree Network System-2 but not in the SOC Degree Network System-4, or it may participate in both systems.

Key Components of the SOC Degree Network System

Membership Types

Currently, SOC Degree Network System institutions are designated as either Core or Affiliate members within a degree type (associate or bachelor's):

- **Core member institutions** offer at least one-degree program that has two-way guaranteed transfer of coursework.
- **Affiliate member institutions** offer distinctive and highly-specialized degree programs that meet an identified educational need of a particular military Service, often associated with a specific Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Rating, or serving a targeted military population.

It is possible for a college to be a Core member institution for one degree level and an Affiliate member institution at the other.

Membership Criteria

Effective Fall 2015, DNS Institutions will be required to meet a number of institutional membership criteria for participation in the System. These criteria are available under the **DNS section** of the SOC Web Site. Additional information will be published as it becomes available.

Network Types

A Network consists of a number of degree programs in a single academic area offered by SOC Degree Network System institutions at a variety of military installations, through distance learning, or by learning assessment. The two types of Networks within the Degree Network System are Guaranteed-Transfer Networks and Auxiliary Networks:

- **A Guaranteed-Transfer Network** consists of degrees that must achieve a 40 percent standard of two-way guaranteed transferability in major and major related courses. Courses with two-way guaranteed transferability are listed in the SOC Degree Network System Transferability Tables. Guaranteed-Transfer Networks for bachelor's degrees are:

  Accounting
  Banking/Finance
  Business Administration
  Computer Studies
  Criminal Justice
  General Business
  Health Services Management
  History
  Human Resource Management
  Information Systems Management
  Management
  Marketing/Retailing
  Psychology
  Public Administration
  Technical Management

- **An Auxiliary Network** consists of degrees that are popular or career-related and fall outside of the Guaranteed-Transfer Networks. To participate in Auxiliary networks, Core institutions must have at least one degree in a Guaranteed-Transfer network. Degree programs in Auxiliary Networks are not required to meet transfer standards that apply to degrees within the Guaranteed-Transfer Networks, but may include some guaranteed transferability derived from courses also present in the college's Guaranteed-Transfer Network degrees. Auxiliary Networks for bachelor's degrees are:

  Applied Science and Technology
  Aviation Studies
  Communication
  Education/Instructional Development
  Electronics Technology
  General and Liberal Studies
  Homeland Security
  Interdisciplinary Studies
  Other Career-Related
  Religion

- Degrees from Affiliate member institutions are not included in either network type.

Guaranteed Transferability and SOC DNS Course Categories

The Guaranteed-Transfer Networks are designed to maximize guaranteed transferability for as many major and major-related course requirements listed in degree programs as possible. Students complete degree requirements as they change locations during their military careers without loss or duplication of credit, or respond to other demands of a military career.

A SOC Degree Network System Course Category Code is established whenever a group of institutions agrees to accept courses in transfer from each other that are comparable in content. All comparable courses that have been reviewed and accepted in transfer by Core member institutions in a particular Course Category are displayed in the Transferability Tables under that Code. Core member institutions sharing the same SOC DNS Course Category must accept each other's courses in those categories in transfer without prior approval. See Chapter 5 for a more complete discussion of SOC DNS Course Categories, transferability policies, and the SOC Degree Network System Transferability Tables.

Home College

The SOC Degree Network System member institution from which the servicemember or adult family member is seeking a degree is designated the "home college." The home college is responsible for issuing a SOC Degree Network System Student Agreement (Student Agreement).

Academic Residency

SOC Degree Network System member institutions must limit academic residency to 25 percent or less of the total degree program, specifically avoiding any "final year" or "final semester" residency requirement. The only exception is for institutions that offer 100 percent of an undergraduate degree online; they may require that servicemembers take 30 percent of that degree program from their institutions. Participating institutions that offer degrees through the learning assessment method often require substantially less than 25 percent academic residency.

Degree Program Delivery Methods

The SOC Degree Network System incorporates three program delivery methods: traditional classroom-based instruction and two external degree delivery methods—distance learning and learning assessment. Distance learning degrees in the SOC DNS are those degrees in which the majority of required credits are available to servicemembers through a distance delivery mode (e.g. Internet, video, teleconferencing, correspondence etc.), from the home college. Learning assessment usually requires little or no academic residency and may be based on college credits derived from evaluation of learning from nontraditional sources such as standardized testing, demonstration of competency from extra institutional learning that relates to academic learning or transfer of credit from other institutions.

SOC DNS Student Agreements

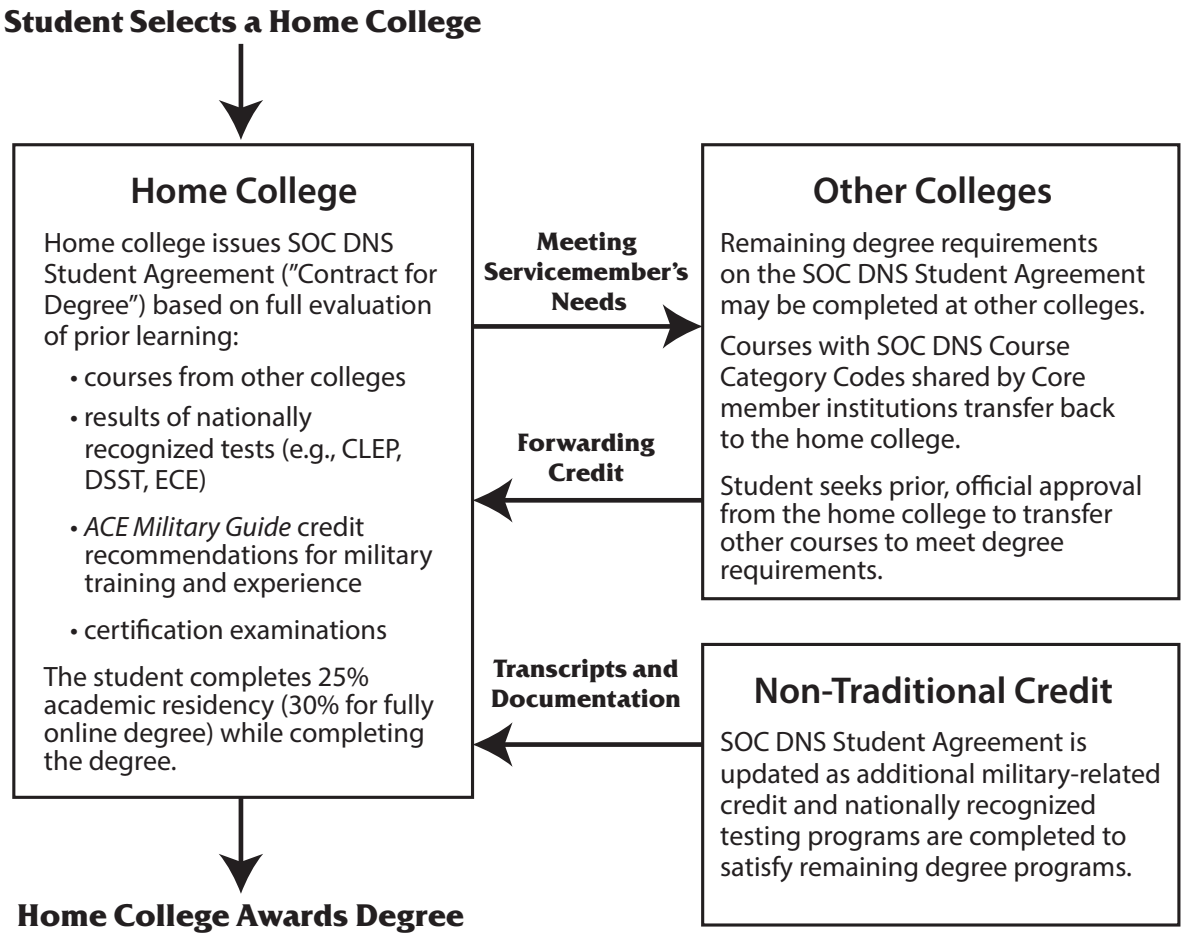
Every SOC Degree Network System member institution must issue a Student Agreement for degree programs listed in the Degree Network System to each degree-seeking student who has chosen that institution as his/her home college. The Student Agreement must be issued early in the student's enrollment at the college or when the student has completed six semester hours with the home college. The Student Agreement is an official evaluation of the student's prior learning, including courses taken from other institutions, military training school courses, military occupational experience (MOS or Rating), and nationally recognized examination programs. The Student Agreement serves as a degree plan so that the student has a complete assessment of remaining degree requirements. See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of Student Agreements.

Family Member Participation

Adult family members who attend a SOC Degree Network System member institution are entitled to many of the same policies and benefits as the servicemember. These include a SOC DNS Student Agreement, the use of two-way guaranteed transfer, reduced academic residency, etc. An adult family member is defined as a spouse or adult child of the military member.

Completing Degrees after Military Service

All Degree Network System member institutions must honor Student Agreements to allow servicemembers and their adult family members to complete their degrees after leaving the military. Refer to the College Information Pages in Chapter 3 for specific policies on time limits for completing degrees. Student Agreements remain valid as long as the student does not exceed the school's degree completion time limit or break-in-attendance policy. Degree completion time and attendance policies vary by college.



How the SOC Degree Network System Works

The SOC Degree Network System is designed to allow a servicemember to begin a degree with a home college and to continue that degree to completion even with changes in duty station during the student's military career, or in response to other demands of a military career.

Transfer of SOC Degree Network System-2 Associate Degrees to SOC Degree Network System-4 Bachelor's Degrees in Related Networks

All credits from an associate degree from one college may not be completely accepted by another college in transfer toward a bachelor's degree. Courses are generally accepted in transfer only after a course-by-course evaluation by the accepting college. All Core member institutions in the SOC Degree Network System-4, however, have agreed to accept an associate degree completed in a related SOC Degree Network System-2 network as a minimum of 45 percent of the credits needed for a related bachelor's degree, with certain stated limitations. The designated 2-year Networks to which this guarantee applies, and the corresponding 4-year Networks are:

SOC Degree Network System-2 Network	Related SOC Degree Network System-4 Network
Accounting	Accounting
Business Administration	Business Administration
Computer Studies	Computer Studies
Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice
General Business	General Business
Management	Health Services Management Human Resources Management Management
Marketing/Retailing	Marketing/Retailing
Psychology	Psychology

General Education Requirement. The minimum transfer of 45 percent of the credits needed to complete the bachelor's degree assumes that the designated associate degree contained at least 30 semester hours of General Education credits. If a student does not have these courses when transferring a Degree Network System-2 degree, the receiving institution may add sufficient General Education credits to the remaining bachelor's degree requirements.

Basic Course Requirement. The minimum transfer of 45 percent of the credits needed to complete the bachelor's degree assumes that specified basic courses have been completed in the associate degree. Basic courses in Degree Network System degrees in Accounting, Banking/Finance, Business Administration, Human Resources Management, Information Systems Management, Management, and Marketing/Retailing may include six semester hours in Accounting Principles and six semester hours in Principles of Economics (or Microeconomics and Macroeconomics), as well as other additional course requirements. If a student does not have these courses when transferring a Degree Network System-2 degree into a related Degree Network System-4 degree, the receiving institution may add appropriate courses to the remaining bachelor's degree requirements. If the 4-year institution demonstrates that external regulatory or accreditation requirements mandate courses not contained in the associate degree being transferred, those courses may be added.

American Council on Education (ACE) Recommendations Limitation. The minimum transfer of 45 percent of the credits needed to complete the bachelor's degree assumes that credits awarded for military Service schools, military experience, and standardized tests were within the limits recommended by ACE in the *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services (ACE Military Guide)*. If a transferring student presents credits awarded on the basis of a test score below the ACE recommendation or below the receiving institution's established test score for credit award, the receiving institution may add the same number of credits to the remaining bachelor's degree requirements. If the student presents credits that exceed the ACE recommendations, the receiving college may adjust the credits accepted toward the bachelor's degree in accordance with its own policies.

Joint Services Transcript (JST)

The JST is a multi-service official transcript for servicemembers. The JST replaces the Army American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), the Sailor Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), and the Coast Guard Institute (CGI) transcript. Under contract with the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), the American Council on Education (ACE) conducts and facilitates the rigorous academic review of military courses and occupations. These credit recommendations form the academic basis for colleges and universities to consider toward degree requirements. The JST is an official transcript tool that validates and documents the recommended college credits for professional military education, training courses and occupational experience of servicemembers and veterans. This unified and standardized document will make it easier for institutions to review and articulate these credits as appropriate.

Each JST document will contain the following information:

- Military branch-specific seal (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) Note: The Air Force utilizes the Community College of the Air Force for their transcripts.
- Service member data
- Course completions
- Occupational affiliations
- Credentialing (certifications and or licenses)
- Military experience
- Summary page
- Academic Institution page (Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy only)
- College Degrees (Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy only)

More information is available at **https://jst.doded.mil** or **http://www.jointservicetranscript.com.**

The JST Summary Page and SOC DNS Course Category Codes

The JST Summary page provides a synopsis and overview of all ACE-recommended credits found in the JST. Its abbreviated format resembles that of an actual college transcript. Accompanying the ACE credit recommendations is a column entitled "SOC Category Code." Information in this column helps college evaluators assign credit for military experience to areas of the degree other than "free electives." For example, credit recommendations with SOC DNS Category Codes may apply to specific courses - with the same Codes - within DNS degree programs. In other cases, the information in this column can assist in assigning credit towards major-related electives such as aviation, electronics, or other discipline areas. Unlike the guaranteed transferability of courses with assigned SOC DNS Category Codes in the Transferability-Tables, the Codes listed on the JST Summary Page are suggested mappings only and do not guarantee transferability.

SOC Degree Network System *Credit Evaluation Supplement*

The *SOC Degree Network System Credit Evaluation Supplement (Credit Evaluation Supplement)* is a resource designed for use with the *SOC Degree Network System 2* and *-4 Handbooks* and the American Council on Education's (ACE) *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services (ACE Military Guide)*.

The ***Credit Evaluation Supplement*** contains tables that suggest appropriate mappings to SOC DNS Course Categories of the following:

- Subject Area terms contained in service school and occupational exhibits in the *ACE Military Guide*—listed in Section 1, ACE Subject Area Terms Mapped to SOC DNS Course Categories
- ACE-recommended credit for nationally-recognized credit-by-examination programs including College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), DSST, and Excelsior College Examinations (ECE) / UExcel®—listed in Section 2, Examination Credit Tables
- Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) courses—listed in Section 2, CCAF Course Mapping Table
- DANTES Independent Study Course Codes/Subject Areas—listed in Section 2, DANTES ISC Code Tables for associate and bachelor's degrees

The mapping of *ACE Military Guide* credit recommendations to SOC DNS Course Categories should optimize the academic placement guidelines of ACE Military Guide-recommended credit toward SOC DNS degree programs. College counselors and evaluators are encouraged to consider these recommendations when evaluating and applying credit to degree requirements appearing on Student Agreements. The recommended placement of these credits appears on the Joint Services Transcript Summary page.

The Role of the SOC Degree Network System Points-of-Contact

Each member institution is required to identify one main Point-of-Contact (POC) to receive all SOC DNS communications. Having a single contact for all SOC DNS matters is critical to maintaining effective communication between the SOC DNS and institutions. Institutions are asked to notify SOC immediately of any changes to POC information so that SOC may update its records accordingly.

The main DNS POC is responsible for:

- understanding the Student Agreement process and coordinating the creation and submission of Student Agreements for military students and family members who have selected the institution as their DNS home college;
- responding to the annual *SOC Degree Network System Handbook* update request by the required deadline;
- providing an annual report of military and military-related graduates in the requested format by the required deadline;
- providing advising/academic counseling to the student or referring them to an advisor; and
- keeping SOC staff informed of institutional changes as they happen.

Additionally, they should be prepared to explain to students requesting information the following:

- the purpose and features of the DNS as outlined in the *SOC DNS Handbook*;
- institutional policies and procedures as reflected in Chapter 3 of the *SOC DNS Handbooks*;
- the process for receiving a Student Agreement as well as the timeframe (after completion of no more than six semester hours of credit);
- how to acquire the Joint Services Transcript (JST) and the process for evaluating military credit at your institution;
- the policies and procedures for dropping/withdrawing from a class (e.g., a Web site URL, e-mail address, and/or name and a telephone number), as well as student obligations and academic consequences if not following established procedures; and
- if the college is a Core SOC DNS Member, students should be advised about guaranteed two-way transfer of courses in SOC DNS Course Category Codes, as listed in the Transferability Tables. (Chapter 5: *SOC DNS Handbook*.)

The POC at DNS core member institutions should:

- coordinate the response to SOC DNS Course Category circulations by required deadlines;
- work directly with SOC DNS personnel to maintain the requisite level of course transferability for degree programs in Guaranteed-Transfer networks; and
- ensure that college personnel respond to questions from military students.

These tasks may be delegated by the POC for completion by another college staff member; however, the main POC is ultimately responsible for ensuring timely submission of or follow-through on these items.

Student Responsibilities and Procedures for Getting Started

Servicemembers should always work with an Education Officer, or similar military representative, to ensure that all benefits are afforded during the educational process. This includes choosing an institution and degree path, using the SOC Degree Network System resources, and obtaining Tuition Assistance.

To get started:

- Explore interests and career/degree options with your Education Services Officer.
- Apply for admission at the college of your choice.
- Request transcripts: Have your Joint Services Transcript (JST) as well as transcripts of any other college work completed, and transcripts of test scores (e.g., CLEP, DSST, UExcel®) sent to the college you have selected.
- Request a SOC DNS Student Agreement from your home college. Your home college is required to issue your Student Agreement by the time you've completed 6 semester hours. This reflects your official evaluation of previously earned credits that have been applied to your degree plan. Your Student Agreement serves as a "contract for degree." Retain a personal copy of your Student Agreement signed by the college.
- Keep in contact with your home college academic adviser. Make sure that you understand all your degree requirements, including academic residency, requirements in the major, degree completion time limits and any break-in-attendance policy parameters. Academy residency is defined as courses you actually take from your home college, not another school or transferred from other sources.
- Satisfy Academic Residency: Try to complete your academic residency requirement with your home college as early as possible (typically 25% of degree; up to 30% for online programs). Academic Residency means taking courses, either in traditional classroom format or online, from your home college.
- Follow your SOC DNS Student Agreement to complete degree requirements. Use Chapter 5 of this *Handbook* to find courses in SOC DNS Course Categories guaranteed to transfer.
- Learn more about taking courses at another college. Often student will decide to take a course at another school due to costs, convenience, and desire to use different course delivery method. Request official approval from your home college before taking a course from another college. A sample course substitution form is provided in the Appendix of this *Handbook* (Courses sharing SOC DNS Category Codes don't require prior approval).
- Document Earned Credit: Forward transcripts to your home college after completing courses with other schools, if you have advanced in pay grade, or if you taken additional tests.
- Track your progress. You may indicate on your Student Agreement progress toward degree completion by notating all courses you have completed.
- File a graduation request or application with your home college after completing academic residency and all degree requirements.

Using the *SOC DNS Handbooks*

Chapter 4 (College Locator)

Many students find it helpful to start with this chapter, since it lists the DNS Degree Networks (i.e., groups of related degrees), available locations, and participating colleges.

Look in Chapter 4 to:

- To find out which colleges offer degrees by Network at your next duty station. (See Network Locations by Installation.)
- If you're looking for a degree program offered through distance learning. (See Network Locations by Installation > All Sites, Distance Learning.)
- Identify degrees available through the DNS or if you're looking for a degree in a particular academic subject area: (See Network Locations by Network.)
- To find out where your home college offers degrees by Network. (See Network Locations by College/ University.)

Chapter 3 (Colleges and Degree Programs)

This chapter provides details about the individual DNS colleges.

Look in Chapter 3 for:

- For information about a DNS college's academic policies, including degree completion time limits. (See Index to College Information Pages.)
- If you need contact information for a specific DNS college. (See Index to College Information Pages.)
- For specific degree titles and delivery methods by institution: TD -Traditional, DL - Distance Learning, LA – Learning Assessment. (See Index to College Degree Programs.)

Chapter 5 (Transferability Policies and Tables)

This chapter provides information on the guaranteed transfer of credit among participating institutions.

Look in Chapter 5 to:

- To find courses with guaranteed transferability from your home college. (See College Course Index.)
- To locate pre-approved courses in SOC DNS Course Category Codes that are guaranteed to transfer back to your DNS home college. (See SOC DNS Course Category Transferability Tables.)

Appendix

This section of the *SOC DNS Handbook* is a useful resource that includes:

- meanings of commonly used military and academic acronyms;
- definitions of terms used throughout the *SOC DNS Handbook*;
- course substitution approval form;
- a semester/quarter hour conversion chart; and
- the SOC DNS Course Approval Form.