

Chapter 1

The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Degree Network System (DNS)

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SOC Degree Network System Overview

The SOC Degree Network System (DNS) consists of institutions selected to deliver specific associate and bachelor's degree programs to servicemembers. The SOC DNS includes:

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

The SOC DNS-2 and the SOC DNS-4 function as separate systems (e.g., an institution may participate in the SOC DNS-2 exclusively, or it may participate in both systems).

Membership

SOC DNS institutions are required to meet a number of institutional and degree membership criteria for participation in the system. These criteria are available under the [DNS membership section](#) of the SOC Web site. Generally when seeking new member institutions or new or additional degree programs, the DNS will publish a Call for Programs to all institutions that are signatories of the DOD MOU. The Calls for Programs will focus on specific degree programs that are being solicited at that time.

Institutional members of the SOC DNS agree to special requirements and obligations that provide military students with opportunities to complete college degrees without suffering loss of academic credit because of changes of duty station or other demands of military career. Additional membership expectations are outlined under the Role of the SOC DNS Point-of-Contact section of this chapter.

Benefits to Institutions From SOC DNS Membership

SOC DNS membership institutions have demonstrated their commitment to servicemembers pursuing educational goals while balancing the challenges of active military service. Accordingly, SOC DNS membership serves to assure servicemembers of this commitment, as well as to provide higher visibility within the military voluntary education community. DNS member schools also provide details of their academic policies and degree programs in the DNS informational media.

Responsibilities of Membership and the Role of the SOC Degree Network System Points-of-Contact (POC)

The Main SOC DNS POC is Responsible For:

- understanding the Student Agreement process and coordinating the creation and submission of Student Agreements for military students who have selected the institution as their DNS home college;
- providing advisement/academic counseling to the student or referring them to an advisor;
- keeping SOC staff informed of institutional changes as they occur;
- SOC DNS Student Agreement policy and procedures;
- understanding the features of the Joint Services Transcript (JST);
- withdrawal and drop procedures, especially how they relate to students who must suspend their course attendance due to military obligations; this includes the provisions of the U. S. Department of Education Readmission Policy and the HEROES Act of 2003;
- guaranteed two-way transfer of courses in SOC DNS Course Category Codes;
- working directly with SOC DNS personnel to maintain the requisite level of course transferability for degree programs in Guaranteed-Transfer Networks; and
- ensuring that all components of the institution are familiar with the needs of military students—these include bursar, registrar and advisement services.

The SOC DNS conducts an annual cycle of program review and informational updates. 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.

Specific Annual Tasks for the SOC DNS POC

- acting as liaison with the DNS during the annual membership Performance Review. The Performance Review serves as an evaluation process for the school’s participation in the DNS;
- providing an annual report of military graduates in the requested format by the required deadline;
- responding to the annual SOC Degree Network System Handbook update request by the deadline stated in the request;
- coordinating the response to SOC DNS Course Category circulations within the allotted timeframe.

Key Components of the SOC Degree Network System

Networks

A SOC DNS Academic Network consists of a number of degree programs in a single academic area offered by SOC DNS member institutions. DNS degrees are generally offered through a variety of delivery methods, including distance learning, traditional classroom setting, and prior learning assessment. Some member institutions offer traditional and/or blended learning opportunities at a variety of military installations. Member degrees 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 DNS Transferability Tables.

Guaranteed-Transfer Networks for associate degrees are:

- Applied Science and Technology
- Automotive Maintenance
- Business Administration
- Computer Studies
- Criminal Justice
- Electronics Technology
- General and Liberal Studies
- General Business
- Management
- Psychology
- Technical Management

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 and transferability policies.

Articulation Agreements

Articulation Agreements serve as a credit-granting map between two or more colleges or universities and their degree programs. The best example of how an articulation agreement works is when a student enrolls in an associate degree program to pursue a specific degree. The school offering the associate degree may have entered into an agreement with another school offering a bachelor’s degree in a similar field of study. By completing an associate degree that is part of an articulation agreement, the student is generally assured that all, or most, of the credits completed for the associate degree will be accepted into the bachelor’s degree program of the “receiving” school.

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 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:

<u>SOC DNS2 Network</u>	<u>SOC DNS4 Network</u>
Business Administration	Business Administration
Computer Studies	Computer Studies
Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice
General Business	General Business
Management	Health Services Management
	Human Resources Management
	Management
Psychology	Psychology

General Education Requirement

The minimum transfer of 45 percent of the credits needed to complete the bachelor’s degree assumes that the associate degree included 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 Business Administration, Human Resources Management, Management, 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.

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.

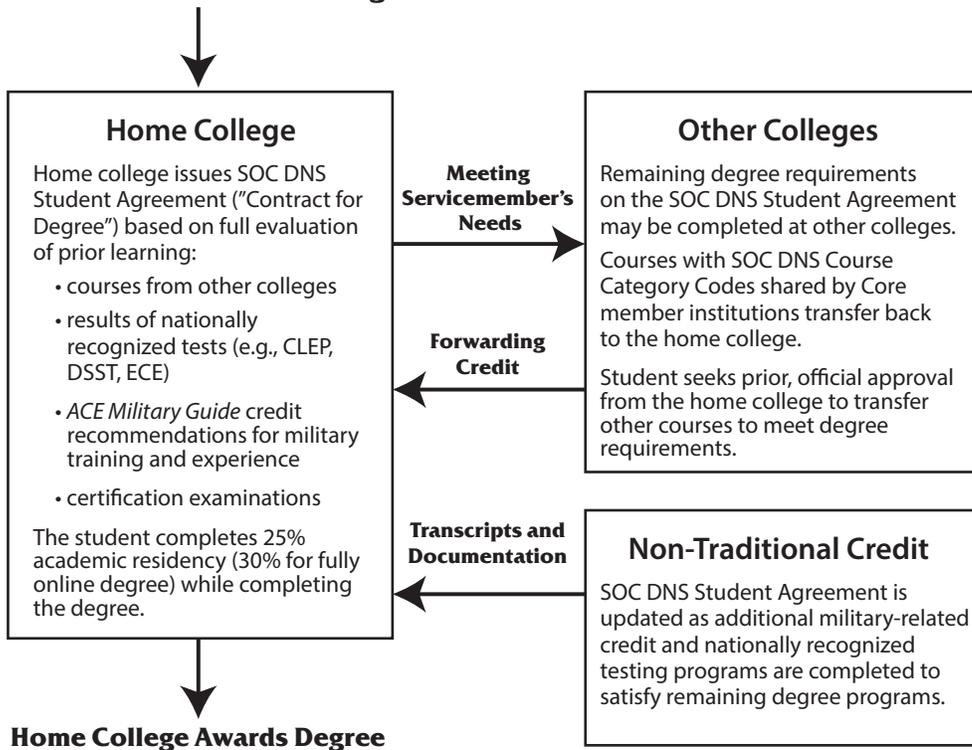
Further information on articulation agreements may be obtained by contacting the school’s registrar’s office.

Students who enroll in an associate degree program as their initial but not final educational goal may wish to explore articulation agreement opportunities in order to maximize credit transfer opportunities to a four-year program.

The list of DNS associate degree programs will articulate to the list of DNS bachelor’s degree programs in related Networks.

[DNS2 to DNS4 schools and degree programs.](#)

Student Selects a Home College



Home College

The SOC DNS member institution from which the servicemember is seeking a degree is designated the “home college.” The home college is responsible for issuing a SOC DNS Student Agreement (Student Agreement) when the student has completed his or her first two courses at that school.

Academic Residency

SOC DNS member institutions must limit academic residency to 25 percent or less of the total degree program and not require a “final year” or “final semester” residency requirement. The only exception is when a degree may be completed entirely online the residency requirement may be increased to 30 percent. 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 DNS 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 DNS 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, when the home college has received all of the student’s relevant transcripts, 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. It also serves

as a contract-for-degree that protects the student from changes to their degree program that may occur because of deployment or other military-related interruptions to their studies.

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. While member institutions are not required to complete Student Agreements for family members and do not submit them to the SOC DNS for processing, they may offer them to family members.

Completing Degrees After Military Service

All SOC DNS member institutions must continue to honor Student Agreements even after the student leaves the military. 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.

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.

Using the *SOC DNS Handbooks*

Chapter 1: Overview of the SOC Degree Network System

Chapter 2: Student Agreement

This chapter provides detailed information about the importance of the SOC DNS Student Agreement and the policies and requirements governing its use.

Look in Chapter 2 for:

- Importance of a Student Agreement including what data is collected, what protections it affords the military student.
- How colleges/universities should properly complete, issue, and distribute a SOC DNS Student Agreement.
- Information regarding Open Network Student Agreements.

Chapter 3: Colleges and Degree Programs

This chapter provides details about the individual SOC DNS colleges and universities.

Look in Chapter 3 for listings of SOC DNS member schools, their degree programs, academic policies, and contact information.

Chapter 4: Member School Locations

Look in Chapter 4 to find out which colleges offer degrees at your current or next duty station. The SOC DNS website offers a search function enabling students to find SOC DNS member schools by location, or degree. Chapter 4 of the *SOC DNS Handbooks* also provides a state-by-state, country-by-country listing of member schools offering traditional classes at off-site locations / satellite campuses—many of which are military bases throughout the world.

Chapter 5: Transferability Policies

Students wishing to take a course away from their home college should search the Course Category Codes in the online [SOC DNS Search Tool](#) to identify schools/courses they may attend that provide guaranteed transferability to and from their home college and degree plan.

Chapter 6: Student Information

This chapter is specifically for military students. It discusses steps to getting starting, the SOC Student Agreement, and how to use the *SOC DNS Handbook*.

Appendix

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

- definitions of terms used throughout the *SOC DNS Handbook*;
- a semester/quarter hour conversion chart; and,
- the SOC DNS Course Approval Form.