

The Program Manager's Course PMT 401

This rigorous, executive-level, in-residence, case-based course lasts 10 weeks. It is designed for highly motivated, experienced acquisition practitioners, specially selected for their potential as leaders of major acquisition programs, integrated product teams, and major command division chiefs.

A Demanding Course That Relies on a Three-Step Learning Process ...

- Individual study and preparation per case (1–2 hours).
- Active participation in small group (6–8 person) discussion (20 minutes per case).
- Active participation in large group (24–32 person) discussion (80 minutes per case).

To Enable Students to Apply the Three-Step Learning Process

- Apply critical and creative thinking to solve problems and dilemmas.
- Lead disparate groups, develop a cohesive team, and solve the complex problems common to program management offices.
- Apply best business practices to achieve win-win relationships with industry partners.

Course Composition

The course is constructed around eight overarching themes involving primarily case studies of real life acquisition-related challenges and dilemmas that provide each learner the opportunity to practice:

- Leading a program in a rapidly changing environment,
- Leading program management operations in different acquisition phases,
- Working effectively with higher headquarters,
- Working effectively with industry,
- Achieving and maintaining excellent customer relations,
- Applying appropriate tools for the evolving information environment,
- Working effectively with external organizations, and
- Leading joint and international programs.

The Right Students

Program Management career field training has been re-engineered to enhance the performance of the acquisition workforce, and to better synchronize training and the progression of billets and responsibility over an individual's career. Optimally, a career in Program Management involves a sequence of training, interspersed with increasing experience and responsibility that culminates in selection to a senior program or acquisition management position.

By statute, Program Executive Officers and deputies, and ACAT I and II PMs and DPMs, are required to complete an advanced program management curriculum (beyond Level III certification). OSD(C³I) has directed that ACAT IA PMs and DPMs complete the same advanced training curriculum. As a result of the re-engineering of Program Management career field training, advanced training is now defined as PMT 401 (Program Manager's Course) and PMT 402 (Executive Program Manager's Course).

The right mix of students in each offering of PMT 401 is critical to the learning experience and the success of the course. The right mix includes experienced, Level III-certified members of the acquisition corps, primarily

from the Program Management career field; a limited number of Level III professionals from other DoD acquisition career fields with broad experience in Program Management; and professionals from industry.

Students shall be selected by their Service or Agency (in terms of potential, performance, and experience) to become Program Executive Officers or deputies, major PMs or DPMs (ACAT I/IA/II and large ACAT III programs), as well as leaders of major IPTs or functional divisions or departments. They shall be at the GS 14 or O-5 grade or senior, with at least 4 years of experience in, or in direct support of, a program office.

Due to the advanced, multifunctional, integrated curriculum of PMT 401, Level III certification in one or more career fields is required. Individuals who are not certified Level III in Program Management are encouraged to complete Level II and III Program Management career field courses (PMT 250 and PMT 352) to increase their potential for selection for PMT 401 and to enhance their contribution to the course.

Prior to attendance and following completion of the above courses, students should have gained additional experience in challenging acquisition assignments.

“DAU is one institution that touches nearly every member of the workforce throughout all stages of their professional careers. This is where we revitalize our workforce, while ensuring it has the training it needs to make smart business decisions and deliver for our warfighters.”

— Remarks by Michael W. Wynne
Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics)
12 April 2002



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The Right Course Content

- Approximately 100 case studies/learning experiences bring reality into the classroom.
- Each case requires students to study, analyze, and discuss examples of commonplace problems actually encountered in defense program management.
- Most cases are written around a protagonist — PM, DPM, contractor PM, or other decision maker — describing: (1) a challenge or problem encountered, (2) the protagonist's analysis of the challenge/problem, and (3) the two or more options considered by the protagonist, each of which have positive and negative features.
- Hundreds of questionnaires and dozens of personal interviews resulted in the development of case studies.
- Other learning experiences include: an elective program, Capitol Hill visits, Looking Glass behavioral simulation, and distinguished guest lecturers.

The Right Course Construct

The rigor, length, course content, and intensity of the Program Manager's Course place significant demands on the students, as well as the faculty.

- Twelve-hour days, five days each week supplemented by individual and small group

study on weekends is the norm. Residence on Fort Belvoir supports and facilitates this regimen.

- A nominal day:
 - 0730-0900, small group preparation for case studies to be presented that day;
 - 0900-1030, first case study;
 - 1030-1200, second case study;
 - 1200-1330, lunch; occasionally with speaker
 - 1330-1500, third case study;
 - 1500-1700, small group or individual study;
 - 1700-1830, dinner; and
 - 1830, small group or individual study.

(NOTE: Each session includes a ten-minute break.)

- Full participation in all program activities is expected.
- Students must not be burdened by outside responsibilities during the course.
- One extended weekend break planned during the program.
- The total aggregation of all cases will portray the acquisition life cycle with a number of variations reflecting innovative application of Evolutionary Acquisition and technology insertion to achieve reduced cycle time.
- The cases address all Services, joint, and international programs.



American Society for Training and Development
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Brandon Hall Gold Award
for the AT&L Performance Learning Model as a Best Practice
Excellence in e-Learning 2003

Selected to represent DoD in President's Quality Awards in two categories in 2003



AT&L ranked among
Training Magazine's 2004 Training Top 100

Award-winning best practice presentations at national learning and development, training, performance measurement, balanced scorecard, strategic planning, and corporate university conferences

Student Comments

"Outstanding class. I've recommended it to other PMs already."

"I got more out of this course than any other course I ever attended, either in college or in DAU. A 'must have' course."

"Excellent course. Best DAU course I've ever attended. Good model, good execution. I really believe this is real learning."

"Educational in that it exposes a contractor to the training and thought patterns of the government."

"The case method provides insight into real cases, real scenarios, and sometimes even real outcomes. This type of learning is not provided in the typical learning environment."

"PMT 401 has re-activated the stimuli that are required for out-of-the-box applications. This course DOES provide a useful approach to problem solving."

"Excellent and productive for supporting the warfighter needs. Thanks for this opportunity."

"This course was fantastic. The case method is great and you hit the right mix of workshops and cases."

"An insightful adventure. Learned SO much from others and the superb staff."

"Excellent job of developing critical thinking skills and how to use them in daily personal and work life."



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DEDICATED TO
SUPPORTING THE WARFIGHTER

OFFERED BY THE
DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE –
SCHOOL OF PROGRAM MANAGERS

SPONSORED BY THE
DEFENSE ACQUISITION UNIVERSITY
FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

