

PROFESSIONAL FORUM



The MQS System

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was prepared by the Center for Army Leadership, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The Military Qualification Standards (MQS) system is designed to identify common task and branch training requirements for officers. It provides a framework that school commandants, unit commanders, and individual officers can use for common and branch specific officer training, education, and professional development.

MQS I covers precommissioning training; MQS II covers company grade officer training; and MQS III applies to field grade officer training.

The MQS system has two components—a military task and knowledge component and a professional military education component. The military task and knowledge component provides the critical tasks on which officers must train, while the professional military education component focuses on improving the officers' cognitive skills.

The MQS system identifies the critical battle-focused tasks, skills, and knowledge that officers must master at each stage of their careers. It establishes the responsibilities and standards for their professional development, training, and education.

Leader development results from the progressive and sequential education,

training, and experience an officer receives throughout his career. It starts in the precommissioning phases of training, continues through commissioning, branch education, and operational assignments, and ends only when an officer has completed his military service. This process depends for its success on institutional training, operational assignments, and self-development, all of which must work together if the process is to succeed.

School commandants (and other proponents) are most directly involved with institutional training. This includes, for example, the training that company grade officers receive in the officer basic and advanced courses and the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS³). Unit commanders, on the other hand, are most directly involved with operational assignments.

LINK

The MQS system provides the link between institutional training and operational assignments, and helps commandants construct their unit training plans and design their junior officer development programs to complement the training of their unit's METL (mission essential task list) tasks.

Individual officers are most directly involved with self-development, which includes professional reading and study. They are also ultimately responsible for

their development as leaders.

Of particular interest to company grade officers (Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard) is the implementation of the revised MQS II system. Its goal is to prepare company grade officers to accomplish their wartime tasks. It is also intended to provide the basis for their promotion to major, for their schooling at the command and staff college level, and for their advancement to positions of greater responsibility.

It serves as a bridge over which officers can progress through the first and second milestones of their careers (now called passage points). The requirements that make up the passage points include the completion of the appropriate branch schools and developmental assignments, demonstrated proficiency on common and branch tasks, and completion of specified portions of the Foundation Reading Program.

The first passage point occurs when an officer enters his branch advanced course. The second occurs when he completes his company grade career and either enters a resident command and staff course or enrolls in the non-resident Command and General Staff College course.

The military task and knowledge component of MQS II is organized into common task areas that are essential for all company grade officers and branch-specific task areas that apply only to the officers in a particular branch. The profes-

sional military education component of MQS II consists of a reading program and, for selected officers, advanced civil schooling as well.

MQS gives commanders the flexibility they need to establish leader development programs that complement their METL-based unit training programs. The METLs and warfighting must be the focus of unit leader development programs. Commanders must therefore tailor both their MQS task training programs and their professional reading programs to support their METL-based unit training plans. (MQS does not require commanders to train tasks that do not support their unit METLs.)

The MQS II implementation plan will include the distribution of both a common manual and a branch manual. The

MQS II common manual will be distributed in December 1990, and the MQS II branch manuals between January and March 1991. Each lieutenant and captain will receive personal copies of both manuals through his unit's pinpoint distribution system.

The U.S. Army Publications Distribution Center will ship the new manuals on the basis of specific unit requirements as identified on unit DA Forms 12-99. Unit commanders should make sure their pinpoint accounts accurately reflect authorizations for both lieutenants and captains, by branch. Similarly, officers should check with their units to make sure their copies of these manuals are on order.

After the initial fielding of the manuals, newly commissioned officers will receive their manuals through their officer basic

courses. Each service school should make sure enough copies of both manuals are on hand. In addition, each school should have some manuals for advanced courses officers who did not receive copies through their units. All officers should keep their MQS manuals when they leave these courses.

If all company grade officers and their leaders understand the overall Military Qualification Standards system, and if they have the materials they need, MQS II should effectively accomplish its goals.



LNOing

ALLEN L. TIFFANY

Many first lieutenants and junior captains are assigned as liaison officers (LNOs) on brigade and division staffs, and occasionally on a battalion staff as well. These are table of organization and equipment (TOE) positions. Unfortunately, the young officers are given few opportunities to act as LNOs, and spend most of their time as "assistants to the assistant" or as "project officers." Because of this, they learn little about how LNOs are supposed to work and exactly what it is they are supposed to do. When they do occasionally serve as LNOs between their units and others, it is normally within their own division and therefore not too hard for them to "muddle through."

Sometimes, though, they must serve outside their division, and this is when their jobs become more difficult. Such was the case when I was assigned as an

LNO on a brigade staff in the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord. One Friday afternoon, when the brigade was on its highest alert status, my commander walked in, pointed at me, and said, "I want you at corps headquarters by tomorrow morning. We've just been alerted."

I was excited and eager to take on this mission, but I had given little thought to performing my LNO duties 2,000 miles from my home station with an outfit I knew less about than they did about me and my unit. Fortunately, a quick cram session and assistance from some wise veterans gave me a substantial amount of institutional knowledge.

I found that while Field Manual 101-5 does give a good overview of an LNO's responsibilities, it does not discuss some of the more subtle tricks of the trade.

Doctrinally, LNOs are supposed to be exchanged between units when possible. If this cannot be done, liaison is effected from left to right and from higher to lower. At times, however, liaison must be effected from lower to higher. Thus, a lieutenant or captain serving as an LNO on a battalion or brigade staff might suddenly find himself as his unit's sole LNO to a headquarters one or more echelons above his parent headquarters; in other words, a brigade LNO could find himself working at a corps headquarters.

My brigade's mission was highly successful, and I believe my eleventh-hour cramming helped me help the unit. Both before and during the exercise, I did learn a lot, although I realized there was much more I had to learn. But I would like to share some of that institutional knowledge I picked up and some of those subtle tricks