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## CHANGES REQUIRED TO THE AERE SCRIT FOR PD POINTS

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**Service Paper**

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## **CHANGES REQUIRED TO THE AERE SCRIT FOR PD POINTS**

### **AIM**

1. The aim of this service paper is for the Aerospace Engineering Officer (AERE) Score Criteria (SCRIT) used at the National Performance Evaluation Report (PER) Board to attribute full Professional Development (PD) points for students completing their Master Defence Studies (MDS) as well as students not completing their MDS for both reporting periods after completing the Joint Command and Staff Programme (JCSP) at the Canadian Staff College in Toronto.

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. Last year, Maj Sébastien Thibeault, an AERE was on JCSP and raised a few points through Col Woods for the AERE Council consideration. His biggest concern was that in accordance with (IAW) AERE Council Directives at the time, somebody on JCSP needed to do some PD on his/her own time to be able to get PD points on the SCRIT for the following PER Board. Basically it was expected that the member would take a University Course or equivalent while attending JCSP. The only other option to avoid this situation was to have it done (PD) between 1 April and the beginning of the course – typically mid-August. This is difficult as most schools do not offer summer courses – not to mention that a few months prior to the course, one must take most of one's leave, conduct a House Hunting Trip (HHT), sell one's house etc.... After a debate, AERE Council decided that only students undertaking the MDS would be given the full points for PD. The SCRIT was changed accordingly.

3. After 24 weeks on JCSP, I now fully understand Maj Thibeault's concerns and their origin. I will demonstrate that the point he addressed last year should have been adopted and that,

as a matter of fact, the rationale behind adopting his reasoning only to give MDS students PD points is totally flawed.

## **DISCUSSION**

4. JCSP has changed drastically over the last few years (it even changed significantly since 2010) and we need to differentiate between myths and facts related to the course. Here is a list of facts that will ensure that everybody is on the same wavelength. Some of the facts are based on the information provided by the Canadian Forces College (CFC) and confirmed by the Programme Officer (Prog O), LCol Torrence. He also confirmed that the statistics provided are typical for the last few years:

- a. all courses are taught at the graduate level (Flag A);
- b. on average 80% of the students will undertake a MDS. This year 106 out of 131 students are registered in the MDS programme. The reasons given for those not undertaking a MDS are: they do not need to, they do not want to, they are not allowed to (Flag A);
- c. not everybody gets accepted for the MDS; the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) overlooks the programme and rejects approximately 8% of the applications. This year 12 students out of 126 applicants were initially rejected; all twelve students appealed the decision and 2 of those students were accepted. In summary, 106 students were accepted out of 126 applications (Flag A);
- d. on average 80% of the students who do their MDS will do it through two complementary courses rather go the Directed Research Paper (DRP) route (a.k.a. thesis). This year 26 students out of 126 MDS applicants selected the DRP route (Flag A);

- e. the expectation for the course is that one is able to write one thousand words in ten hours (or 100 words in 1 hour); this includes researching, planning, writing and reviewing one's work (Flag A);
- f. the difference in hours for MDS and non-MDS students is typically 20 hours per course. This 20 hours difference is usually based on the length on an essay – MDS students are required to write 4,000 words compared to 2,000 for non-MDS students (2,000 words / 100 words per hour equals 20 hours). In some instances, the difference less than 20 hours. As an example (Flag B), complementary study 536 – Case Studies in Canadian International Policy run by Dr. Adam Chapnick requires a MDS student to complete a Briefing Note of 3,500 to 4,000 words divided among 2 students and a 90 minutes presentation; a non-MDS student needs to complete a 1,500 to 2,000 word Take-Home Examination. The remaining course workload is exactly the same between the MDS and non-MDS student. Please notice as per RMCC ruling, non-MDS students are not permitted to complete the MDS workload. In this case (complementary study 536) he/she is not allowed to do the Briefing Note – the Take Home examination is the only option;
- g. non-MDS students still complete 12 out of the 12 graduate courses required for a MDS, but due to a reduce workload in two of the courses (complementary courses) only 10 courses are recognized by RMCC. The bottom line: non-MDS students are only 2 courses away from receiving a graduate degree;
- h. one complementary study will be completed prior to the 31 March, while the second complementary study will be completed after the 31 March. In other

words, the only difference in deliverables between a MDS student and a non-MDS student is 20 hours prior to 31 March and 20 hours from 1 April until the end of the course (Jun);

- i. the bare minimum workload outside working hours is as follows: 3 hours from Monday through Thursday and 6 hours over the weekend for a total of 18 hours a week (Flag A);
  - j. there are 28 weeks of workload at JCSP from beginning of the course until the 31 March (Christmas/Holiday Break removed) (Flag C);
  - k. there are 10 weeks of workload at JCSP from 1 Apr until Graduation (Spring Break and HHT week removed) (Flag D);
  - l. approximately 50% of students on JCSP are here with their family (55 people out of the 107 Canadians on the course are on Imposed Restriction (IR)) (Flag E). Of the 55 people on IR, approximately 70% are on IR at least 4 hours from home and the other 30% are on IR within 2 hours from home; and
  - m. MDS students opting for DRP require the same number of hours outside working hours as MDS students opting for complementary courses (and not more hours, as most people think). The reason being is that DRP students do not attend complementary courses; they get free time while complementary course students are in class, working on their deliverables, or preparing for classes. DRP students may spend their efforts and energy on their DRP.
5. The heart of my argument is based on the definition of PD on the AERE SCRIT (Flag F). The definition reads as follows:

“consider education/training completed on member's own time including: university-level courses, professional certification training. Two (2) pts for undertaking MSDS while attending JCSP. An additional 1 pt for 2nd PG (under Education) upon successful MSDS completion in the same year. Note: In order for a course to be considered it should normally be one week or longer in duration and points awarded should be reflective of the level of effort.”

I can attest, having served as the AERE Career Manager last year, that depending on its Board Members, some boards will award full points for PD to someone who completed a College course, as long as the course is somewhat in line with the occupation (i.e. accounting). I acknowledge that it is up to Board Members to come up with a general rule for determining whether a course meets the definition or not, and to apply that rule for all. The following year, new Board Members may decide to award 1 point or even 0 points for the same College course, as long as they are consistent in their approach.

6. After the long list of facts, let's put them into perspective. Somebody attending JCSP as a non-MDS student will work a minimum of 504 hours (18 hours a week over 28 weeks) outside working hours at the Graduate level for the first reporting period (1 Apr – 31 Mar). How doesn't he/she meet the definition of AERE SCRIT PD? How come 504 hours of the graduate level studies outside working hours does not meet the definition of PD, or 40 hours on his/her own time? Especially when, based on first-hand knowledge, someone attending a College Course may be awarded full points (2 points) for PD while someone who completes 504 hours at the Master Level receives 0 points. To add to the issue, AERE Council adopted the rule that a MDS student gets 2 points but a non-MDS student gets 0 points. They adopted this rule knowing all the while that unless a student is following the DRP route, by the 31 Mar both MDS and non-MDS students will have only a marginal difference of 20 hours or work separating them (depending on the chosen Complementary Study).

7. Finally, an AERE distance learning (DL) student attending JCSP gets 2 points for PD for both of the Reporting Periods. How does the case of the DL student differ from that of the student attending the residential program? One of the arguments brought forward is that the DL students have another job during the day and have JCSP in the evening. However, DL and residential students have it not so different here: residential students go to classes during the day and study every evening and weekends – this is especially true if their family is with them in Toronto, which is the case for 50% of all the students.

8. As mentioned above, AERE Council adopted the full PD points for MDS students but for only the first reporting period (beginning of the course around mid-Aug until 31 Mar). There is also an argument that for the second reporting period (after 31 March) points for PD should be awarded by the PER for that reporting period. From 31 Mar until the end of the course, MDS students will have put in 180 hours (18 hours a week over 10 weeks) and non-MDS will have put in 160 hours. Once again, this definitely meets the AERE PD definition; it is way more than the required minimum of 40 hours.

9. I also have inside information, as I was present in the room when AERE Council discussed Maj Thibeault's proposal last year. I know that it is extremely important for AERE Council to encourage all AERE officers to undertake the MDS while attending JCSP and this is one of the reasons behind last year's resolution. However, it is true many years ago when students did not have the complementary courses option, only the DRP option, that there was a huge discrepancy in the workload between MDS and non-MDS students. As this paper has demonstrated, this is not the case anymore. The number of hours for MDS and non-MDS is now so close that it would be foolish for an AERE not to apply for the MDS; it provides either 1 or 2



extra points under Education in the SCRIT (Flag F). This alone should meet the AERE Council's intent to strongly encourage the completion of a MDS. Finally, the current situation is totally unfair to a student who applies for the MDS and is rejected.

10. To look at this issue from a totally different perspective, I would think that the aim of sending students to JCSP would be to have them receive a promotion – either the year they are on JCSP, the year after, or, as worst case scenario, two years after the course – especially when there are only 3-4 promotions a year for AERE. I would think that it would be in the best interest of the occupation to give as many fair and deserving SCRIT points to these individuals. Additionally, who would argue that spending 504 or 160 hours outside working hours at the Graduate level does not meet the PD definition of the AERE SCRIT?

## **CONCLUSION**

11. Last year, as the AERE Career Manager, I was not in a position to understand clearly Maj Thibeault's point of view. However, I now believe he had more than one valid point. To ensure that I was not biased, I requested an honest opinion from my four other fellow AERE Officers on this course. They all agree on my analysis and proposal. Additionally to remove any AERE bias, I also talked to my colleagues from other occupations on this course including pilot, logistic of all three elements, Maritime Engineer (MARE), Maritime Surface (MARS), Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (EME), Air Combat System Officer (ACSO) and Communication and Electronics Engineer (CELE). They reviewed my logic and they all agree that it just makes sense.

12. The JCSP course has evolved so much over the last few years and the AERE SCRIT just need to be amended to reflect today's reality.

**RECOMMENDATION**

13. The recommendation is for all AERE JCSP members receive 2 points for PD for the first and second reporting period. At the PER Board following the JCSP course, MDS and non MDS students would both receive 2 points for JCSP completion and 2 points for PD. MDS Students would receive an extra 2 points if this is their first Master degree or an additional point if this is their second Master on the board. The first PER following JCSP, MDS and non-MDS students would also get 2 points for PD whether they were promoted that year or not. After all, they have completed at least 160 hours of graduate level courses for that reporting period.