



National Defense University

Joint Forces Staff College

Relevancy to the Joint Force

September 2017

Joint Forces Staff College

The Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) is one of five colleges comprising the National Defense University system.

The mission of JFSC is to educate national security professionals to plan and execute operational-level joint, multinational, and interagency operations to instill a primary commitment to joint, multinational, and interagency teamwork, attitudes, and perspectives. Military operations increasingly require the Services to work jointly and JFSC provides students the tools necessary to operate in a joint environment.

JFSC is composed of four schools, each with different student populations and purposes.

- Joint Advanced Warfighting School (JAWS) – 10.5 month in-residence program that produces graduates who can create campaign-quality concepts, plan for the employment of all elements of national power, accelerate transformation, succeed as joint force operational/strategic planners and be creative, conceptual, adaptive and innovative. JAWS is a 38 credit, Joint Professional Military Education Phase II (JPME II) degree program, culminating with a Master of Science in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.
- Joint and Combined Warfighting School (JCWS) – 10 week in-residence program that produces graduates capable of creatively and effectively planning operational level warfighting for joint and combined military forces while integrating the effects of the United States Government, non-governmental

organizations, and international organizations to ensure the success of Combatant and Joint Task Force Commanders functioning within an uncertain operating environment. Graduates of the program earn 10 graduate credits and JPME II certification.

- Joint Continuing and Distance Education School (JCDES) offers Joint and Combined Warfighting School – Hybrid (JCWS-H) – 40 week blended distance learning/in-residence program similar to the in-residence JCWS but geared primarily toward preparing reserve component officers for joint duty assignments. Graduates of the program earn 9 graduate credits and JPME II certification.
- Joint Command, Control, and Information Operations School (JC2IOS) – Designed to educate and train military officers and civilian equivalents in the concepts, applications, and procedures associated with C4I and Information Operations planning in joint and multinational environments. The school is comprised of five standalone courses.
 - Joint Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence/Cyber Staff and Operations Course (JC4ICSOC) – 3 graduate credits
 - Joint Information Operations Planners' Course (JIOPC)
 - Joint Military Deception Training Course (JMTC)
 - Defense OPSEC Planners' Course (DOPC)
 - Joint Information Operations Orientation Course (JIOOC)

Relevancy

Students graduating from the three JFSC JPME II programs comprise 57% of all Department of Defense JPME II throughput¹; this percentage increases to 74% when graduates across National Defense University are included. As the top producer of JPME II qualified officers, JFSC is in a unique position to impact the leaders of tomorrow.

Survey Feedback

Feedback from students across JFSC schools is overwhelmingly positive. Survey results suggest that schools are achieving their respective missions and students are finding their educational experiences worthwhile and valuable. Further, at program/course completion, a strong majority of students indicate that they would recommend enrollment to others and that the curriculum is up-to-date. The table below shows a breakdown of key summative data from 2016 JFSC offerings.

Analyses of follow-on survey data from JPME II graduates often find increased percentages of respondents who indicate their respective program was worthwhile and valuable and that they would recommend it to others. As an example, while 72% of JAWS AY15-16 respondents indicated they would recommend enrollment when surveyed at the end of the program, the percentage increased to 83% six months post-graduation. Further, at this time, all graduate respondents agreed the JAWS program improved their ability to design, coordinate, and execute military plans at the operational-strategic level of war, and 94% agreed JAWS improved their ability to be a creative, innovative, adaptive, and transformative leader.

“JAWS was one of the most demanding academic programs, civilian or military, I have completed. I continue to benefit from the knowledge, skills and perspectives I gained from the course, and from the faculty's mentorship.”

Although more than 90% of JPME II respondents indicate the curriculum is up-to-date, some graduate respondents

Program/ Course	Agreement Percentages			
	Achieved mission	Worthwhile & valuable	Recommend to others	Curriculum is up-to-date
JAWS	—	88% (94%)	72% (83%)	97%
JCWS	93%	93%	92%	91%
JCDES/ JCWS-H	96%	98%	95%	96%
JC4ICSOC	100%	100%	100%	—
JIOPC	96%	97%	94%	—
JMTC	100%	100%	100%	—
DOPC	94%	94%	94%	—

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent data from the cohort's Graduate Survey.

¹ Based on the 2016 Joint Officer Management Report

have identified select Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) learning areas/objectives that are not applicable to their follow-on job duties. Despite not using all skill sets, nearly all respondents report that their respective programs adequately prepared them to perform duties related to each of the OPMEP areas. Supervisor ratings confirm that graduates adequately perform in each of the respective OPMEP learning areas. Qualitative feedback from supervisors further confirms that JFSC attendance is relevant and value-added.

“Knowing JOPP is a key aspect of our mission. Graduate's in-depth knowledge of JOPP (that he gained at JCWS) is enabling him to be more successful in his job.”

“The graduate's in-depth understanding of interagency and geo-political relationships proved critical to partnership building and helped provide strategic options to warfighters and senior decision makers.”

“I depend on the graduate every day to analyze complex products and then prioritize tasks for a 45 person joint directorate. His attendance at JCWS increased his abilities and confidence in this task set.”

“JCWS has enabled him to translate guidance from the strategic level into operational plans in a joint and multinational environment.”

“Graduate is responsible for developing the Whole-of-Government Space Control Enterprise Architecture. Understanding the ‘Big Picture’ regarding how all the Services, Departments, Agencies and others must come together is key. JPME II was key to setting that stage.”

Further, JAWS supervisors typically rate JAWS graduates above average in comparison to other war college graduates across all assessed skill categories: knowledge/use of joint doctrine, critical thinking skills, strategic thinking skills, verbal communication skills, written communication skills, and overall effectiveness. Open-ended responses support that there are qualitative differences between graduates of JAWS and other war colleges.

“The amount of work is significantly more than the other War Colleges but in the end you will be light years ahead of your peers by the exposure, critical thinking and creative aspects of the curriculum.”

–JAWS Graduate

“Strategic thinking and drawing the connections between Grand Strategy (or lack thereof) and the operational level of war - i.e. referencing/ applying the operational art of war to the strategic challenges at the Joint Staff level.”

–JAWS Supervisor

Combatant Command Feedback

In 2016, the JFSC Commandant requested feedback from the Combatant Commands (CCMDs) to ensure JAWS graduates were effectively supporting the CCMDs' needs. Responses were received from USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, USPACOM, and USTRANSCOM and indicated great satisfaction with the quality of JAWS graduates. Multiple CCMDs identified quality differences between JAWS and non-JAWS graduates, with requests for additional JAWS graduates to be assigned to the CCMDs. Excerpts from the response letters are provided on the following page for reference.

USCENTCOM: “The education received from the JAWS program gives them the ability and confidence to lead operations and planning teams faced with extremely challenging problems. Each of our JAWS graduates has shown strengths in the following areas: verbal & written communication, thoughtful decisiveness, time & resource management, endurance & perseverance, strategic perspective, historical perspective.”

USEUCOM: “We have found that because graduates are generally more competent in the joint arena than staff officers without JAWs experience, they tend to view problems through a joint lens more effectively. This is critically important in O6 level staff officers that we routinely rely on to synchronize staff inputs and arrive at a comprehensive joint solution to COCOM level problems. This joint perspective also allows more effective communication with flag level leaders regardless of service... It is clear that attendance at JAWs makes staff officers more competent/capable in the joint environment.”

USPACOM: “USPACOM could not be more pleased with the high level of competency we see with JAWS graduates assigned to this headquarters. Their output is always of the highest quality and this command relies on their ability to effectively plan, communicate, and synchronize at the 4-Star level. Their efforts facilitate the ability of our Commander to make the correct decisions and making them quickly. Our thanks to you and your institution for the high quality graduates you are producing.”

USTRANSCOM: “The abilities demonstrated by Col [REDACTED] were truly superior. He was quickly integrated into our Operations and Plans Directorate (TCJ3). The knowledge and

skill set he possessed were utilized working OPLANS for the CENTCOM and EUCOM AORs. He quickly became the Subject Matter Expert within our East Division and the Command. His ability to think through complex problems meant he was the obvious choice to represent USTRANSCOM in Afghanistan to assist US Forces - Afghanistan to prepare for the retrograde of thousands of pieces of equipment and material in preparation for the Presidential directed drawdown in 2014 and 2015. Additionally, Col [REDACTED] provided pivotal leadership in the most diverse and high operations tempo Division within the Directorate during multiple Division Chief turnovers as a result of retirements and PCS requirements.”

USTRANSCOM – Joint Enabling Capabilities Command: “The JAWS graduates received over the past several years were quickly integrated into the JECC baffle rhythm and staff processes. All of them have been able to contribute in meaningful ways almost immediately upon arrival, with several being sent on operational missions within weeks. By far, the curriculum JAWS provides these officers gives them a leg up on their peers.... I rely on my JAWS graduates to take over the heavy-lifting jobs at the JECC on arrival, and all of them eventually assume leadership roles within the command.... Their ability to tie the political, strategic, and historical backgrounds into operational planning and execution is unmatched. I believe the education they received at JAWS is a direct contributor to their ability to do that. The credibility of the JECC as a center of excellence for joint operational planning rests in no small part on the credentials of our JAWS graduates.”

External Feedback²

In addition to each of JFSC's three JPME II programs having successfully gone through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE), an additional external review of JFSC found:

The curriculum at JFSC is relevant and appropriate for the goals and missions of the institution. The JCWS curriculum is more relevant to those enroute to their first joint assignment and less relevant to more-senior officers. (pg. 4)

A more in-depth analysis of JCWS, including feedback from over 700 JCWS graduates on an Alumni Survey conducted by National Defense University's Academic Affairs, found:

1. JCWS program content, curriculum, and course materials are sound and well-documented
2. Sequencing of attendance is linked to the value of JCWS; officers attending earlier in their careers and before their first Joint assignment experience the highest value-added; Army officers report higher value from their JCWS education than officers from other Services
3. In general, the character of in-residence education, academic flexibility, academic freedom, and the length of the JCWS program are favorably assessed by graduates; graduates describe opportunities for increased efficiencies
4. Post-JCWS assignment patterns effect program value; placing graduates into Joint assignments immediately following program completion increases the value-added

Overall the largest contributing factor in determining the value of the JCWS program is the timing of an individual's assignment both to the schoolhouse and afterward. JCWS graduate feedback indicates that the program is sufficiently preparing officers for Joint assignments. In order to properly apply these lessons, JCWS graduates would, ideally, attend JCWS before serving in a Joint assignment and upon graduation would be assigned to a Joint billet. (pg. 17)

Acculturation and Contribution to a Joint Team

Initial assessment of the Joint Acculturation Survey data from all 2016 JCWS and JCWS-H classes indicates that students graduate from their respective programs with a more common or joint perspective compared to when they entered. Students across years, programs, and Services routinely identify the acculturation process and interaction with other Services, interagency, and multinational partners as one of the most beneficial aspects of their JFSC experience.

"Although my experience serving on Joint Staff was superb...the JFSC experience provided even GREATER acculturation because of the intensive 10 weeks of working 8-12 hours days plus off hours spent with Officers from all Services...the difference being we were immersed (collectively) in studying/analyzing Joint Pubs and applied knowledge (JOPP) and debated (assumptions) real world problems. You cannot get this type of experience anywhere else...including on a JTF. Well done JFSC!!"
- JCWS Graduate (USN)

² "Review of JFSC – May 2013" - J7 FY13 Annual Guidance

“JCWS is an absolutely outstanding course. The opportunity to interact with officers from other services and countries over international problem solving is absolutely essential to preparing today's officer for tomorrow's challenges.”

- JCWS Graduate (USA)

“Understanding the mindsets and cultures of the various services provided me with a greater appreciation as to how each service approaches and/or tackles different problem sets. It also allowed me to gain a better appreciation of looking at problems from various angles and/or different points of view.”

- JCWS Graduate (USMC)

“I was truly humbled by the quality and quantity of brainpower that existed in our class. And, the design of the course allowed a great deal of interaction, open discussion, and crosstalk which increased my strategic thought, improved my cross-service perception, and made me proud to know that the caliber of our DoD officers is beyond impressive.”

-JCWS Graduate (USAF)

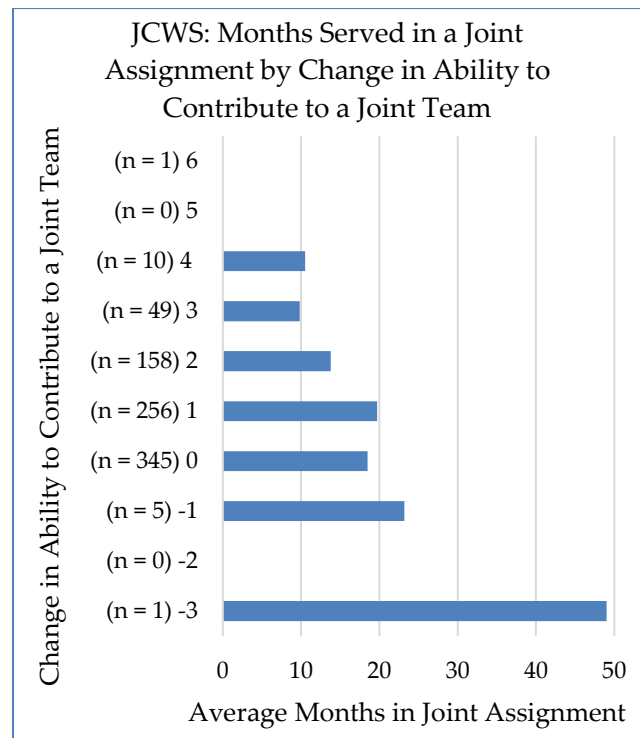
“A terrific course. I learned a lot, I benefited from the close friendships I have made with those classmates from other services, and I feel more qualified to fill my joint position at PACOM. All in all, well done to you all.”

-JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate

“Excellent course overall – well worth the time/effort. Faculty was great; opportunity to interact with other services was outstanding.”

-JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate

In addition to developing more joint perspectives, 57% of JCWS and 69% of JCWS-H students report an increase in their ability to substantially and effectively contribute to a joint team upon completion of their programs. Compared to JCWS-H respondents, who serve an average of 9 months in a joint assignment prior to arriving at JFSC (defined as time served in Title 10 active duty status at a unified or sub-unified command, Joint Task Force, or other joint operational headquarters), JCWS respondents enter with an average of 17 months. Further breakdown of the 825 JCWS respondents by average months in a joint assignment and change in ability to contribute to a joint team are provided in the table below.



Students who report larger gains in their ability to contribute to a joint team (2 or more points on a 7-point scale), typically have less prior time in joint assignments. For the 42% (n = 345) of JCWS students who report no change in their ability to contribute to a joint team upon program completion, the average length of time

in a joint assignment is 18 months. Of those individuals with no change, 49% (n =168) were at full performance capacity upon arrival (i.e., their ability to contribute to a joint team was a 7 on both the pre and post); this group has an average of 19 months in joint assignments. For the six students who show decreases in their ability, average time in a joint assignment increases to 28 months. It is important to note, other background characteristics (e.g., age [41 years], total time in Title 10 active duty status [17 years]) are consistent for both respondents who do and do not report gains. Therefore, students who arrive at JFSC with less joint experience typically make the largest gains in their ability to effectively and substantially contribute to a joint team.

While the average gains for JCWS and JCWS-H are .9 and 1.3, respectively, on average, JAWS students report a 2 point improvement (on the 7-point scale) in their ability to substantially and effectively contribute to a joint team upon program completion. Further, 100% of JAWS graduate respondents rate their ability to contribute in the top two response categories. Supervisor ratings validate these positive findings. Qualitative feedback across programs supports that JFSC graduates, both domestic and foreign, are making a difference in the joint force.

“Just yesterday I was in a meeting talking about JSCP, GEF, and COA development. There was a JPME II classmate leading the effort; I remember thinking I would be clueless in this meeting if it weren’t for this course.”
–JCWS Graduate

“As a senior Canadian Officer this course was invaluable to me in understanding how the

US military and key agencies work together. In my present job at Chief Defence Intelligence, Canadian equivalent to the US DIA, what I have learned and contacts from the course have already paid dividends.”
–JCWS Graduate

“I have been pleasantly surprised at the immediate impact of the course upon my assignment at HQ CENTCOM and also in my current deployment to Afghanistan. I have become engaged with the majority of topics covered in the course in a way that was not apparent in previous assignments. I would have to say my timing in attending the course was perfect, and the relevance of the skills, concepts, and documents covered in the course to my job is invaluable.”
–JCWS Graduate

“Upon returning to Kenya, I was appointed the Ops Officer of my Bn which is due to deploy in Somalia in a joint operation under the AU. This was to take advantage of what I had learned in this course despite being the junior Major in the Battalion.”
–JCWS Graduate

“Outstanding content, structure, instructors, and support staff – really pleased and I know it will help me day-to-day in the field and in the Pentagon.”
–JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate

“Both the lessons and my experiences from the course will greatly influence the remainder of my military career.”
–JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate

“A few weeks ago I was asked to review a policy document before its release. After reading the draft it was obvious the writer

was not familiar with the subject or how to find applicable guidance. I took the time to organize the material in a way that a technical or nontechnical reader could follow its intended purpose and guidance it was meant to provide. I included numerous examples of the current policy and added these as references (listing them in a Ref block). This morning the new policy was released with most of my suggestions.”

–JAWS Graduate

“As an international student I feel that I have left JAWS as a far more rounded officer which has enabled me to be far more effective in my new role. I am incredibly appreciative to all of the faculty and students who helped to educate me and provide insight into the future of our national and military endeavors.”

–JAWS Graduate

“JAWS was the hardest academic challenge that I ever faced but was truly one of the most rewarding experiences of my military career. The quality of the students and the instructors was amazing and I learned just as much from my peers as I did from the courses of instruction. I would highly recommend the course to anyone who is looking for a real academic challenge.”

–JAWS Graduate

Timing of Attendance

Data and findings from external reviews support that JFSC programs and courses are relevant to the joint force; however, timing of attendance during an individual’s career may have a direct impact on the relevancy for that individual. Each Service maintains responsibility for selecting and sending

students to JFSC. In order to maximize return on educational investment and ensure students are prepared to serve in a joint capacity, students should attend their respective programs enroute to or early in their assignments, and not at the end. For JCWS, the largest producer of JPME II qualified officers, students would ideally attend enroute to their first joint duty assignment or at least within their first year. Roughly 35% of JCWS US military students meet this criteria, with the percentage increasing to approximately 50% during the summer session.

Consistent with findings from external reviews, student/graduate and supervisor feedback routinely identifies that timing of attendance is critical. Feedback from graduates who attend JFSC enroute to their first joint assignment often cite the value of having JPME II prior to arrival at the assignment. Despite the majority of JFSC students finding their respective programs worthwhile and valuable, officers attending JFSC later in their careers frequently express a desire to have taken the course prior to their first joint assignment.

“Working with other Services in a classroom learning environment and in a classroom planning environment was exactly the preparation needed to proceed to my Joint assignment at a CCMD.”

–JCWS Graduate

“The exposure to the processes and structure of a joint command were extremely helpful. I attended enroute with no prior joint experience, so my ‘a-ha’ moments continue to come as I match my learning with my current experiences.”

–JCWS Graduate

“It helped a lot with expectations when I got to my job. If I had come to my job without JPME 2 experience, my learning curve would have been even steeper than it already is.”

–*JCWS Graduate*

“JCWS is a phenomenal course and remains a must for all prospective joint officers prior to arriving at their joint assignment...the benefits of having a JCWS graduate significantly outweighs the loss of an officer for two months while attending the course. It has been my experience that JCWS grads are qualitatively better performers at the joint level than non-JCWS officers.”

–*JCWS Supervisor*

“Good course! I wish I had completed it before I got into my current military job. It would have made me better at it.”

–*JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate*

“This entire course is extremely valuable to my military career and should be taken at the beginning of a Joint assignment. I have been in a Joint Command for three years and will serve much longer. The DL portion of this course is excellent in that it spaces the assignments out appropriately in consideration to our full time job.”

–*JCWS-H (formerly AJPME) Graduate*

Informal Feedback

In addition to feedback collected via formal mechanisms, JFSC often receives unsolicited feedback from graduates providing personal updates and identifying the applicability of their JFSC experiences to their current assignments.

“I finally made it to Korea and am getting settled into my new job, as planner on the J4 staff. It’s amazing how much stuff we talked about in class we are actually doing here (coordinating with our interagency and international partners - I work right next to a ROK LTC). I am definitely glad I went to JPME II prior to beginning work.”

“My leadership is already utilizing the skills you taught me in JPME-II... Seems I’ve been tagged as the ‘go-to’ guy for joint related matters by my leadership.”

“Day 1 of my assignment here my boss was introducing me as ‘the expert planner’ because I was the only one in the office with JPME 2.”

“I have already used what I learned regarding Operational Design and producing Planning Guidance for the permanent infrastructure effort here in Afghanistan over the next 32 months... I have also been coaching my CPTs and MAJs about understanding the operational environment. All that stuff we learned/talked about is incredibly relevant here, and has helped me be a better leader/coach for them. Anyway, all is well and we are making an impact. Just wanted to let you know that you made an impact on me and, by extension, are making a positive difference in this theater.”

“Just wanted to let you know how well JCWS prepared me for this job. I am way ahead of the majority of my counterparts that don't have JPME II – and there are a lot of them. You don't truly realize the value of what you learned until you have to apply it in your next job.”

Conclusion

Overall, findings suggest JFSC programs and courses meet their intended missions and are relevant to the joint force. While JFSC strives to maintain relevancy through its continuous curriculum development process, maximum relevancy will not be reached until students attend their respective programs at the most appropriate and beneficial times in their careers. Further, although nearly all students recognize the immediate benefit of their education, as evidenced by their overwhelmingly positive feedback at program/course completion, additional evidence gathered through follow-up graduate surveys and informal feedback suggests that students often do not recognize the full value of their JFSC experience until they have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills at their follow-on assignments.



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