
Military Qualification Standards

— what it is and how it works

By Van Newman

The Army's system to develop officers as leaders is called military qualification standards (MQS). It provides officers, school commandants, and commanders with a framework for common and branch-specific training, education, and professional development. MQS I encompasses precommissioning training; MQS II covers company grade officer training; and MQS III applies to field grade officers.

The MQS system is designed to identify common and branch training

requirements for officers. It 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 their 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 the professional development, training, and education of Army officers.

MQS and Leader Development

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 stops only when the officer completes his

military service. The process depends on three pillars for its success—institutional training, operational assignments, and self-development. Each of the pillars must work in concert with the others if the process is to be successful.

School commandants (and other proponents) are most directly involved with the institutional training pillar. Training company grade officers receive in the officer basic course, officer advanced course, and the combined arms and services staff school (CAS³) falls into this category.

Unit commanders are most directly involved with the operational assignments pillar. The MQS system provides the link between institutional training and operational assignments.

It helps the commander construct his unit training plan and design his junior officer development program to complement the training of his unit mission-essential task list (METL). The individual officer is most directly involved with the self-development pillar. It includes professional reading and self study.

The individual is also the one ultimately responsible for his or her development as a leader.

MQS II

MQS II applies to company grade officers in the Active Army, US Army Reserve, and Army National Guard. The goal of MQS II is to prepare company grade officers to accomplish their wartime tasks, to provide the basis for promotion to major and attendance at command and general staff college (C&GSC) level schooling, and to prepare officers for service

in positions of greater responsibility.

It provides the bridge for officers to progress through the first and second milestones in their careers (now called passage points). The requirements that comprise the passage points include completion of 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 officers enter their branch advanced courses. The second occurs when officers complete their company grade careers and either enter resident CGSC or enroll in non-resident CGSC.

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

The professional military education component of MQS II consists of a reading program and, for selected officers, advanced civil schooling. MQS provides commanders with the flexibility they need to establish leader development programs for their officers that complement their METL-based unit training programs.

The focus of unit leader development programs must be warfighting and the METL. Therefore, commanders must tailor both their MQS task training program and their professional reading program to support their METL-based unit training plans. MQS does not require commanders to train tasks which do not

support their unit METLs.

The MQS II implementation plan will involve distribution of both a common manual and branch manual. The MQS II Common Manual will be distributed in December 1990. The MQS II branch manuals will be distributed during January to March 1991. Each lieutenant and captain will receive a personal copy of the MQS II common and branch manual.

The new MQS II manuals will be fielded through pinpoint distribution. Unit commanders should ensure their pinpoint accounts accurately reflect both lieutenant and captain authorizations by branch. The US Army Publications Distribution Center will ship the new manuals based on specific unit requirements identified on unit DA Form 12-99. Once the manuals are fielded, follow-on distribution (to newly commissioned officers) will be accomplished through the officer basic course.

MQS is a system of training based on the philosophy that officers are responsible for their duty performance. Accordingly, officers should ensure that they receive a current copy of the appropriate manuals. Check with your unit now to verify that your copies of the MQS II manuals are on order.

Mr. Van Newman is an educational specialist with the US Army Chemical School. He is assigned to the Individual and Unit Training Course Development Division.