
DISAM Curriculum Review

By

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The annual DISAM Curriculum Review was held this year on 23 and 24 February. In the cover letter to the formal minutes, addressed to the DISAM Policy and Advisory Council members, COL Judy-Ann Carroll, DISAM Commandant wrote: "From my perspective, this was one of the best curriculum review sessions ever held. Your representatives were highly knowledgeable about your training requirements, fully participated in the discussions, and provided quality input for quota identification and dissemination." The complete minutes of the curriculum review, along with copies of the briefing charts are currently available on the DISAM webpage at <http://disam.osd.mil>.

Each year the curriculum review is convened with two major purposes: to review and validate formal changes to the content of DISAM courses, and to determine the numbers of classes and student quota allocations for the up coming year. In addition, this year the theme of the curriculum review was expanded to incorporate discussions of significant additional educational initiatives taking place at DISAM that are relevant to the international security cooperation community, such as distance learning and individual professional development. (See related articles by Dr. Mortsof and Lt Col Currie.)

Reviewing the curriculum is an on-going practice at DISAM that is not limited to an annual exercise. While the formal review is only held once a year, minor changes to courses are continuously incorporated each time a class is presented. In addition, recommendations and on-going feedback from the end-of-course critiques are carefully evaluated and incorporated into classes when appropriate. For major revisions, updates and new courses, the Policy and Advisory Council send their representatives to DISAM in February each year to evaluate proposals. DISAM faculty members constantly monitor activity within the security cooperation community to make sure the information in our courses is current and useful.

The meeting this year focused on the Overseas Course (SAM-O), the CONUS Course (SAM-C) and the Training Officer Course (SAM-TO). Additional status was presented on the two new DISAM courses, Logistics Customer Support Course (SAM-CS), which debuted in FY1999, and the Case Reconciliation Course (SAM-CR), which was piloted in April 2000. The Case Reconciliation course is of particular interest because, following the model of the Training Officer course, DISAM has once again partnered with the military departments to provide service unique instruction.

The student quota allocations and the number of DISAM classes for the up coming year generated much discussion. There has been considerable dismay over the last two years that, notwithstanding projections from the military departments, many quotas for DISAM classes are not being filled. Because of low student registrations, three classes were cancelled in FY1999 and two classes have been cancelled in FY2000 to date. The minimum number of students per class is 20 and the limit is 36.

The next displays the number of class offerings proposed and agreed to for FY2001:

	C	CO	CM	CF	CS	CR	TO	E	A
FY 2001 DISAM OFFERINGS	8	3	4	3	2	2	5	4	2
<p><i>This information does not include SAM-O, SAM-F, SAM-P, METS, or On-site Courses.</i></p> <p>NOTES:</p> <p>(1) The SAM-CS Course will be scheduled for two offerings in residence for FY2001. If a specific organization requires an on-site, they must schedule it through the on-site coordinator, and provide the funding.</p> <p>(2) There will be two resident SAM-CR Courses. Additional CR courses will be scheduled on-site as programmed by the MILDEP coordinators. For FY2001, only one on-site CR course per MILDEP will be funded by DISAM.</p> <p>(3) Average of 15 U.S. government executives per class. This class is combined with an average of 15 industry students for an overall class size of 30.</p>									

Although some of the reasons for the low registration levels in DISAM classes can be attributed to reengineering, and the “rightsizing” of organizations, another problem that has been identified is a systemic student management issue. Stated simply, the quotas are not reaching the targeted students. In addition to improving communication with the training management organizations, the DISAM registrar is working with the military services to reach out to students. Two weeks prior to a class start date, the DISAM registrar will post the number of unused quotas in a class on the DISAM webpage, and open those seats to any eligible applicants. That way, interested potential students can individually notify their training monitors of the availability of seats and process the paperwork for class.

The DISAM webpage contains detailed information regarding course content and registration procedures. It also has a list of military service points of contact for DISAM courses.

The DISAM faculty and staff are committed to continuous improvement in our educational mission. The curriculum review is an important way that we stay current with requirements, but it is not the only way. The yearly meeting is a two-way forum in the sharing of information.

About the Author

Virginia Caudill is an associate professor and the Director, Management Studies at DISAM. She has over 25 years of international and security assistance experience. She has a bachelors degree from the University of the Americas in Mexico, and an MPA from the University of Dayton. In addition she has an adult education teaching certificate from Milligan College in Tennessee. She has been teaching at DISAM since 1988.