



# Maritime Operational Planners Course

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## Overview

The Maritime Operational Planners Course (MOPC) is a 60-day program of instruction that develops planners capable of performing in high-tempo, dynamic maritime environments at the operational level of war. The course is made available to a select group of officers, O-3 to O-5 en route or already assigned to a maritime headquarters. MOPC produces officers capable of forming, organizing, and leading operational planning teams and proficient in the detailed application of concepts and methods involved with Navy planning. The curriculum is based on Navy, naval, and joint doctrine as well as emerging concepts at fleet Maritime Operations Centers (MOC) and observations from the Naval War College Assist and Assess Team's fleet engagement. Upon completion of the MOPC, graduates are designated Maritime Operational Planners, acquiring the additional qualification designation (AQD) of JPM.

## Background

National defense strategies trending toward Great Power Competition and the prominence of the maritime domain increasingly depend on Naval Component Commanders' (NCC) and Numbered Fleet Commanders' (NFC) ability to successfully respond to national requirements. The demand on staffs at fleet MOCs have significantly increased as the Navy's operational level of war capabilities have evolved. Evolving strategy and future crises require NCC and NFC to have an increased planning capability and capacity to meet both routine and crisis planning requirements while simultaneously supporting ongoing operational plan and order development. In response to these demands, the Naval War College created the MOPC to provide Navy operational level staffs with requisite maritime planning capability and capacity.

## Mission

The mission of the Maritime Operational Planners Course is to provide individuals to fleet staffs who are educated in all facets of Navy Planning and are prepared to immediately and effectively serve on maritime component staffs as skilled planning team leaders and key members.

## Education Outcome

The overarching course objectives are to:

- Analyze, understand, and apply Naval Planning to create plans, orders, and staff estimates at the operational level of war throughout the range of military operations.
- Understand the strategic context and fundamentals of naval and joint operations, operational art, operational design, and the relationship of operational art to strategy and tactics.
- Comprehend the organization and functions of a maritime component staff.
- Demonstrate the ability to lead cohesive and well-trained planning teams, fostering effective collaborative relationships and trust among diverse organizations and individuals.

## Expectations of the Graduate

- Able to excel as a planning team leader addressing operational level planning problems.
- Able to conduct contingency or crisis planning across the range of military operations.
- Able to write maritime component directives (supporting plans and orders with select annexes).
- Able to interact across all echelons of a joint force and effectively represent maritime perspective as a liaison to higher, adjacent, and subordinate headquarters, and participating interagency and multinational forces.

## Approach

MOPC's central approach is experiential education in which the faculty purposefully engage with learners in direct practice that reflects concepts, methods, and experiences the graduate will be expected to demonstrate during follow-on assignments. The MOPC highlights staff functional planning concerns, primarily for those staff officers whose duties include participation on planning teams at the numbered fleet (or equivalent) level. The MOPC provides comprehensive methods to teach planners how to proactively translate strategic objectives into operational actions.

- **Foundation.** The MOPC is a practitioner's course that examines both the art and science associated with military activities across the range of military operations. Introductory sessions anchor the MOPC course of instruction with an examination of key operational art and theoretical concepts that form the foundations of planning.
- **Process centric.** This course is organized in modules that center on the steps of the Navy Planning Process (NPP): *Mission Analysis, Course of Action (COA) Development, COA Analysis, COA Comparison and Decision, Directive Development, and Transition*. Equally important is the incorporation of design methodology and intelligence preparation of the operational environment, with additional emphasis on staff functions and activities integral to Navy planning: command and control, intelligence, sustainment, fires, protection, assessment, and operational in the information environments.
- **Repetition.** The course incorporates lectures, seminars, and practical exercises using realistic case studies relevant to current global maritime challenges. The MOPC includes multiple in-depth iterations of the navy planning process, exposing students to multiple maritime problems. During each of the planning iterations students, as part of the OPT, will be required to execute each step and sub step of the NPP and produce associated products; information and decision briefs, written directives (plans, orders, FRAGORDS, etc.), and select staff estimate products.
- **Comprehend, Apply, Synthesize.** The MOPC uses three main scenarios (fictional case studies) as vehicles to: first, comprehend Navy planning and the techniques and procedures for each of the planning sub-steps; second, allow students to apply the processes in a controlled environment under moderator guidance and feedback; and third, ensure students have the opportunity to demonstrate facility with the joint, combined, operational level planning and are able to instruct the planning team in the planning processes.
- **OPT Leadership.** During each of the planning iterations throughout the course students are formed into planning teams and perform planning and staff processes in support of the mission and planning requirements. Student positions within the planning team are rotated to allow many opportunities for students to lead and direct the process, develop directives, and conduct briefings.
- **Time constrained planning.** Additionally, several short-duration crisis planning evolutions are woven through the course to expose students to the utilization and value of the NPP in a time compressed environment.