

# Career Field Certification — Creating an Agile Contracting Workforce

by Ms. Carolina M. Woods, Staff Writer

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), signed into law in November 1990, requires the secretary of defense to establish education and training standards, requirements and courses for the civilian and military acquisition workforce. Throughout the years following the implementation of DAWIA, there have been many changes to the education and training standards that reflect a changing acquisition environment. As such, the Department of Defense (DoD) developed

a series of educational programs for each career field geared toward certification in that field.

Certifications recognize the level to which a member of the DoD acquisition workforce has achieved functional and core acquisition competencies required by a career field. As described by Ms. Peg Janes, deputy director, contract financing and payment, “Implementing regulations describe the purpose of the DoD acquisition technology & logistics workforce education, training, and career development program, which is designed to

create a professional, agile and motivated workforce that consistently makes smart business decisions, acts in an ethical manner and delivers timely and affordable capabilities to the warfighter.”

For the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), a series of changes currently being implemented to the certification requirements for the mission-critical contracting career field are designed to develop a “motivated and agile workforce of new contract business strategists,” Ms. Janes commented. The contracting career field includes the positions of contract specialist, contract termination specialist, contract administrator, administrative contracting officer, contract price/cost analyst, procurement analyst and termination contracting officer. As business advisors, contracting personnel create effective, efficient and proper business arrangements, have a strategic focus on acquisition and effectively leverage DoD spending to tax dollars to reflect customers’ needs. They are required to have knowledge of the legislation, policies, regulations and methods used in contracting, as well as knowledge of business and industry practices, sources of supply, cost factors, cost and price analysis techniques and general requirements characteristics.

Certification requirements for the career field are not new, and over the course of the last three years, the Defense Acquisition University has been transforming the contracting curriculum required for all three levels of certification to incorporate the new competencies required within the workforce. As Ms. Janes explained, “the new curriculum also continues the conversion from stove-piped to integrated training, where concepts are introduced and discussed in conjunction with the contracting process.”

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In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, the new contracting career field Level I and Level III certification curricula and corresponding certification requirement changes were fielded. The curriculum for the Level II certification requirements was first fielded in October 2006 (fiscal year 2007). To facilitate the learning process, the revamped contracting curriculum utilizes existing technologies for some courses to bring the classroom to students via distance learning.

One of the main challenges that has stemmed from the changes to the contracting certification curriculum and requirements is recognizing that there may be instances where an individual has completed all of the prior Level II contracting courses but has not satisfied the two years of contracting experience required for Level II certification by the deadline of Sept. 30, 2006. To preclude people in this situation from having to

complete the new course curriculum, the defense procurement and acquisition policy director issued a memorandum on Sept. 13, 2006, granting a grace period for these employees to fulfill the experience requirement.



**(Top and Above Right)** Students at a defense acquisition certification course at Defense Acquisition University, Ft. Belvoir, Va. (Photos courtesy of Defense Acquisition University)

**(Previous Page, Background)** Defense Acquisition University at Ft. Belvoir, Va. (Photo by Mr. Patrick Maloney, U.S. Army)

*Individuals who have completed all prior training requirements as of Sept. 30, 2006, but who have yet to complete the two-year experience requirement will have until March 31, 2007, to do so.*

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In the current dynamic and often complex acquisition environment, certification has become a major part of all major government

agencies' employee development programs, and DCMA is no exception. As highlighted by Ms. Janes, for the Agency, "certification in contracting helps to ensure that DCMA employees have the education, experience and training to administer increasingly complex contracts and the skills to conduct business professionally with their industry counterparts."

### Contracting Certification Levels I, II and III

Below are the certification standards and full curricula required for achieving Level I, Level II and Level III contracting certification as of Oct. 1, 2006.

#### Level I Certification Courses

- CON 100, Shaping Smart Business Arrangements (classroom, 4 days)
- CON 110, Mission Support Planning (distance learning)
- CON 111, Mission Planning Execution (distance learning)
- CON 112, Mission Performance Assessment (distance learning)
- CON 120, Mission Focused Contracting (classroom, 10 days)
- One elective\*

#### Level II Certification Courses

- CON 214, Business Decisions for Contracting (distance learning, 24 hours)
- CON 215, Intermediate Contracting for Mission Support (classroom, 8 days)
- CON 216, Legal Considerations in Contracting (distance learning, 30 hours)
- CON 217, Cost Analysis and Negotiation Techniques (distance learning, 40 hours)
- CON 218, Advanced Contracting for Mission Support (classroom, 9.5 days)
- Two electives\*

The prerequisite for these courses is completion of Level I courses.

#### Level III Certification Courses

- CON 353, Advanced Business Solutions for Mission Support (classroom, 9.5 days)
- Two electives\*

The prerequisite for these courses is completion of Level II courses.

\* As agreed to by a supervisor, electives may include all training opportunities related to an employee's job or necessary for career development or for cross training. Electives may include no-cost distance learning or other training opportunities, assignment-specific courses funded by Defense Acquisition University/director, acquisition career management, or other training opportunities funded by a student's organization.

For more information on contracting career field certification, please visit the 2007 Defense Acquisition University academic catalog on Defense Acquisition University's Web site at

<http://www.dau.mil/catalog>.

Source: *DAU Catalog*, 2007, Defense Acquisition University, 7 Nov. 2006, <<http://www.dau.mil/catalog>>.