

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Advanced Academic Degree Unmasking for Promotion Central Selection Boards**

### **Q1. Who is affected by this new policy?**

**A1.** All Department of the Air Force officers meeting major and lieutenant colonel promotion boards starting on or after Jan. 1, 2023, will be affected by this change.

### **Q2. Why is the Department making this change to unmask advanced academic degrees for the Air and Space Forces?**

**A2.** This change acknowledges that the world environment has shifted. We need leaders and supporting staff throughout the DAF at all levels who have deep expertise in emerging technologies and their applications to military operations. We must also have leaders with expertise in the cultures of our potential adversaries. Such expertise and associated critical thinking skills are developed from many sources and experiences, including advanced academic degree programs. Including academic experience in promotion consideration reinforces the value of education within the DAF.

### **Q3: Will Advanced Academic Degrees be required for promotion?**

**A3:** No. Operational and academic expertise and experience, as well as high levels of job performance, will remain the most important factors when evaluating officers for promotion. Advanced degrees should be chosen to meet personal and professional goals, with an appreciation of the value of the specific degree has to the Department of the Air Force.

### **Q4: Previously, the Department of the Air Force masked advanced academic degrees to allow Airmen and Guardians to focus on job performance. Why are they now unmasked?**

**A4:** Promotion board members will be instructed to understand and appreciate the value of specific advanced academic degrees, along with military training and operational experience, with respect to the developmental category meeting the board. Officers will not be expected to pursue an advanced degree solely with the intent of meeting a promotion board or satisfying a perceived requirement.

### **Q5: How will current policy be affected by these changes? (Air Force Only)**

**A5.** Comments on AADs in evaluations and promotion recommendation forms (PRFs) remain prohibited at this time. The focus on evaluations will remain on an officer's job performance during the rating period. The PRF will remain focused on an officer's potential to serve in the next higher grade.

### **Q6: How will current policy be affected by these changes? (Space Force Only)**

**A6:** Comments on Officer Promotion Reports (OPRs) regarding completion of/enrollment in AAD remain prohibited as this product focused on performance. In accordance with Space Force policy, comments on Promotion Recommendation Forms (PRFs) are not authorized.

**Q7: Will this impact all Developmental Categories for promotion?**

**A7:** Yes, it will impact all developmental categories for Airmen and Guardians eligible for promotion to major and lieutenant colonel. Effective Jan. 1, 2023, data pertaining to AADs will be visible on promotion-related documents from major through colonel.

**Q8: Will Developmental Category leads and career field managers determine which academic degrees will be valued?**

**A8:** Leaders most familiar with the current and future operations in our diverse career fields are well positioned to identify those academic areas which enhance performance in support of our Air and Space missions. Developmental Category Leads, development teams and career field managers are working across echelons within each functional community to implement this change. Updated guidance will be continuously posted on myPers Total Force DAF Officer Development pages as we move through the process.

**Q9: Will there be an increase in the Tuition Assistance budget with the unmasking of advanced academic degrees?**

**A9:** OSD sets TA per-class and annual caps and considers changes to TA maximum limits in light of changing costs for higher education. DAF leadership will continue supporting increases in TA.

**Q10: For future boards, will having an AAD affect an Airman's ability to receive a "DP"—ergo, becoming a defacto requirement? (Air Force Only)**

**A10.** A "DP" is awarded based on an officer's promotion potential and sends a strong signal to the central selection board that the officer is ready for immediate promotion. Job performance is and remains the most important factor when evaluating the officer corps for promotion. Now, advanced academic degrees may be considered at any stage in the promotion process by Senior Raters, Management Level Reviews, or Selection Boards; however, AAD completion is not a "pass/fail" for promotion.

**Q11: For future boards, will having an AAD affect a Guardian's ability to receive a "P" versus a "DNP" (Space Force Only)**

**A11.** While commanders will have the knowledge of the academic degree due to unmasking in consideration for promotion recommendations, AAD completion is not a "pass/fail" for promotion.

**Q12: Does this policy apply to recent transfers to the Space Force from services outside of the Department of the Air Force?**

**A12.** Yes, this policy applies to all Department of the Air Force officers, including recent Inter-Service Transfers meeting an FGO promotion board.

**Q13: What Advanced Academic Degree information will be visible to my chain of command during the pre-board process and to panel members during the promotion board?**

**A13:** The degree level (e.g., BAC, MAS), the degree specialty (e.g., Electrical Engineering, Political Science), the school attended (e.g., University of Illinois, Baylor University), and the year of completion (e.g., 2018) will be visible.

**Q14: For those who have multiple degrees, how many AADs will be visible to the board?**

**A14:** Effective January 1, 2023, all DAF officers most recent two degrees will be visible to the board, consistent with current process for all officers meeting O-6 promotion selection boards. Specifically, the most recent degrees (chronological, by degree conferred date) that are bachelor's and above are displayed. For example, an officer with two master's degrees will have only two most recent master's and no bachelor's degree. Alternatively, an officer with one master's degree will have their bachelor's degree visible and their master's degree visible. The DAF is currently exploring alternate display options that could allow more than two degrees, and prior to a change, the DAF will announce any adjustments to the current number of degrees visible.

**Q15: How do I update my information to ensure my advanced academic degree is available to the board?**

**A15:** To update your information, please go to the "AFIT Officer Education Record Updates/Corrections" website. There, you will find instructions on how to update your information. NOTE: The website still needs to be updated to reflect this new policy, so some language may still reflect the OSB not being updated, but it will be updated. You can reach the AFIT site at: <https://www.afit.edu/coding/index.cfm>.

**Q16: How can I tell the board that I am working on my advanced academic degree and the current status of completion?**

**A16:** Eligible officers may correspond by letter with their board and address any matter concerning themselves they believe is important to their consideration. Letters must arrive no later than 10 calendar days before the board convening date. DAFI 36-2501, para 2.10, discusses writing letters to the board. The following link also provides information on writing a letter to the board: [https://mypers.af.mil/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/3515/p/9/c/656/p/9/c/656](https://mypers.af.mil/app/answers/detail/a_id/3515/p/9/c/656/p/9/c/656)

**Q17: How will I know if my information is on the OSB?**

**A17:** The system update is expected to be completed in early December. Immediately following completion, AFPC will send new officer pre-selection briefs to all eligible officers. Once received, view your information to ensure all data, including AAD, is accurate. That is what will be provided to the board. If the AAD information requires updating or additions, go to the AFIT Officer Education Updates/Corrections website above and initiate the update.

**Q18: Can I “Opt Out” of Promotion to allow myself time to pursue an advanced academic degree?**

**A18:** Officers will be able to request for “Opt Out” of promotion consideration in accordance with current DAF policy, which provides provisions for eligibility and timelines required for submission. Officers meeting boards that convene prior to 26 April, 2023 are past the deadline for opting-out of promotion in accordance with DAF policy.