

**BACKGROUND PAPER**  
**ON**  
**ROTC TERM ABROAD PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

1. The Military Services and ROTC units here at Norwich value international experience for future officers. This paper describes general and service specific considerations for Norwich advisors when planning terms abroad for ROTC Cadets.
2. Terms abroad require advanced planning and coordination for NU students seeking ROTC commissions. ROTC professional development milestones are programmed to graduate cadets (Navy midshipmen) in four years of academic and leadership training. ROTC leadership training varies by service, and is conducted during the academic year in leadership laboratory and during a portion of some summers between academic years. Early planning by NU advisors, cadets, and ROTC staff will maximize opportunities for terms abroad and set achievable expectations for individual cadets and their NU academic advisors.
3. Cadets seeking a commission should be contracted prior to attending an academic term abroad. Norwich's three ROTC units are our DoD's on-site major employer for Norwich graduates. Prior to contracting, cadets are not under obligation to a Service, and thus do not require permission to attend a term abroad. However, prior to contracting, all training and evaluation is effectively an interview for acceptance into a commissioning program. Cadets can be contracted as early as their first week at Norwich for those receiving four year scholarships prior to college. Others will be contracted throughout the first two years at Norwich based on performance and Service needs. By the start of their junior year, most cadets who are going to commission are contracted, either with or without a scholarship. Contracting is the critical milestone where the cadet and the Service determine that all requirements for service as an officer are met, and a legal contract is made to commission the cadet after graduation. At contracting, the interview is over, the individual cadet is "hired", and the professional training begins. A term abroad prior to contracting limits the amount of direct observation the ROTC staff has of the cadet, which poses a high risk during the interview stage. As a result, students who are not yet contracted, but who are seeking a commission, should not participate in an academic term abroad until after contracting, or until after their opportunities to earn a contract have been exhausted.
4. Once contracted, professional training involves leadership laboratory during the academic year and summer training. Summer training varies by service, and should be considered in a term abroad plan. The following Service 'best times' for terms abroad are chosen based solely on preparation for Service specific summer training requirements.

### Best Terms Abroad

Army	Sophomore Fall	Sophomore Spring	Senior Fall
Navy*	Sophomore Fall	Sophomore Spring	
Marine**	Sophomore Fall	Sophomore Spring	Senior Fall
Air Force	Junior Fall	Junior Spring	Senior Fall

\* Navy Nuclear Options are limited due to lengthy interview process

\*\* Marine Junior Spring will NOT be approved

5. As a Service employee, contracted cadets earn stipend, uniform and book allowances, and in many cases are paid tuition. The Services budget for these expenses in addition to paying the commissioned officer salary and benefits in the planned graduating year. Thus, the Service must approve any actions that impact completing the cadet's undergraduate degree, and the cadet must comply with Service decisions or breach their contract. Terms abroad have the potential to impact completing the NU degree program unless that term abroad is required by the degree program to graduate. Abroad term risks can be mitigated if 1) term abroad credits provide credit towards completing NU requirements and to not increase course load during traditional terms; and/or 2) the cadet's approved graduation date accounts for the additional time required for the term abroad; and/or 3) the cadet requests a leave of absence at zero cost to the Service (stipend, benefits and tuition suspended during term abroad). In general, most cadets seek to reduce time to graduation and minimize personal costs, so the primary means of mitigating risk is for a semester abroad to count one-for-one towards requirements in the NU curriculum map. Thus, students and advisors recommending terms abroad should plan as early as possible on how to mitigate risk and Service costs by coordinating a written plan with the Service future employer.

6. There are two levels of approval for a contracted cadet. The first is the NU ROTC Commander. The ROTC Commander can generally approve when a term abroad is required by the major, and there is no cost to the Service. Cadets on scholarship always require higher headquarters command approval (beyond the ROTC unit here at Norwich). The approval request process for term abroad should begin, at latest, at the beginning of the previous academic term.

7. Service nuances exist. This background paper is intended to educate advisors about planning considerations for ROTC cadets' terms abroad. The concepts described cannot be applied successfully without notification and counsel from ROTC staffs to address service and cadet specific considerations. We encourage interested advisors to contact ROTC staff with general questions or specific student questions so together, ROTC and Norwich faculty can maximize the experiential learning available through Norwich study abroad programs.