

**Constructive Service Credit (CSC) Guideline for Functional Area 48 (FA 48)**  
**Foreign Area Officer (FAO)**

References:

1. Army Regulation 350-1: Army Training and Leader Development
2. Army Regulation 601-100: Appointment of Commissioned and Warrant Officers in the Regular Army
3. 10 USC 533: Service credit upon original appointment as a commissioned officer
4. DOD INSTRUCTION 1310.02: Original Appointment of Officers
5. DOD INSTRUCTION 1312.03: Entry Grade Credit for Commissioned Officers and Warrant Officers
6. DOD INSTRUCTION 1315.20: Management of the DoD Foreign Area Officer Program
7. Department of the Army Pamphlet 600–3: Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management
8. ALARACT 086/2024

The Constructive Service Credit (CSC) Guideline provides interested Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and civilians the prerequisites needed to apply for a Direct Commission into Functional Area 48 (FA 48). When calculated, the constructive service credit provides a Candidate the grade and date of rank comparable to a contemporary who began commissioned service immediately after obtaining a baccalaureate degree. Constructive service credit is based upon the applicant providing education and work experience equivalent to the qualification training expected of a Captain with sufficient Key Development (KD) time. Examples of qualifications that can be calculated as service credit are listed within the FA 48 CSC highlighting preferred educational and professional benchmarks expected by a fully-qualified Candidate.

As a specialized Functional Area, FA 48 cannot direct commission a Candidate to the rank of Second Lieutenant or First Lieutenant. The Department of Defense Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program's foundational policy document, DoDI 1315.20 prohibits entry into the Military Department FAO Program without being fully qualified in a primary military specialty or designator and maintaining active eligibility to occupy critical or special sensitive positions, which includes eligibility to access Top Secret or Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI), regardless of utilization tour requirements.

CSC is determined in accordance with the guidelines in DODI 1312.03, paragraph 3.4. CSC may be awarded for, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

1. Related civilian degree (master's or higher).
2. Work experience in a related field (military or civilian).
3. Related military or civilian training (functional courses, certification, etc).

## **Considerations for Proponent Specific Academic Credentials**

Prior to application, all Candidates must have a baccalaureate degree. When calculating credit for post-graduate degrees, credit will only be awarded for one advanced degree. No more than 12 months credit will be awarded for a completed master's degree or 36 months credit for a completed PhD. A maximum of 36 months of credit can be applied when calculating academic credentials. Examples of FAO-related degrees include, but are not limited to, International Relations/Affairs, Regional Area Studies, Regional History, and National Security Studies.

## **Considerations for Proponent Specific Work Experience and Professional Certification**

FAOs strive to become the U.S. Army's regional subject matter experts. Prior work experience indicating analytical and critical thinking in regional matters is a preferred attribute for any Candidate. Examples of FAO-related work experience include, but are not limited to:

1. Department of State (DoS) Foreign Service Officer (FSO)
2. National Security Council Staff
3. Interagency Employee at a U.S. Embassy
4. Congressional Staff (Personal or Professional)
5. Army Service Component Command (ASCC), Combatant Command (CCMD), Joint, Army, or Sister Service Staff, DSCA, OSD Regional/Country Military Affairs Specialist
6. Security Cooperation (Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Financing, Building Partner Capacity, and/or International Military Education & Training)
7. Regional Strategic Analyst (ASCC, CCMD, DIA, OSD, Sister Service, and/or other members of the Intelligence Community)

Applicable work experience will be credited at a 1:1 month ratio (one month of credit for each month of experience).

*\* Ex: 18 months as an Army Service Component Command Regional Desk Officer + 10 months as a member of the National Security Council Staff = consideration for 28 months Constructive Service Credit*

Professional certifications can also factor into a Candidate's CSC. Examples of applicable professional certifications can be found in the chart below.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CERTIFICATION	MAXIMUM MONTHS OF CREDIT
Certified DoD All Source Analyst (CDASA-I or higher)	24 months of constructive service credit *Cannot be combined with work experience credit.
Joint Intelligence Planner-Proficiency Level I (JIP-I)	18 months of constructive service credit *Cannot be combined with work experience credit.
Defense Security Cooperation University	12 months of constructive service credit *Cannot be combined with work experience credit.

\*This list specifies examples of industry certifications and is not all inclusive.

### Direct Commission Prerequisites

Pursuant to ALARACT 086/2024, if selected for a FA 48 Direct Commission, the Candidate must be assigned to an officer basic branch, and complete basic branch professional military education (PME) as determined by the basic branch prior to entering qualification training as a FAO. Following the certification of the Direct Commissioning Course, the basic branch's Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC), and the Captain Career Course, the Candidate will enter the FAO Military Education Level (MEL) 4 training pipeline in accordance with AR 350-1 and DA PAM 600-3.

FAO Proponent appoints the board to consider Candidates pursuing a direct commission to the grade of Major or below. If recommended by the board, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) is the appointment authority of all direct commission officers to the grade of CPT (O-3) pursuant to DoDI 1310.02. If approved by the board, the President of the United States (POTUS) is the appointment authority of all direct commission officers in the grade above CPT (MAJ-COL), pursuant to DoDI 1310.02.

As a separate requirement, no person may be appointed as a commissioned officer above the grade of Major as a Regular Army or Reserve Component officer unless recommended for appointment by a board of officers convened on the SECARMY's behalf, pursuant to the SECARMY's instructions. See Army Directive 2019-27 (Direct Appointment of Officers Up to the Grade of Colonel (Other Than Special Branches).

**To Direct Commission as a Captain (CPT).** A Candidate may be directly commissioned to the rank of CPT in the FAO corps. To be directly commissioned and accessed as a CPT, a Candidate must be rooted in the profession of arms with a minimum of 36 months of military service. A Candidate must have a minimum of 60 months of demonstrated FAO-related CSC and must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, signifying the start of constructive service credit eligibility per DoDI 1312.03 (28 December 2018).

The rank of CPT is the first eligible rank to become a FAO, mirroring the standard career progression of a Candidate's contemporary who began commissioned service immediately after obtaining a baccalaureate degree. Captains are expected to focus on completing the assessed basic branch PME and the FAO training pipeline in preparation for their first utilization assignment.

**To Direct Commission as a Major (MAJ).** All Candidates must have completed the CPT-level direct commission requirements listed above. Additionally, the Candidate must have obtained an additional 12 months (total: 72 months) of FAO-related CSC, obtained proficiency at a 2/2 Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level in a relevant regional language, and received a regionally-focused master's degree (or higher). If not already completed, Majors must complete MEL4 requirements in accordance with AR 350-1 and DA PAM 600-3, including the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Common Core or Foreign Staff College equivalent, and attend the Joint Foreign Area Officer Course (JFAOC).

At the rank of MAJ, FAOs are expected to apply the experience and academic knowledge gained through the FAO training pipeline within their Area of Concentration (AOC). Fully-trained, educated, and experienced majors have the opportunity to serve in Joint or Army positions, honing their regional expertise.

**To Direct Commission as a Lieutenant Colonel (LTC).** All Candidates must have completed the MAJ-level direct commission requirements listed above. Additionally, the Candidate must have obtained an additional 60 months (total: 132 months) of CSC, demonstrate a regional expertise through written and oral modalities befitting a senior military and/or government audience, and have completed all components of MEL4 requirements (or equivalent) in accordance with AR 350-1 and DA PAM 600-3.

At the rank of LTC, FAOs are expected to have a broad array of developmental positions that allow them to be assigned to any FA 48-coded position within their AOC. A fully-trained, educated, and experienced LTC has the opportunity to be the Senior Defense Official (SDO) serving as the senior military advisor to the Ambassador and senior military representative within a U.S. Embassy country team.

**To Direct Commission as a Colonel (COL).** All Candidates must have completed the LTC-level direct commission requirements listed above. Additionally, the Candidate must have obtained an additional 60 months (total: 192 months) of CSC, of which at least 48 months of credit must be senior foreign affairs experience, demonstrate a global expertise through written and oral modalities befitting a senior military and/or government audience, and have completed all components of MEL4 requirements (or equivalent) in accordance with AR 350–1 and DA PAM 600-3.

At the rank of Colonel, FAOs are expected to have a broad array of developmental positions that allow them to be assigned to any FA 48-coded position across the force, regardless of AOC. A fully-trained, educated, and experienced COL positively shapes the Army and Joint enterprise. The FA 48 COL is expected to have professional mastery of competencies for all foundational categories. In addition to serving as SDOs and senior leaders in critical Embassy locations and military command headquarters, FA 48 COLs serve by actively mentoring and developing junior FAOs.

### **Following Direct Commission**

Regardless of entry grade credit, a newly commissioned FAO must attend JFAOC, achieve a 2/2/1+ ILR in a control language specific to their AOC, obtain a graduate degree in international relations with a concentration in their assigned geographic region, and attend In-Region Training (IRT). Proponent, in conjunction with FAO Branch, will determine whether the direct-commission Candidate has met any portion of the listed MEL 4 requirements in accordance with AR 350–1 and DA PAM 600-3. Based on the Candidate's background, Proponent might grant credit for previous training, education, and experience. If not already completed, direct-commissioned FAOs must also complete Intermediate Level Education (ILE) via distance learning, a satellite campus, or at a Foreign Staff College.

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