



How The Chemical School Quality Assurance Element Can Help Improve Training

By Mr. Robert Davis

The staff at the U.S. Army Chemical School Quality Assurance Element (QAE) is dedicated to promoting the highest standard of training. Whether we are conducting evaluations, providing consulting services, attending conferences, or participating in assessments and information exchanges, enhancing Army combat readiness remains our focus. Our mission is to provide oversight of and support for the development and integration of training and professional military education to meet the needs of the unit, the Soldier, and the Army.

At the QAE, we provide assistance with producing training and doctrine publications and with training Soldiers and leaders to support the Army's transformation mission. To support this mission, we provide a variety of services.

Internal Evaluations

During an internal evaluation, we gather data focused on the training development (TD) process and the training program and provide this data to decision makers so that they can make sound, informed decisions about how to improve the quality and effectiveness of the instructional system. Internal evaluations are performed to identify weaknesses and strengths in TD and instructional systems. They are not only performed to check an instructor's technique and method of instruction, but to also check the quality of the material being taught and measure what students are learning. In an internal evaluation, comparisons are made between the course objectives and standards applied in the training and the objectives and standards specified in course development documents. Each evaluator in the QAE conducts two internal evaluations per week and provides this data to the appropriate course manager or training developer.

External Evaluations

During an external evaluation, we gather data from the field to determine if Soldiers' instruction meets their job performance requirements, if additional instruction is required, or if the instructional material was applicable to their duties. External evaluations ensure that the training our Soldiers receive is effective, is cost-efficient and, most importantly, meets the needs of the operational Army. External evaluations are quality improvement checks which ensure that graduating students use their knowledge to accomplish tasks and make improvements to future operations.

External evaluations are conducted on Soldiers and/or their supervisors six months following graduation. They are contacted by e-mail and directed to a Web site to complete a survey that measures how they are using their course knowledge to complete their missions. The feedback from the surveys ensures that our Soldiers are trained to meet the needs of the operational force.

School Accreditation

Accreditation is the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Commander's formal recognition of a school's excellence in training. It is the result of an evaluative process which certifies that an institution's training program, processes, personnel, administration, operations, and logistical support are adequate to support course standards. Accreditation affirms that training institutions are adhering to TRADOC training guidance and directives. Additionally, it ensures that—

- Standardized training and training products are doctrinally correct.
- Staff and faculty personnel are trained to standard and provide quality instruction to their students.
- The institutional infrastructure meets the required standards.
- The training program provides relevant and realistic training to meet opposing forces (OPFOR)/contemporary operational environment (COE) requirements.
- The school is prepared to meet the training and educational needs of Stryker and future forces.
- Feedback is provided to senior leaders regarding significant training issues.

The Chemical School received full accreditation in March 2006 (refer to the evaluation standards used in the gray box). The accreditation of all Active Army and reserve component (RC) training institutions is reevaluated every three years. TRADOC accreditation standards are used to evaluate training, training support and, where applicable, proponent functions.

TASS Battalion Accreditation and Staff Assistance

The Total Army School System (TASS) is comprised of accredited and integrated Active Army, Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve schools. TASS battalions are divided into regions and functionally aligned with their training development proponent. At present, the Chemical Corps has six TASS battalions, geographically divided into six regions throughout the United States, that teach military occupational specialty (MOS) 74D reclassification and Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) courses.

Chemical TASS battalions are accredited every three years, and the Chemical School QAE serves as the primary agency responsible for conducting the evaluations. During an accreditation year, we travel to approximately 80 percent of the battalion training locations to evaluate courses. We also evaluate the two-week annual training conducted at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The year prior to accreditation recertification, we visit training locations and provide staff assistance to prepare for the upcoming event.

The following standards were used by TRADOC to evaluate and accredit the Chemical School. These standards included compliance with—

- **Conduct of training.**
 - Maintained the proper instructor-to-student ratio and equipment requirements.
 - Maintained required instructor qualifications and proponent technical certification requirements.
 - Used current and approved course materials (including tests) that train Active Army and RC Soldiers to the same task performance standards.
 - Conducted training and operations that minimized accident risks.
 - Conducted training that protected the environment from damage.
 - Scheduled and conducted sequential, progressive training according to a mandatory training sequence.
 - Ensured that instructors and cadre performed their instructional duties and responsibilities according to regulatory guidance and lesson objectives.
 - Ensured that students performed tasks to the prescribed learning objective standards.
 - Presented opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their leadership skills and knowledge in a performance-based environment.
 - Used required ranges and training areas as prescribed.
- **Training support.**
 - Made corrections to shortcomings identified during previous accreditation evaluations.
 - Managed manpower effectively to meet mission requirements.
 - Maintained the required equipment; training aids, devices, simulations, and simulators (TADSS); ammunition; pyrotechnics; training materials; consumable supplies; and references (as prescribed).
 - Evaluated and tracked instructor and cadre performance abilities and took action, as appropriate, to sustain and improve those abilities.
 - Maintained facilities that promoted a learning environment and met learning objectives (including barracks, classrooms, ranges, training areas, and learning facilities).
 - Instituted policies, procedures, and oversight practices to ensure that effective training and administrative support was provided.
- **Proponent functions.**
 - Maintained a quality assurance program that included internal and external evaluations to improve, sustain, and develop effective education and training.
 - Instituted an effective system to forecast, update, and monitor training and leader development-related resourcing requirements.
 - Developed and maintained training products based on current and approved critical tasks and task analysis data.
 - Designed and developed efficient, effective, and relevant Active Army and RC training to the same task performance standard, using (as appropriate) live, constructive, and virtual training.
 - Developed and provided valid and reliable criterion-referenced tests.
 - Maintained training that reflected current joint, Army, and branch doctrine at the appropriate level and incorporated lessons learned from combat training centers, unit operational deployments, and the Center for Army Lessons Learned.
 - Instituted a staff and faculty development program to meet regulatory, institutional, and career development requirements.
 - Developed, published, and followed command training guidance according to Army doctrine.

End of Course Questionnaires

We develop and conduct end-of-course questionnaires for all courses taught by the Chemical School. These questionnaires were developed to provide Soldiers an opportunity to present their perspectives about their training experiences. The information they provide is analyzed and presented to Chemical School leadership to help them make informed decisions for training improvement.

Conclusion

There seems to be a misconception that the QAE is an outside inspection team who wears black hats and shows up to ruin everyone's day. This is not the case! We are not the enemy. We are Chemical School personnel who work directly with training developers and course managers to identify ways to improve training for Chemical Soldiers. If you are experiencing any training problems, let us assist you; we will go out of our way to help! So the next time you see one of our evaluators in the back of your classroom, try to look at us differently; we are there to help you. 🙏

References:

- TRADOC, "TRADOC Quality Assurance Program and Accreditation of Army Education and Training," memorandum, 20 January 2004.
- TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-4, *Systems Approach to Training: Evaluation*, 12 January 2004.
- TRADOC Regulation 350-18, *The Army School System (TASS)*, 26 May 2000.

Mr. Davis is a training specialist for the U.S. Army Chemical School, TASS Accreditation and QAE. He has a master's degree in training and organizational development and is a retired Chemical Sergeant Major with 26 years of military experience.

Honoring Our Fallen Dragon Soldiers



Sergeant Jonathan E. Lootens
Hometown: Lyons, New York
Unit: 2d Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii
Killed: 15 October 2006

Specialist Elias Elias
Hometown: Glendora, California
Unit: 3d Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colorado
Killed: 23 December 2006



Sergeant Marco L. Miller
Hometown: Longwood, Florida
Unit: 3d Battalion Support Company, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Camp Blanding, Florida
Killed: 5 December 2006

Specialist Ignacio Ramirez
Hometown: Henderson, Nevada
Unit: 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, 1st Armored Division, Friedberg, Germany
Killed: 9 August 2006



This casualty list from the ongoing Global War on Terrorism was current as of the publication date.