INTRODUCTION

Key Points

1. Overview of the BOLC I: ROTC Curriculum
2. Military Science and Leadership Tracks
3. MSL 301 Course Overview: Adaptive Team Leadership
4. The Role of the MSL III Cadet
5. Academic Approach
6. How to Use This Textbook
7. Cadet Resources

Leadership is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it.

General of the Army (GOA) Omar N. Bradley
Overview of the BOLC I: ROTC Curriculum

Being an officer in the US Army means being a leader, a counselor, a strategist, and a motivator. Officers must lead other Soldiers in all situations and adjust to environments that are always changing. To prepare prospective officers to meet this challenge, the Army ROTC program is designed to develop confident, competent, and adaptive leaders with the basic military science and leadership foundation necessary not only to lead small units in the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE) but also to evolve into the Army’s future senior leaders.

The ROTC program is the first, or pre-commissioning, phase of the Army’s Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC). The goal of BOLC is to develop competent and confident leaders imbued with a warrior ethos, grounded in field craft, and skilled in leading Soldiers, training subordinates, and employing and maintaining equipment. BOLC is designed to ensure a tough, standardized, small-unit leadership experience that flows progressively from the pre-commissioning phase (BOLC I, one source of which is ROTC) through the initial-entry field leadership phase (BOLC II) to the branch technical phase (BOLC III). This progressive sequence will produce officers with maturity, confidence, and competence who share a common bond—regardless of whether their branch is combat arms, combat support, or sustainment—and who are prepared to lead small units upon arrival at their first unit of assignment.

The basis of the Army ROTC curriculum is the BOLC common core task list, which represents the foundation of competencies a second lieutenant needs upon arrival at his or her first unit. ROTC Cadets receive education and training in each of the BOLC I common core tasks, as do officers produced by other commissioning sources (the United States Military Academy and Officer Candidate School). Then, in BOLC II and III, all second lieutenants, regardless of commissioning source, participate in more-advanced, field- and branch-oriented education and training events that are part of the BOLC II and III common core task lists.

Like the BOLC model, ROTC’s Military Science and Leadership (MSL) courses are sequential and progressive; that is the content and expectations placed on you as the student increase as you progress through the ROTC Program. As you may recall, the academic rigor of your MS II year was greater than that of your MS I year. Your MS III year will be far more challenging and involved than your MS I and II years combined.

As was the case with your MS I and MS II ROTC curriculum, your MS III courses are organized into five tracks: the Leadership Track, the Personal Development Track, the Values and Ethics Track, the Officership Track, and the Tactics and Techniques Track. The MSL III and IV years will treat each MSL track in greater depth in order to teach you all the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for commissioning, success at BOLC II, and the establishment of a sound foundation for a career as a commissioned Army officer.

In addition to classroom instruction, your MS III year will provide you with multiple opportunities to apply military science and leadership concepts in field environments, including leadership labs, battalion or joint field training exercises (FTX), and any battalion STX training that your PMS may direct. As a contracted Cadet, you must participate in physical training (PT) to build your fitness ethos and maintain Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) standards. Crucial to the ROTC program is Cadet attendance at the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC), normally between the MSL III and MSL IV years. The primary focus at LDAC is to evaluate each Cadet’s officer potential in a collective garrison and field training environment. The secondary purpose of LDAC is to validate specific skills taught on campus and to impart selective individual and collective skills.
Military Science and Leadership Tracks

Each of the five learning tracks in the Army ROTC military science and leadership curriculum has subcategories that are reiterated and developed progressively through the MSL courses. The US Army has long recognized the importance of the effective leader who fully embodies the leadership ethos, who is fully committed to being a lifelong learner of leadership as a process and journey rather than a destination, and who has the professional acumen to put this leadership into action in an effective, value-added manner regardless of the challenge of the situation faced in the fast-paced, ever-changing COE.

Leadership

- **Leader Attributes** from FM 6-22 are used throughout the curriculum as a graphic organizer for developing a basic knowledge of leader dimensions. The implicit focus throughout the curriculum is on the importance of personal discipline in becoming a leader of character, a leader with presence, and a leader with intellectual capacity.

- **Core Leader Competencies** are centered around what an Army leader does. These competencies are defined and illustrated as they apply to direct (tactical), organizational (operational), and strategic levels of leader responsibility. The course of study as a whole is designed to challenge and develop the leader’s ability to lead (demonstrate competence, communicate, and motivate), develop self and others (adapt, learn, and mentor), and achieve (prioritize, plan, and execute).

Personal Development

- **Character** development is an implicit aspect of the ROTC curriculum. Cadets are challenged throughout the course of study to recognize and model the Army Values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage; to empathize with their peers, subordinates, and others; and to live the Warrior Ethos.

- **Physical Presence** is foundational for Army leader development. Every Cadet who seeks to become an officer must be able to demonstrate an exceptional level of physical fitness, composure, confidence, and resilience.

- **Intellectual Capacity** has always been and continues to be an imperative characteristic for officers serving in the US Army. Those serving in the contemporary operating environments of Iraq and Afghanistan are learning firsthand the value of mental agility and innovation to Army leadership. Vignettes and case studies from these environments are used to challenge Cadets to examine non-linear situations, to hone their judgment, and to increase their tactical, technical, cultural, and geopolitical knowledge.

Values and Ethics

- **Army Values.** While it is important for Cadets to be able to articulate the seven Army Values, it is even more imperative that they be able to demonstrate these values in their daily interactions with others. Values form the foundation for Army leadership.

- **Professional Ethics.** In addition to the Army values, military codes and regulations govern ethical behavior and decision making. Cadets apply the ethical decision making process during case studies and historical vignettes.
- **Warrior Ethos** is embedded in case studies and historical vignettes throughout the curriculum. Cadre members discuss the four basic principles of the Warrior Ethos whenever possible. Cadets apply the Warrior Ethos to increasingly complex situations as they progress through the ROTC program.

**Officership**

- **Military Heritage.** Cadre members teach and model military heritage through daily performance and contact, lab exercises, ceremonies, and interpersonal interactions throughout the ROTC curriculum.

- **Military History.** Cadets review vignettes and case studies, which provide opportunities for critical reasoning in evaluating tactics, leadership styles, problem solving, and decision making.

- **Management and Administration.** Cadets learn Army programs, policies, and procedures related to areas such as organization, human resources, management, administration, training, and facilities in order to support Army operations.

**Tactics and Techniques**

- **Tactical operations** are the major focus of the two MSL III courses. Cadets are expected to shift from mastering an understanding of tactical operations to mastering these operations through in-depth study and experiential leadership opportunities. During labs, Cadets are expected to develop and demonstrate a proficient understanding and ability to perform basic land navigation, troop leading procedures, and squad tactical operations.

**MSL 301 Course Overview: Adaptive Team Leadership**

MSL 301 challenges Cadets to study, practice, and evaluate adaptive leadership skills as they are presented with the demands of preparing for the ROTC Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC). Challenging scenarios related to small-unit tactical operations are used to develop self-awareness and critical-thinking skills. Cadets receive systematic and specific feedback on their leadership values, attributes, skills, and actions. Cadets must meet the following objectives:

**Apply the Army Leadership Requirements Model while leading teams.**

- Apply the Army Leadership Requirements Model—leader attributes and core leader competencies—in tactical situations
- Compare and contrast different leadership styles and their effects on team dynamics
- Apply effective oral and written communication skills in Army operations
- Counsel subordinates on performance.

**Apply tactical principles and doctrine to Army operations.**

- Conduct troop leading procedures
- Analyze terrain in practical situations
- Navigate from one point to another
- Apply principles of squad tactics in offensive and defensive operations
- Conduct a risk assessment.
Analyze personal readiness to enter LDAC in key areas of flexibility, character, adaptability, and fitness.

- Conduct a self-assessment in personal development areas
- Develop a readiness plan in preparation for LDAC
- Identify battle fatigue risk factors and leader actions to offset them.

The Role of the MSL III Cadet

**LEADS.** As a potential Army officer, you will be challenged to study, practice, and evaluate adaptive team leadership skills as you are presented with the demands of the ROTC Leader Development and Assessment Course. Increasingly complex scenarios related to small-unit tactical operations are used to develop self-awareness and critical-thinking skills. You will receive systematic and specific feedback on your performance as a battalion staff officer by your cadre, just as commissioned officers serving on staffs receive counsel and feedback from their raters.

**DEVELOPS.** Learning the skills required of a competent officer and leader demands that you participate actively in learning through critical reflection, inquiry, dialogue, and group interactions. MSL 301 will teach you competency-based leadership described in FM 6-22 as it relates to your responsibility to earn your commission and to develop junior Cadets to become future Army lieutenants. Based on your understanding and experience of adaptive team leadership, you will work to identify activities (such as club leadership, sports teams, event planning, or other extracurricular activities) in which to practice adaptive leadership skills. You are also encouraged to continue in your own leadership roles beyond ROTC. Everyone is responsible for contributing to the success of the learning experience.

**ACHIEVES.** Extensive small-group discussions and exercises are embedded throughout the MSL 301 course. MSL III Cadets are encouraged to work together as a team and with their instructors in modifying assignments, suggesting agendas, and raising questions for discussion. Collaborative learning is enhanced when Cadets describe adaptive team-leadership lessons learned from lab and FTX experiences.

Academic Approach

The MSL curriculum is outcomes based and designed to focus on Cadet learning, rather than on any specific subject matter. Focusing on the Cadet requires student-centered objectives and conscious attention to how Cadets react to the instruction received. For effective instruction, Cadets need the opportunity to apply the knowledge received from instruction received by experienced Cadre. Too often, academic instruction is limited to the delivery of information, either through reading assignments, lectures, or slide presentations. Active, student-centered learning, in contrast, is founded on the belief that interaction is central to the learning process. Learning occurs during class in the same way it does outside the classroom: through unstructured and structured experiences in which the Cadet interacts with cadre, with the instructional material, and with other Cadets. Helpful synonyms for ROTC’s student-centered approach to learning are experiential learning, direct experience, discovery learning, experience-based learning, and participatory learning. All of these approaches center around five basic steps:

1. Readiness for and openness to the experience.
2. The experience itself.
3. Reflection upon the experience.

4. Analysis, application of theory, or additional explanation of information to clarify the relationship between theory and actions, with an understanding of lessons learned regarding needed changes.

5. The opportunity to re-experience (practice in new situations/practical exercises).

The onus must first be on the Cadet’s pre-class preparation. Cadets must come to class with a foundation of knowledge from their pre-class readings. This allows the cadre to apply the Socratic model of reflective learning during the 50 minutes of classroom instruction. During this limited contact hour, the cadre can focus on explaining the concepts or material that needs clarifying.

How to Use This Textbook

The readings in this textbook have been compiled to prepare the Cadet to participate actively and productively in MSL classes and labs. The chapters are divided into the five MSL curriculum tracks as follows:

- Leadership Track
- Personal Development Track
- Values and Ethics Track
- Officership Track
- Tactics and Techniques Track

To be most effective, MSL class sessions are best sequenced to coincide with Leadership Lab schedules, which may vary from campus to campus due to weather, academic calendars, and other local variables. Thus, class sessions may not necessarily follow the same sequence as textbook chapters. Cadets must follow the reading assignments given by their instructors to ensure they are adequately prepared for each class session.

The first page of each chapter orients the Cadet to the key points to be covered in the reading assignment. At the end of each chapter, learning assessment questions serve as “checks on learning” for the Cadet to ensure he or she understands the key points of the chapter. Additionally, vignettes, scenarios, case studies, and critical-thinking questions are dispersed throughout the chapters to help the Cadet build critical-thinking skills and to apply the coursework to real-world situations. The learning assessment questions at the end of each chapter are aligned with the learning objectives for each coinciding lesson.

Cadet Resources

Cadet Textbook. This textbook contains the readings that support the MSL 301 course, Adaptive Team Leadership.

CONCLUSION

The Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) common core task list forms the foundation of competencies a second lieutenant needs to know upon arrival at his or her first unit. Today’s Army officer develops through a progression of BOLC sequential learning programs designed for pre-commissioning (BOLC I), common tactical training that is focused on warrior tasks and battle drills (BOLC II), and basic branch-specific training (BOLC III). The ROTC program is the implementation of BOLC I in a university setting. Today’s ROTC Cadet represents the future leadership of our great nation. Such responsibility must be carried by officers well versed in the principles and practices of effective leadership, military operations, and personal development. A future officer must be a leader of character, of presence, and of intellectual capacity—a professional who is able to think critically and ready to lead Soldiers in the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE). The MSL III year of ROTC forges this officer through a challenging curriculum of leader development, Army operations, and personal development in preparation for the culminating test during the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC).

Although this course prepares you for this challenge, it is your responsibility to live the leader attributes while adopting and demonstrating Army Values at all times—both on and off campus. The qualities of an Army officer are not words professed for an exam or exercise. At the MSL III level, these qualities are the expression of a professional prepared to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic.” Your commitment to excellence in the Warrior Ethos, tactical proficiency, and adaptive team leadership is essential to the success of the Army of the future.

References
