

Course Plan 2027

Baltic Defence College

Ad Securitatem Patriarum

Higher Command Studies Course

Approved by
BALTDEFCOL CDT
Order No 120/05.11.2026

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Course Director's Foreword

On behalf of the Commandant of the Baltic Defence College, it is my pleasure to warmly welcome you to the Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC) 2027. Fully sponsored by the Framework Nations, this course offers senior officers and government officials the opportunity to continue their professional development by engaging with strategic-level issues. Its purpose is to equip you with the knowledge, understanding, and tools to become creative, proactive, and agile commanders, policymakers, and managers – capable of making sound, decisive, and future-oriented decisions.

Throughout the course, our faculty and guest speakers will challenge you to think critically about the dynamics of the security environment, to innovate in the face of political, economic, social, and environmental change, and to design and implement effective strategies. The unique international civil-military composition of the course fosters a stimulating environment where participants can learn from one another and share valuable professional experiences. Beyond the classroom, you will also expand your professional networks, form lasting friendships, and have the chance to explore the rich culture and history of the Framework Nations.

I look forward to your active participation and contributions. I trust that this course will support and inspire your continued growth as future senior military leaders and government officials.

This course plan sets out the learning requirements for each core module of HCSC 2027 and provides general information about additional activities designed to help you achieve the course objectives. It is published under the authority of the Commandant of the Baltic Defence College.

Çlirim Toci
Colonel (ret.), PhD
Course Director

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Section 1 – About the Baltic Defence College

1.1 Mandate of the Baltic Defence College

The Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) was founded in 1999 by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with support from their allies and partners. The mandate of the College was set out in the founding document. In 2023, the Baltic States Ministerial Committee approved the BALTDEFCOL Development Plan for 2024-2032, which provides political guidance for the development and future operations of the College and sets strategic goals and ways to achieve them. It ensures that the College remains responsive to the evolving character of academic best practices and remains a Professional Military Education (PME) institution of choice in a constantly evolving strategic environment.

The vision for BALTDEFCOL is to be a modern, future-oriented, attractive, competitive, English language-based international defence college with a regional focus and Euro-Atlantic scope. The BALTDEFCOL serves as a PME institution at the operational and strategic levels, applying the latest educational principles, effective management, and the most efficient use of intellectual and material resources.

The college's mission is to educate military and security-related civilian personnel of the Framework Nations, allies, and partners while promoting international cooperation, networking, and contribution to security and defence policy research to meet the long-term defence and security needs of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

In July 2022, the NATO Allied Command of Transformation (ACT) granted the BALTDEFCOL unconditional institutional accreditation status. This marks yet another historic milestone in recognising BALTDEFCOL's high-quality standards in delivering education and BALTDEFCOL's relevance for NATO and its partners.

BALTDEFCOL's primary geographical scope in educational matters is on:

- The Baltic region;
- The wider Baltic Sea region with particular focus on Russia;
- NATO/EU; and
- The wider NATO/EU area of interest.

As a core program, BALTDEFCOL delivers for Officers and Civil Servants two PME courses:

- Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC) – a five-month senior-level course.
- Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC) – a ten-month general staff officer operational level course.

For the mid-level governmental organisations and agency officials (civil servants):

- Civil Servants' Course (CSC) – an operational-level security and defence course.

In addition to its core PME programme, the BALTDEFCOL delivers the following continuing education courses:

- Senior Leaders' Course (SLC) – a one-week course for General/Flag officers and civilian equivalents.
- Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course (CSELC) – a three-month strategic level course for top-level Senior Enlisted Leaders working directly for General/Flag Officers.
- Reserve Officers' Operational Level Course (ROC) – an operational-level programme for officers in reserve.

1.2 Professional Military Education (PME) System

The Professional Military Education System of the Framework Nations divides officer education into four development levels (Figure 1). The first two levels, concerned with junior officers' basic training and education, are national responsibilities. The Baltic Defence College's Joint Command and General Staff Course and Higher Command Studies Course (or their equivalents) are the third and fourth levels of military education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

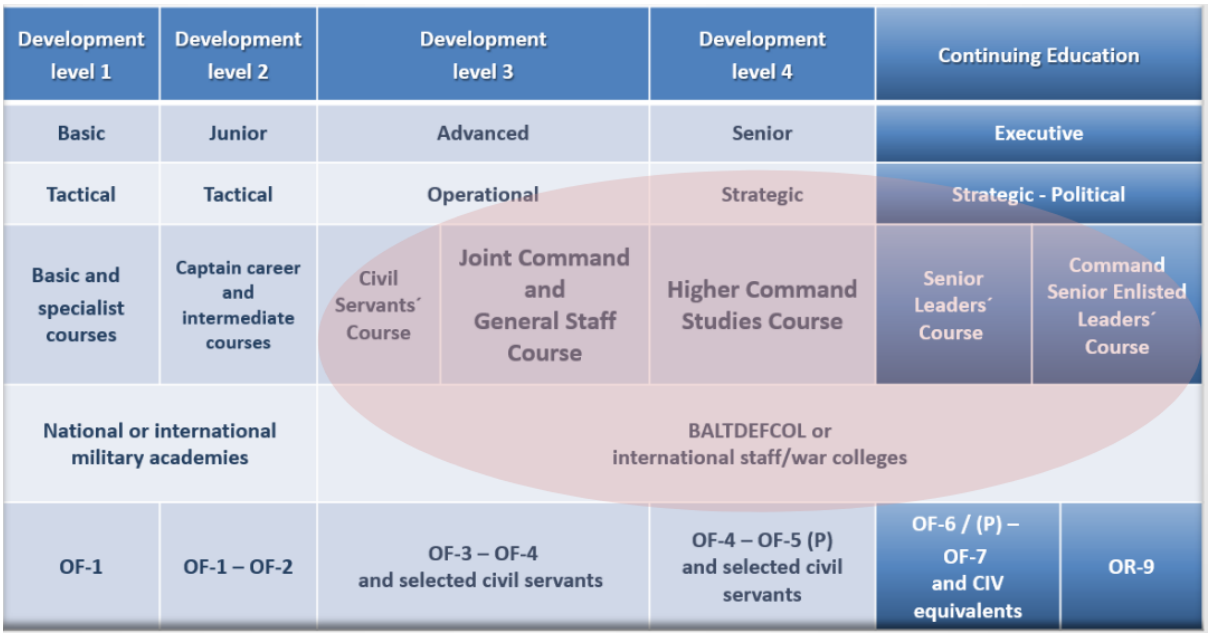


Figure 1 *Diagram of the Professional Military Education (PME) System of the Framework Nations.*

1.3 Policy on Equal Treatment and Code of Conduct

In 2019, the BALTDEFCOL implemented its Policy on Equal Treatment. This policy will be introduced and explained to students at the beginning of the course. This policy ensures a pleasant working environment, learning conditions, and protection from unfair and unequal treatment. Mutual trust and respect for the dignity and rights of all people are essential characteristics of this environment, and they are directly related to the BALTDEFCOL's Code of Conduct, which all members of staff and students are expected to follow. The Code of Conduct contains the following principles:

RESPECT:

- People (listen to everyone)
- The multinational environment
- Students – as colleagues
- The chain of command:
  - Make decisions at the right level
  - Show loyalty to decisions

RESPONSIBILITY:

- Be professional – lifetime learning
- Express your opinion
- Use common sense

OPENNESS:

- Have no hidden agendas
- Get input before decisions
- Talk to – and not about – people

HAVE FUN:

- Involve families
- Encourage socialising to do things together

Section 2 – About the Higher Command Studies Course

2.1 Outline

The HCSC was established in 2004 to educate senior military officers and government officials on the challenges associated with adapting defence institutions at the national, Allied, and European levels. Its core rationale is to ensure that the Baltic states' armed forces can effectively contribute to strategic challenges of the 21st century, and that their leadership is prepared to lead significant defence development programmes.

To date, the College has conducted twenty-three iterations of the HCSCs, graduating 394 students from 34 countries. Many alumni have gone on to serve in essential and demanding positions within their national defence structures or international organisations.

The HCSC 2027 will run from **11 January to 17 June 2027**, spanning **twenty-three weeks**. Students are expected to engage in preparatory reading and study of assigned publications prior to arrival. During the residential phase, each working day will consist of **six academic hours** of classroom activities. Additionally, students should anticipate **up to three hours of individual preparation per working day**, and **up to five hours on weekends**. Weekly contact time will not exceed **28 hours**, although certain components, such as the strategic operations planning module, study trips, and conferences, may require adjusted or additional study hours.

The course is highly engaging and demands active participation in **individual research**, **collaborative projects**, **academic discussions**, and other **group-based activities**. Two **study trips** will complement the classroom curriculum.

2.2 Aim

The aim of the HCSC is to prepare senior military officers and civilian government officials from the Framework Nations, their Allies and Partners for executive responsibilities at the strategic level both nationally and within the international community.

2.3 Learning Objectives

The delivery of education throughout the HCSC is organised to achieve learning objectives that delineate critical fields of knowledge and essential skills for students to master. The curriculum of HCSC 2027 is designed to produce graduates who are able to:

1. **Assess** key drivers and trends in the evolving security environment and appraise their implications for the security and defence of the Euro-Atlantic community, the Baltic Sea Region, and the Baltic states.
   This course objective is supported and achieved particularly through Module 2, Security Environment, Module 3, Russian Security Policy, and all other Modules, Electives, the Research Project, the Annual Conference on Russia, and both study trips.

2. **Contribute** to developing and implementing defence policies, strategies, plans and management decisions to achieve national and Allied strategic objectives.
   This course objective is supported by and achieved through the following educational components: Module 4, Defence Policy and Strategy Development; Module 5, Strategic Operations Planning; Module 6, Defence Management, and Module 7, Strengthening Deterrence and Defence, but is also supported by Modules 1 and 2, both study trips, and the Research Project.

3. **Develop** as creative, proactive, and agile leaders while performing executive responsibilities at the strategic level in interagency, national, and international environments, demonstrating the traits essential to the profession of arms.
   This course objective is supported and achieved mainly by Module 1, Strategic Leadership, but also supported by all other Modules, Electives, study trips, and the Research Project.

4. **Formulate and communicate** solutions to complex problems in security, defence, strategic leadership, and high command problems using critical thinking and practical communication skills.
   This course objective is supported by and achieved particularly through the Foundation Module and Module 1, Strategic Leadership, as well as all other Modules, Electives, study trips, and the Research Project.

2.4 Recognition of the HCSC

In designing and delivering the HCSC, the Baltic Defence College aims to align with the standards and expectations of civilian postgraduate degree programmes. Nevertheless, the HCSC is primarily conceived as a senior-level professional military education (PME) course.

The decision to accredit any educational components of the HCSC, such as the recognition of ECTS credit points, rests entirely with individual universities. While the College ensures academic rigour and coherence, formal recognition within a master's or other academic programme is subject to the policies of each institution.

Several NATO and partner nations recognise the HCSC at the national level as a PME Level 4 programme. Additionally, selected electives are certified by NATO or the European Union and are recognised accordingly.

2.5 Module-based Participation

The HCSC provides additional opportunities for external participants from governmental institutions and universities to engage with selected parts of the curriculum by attending one or more specific modules. While these participants benefit from exposure to the course content and discussions, they are **not eligible to receive the Course Diploma**. Furthermore, the comprehensive student assessment system applied to HCSC students does not extend to these external attendees.

The inclusion of such participants, namely civil servants from security and defence institutions, as well as students from other educational establishments, **enriches the learning environment** by introducing diverse perspectives. Senior officers and civil servants from the security and defence sectors, along with postgraduate students (or, in exceptional cases, senior undergraduates) from Framework Nations, Allied, and Partner countries, are eligible to participate in the following HCSC 2027 modules:

Module 1: Strategic Leadership
Module 2: Security Environment
Module 3: Russian Security Policy
Module 4: Defence Policy and Strategy Development
Module 5: Strategic Operations Planning
Module 6: Defence Management
Module 7: Strengthening Deterrence and Defence

Section 3 – Educational Framework

3.1 Introduction

The educational framework of the Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC) is grounded in a diverse range of academic methodologies, including lectures, panel discussions, seminars, and small-group (syndicate) activities. These are all designed to support advanced-level adult learning. Accordingly, the primary responsibility for achieving the intended learning outcomes rests with the student.

To support this, the HCSC and the Baltic Defence College are committed to providing an optimal educational environment. The course is structured to leverage the extensive experience and expertise already present within the College and is further enriched by specialised knowledge and skills drawn from external sources. Active learning is strongly encouraged, and full participation and contribution from all students are expected. This approach fosters an open and constructive environment in which students are encouraged to share their insights, experiences, and learning with one another.

In summary, the HCSC is designed for self-motivated and experienced professionals who possess the requisite English language proficiency to engage effectively with their peers and who are committed to excelling during their time in Tartu.

3.2 Educational Charter

The delivery of education at the Baltic Defence College is guided by an 'Educational Charter', which includes six principles related to both students and faculty:

1. **Education is not received but achieved:** as education is the basis of professional and individual self-improvement, students are therefore encouraged to devote themselves to their studies, understanding that the effort they put in will be rewarded by what they get out of the educational process.
2. **Minds are not vessels to be filled, but fires to be kindled:** the faculty should not simply provide facts for students to learn; through small group learning methods, they should also seek to mentor students to help them develop their ability to think for themselves. The objective is not to educate students on what to think but rather to show them how to think.
3. **Knowledge is a potent weapon, so arm yourself well:** research facilitates the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. While knowledge is not necessarily power, power can only be wielded effectively with knowledge. Students are inspired to research information supporting their interests and requirements. Equally, the development of education requires continuous research and self-development on the part of faculty.
4. **Professionalism is the key to education and research:** responsible faculty must be experts in their respective fields, capable of enacting quality management over the educational process, able to maintain excellent educational materials, and ready to devote themselves to their students and work.
5. **Assessment should be rigorous and fair:** assessment should be understood and designed as a productive learning experience for students, meaning faculty should always endeavour to provide professional, meaningful, and constructive feedback. Meanwhile, students should receive this feedback in the positive way it is intended, as a learning tool to facilitate self-improvement.
6. **Voices should not be raised, and arguments should be improved:** in keeping with an ethos of free enquiry and transparency, the Baltic Defence College will always

foster an open atmosphere where faculty and students can engage – sometimes even robustly – in discussion and debate.

3.3 Learning Levels – Bloom's Taxonomy

Like other institutions practising Professional Military Education, the Baltic Defence College employs a system incorporating Bloom's taxonomy of learning to structure its educational products. This taxonomy was developed by Dr. Benjamin Bloom in 1956 to delineate various aspects of learning. Bloom identified three components of education, namely the Cognitive (mental), Affective (emotional) and Psychomotor (physical) domains of intelligence, though the cognitive has been by far the most influential. Indeed, Figure 2 depicts the latest revision of 'Bloom's Taxonomy'– by a team of academics led by Dr Lorin Anderson, a student of Bloom, in 2000 – illustrating the **cognitive domain** progression of learning.

Learning Level	Explanation
6. Create *(highest level)*	A cognitive process through which elements are linked together or reorganised to form a coherent or functional whole or a new pattern or structure.
5. Evaluate	A cognitive process whereby theories, concepts, ideas, or phenomena are scrutinised and judged in relation to their relevance or superiority.
4. Analyse	A cognitive process whereby a piece of information is split into its component parts, where each relationship is articulated in relation to the others.
3. Apply	A cognitive process whereby information is articulated in relation to a particular situation (often to overcome an issue or problem).
2. Understand	A cognitive process whereby the meaning of various theories, concepts, ideas, or phenomena is obtained and articulated.
1. Remember *(lowest level)*	A cognitive process whereby information – previously discovered – is recalled and articulated.

Table 1 *Bloom's Updated Taxonomy (adapted from Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001. Expanded version is presented in BALTDEFCOL SOP for the Planning of Education, Annex G)*

Bloom's Updated Taxonomy helps the lecturer ascertain the correct level students should be capable of achieving in the proposed educational activity. In sum, generally:

- Before a concept can be understood, it must be remembered.
- Before a concept can be applied, it must be understood.
- Before a concept can be analysed, it must be applied (either in practice or theory).
- Before a concept can be evaluated, it must be analysed.
- Before a new concept can be created, other concepts must be remembered, understood, applied, analysed and evaluated.

Since then, several attempts have been made to develop a more detailed taxonomy, incorporating several 'levels of knowledge' alongside Bloom's six different levels of cognition.

These include:

- **Facts –** Actualities, Data, Events, Objects, Phenomena, Realities, Truths.
- **Concepts –** Conceptions, Designs, Ideas, Models, Notions, Theories.
- **Procedures –** Measures, Methods, Practices, Tactics, Techniques.
- **Processes –** Frameworks, Plans, Policies, Schemes, Strategies.
- **Principles –** Attitudes, Doctrines, Charters, Ideologies, Philosophies, Rules, Values.

Levels of Cognition →

Levels of Knowledge ↓

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Facts	List	Describe	Classify	Consider	Rank	Assemble
Concepts	Recall	Explain	Use	Differentiate	Assess	Modify
Procedures	Reproduce	Identify	Employ	Examine	Validate	Plan
Processes	Outline	Estimate	Utilise	Investigate	Justify	Formulate
Principles	State	Convert	Demonstrate	Distinguish	Appraise	Generate

Table 2 *Levels of Knowledge Integrated with Bloom's Updated Taxonomy*

The Baltic Defence College integrates these levels of knowledge with Bloom's Updated Taxonomy to better help define which keywords should be used in generating Learning Outcomes, i.e., those statements relating to what students should be able to do after completing a course or module (Table 2).

The HCSC utilises these learning levels in the identification of Learning Outcomes, which are deemed necessary for the course and its educational components. In keeping with the course's educational philosophy and the background of the students attending the course, a large portion of teaching is provided between cognition levels four and six.

3.4 Course Documents

Although BALTDEFCOL operates under a range of regulatory documents, the structure and delivery of each core curriculum course are primarily governed by the Course Plan (CP), educational component descriptions in ILIAS, and weekly schedules. These are the key sources of course-related information and must be reviewed by all students. Additionally, the BALTDEFCOL Regulations and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Student Assessment provide essential guidance applicable to all course participants.

Course Plan

The HCSC Course Plan contains essential information about BALTDEFCOL and the course itself, including relevant extracts from applicable regulations. It serves as the primary reference for the course curriculum for the academic year and outlines the course structure through the Curriculum Flow.

Learning Management System ILIAS

To support the learning process, BALTDEFCOL employs the web-based Learning Management System (LMS) ILIAS. This platform facilitates the management of learning content and provides tools for collaboration, communication, evaluation, and assessment. Each educational component within a course is detailed in ILIAS from the overall description to specific classroom activities, making it the primary source for daily topics, activities, assignments, and readings (syllabus).

Weekly Timetable

The weekly timetable outlines lectures, group activities, and other events, including College-wide activities. Published at least two weeks in advance, it remains subject to change. Extracurricular and academic events, such as roundtable seminars, formal dinners, and fireside chats with guest speakers, are also included.

3.5 Educational Activities

The Baltic Defence College has chosen to follow the Bologna Process, which was initiated within the European Higher Education Area to standardise the duration of European educational courses and assessment procedures to facilitate the easy transfer of qualifications between academic institutions. In Estonia, 26 hours corresponds to 1 ECTS[1] credit. The HCSC includes 1045 hours or 41 ECTS credit points in total. The time allocated should enable the average student to pass each educational component and, therefore, the course, but those students seeking to gain deserved recognition for their efforts should expect the need to put in more time and effort. Each week, an average of 45 hours of study time is allocated, which is typically divided into two basic formats:

1. **Contact Hours (CH):** within the curriculum, this includes the time spent in lectures, syndicate activities, exercises, and study trips, during which students are expected to be integrated with faculty or acting under the direct supervision of faculty:
    a. **Lectures** are one of the ways through which adult education is provided, allowing all students to congregate together with an expert – either a member of the faculty or a guest speaker – who presents on a topic to stimulate students' thinking and convey key facts, experiences, or ideas while simultaneously drawing students into debate and discussion.
    b. **Plenary Discussions** are group discussions or syndicate presentations in the class moderated by either a member of the faculty or a guest speaker.
    c. **Syndicate Activities** allow students to present and provide briefings on particular topics to one another. The HCSC students will be divided into two syndicates, whose composition shall be fixed for the duration of the course. Syndicate activities generally consist of preparatory reading, a presentation, and a discussion. These discussions encourage students to consider course material at a higher cognitive level. They are chaired, in rotation, by students (the Syndicate Leader or Task Leader), who are expected to carry out additional work in preparation for this role.
    d. **Supervision** is essential for students to complete selected written assignments through regular meetings with an academic supervisor. It is critical to understand that the role of the supervisor is not to write the student's assignment for them but rather to provide essential feedback and advice on drafts of their paper, which can then be used to make improvements and amendments to future versions.
    e. **Conferences** provide opportunities to share scientific knowledge and in-depth expertise on a specific topic. Students will be provided with a chance to participate in such events, including the BALTDEFCOL Conference on Russia 2027.
    f. **Faculty- or student-organised seminars** usually consist of group discussions chaired by an assigned faculty member and may also be structured around briefings, presentations, or preliminary readings. This method facilitates the exchange of views, trains analytical skills and critical thinking, and fosters an ability to reflect on a given subject area.
    g. **Individual Research Project (Research Paper)** is a work of individual research carried out by a student on a topic related to the course curriculum, which consists of required reading, tutoring, a written paper, and a presen-

[1] ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

tation. During the course, students will be tasked to produce a research paper (of around 5000 words) involving detailed research and applying academic standards.

h. **A policy paper** (policy brief, policy memo) is a short report on a problem for decision-makers or policymakers. The typical structure is as follows: a) issue, b) executive summary, c) background information, d) discussion of policy options, and e) an actionable recommendation.

i. **A point paper** is a written product which conveys information in bullet form by listing facts, assessments, and recommendations.

j. **Exercises** form a part of the HCSC learning process. They are conducted to allow students to apply the theories and concepts studied throughout the curriculum to solve problems in defence policy and strategy. These solutions constitute the basis for group presentations, which are a part of students' assessment of respective modules and electives. All exercises are closely connected to the relevant learning outcomes and are a significant aspect of the educational experience during the course.

k. **Study Trips** are collective visits to institutions, organisations, and agencies outside the Baltic Defence College. As such, they constitute an essential and integral part of the HCSC and are planned to meet the relevant learning outcomes for each module. These trips provide students with an excellent opportunity to meet national, regional, and global practitioners in the environment in which decisions are made, allowing students to obtain first-hand knowledge of allied, European, and national policies as well as armed forces and cultural values.

l. **Extracurricular activities** involve high-level visitors or distinguished guests who will deliver a lecture for all the courses present and the faculty, providing the opportunity to get an update on contemporary issues or unique personal and professional insight. These activities are often not pre-planned and thus require adjustments in the course schedule and weekly plans.

2. **Individual Preparation Hours (IPH):** time allocated for individual study and research, preparation for syndicate activities, and reflection, as well as work on assignments. When the IPH is foreseen beyond the daily schedule, students should plan to spend three hours each day from Monday to Thursday engaged in such activities, as well as five hours over the weekends. The HCSC includes three varieties of reading, but could include these additional tasks:

   a. **Pre-readings** are mandatory readings to be completed in preparation for the course. This reading is considered essential for ensuring that all students start the HCSC with a baseline level of elementary knowledge.

   b. **Preparatory Readings** are mandatory and must be completed before particular educational activities. Preparatory readings are intended to provide students with a broad overview of the topics identified to reach the learning outcomes specified.

   c. **Supplementary Readings** are supplied to support each educational activity, providing additional insight into certain aspects of the curriculum. The complete list of supplementary reading material will often be well in excess of that which can be reviewed in the time available. Students will thus have to make a choice as to what they consider of most significant value to their personal goals and interests.

Section 4 – Organisation of the HCSC

4.1 Faculty Organisation

Course Director (CD)

The Course Director is directly responsible to the Commandant for the development, planning, and execution of the course. When required, the Course Director is assisted by the Dean, the Curriculum Developer and Coordinator, Educational Component Coordinators, Senior Mentors, Assessors, and other relevant faculty members.

Educational Component Coordinators (ECCs)

Educational Component Coordinators (module or elective coordinators, etc.) oversee the development, planning, conduct, and assessment of various educational components of the HCSC. They are responsible for liaising with, utilising, and administering matters related to external support, e.g., Senior Mentors, Guest Speakers, etc.

Senior Mentor (SM)

Senior Mentors help students by supervising their work, advising them on how they might tackle tasks and what resources they might use, and evaluating their achievements. They will observe and participate in the students' discussions and lectures on curricular topics. They will also assist with the course evaluation.

Faculty

Faculty are civilian and military personnel deployed by nations or hired directly by the College to plan and implement educational activities and assess students' assignments. The faculty implements educational activities as ECCs, supervisors of research papers, assessors, and lecturers. Directors of the Department, Dean, and other Management Group members are also part of the Faculty.

Course Secretary

The Course Secretary is responsible for all daily secretarial and administrative duties for the HCSC.

4.2 Student Organisation

Class Leader

The students will elect one of their peers as the Class Leader. To conduct their official duties, the Course Director will delegate authority to the Class Leader concerning fellow HCSC students.

The Class Leader is the students' voice and represents them in all issues related to education and life outside the College. They will disseminate information to the students, collect their views on significant issues, and relay feedback to the Course Director and faculty members. This includes planning and carrying out the course feedback session at the end of the course.

The Class Leader's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining direct communication with and seeking guidance from the Course Director regarding HCSC initiatives.
- Disseminating information to HCSC students.
- Serving as a nexus to gather the overall view of the class on significant issues, relating them to the Course Director.
- Organising the planning and execution of HCSC social and other events, both within and outside of the College.
- Organising the planning and preparation of end-of-course mementos on behalf of HCSC students.
- Organising an HCSC feedback briefing at the end of the course.

Class Assistant

Every week, the Course Director will nominate a Class Assistant. They will be responsible for meeting, accompanying, introducing, and thanking Guest Speakers on behalf of the HCSC. The Class Assistant should also ensure the classroom is prepared correctly before and tidied after use.

Syndicates

Students will be organised into syndicates, typically two in number, the composition of which will remain fixed for the duration of the course.

Syndicate Leader (SL)

Each syndicate will elect a Syndicate Leader from among its members. The syndicate leaders will be in charge of representing the views of the syndicates and addressing organisational and administrative issues related to the syndicates. The Syndicate Leader will also be responsible for organising the Syndicate members to carry out the rotational tasks of the Syndicate Chair.

Task Leader (TL)

The CD, SM, ECC or SL may appoint students as Task Leaders for group activities, entrusting them with the responsibility for overseeing the work of their respective teams.

4.3 Student Responsibilities

While in the HCSC, students have several responsibilities regarding both academic rigour and individual propriety. In particular, students should:

- Conduct themselves with propriety both at the College and in public places.
- Respect guest speakers, faculty, and other students in an appropriate manner.
- Act scholarly in class, syndicate, and extracurricular activities.
- Meet with their supervisors regularly.
- Undertake the necessary preparation to engage fully with syndicate activities.
- Ensure compliance with the applicable academic regulations and standards in all oral and written assignments.
- Use artificial intelligence in individual and group tasks only to the extent authorised by the respective Educational Component Coordinator, and in accordance with the BALTDEFCOL Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence.

Section 5 – Curriculum

5.1 General

The HCSC curriculum is composed of distinct educational components: modules, electives, study trips, and a research project. Each component is delivered as a cohesive unit, contributing to the curriculum's modular structure. Educational Component Coordinators (ECCs) are responsible for managing their respective components, including organising instruction and overseeing the assessment process. Education is provided by faculty members and Guest Speakers, with support from Senior Mentor(s).

Each course and educational component are aligned with predefined learning outcomes, structured according to Bloom's Taxonomy (see Table 1). These outcomes specify what students should know or be able to do upon completion of the course or individual components. Summative assessments are designed to evaluate the achievement of these learning outcomes.

5.2 Modules

The HCSC will commence with an Opening and Foundation Module, during which students will receive essential information on the policies, procedures, and protocols necessary for succeeding throughout the course. Introductory lectures will outline the course structure and the academic environment of the Baltic Defence College. Students will also undertake an English language proficiency test and participate in activities designed to foster teamwork and rapport through the formation of syndicate groups. In addition, sessions on research methodology and academic writing will be provided to support the development of individual research projects. The Supervisors' Fair will enable students to make informed decisions regarding the topics and supervision of their research papers.

The HCSC curriculum comprises seven discrete and sequential core modules, each supported by a range of curriculum-related activities. These are complemented by an individual research project, which focuses on preparing and presenting a formal research paper. The course also includes two study trips: the Baltic Defence Study Trip (BDST) and the International Study Trip (IST). Most activities are optimised for residential delivery and are designed to achieve the intended level of learning within each subject area. However, depending on circumstances, parts of the curriculum may be delivered through distance or blended learning, using platforms such as MS Teams and other advanced distributed learning tools.

Each Educational Component has its own aim and key learning outcomes, which are directly linked to the overall course aim and learning objectives. While each component is distinct, the HCSC is an integrated course, and learning objectives are not mutually exclusive.

The Educational Components are sequenced as follows:

M0 Foundation Module
M1 Strategic Leadership
M2 Security Environment
M3 Russian Security Policy
M4 Defence Policy and Strategy Development
M5 Strategic Operations Planning
M6 Defence Management
M7 Strengthening Deterrence and Defence
RP Research Project

5.2.1 Module 0: Foundation Module

This module aims to improve the course participants' skills needed to study and learn effectively.

The module will encourage critical thinking and enhance the communication skills of the course participants. As such, the module will address effective reading and major writing tasks to be completed throughout the course and will examine the essential elements of researching, writing, and discussing research findings. Secondly, the module will discuss cooperation skills and civil-military interactions within an academic environment that will enhance participants' understanding of the requirements at the senior, strategic level of professional military education and will facilitate the establishment of productive group dynamics throughout the course.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Appraise requirements related to participation in a strategic-level professional military education programme.
2. Improve skills needed for effective studying and researching in a professional military education environment.
3. Examine cooperation skills that support an environment conducive to learning and positive group dynamics.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Diagnostic/formative: • Constructive participation	Ungraded
Credits: 1 ECTS	

5.2.2 Module 1: Strategic Leadership

The module aims to examine the concepts of strategic leadership to shape the conditions for students to succeed at a strategic and senior command level.

Considering strategic leaders´ responsibilities, competencies, and tasks, the module will focus on four major topics: the strategic leadership environment, the inner environment of organisations, how to make change happen, and personal aspects of strategic leadership. The module will help students reflect critically upon their previous leadership experience and prepare them to identify and explore the challenges leaders face at the strategic level. The module is developed as a combination of different learning activities, such as lectures, seminars, case studies, group activities, and most importantly, self- and group reflections, all of which are designated to prepare the students for leading, influencing, and motivating others in the joint, interagency, and multinational environment.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Appraise the complexity of the strategic leadership environment and the challenges it presents.

2. Examine leadership characteristics at the strategic level and reflect on personal traits and competencies as a strategic leader.
3. Consider the principles and theories of strategic leadership to design and develop an effective organisation.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Individual paper • Constructive participation	Pass / Fail
Credits: 3 ECTS	

5.2.3 Module 2: Security Environment

Aim of this module is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary security environment and its implications for security and defence. It examines the key drivers and emerging trends shaping international security, with particular attention to both present and future challenges. Students will be introduced to foundational theories and approaches in international relations and security studies, equipping them with the conceptual tools to analyse complex security dynamics. Building on these perspectives, the module explores broad geopolitical themes and pressing issues, including technological innovation, climate change, and governance challenges.

A special focus is placed on NATO and the Baltic Sea Region, assessing how global developments and shifting strategic priorities influence regional and collective security. Through critical reflection and case analysis, students will evaluate how evolving security environments affect NATO's role and the Baltic states' defence outlook.

By the end of the module, students will be able to identify problematic security and defence trends, anticipate the drivers of future security environments, and assess the effectiveness of policy and strategic responses.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the impact of changes to the security environment on the security and defence policies of the Baltic states.
2. Appraise the key drivers and trends in the broader security environment by critically applying theoretical models and concepts.
3. Assess the security and defence implications of changes to the global and regional security environment.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Group presentation • Individual paper • Constructive participation	Pass / Fail
Credits: 5 ECTS	

5.2.4 Module 3: Russian Security Policy

The module aims to explore the Russian security policy since the collapse of the USSR, with particular emphasis on its evolution during the Putin era. It takes a dynamic perspective on the Russian security policy, tracing its substantive changes and persistent elements in security policy actors' behaviour inside Russia, the related institutional developments, and strategic objectives.

To this end, the module covers the developments of Russia's military and security institutions, offers insights into the factors that contributed to the Kremlin's decision to invade Ukraine, examines Russia's ongoing militarisation, and the related policy implications for the wider Baltic region and NATO. To improve our understanding of Russian security policy, the module explores the transformation of Russia's security strategy and thinking, its threat perception, and military building priorities.

Essentially, the module's centre of attention revolves around two critical questions: (a) What are the Kremlin's security objectives and their origins? and (b) What tools of statecraft does Russia use to advance these objectives (and the reason for their selection)? In answering these questions, the module investigates both the Western and Russian perspectives on the Kremlin's security policies and employs various analytic concepts to make sense of Russia's security policy developments. The module participants are provided with the necessary conceptual tools, derived from strategic studies, to make sense and interpret the changes and continuity in the process of Russia's security and military institutions' development.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Explain the fundamental logic underpinning Russia's security policy, including its strategic objectives and guiding principles.
2. Assess the key drivers, actors, and institutions shaping Russia's security policy, the statecraft tools through which their inputs materialise, and use analytic concepts to reveal how they shape it.
3. Assess the major security and defence challenges that Russia poses for the Baltic states, the wider Baltic Sea region, the Euro-Atlantic Community, and derive recommendations for strategies to counter the related threats.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Group presentation • Individual paper • Substantive participation	Pass / Fail
Credits: 5 ECTS	

5.2.5 Module 4: Defence Policy and Strategy Development

This module aims to explain the environmental and procedural variables involved in strategy formulation and to assess recent developments in defence policy and planning at the national, bilateral, and multilateral levels.

The module will begin with a review of strategy formulation theories and will continue with recent developments and trends in defence policy and strategy constrains (national characteristics, security situation and legal framework) and domains (political, military, economic, informational domains. These will then be discussed using examples of the big states, organisations and Baltic defence policies and strategies. The module will introduce the ends-ways-means framework, which can derive strategy from national objectives and interests regardless of state size and connect it to more particular strategy formulation methodologies. These will eventually be used in a group table game called 'Strategic Formulator', which will enable students to participate in the creation of a national defence strategy for a specific country, depending on the artificial scenario provided.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Utilise knowledge of the defence policy and strategy formulation process to actively contribute to its development, including the preparation of proposals for national defence strategies.
2. Appraise the evolution of the Baltic states' national defence policies and strategies while considering their interrelationships with national defence policies and strategies on other "big players" states and organisations (NATO and the EU).
3. Assess interrelationships between the national and international stimuli related to ends, ways, and means while developing a defence strategy based on national purposes.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Group presentation • Individual paper	Pass / Fail
Credits: 5 ECTS	

5.2.6 Module 5: Strategic Operations Planning

The module aims to prepare students to contribute effectively to the operations planning for deterrence and defence at strategic levels, taking into account regional and allied synergies within a comprehensive framework.

The module will introduce NATO's crisis response and operations planning systems and processes. Building on the outcomes of Modules 3 and 4, the module will focus on the practical application of strategic operations planning processes, including using planning frameworks and methods to develop strategic assessments and military response options for the Baltic states. The module will conclude by estimating other phases of NATO's strategic operations planning, execution, and assessment while exploring linkages between various NATO planning systems. Throughout the module, students will individually analyse selected strategic operations planning issues within a comprehensive framework.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Comprehend NATO crisis response processes and apply NATO strategic operations planning processes.

2. Appraise requirements for integrating NATO and national strategic planning for deterrence and defence.
3. Consider the complexities of planning for comprehensive defence within NATO and nationally.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Group presentation (strategic assessment, MRO) • Individual paper • Constructive participation	Pass / Fail
Credits: 3 ECTS	

5.2.7 Module 6: Defence Management

The module aims to provide students with tools and instruments to investigate, assess, and formulate defence management strategies and plans.

It begins with a general overview of defence economics and resource management, analysing key theories, principles, and processes. The focus then shifts to defence management solutions in the area of capabilities development, acquisition, sustainment, and human resource management. The module also discusses national, multinational, and collective capability building, with particular attention to the requirements of the Baltic states and lessons learned from recent practices.

By the end of the module, students will be able to evaluate how financial, material, infrastructural, and personnel decisions shape the formulation of effective defence planning and policy recommendations under conditions of resource constraint.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Formulate coordinated guidance and implementation concepts for effective defence management.
2. Assess the impact of resource allocation on defence management outcomes.
3. Apply rational and disciplined methods for allocating resources to build efficient and effective capabilities in the face of uncertainty.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Group presentation • Individual point paper • Constructive participation in class	Pass / Fail
Credits: 3 ECTS	

5.2.8 Module 7: Strengthening Deterrence and Defence

The module aims to enable students to successfully contribute to developing and implementing credible deterrence and defence strategies for the Baltic Sea region, considering regional and allied synergies.

The module will start with analysing theoretical frameworks and conceptual models for deterrence. It will then critically examine the security threats and current allied and national concepts and capabilities for deterrence and defence in the Baltic Sea region. The assessment will focus on existing gaps and limitations that affect allied, regional, and national capabilities for deterrence and defence. It will also discuss the challenges resulting from diverging perceptions of deterrence and forward defence among states, international organisations, politicians, and the military. These critical perspectives of credible deterrence will act as the basis of the *Strategic Deterrence Simulation*, which will challenge students to formulate a proposal for a credible deterrence and defence strategy for the Baltic Sea region in 2032 that integrates regional and Allied cooperation. This simulation would incorporate considerations and strategic assessments prepared during previous modules for initial scenario planning.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Appraise credible deterrence and defence options for the Baltic Sea region by integrating regional and allied cooperation.
2. Examine and validate foundational theories of deterrence through their practical application to contemporary realities in the Baltic Sea security environment.
3. Evaluate the current deterrence and defence concepts and capabilities related to the security of the Baltic Sea region.
4. Assess the impact of changes to the security environment on formulating and implementing deterrence and defence strategies for the Baltic Sea region.

Assessment

Purpose and method	**Grading**
Summative: • Group presentation • Individual paper and discussion	Pass / Fail
Credits: *5* ECTS	

5.2.9 Research Project

This module allows students to conduct in-depth critical analysis on a topic linked to the strategic aspects of the security environment, security and defence policy, defence strategy, or defence management.

The research process allows students to strengthen their argumentation and expression skills while writing a research paper. To complete the module, students must prepare a research paper according to BALTDEFCOL standards. The research paper must be completed as an individual effort. Ideally, HCSC research papers should focus on a real-world issue important to the security and defence of the Framework Nations, Allies, or Partner Countries. The research paper will be orally defended in front of a defence committee.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. Prepare a research paper using principles of critical thinking and argumentation.
2. Apply academic standards, ethical principles, and formal requirements for conducting research.
3. Present the critical aspects of the research paper and defend its conclusions and recommendations.

Assessment

Purpose and method	Grading
Summative: • Research paper • Defence of research project	Pass / Fail
Credits: 5 ECTS	

5.2.10 Study Trips

Study Trips are organised group visits to institutions, organisations, and agencies outside the Baltic Defence College. They form an essential and integral part of the HCSC curriculum and are designed to support the course's learning objectives and respective modules.

The scope and destinations of each study trip are determined in line with the strategic requirements of the Framework Nations, as outlined in the Development Plan, and may vary between academic years.

These trips provide students with valuable opportunities to engage directly with national, regional, and international practitioners in decision-making environments. By doing so, students gain first-hand insights into Allied, European, and national policies, the function of armed forces, and relevant cultural contexts.

The HCSC 2027 curriculum foresees two study trips: **the Baltic Defence Study Trip** and **the International Study Trip**.

Credits: 2 ECTS each

Baltic Defence Study Trip:

During the study trip to the capitals of the Baltic states, participants will engage with security, defence, and communication planners and experts to analyse deterrence gaps and challenges, explore opportunities for cooperation, and gather information relevant to strengthening deterrence and resilience-related planning. Participants will be encouraged to propose practical solutions based on their findings.

The programme includes visits to national parliaments, ministries of defence, defence forces institutions, as well as discussions with experts from ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of interior, specialised agencies and think tanks. Throughout this trip, participants will reflect on the significance and practical utility of newly acquired knowledge for addressing their research tasks.

This study trip directly supports the learning objectives of **Module 4**, **Module 5** and **Module 6** by enabling interaction with practitioners involved in defence, security and strategy development and implementation. It also offers first-hand exposure to the defence management challenges faced by the Baltic states. Furthermore, it reinforces the learning objectives of **Module 1**, **Module 2** and **Module 3** through discussions on trends in the security environment and Russia, while contributing to **Module 7** learning objectives by facilitating professional dialogue on deterrence and defence requirements and challenges.

International Study Trip:

The HCSC 2027 International Study Trip will focus on NATO, the European Union, and the wider Baltic Sea region. The programme includes an examination of the defence policies of Belgium and France, as well as an exploration of strategy-making at the Alliance and national levels. The visit to NATO headquarters, EU Military Staff, SHAPE, Belgium MoD/GS will provide insights into the development of NATO and the EU policies in general and the role of the Baltic Sea region within these policies.

The international study trip supports the learning objectives of **Module 1**, **Module 2** and **Module 3** by exposing students to Allied assessments of the security environment, perspectives on relations with Russia, and the role of leadership. It also contributes to the learning objectives of **Modules 4**, **Module 5**, **Module 6** and **Module 7** by facilitating discussions on defence policy, and strategy, strategic operations planning, defence management, deterrence and defence at both the Allied and national levels.

5.3 Electives

As part of the HCSC, students will participate in an elective week conducted jointly with other BALTDEFCOL courses. The elective programme provides an opportunity to explore selected topics in greater depth and broaden professional knowledge in areas relevant to individual interests and future responsibilities. While the College intends to offer the topics outlined below, the final selection may be adjusted in response to faculty and subject-matter expert availability, operational considerations, and student interest. Students will be invited to choose from the final list of electives upon arrival at the College.

Credits: 2 ECTS each

2.1 BALTDEFCOL Operational Level Energy Security Course (ENSEC/DLMS)

The aim is to apply Energy Security factors relevant to NATO by introducing the fundamentals and analysing energy security developments in the current geopolitical situation and their potential impacts on Alliance security and military operations at the operational level.

The elective consists of a JADL course, lectures, seminars, reading tasks, presentations, group work and the students' individual work, which, in addition to developing subject specific knowledge, also allows for the development of critical thinking skills. The lectures will be delivered in cooperation with specialists from the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence and their network of subject matter experts. Syndicate work will focus on the collective defence of NATO's Baltic Region Eastern Flank from hybrid threats and NATO's three pillars: RED TEAMING – BLUE TEAMING – ENERGY EFFICIENCY.

Educational Method

In accordance with the NATO ACT approved Course Control Documents III:

- Day 1 Energy Security Awareness: NATO's role in energy security, NATO ENSEC COE: introduction and activities, military aspects of energy security, geopolitics of energy security.
- Day 2 and 3 Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection (CEIP): power production and distribution in the Baltic states, energy in conflicts, hybrid warfare and energy security, critical energy infrastructure protection (CEIP), energy infrastructure in the maritime domain, intersection of cyber security and Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI).
- Day 4 Energy Efficient Operations: energy efficiency in military operations, energy behaviour changes with military application, NATO operational energy concept.
- Day 5 Syndicate Presentations and Assessment.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Analyse energy security developments and their potential impact on military operations.
2. Analyse risks to Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) by focussing on the entire energy system.
3. Apply innovative energy efficiency approaches to improve NATO capabilities.

2.2 NATO Intermediate Strategic Communications Course (DMS)

The aim is to develop an understanding of the information environment and apply a STRATCOM mind-set when planning and conducting operations; ensure STRATCOM integration and execution occurs at all levels within their headquarters.

Audience: This elective is for non-communicators (not STRATCOM/PAO staff) and familiarises staff officers with STRATCOM activities at strategic level organisations.

The elective/course is certified as a NATO course and consists of Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) as an online course, lectures, seminars, and group work, involving students' individual work and preparation. Lectures will be delivered in cooperation with specialists from the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, the Baltic states, the NATO Force Structure, and the NATO Command Structure.

This elective/course is open to external students. The course can be organised as an online course depending on the necessity and time available. Pre-requisite course (optional): Introduction to Strategic Communications (Online course on ACT Joint Advance Distance Learning Portal). The main topics of this elective are the STRATCOM framework, the STRATCOM narrative, the implementation of STRATCOM, and the information environment – challenges and opportunities for a military leader.

Educational Method

- The elective/course will consist of lectures, seminars, and group work, and involves the students´ individual work and presentations.
- Lectures provided by specialists from the NATO Strategic Communications COE, LVA NAF, EST NAF, SHAPE and STRATCOM academy.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Understand the fundamentals of NATO Strategic Communications.
2. Understand NATO STRATCOM policy and its relationship to Political-Military (POLMIL) Direction and Guidance (D&G).
3. Understand the information environment in relation to STRATCOM.
4. Understand the role, function, utility, and limitations of STRATCOM related functions and capabilities.
5. Implement STRATCOM considerations into the processes and products of their branch/department.

2.3 Resistance Operating Concept (DMS)

The aim is to enhance students' ability to utilise the Resistance Operating Concept to develop a national, organised resistance capability, implementing a whole-of-government approach to deter external actors.

This elective focusses on Total Defence (Resilience and Resistance) aspects, discusses the possible roles of different national components, including official state level and public or voluntary level components. The Resistance Operating Environment, structure and supporting concepts will be highlighted and different National approaches are introduced. Ukraine's experience in the ongoing war is also touched upon during discussions.

Analysis of a practical case in Resilience & Resistance will support development of participants' critical thinking and communication skills.

Educational Method

- In-class lectures and e-learning.
- Individual preparation & discussions based on required reading and video materials.
- SME Instructors. 3Bs, POL, UKR, USA perspective..

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Examine the organisation of a Total Defence programme, building resilience and planning resistance pre-conflict.
2. Use resistance planning considerations in the discussion of the operating environment, threats that lead to instability, and programmes to counter these effects.
3. Employ interagency functions and considerations for developing an organised resistance.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of resistance operating concepts in the review of a historical case study.

2.4 Intelligence and Counterintelligence (DMS)

The aim is to develop and enhance students' knowledge regarding intelligence disciplines, within the framework of Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (JISR).

This elective mainly focusses on the role of staff officers in support of the intelligence process. The main topics to be covered are Tools and Techniques of Intelligence Analysis, Basics of Counterintelligence/TESSOC, OSINT, HUMINT as intelligence disciplines, lessons learned from Operational Intelligence during WWII and the contemporary wars in UKR and Middle East. The main topics are also discussed within the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) environment. Study utilises distance learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and principles of critical thinking. Discussions and work in small groups support development of participants' leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Educational Method

- This elective consists of lectures, adult learning via the online courses, work in small groups, student presentations, and plenary discussions.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Examine the intelligence process across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, applying tools and techniques of intelligence analysis and processing.
2. Evaluate the roles of key intelligence disciplines and their contributions to joint military operations.
3. Assess historical and contemporary cases of intelligence success and failure, identifying underlying causes and operational implications.

2.5 Russian History and Strategic Mindset (DPS)

The aim of the elective is to identify the core historical developments and cultural properties of Russia that shape its politics today and are used constantly for the making of strategic decisions.

Students will be provided with an overview of Russian history and its geopolitical aspects influencing its military-strategic decisions. At the end of the course, students will be familiarised with the development of Russian thought and the formulation of its cultural identity. This elective will be structured as a seminar with student presentations. The task will consist of the group presentations and of the analysis of a contemporary speech from the Russian political elite, looking for cultural and historical references within them and identifying them and their importance in the speech.

The lecture series takes us briefly through Russian history. Defining the key events building up what we now consider Russia. Emphasising key identity and country building core events. Including the beginning of Kievan Rus, the Rule of the Mongols, Moscow, and Muscovites and onwards to the end of the Russian Empire. The elective does not cover XX century Russian history. The elective sets certain limits on the topics covered, but at the same time allows the group to delve deeper into the topic.

Educational Method

- Lectures.
- Presentations by the students.
- Group discussions.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of the core historical events in Russia's history.
2. Express an understanding of Russian political and strategic culture, as well as its cultural identity.
3. Express the importance and the development of Russian thought and formulation of Russian history.
4. Categorise and be able to explain the importance of large conflicts before the 20th century that have influenced Russia's strategic mind-set.

2.6 Cyber Defence Policy on National and International Levels (DPS)

The aim is to equip participants with a conceptual framework for strategic thinking in cyber defence and to enhance their understanding of the integration of cyber considerations into both national and international security policies and strategies.

Audience: the elective is designed to provide general awareness of the importance of cyberspace considerations for operational and strategic aspects of contemporary defence and security and does not require any IT related skills or knowledge.

The elective will provide foundational skills and knowledge to analyse and design effective policy frameworks and strategies for cyber defence. The curriculum offers an integrated overview of contemporary geopolitical affairs and security issues, encouraging participants to think creatively and critically about strategically important topics. Guest speakers representing diverse opinions from the political, military, academic, and private

sectors will stress the importance of cyberspace for the contemporary security environment and its effects on conventional and hybrid warfare. This elective will be delivered in cooperation with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

The elective is designed to provide general awareness of the importance of cyberspace considerations for operational and strategic aspects of contemporary defence and security and does not require any IT related skills or knowledge. The conduct of the elective is practical, and case driven. Among other topics, it discusses the impact of emerging technologies and AI on policy generation. Additionally, alongside cyber-related knowledge, it focusses on sharpening the course participants' skills in policy analysis, strategy formulation, critical thinking, communication and teamwork.

Educational Method

The conduct of the elective is practical/case driven and on top of the cyber-related knowledge is focused on sharpening skills of the course participants:

- Policy Analysis
- Strategy Formulation
- Critical thinking, communication, presentation and teamwork

Guest speakers representing diverse opinions from the political, military, academic, and private sectors will stress the importance of cyberspace for the contemporary security environment and its effects on conventional and hybrid warfare. The Elective is EU certified and will be delivered in cooperation with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the elective, students should be able to:

1. Consider the strategic aspects of cybersecurity.
2. Analyse trends in the cybersecurity environment.
3. Apply cybersecurity terminology, concepts, issues, and components.
4. Assess the role of cybersecurity in national and international security contexts.

2.7 Understanding and Countering Hybrid Threats (DPS)

The aim is to provide an introduction to contemporary hybrid threats and the security challenges associated with strategic competition below the threshold of conventional armed conflict.

The course is jointly organised and delivered with the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE). It examines how states employ coordinated activities across the political, economic, informational, cyber, military, and other domains to pursue strategic objectives and generate coercive effects. The elective explores the relationship between hybrid activities and conventional conflict, provides regional and international perspectives on contemporary challenges, and analyses the strategies and policy tools available to deter, counter, and build resilience against hybrid threats.

Educational Method

The elective combines conceptual foundations with practical, case-based learning to develop students' understanding of hybrid threats and strengthen their ability to analyse and respond to complex security challenges. The teaching approach includes:

- Lectures introducing key concepts, frameworks, and analytical tools.
- Practitioner-led sessions examining policy responses and real-world experiences.
- Scenario-based exercises and policy challenges.
- Expert feedback and facilitated discussion on practical exercises.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Elective, a student should be able to:

1. Appraise Assess the nature and impact of hybrid threats.
2. Analyse the methods and instruments used in hybrid competition.
3. Develop policy responses to counter hybrid threats.

2.8 Project Management Certification (DLMS)

The aim is to extend knowledge of how project management and leadership principles support the problem-solving process and prepare participants for formal project management certification examination.

The main topics covered during this elective are Introduction to elective; rehearsal / refreshment of M1 and M5; on-line course (combination of online materials prepared by BALTDEFCOL and course provided by certification authority – 29 modules*), mentoring. Module develops participants' critical thinking, communication and leadership skills.

**Each module covers a Competence Element in the IPMA International Competence Baseline (same set of modules as part of the knowledge base to pass a written exam at certification levels from D-A).*

Educational Method

- Lectures covering theory coming from M1, M5 and elements of M4.
- Required reading.
- Online – according to a certification authority's methodology.
- Mentoring.
- Exam – internal exam as a rehearsal before the online one.
- Certification exam – to be taken independently by students

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Elective, a student should be able to:

1. Understand the organisational, societal, and political context of a project.
2. Understand the personal and social competences required to manage a project.
3. Understand organisational influences and demands on the management of a project.

2.9 Strategic Foresight and Backcasting (DLMS)

The aim is to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of strategic foresight concepts and methodologies within defence contexts.

Participants will delve into the practical application of strategic foresight in envisioning and backcasting future scenarios, enabling them to generate strategic policy recommendations for high-level defence stakeholders. The main topics that are covered during this elective are concepts and methods of strategic foresight, its historical and contemporary applications, potential trends and developments in various domains and technologies, developments in Russia, China, NATO, and the EU. The elective seeks to foster critical

thinking and analytical skills, preparing participants to navigate the complexities of future defence landscapes.

Educational Method

- Online and in-person lectures combined with plenary discussions.
- Backcasting exercise run by UK DCDC (Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre) experts: syndicate work on scenario development.
- Minimum requirement of 12 students (4 working groups).
- Exercise phases: 1) Scenario feasibility analysis, 2) Backcasting method: how scenarios materialise, 3) Policy recommendations on how to prevent negative developments and stimulate positive developments.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Elective, a student should be able to:

1. Understand the strategic foresight concept, theories, and their comprehensive application in defence contexts, including implications for defence planning.
2. Apply knowledge of the backcasting foresight methodology to analyse and envision future scenarios fostering a more dynamic and strategic mindset.
3. Compile and present policy recommendations based on future scenarios, targeting high-level stakeholders.

Assessment of Electives

Elective (ELE 2) assessment purpose is summative and the methods in each elective will vary. Students will be graded based on:

Assessment method	Grading
ELE 2.1 BALTDEFCOL Operational Level Energy Security Course (EN-SEC/DLMS) • Constructive Participation	Pass / Fail
ELE 2.2 NATO Intermediate Strategic Communications Course (DMS) • Constructive Participation (30%) • Open Book Test (70%)	
ELE 2.3 Resistance Operating Concept (DMS) • Constructive Participation (50%) • Group Presentation (50%)	
ELE 2.4 Intelligence and Counterintelligence (DMS) • Constructive Participation (50%) • Group Presentation (50%)	
ELE 2.5 Russian History and Strategic Mindset (DPS) • Constructive Participation (40%) • Group Presentation (60%)	
ELE 2.6 Cyber Defence Policy on National and International Levels (DPS) • Group Presentation	
ELE 2.7 Understanding and Countering Hybrid Threats (DPS) • Constructive Participation (40%) • Group Presentation (60%)	
ELE 2.8 Project Management Certification (DLMS) • Constructive Participation • IPMA exam – optional for receiving the official certificate (NLT the end of the HCSC)	
ELE 2.9 Strategic Foresight and Backcasting (DLMS) • Constructive Participation (40%) • Group Presentation (60%)	
Credits: 2 ECTS	

Section 6 – Student Assessment System

6.1 Introduction

By its purpose, assessment is divided into diagnostic, formative or summative:

Type	Description	Result
Diagnostic	To assess what students already know and/or the difficulties that they might have that may limit their engagement in new learning.	Ungraded narrative feedback
Formative	To provide feedback to students during an educational component or activity. To achieve this, students may be given the opportunity to complete tasks during educational components to assist with their learning. Can be conducted once or continuously. The result does not affect the final grade of the educational component.	Ungraded narrative feedback
Summative	To determine whether students have met the prescribed learning outcomes for the educational component (criterion-referenced), or on what level their accomplishment is compared to the effort of the group (norm-referenced). Can be conducted once at the end of the educational component or can be continuous. For assessment, students are required to complete either one summative activity – an assignment, sometimes consisting of various components – or a series of activities for each educational component.	Grade, pass/fail

To pass an educational component, a student must pass the assignments according to the requirements set by the educational component coordinator. A student receiving a failing grade in one or more summative assessments will not graduate from the HCSC but will receive a '*Letter of Attendance*' instead.

6.2 Assessment and Evaluation

The student assessment procedure consists of two parts. First, all modules, except the Foundation Module, and Research Project include an assignment that will be formally assessed through a process known as summative assessment. The assessment, together with feedback, is intended to assist the students' development throughout the course. Summative assessments are intended to formally assess the performance and knowledge of students in relation to the learning outcomes for the different HCSC modules.

Second, student performance during all course activities will be monitored and evaluated, and the results will be used to create a report that will be sent to both the student and his or her sending state. This type of evaluation is conducted through counselling conducted by the Course Director and, at the end of HCSC, through a written Performance Review. The Course Director will monitor the student's progress and performance throughout the HCSC and will provide them with informal feedback when appropriate:

1. **Course Director's Counselling** will be scheduled for two individual counselling sessions for each student, the first during Module 3 and the second at the end of Module 6.

2. **Diploma and Diploma Supplement** will both be provided to the student prior to graduation from the course.

3. **Performance Review (Annex B):** This document will be sent to the student's nominating authority when completed. This review sets out the evaluation areas and criteria used to describe the range of competencies the Course Director will consider in evaluating student performance.

6.3 Assessment of Academic Ability

The Baltic Defence College uses an assessment system that is compliant with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). However, the implementation of the assessment system and use of the grading depends on each course's requirements and the length of the courses.

Summative assessments will be administered for each HCSC module to formally assess the performance and knowledge of students with respect to the modular learning outcomes. HCSC students will receive a summative assessment of their assignments using pass/fail criteria only. In case of exceptional performance, the student may receive a Pass with Distinction. The type of assessment used in each educational component is decided during the course planning process to ensure the best way to assess the achievement of the learning outcomes and evaluate students' performance.

Each Module coordinator will define a more detailed matrix for all summative assessments in the HCSC assignments. The students will be given the grading matrices before the commencement of each module.

The following grading scheme will be applied for the summative assessments, using **Fail**/**Pass** grading:

Grade	Criteria
Pass	Meeting expectations at least at a satisfactory level. The student displays at least a **satisfactory grasp** of the subject matter and attainment of learning outcomes at least at a satisfactory level.
Fail	Not meeting expectations. The student displays **an inadequate grasp** of the subject matter and attainment of learning outcomes below the minimum level.

Within this grading scale, a "Distinction" may be awarded to a student who displays the highest levels of academic achievement or whose efforts have considerably exceeded expectations. In this case, distinction is added to the pass grade (e.g. Pass with Distinction).

6.4 Reassessment and Student Appeals

In some cases, a student might earn a **Fail** for an assignment. If this happens, they will be afforded one opportunity to undertake a reassessment. After failing the assignment during the reassessment process, an Academic Board will be convened to formulate recommendations for the Commandant. Based on the recommendation of the Academic Board, the Commandant will inform the sending/sponsoring nations of further actions.

If students are dissatisfied with the assessment of a summative assignment, they have the right to appeal their grade, but only if they can provide evidence showing why they believe they have been treated **unfairly** or **inappropriately**. The process for appealing is outlined in the SOP for Student Assessment.

6.5 Misconduct

In cases of academic or personal misconduct, students may be expelled from the HCSC and returned to their home country in accordance with procedures approved by the Framework Nations and outlined in the Baltic Defence College Regulations.

Additionally, if a student's overall course performance fails to meet the required standard, a structured warning system is applied. This system consists of **three levels of intervention**, escalating in severity based on the student's progress and responsiveness to feedback.

Level 1 – Course Director's Dialogue: when the Course Director identifies that a student is not making satisfactory progress or is contributing insufficiently to the course, the matter will be discussed with the **Commandant** and the **Senior National Representative (SNR**, if appointed). The Course Director will then inform the student that their performance is below the expected standard and requires immediate improvement. The student will also be advised that both the Commandant and the SNR have been notified.

Level 2 – Course Director's Report: if a student's performance does not improve following initial feedback, a **Course Director's Report** will be compiled. This report will be formally presented to the student, who will be required to sign it as an acknowledgement of receipt, not as an indication of agreement. At this stage, the **Course Director** will again inform both the **Commandant** and the **Senior National Representative (SNR)** of the situation.

Level 3 – Commandant: if a student's performance continues to be unsatisfactory despite prior interventions, the **Commandant** may decide to recommend to the **sending state** that the student be withdrawn from the HCSC.

6.6 Graduation Documents and Commemorative Items

Upon successful completion of the course, each HCSC student will receive the following:

- **Diploma**
- **Diploma Supplement**
- **Performance Review** (see Annex B)

Only the **Performance Review** is submitted to the student's official authorities or employer. The Diploma and Supplement are retained by the student for personal and academic records.

Graduates are also entitled to receive a numbered Graduation Badge. The badge bears the same unique identification number as the Diploma and is formally presented during the graduation ceremony. Authorisation to wear the Graduation Badge, subject to the applicable national uniform and dress regulations, is explicitly stated in the Diploma.

6.7 Academic Awards

HCSC graduates are eligible to receive the following academic awards:

- **The Commandant's Award**
- **The Academic Writing Award**

These two exceptional students will be formally recognised during the **Graduation Ceremony**.

The Commandant's Award

The **Commandant's Award** recognises the student who has **demonstrated outstanding creativity, insight, academic rigour, leadership, and comradeship**. This individual will have excelled academically across all summative and formative assessments, while consistently displaying exceptional leadership and team spirit throughout the course. Moreover, they will have significantly enriched the educational experience of their peers, made substantial contributions to the course, and embodied the values and expectations of the Baltic Defence College.

The Course Director will nominate a student worthy of consideration for the award in close coordination with the Dean, Senior Mentor and Educational Component Coordinators.

Academic Writing Award

The **Academic Writing Award** is presented to the HCSC student who achieves the highest recognition for their **Research Paper in Strategic Studies**. In addition to receiving an academic award, the recipient's paper will be published in *Ad Securitatem*, the College's academic journal, which is issued following graduation.

Section 7 – Course Evaluation Process

7.1 General

The Baltic Defence College is committed to continuously enhancing its curriculum to ensure it remains effective, relevant, agile, and responsive to emerging challenges. Curriculum development is an ongoing process that includes reviewing the current course programme, planning and authoring new or revised content, approving changes, and producing and disseminating course materials.

A structured evaluation system supports the ongoing development of the course. This system engages faculty, the management group, all personnel involved in the delivery of education, and most importantly, the students. Student feedback and perspectives are essential for refining the course delivery and guiding future curriculum improvements.

7.2 Course Feedback System

The HCSC is regularly evaluated by both students and Educational Component Coordinators. The **Course Feedback System** consists of four distinct components:

Weekly Feedback

Weekly Feedback gathers assessments of faculty members and guest speakers. Its primary purpose is to support professional development and ensure continuous improvement. It also serves as input for the selection and invitation of Guest Speakers, helping maintain high-quality standards.

Educational Component Feedback

The objective of Educational Component Feedback is to acquire timely feedback from students and from the faculty on each component to monitor the learning process, make any necessary adjustments to the ongoing course, and gather data for overall evaluation.

Course Feedback

The objectives of Course Feedback are to obtain students' and Faculty members' overall assessment of the course and to receive recommendations on the areas that need improvement and more attention in the future. Student Course Feedback, which takes place at the end of the HCSC, consists of individual feedback submitted by every student and subsequent discussion and preparation of a joint briefing by the students.

After Course Evaluation

The objective of the After Course Evaluation is to gain students' views about the HCSC a short time after graduation, particularly regarding how their participation met the requirements of their current position.

ANNEX A | Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
BALTDEFCOL	Baltic Defence College
BDST	Baltic Defence Study Trip
BWR	Baltic Way Room
CSC	Civil Servants Course
CH	Contact Hours
Credits	Credit Points are assigned based on ECTS
DLMS	Department of Leadership and Management Studies
DMS	Department of Military Studies
DPS	Department of Political and Security Studies
ECC	Educational Component Coordinator
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ETOC	Education and Training Opportunities Catalogue
EU	European Union
EST	Estonia
IST	International Study Trip
HCSC	Higher Command Studies Course
ICGW	Individual Contribution to Group Work
IPT	Individual Preparation Time
ISD	Individual Study Day
IST	International Study Trip
JCGSC	Joint Command and General Staff Course
LVA	Latvia
LTU	Lithuania
PME	Professional Military Education
SM	Senior Mentor
SNR	Senior National Representative
SYNA	Syndicate Activity
STRATCOM	Strategic Communications
VSH	Von Sydow Hall

ANNEX B | Performance Review

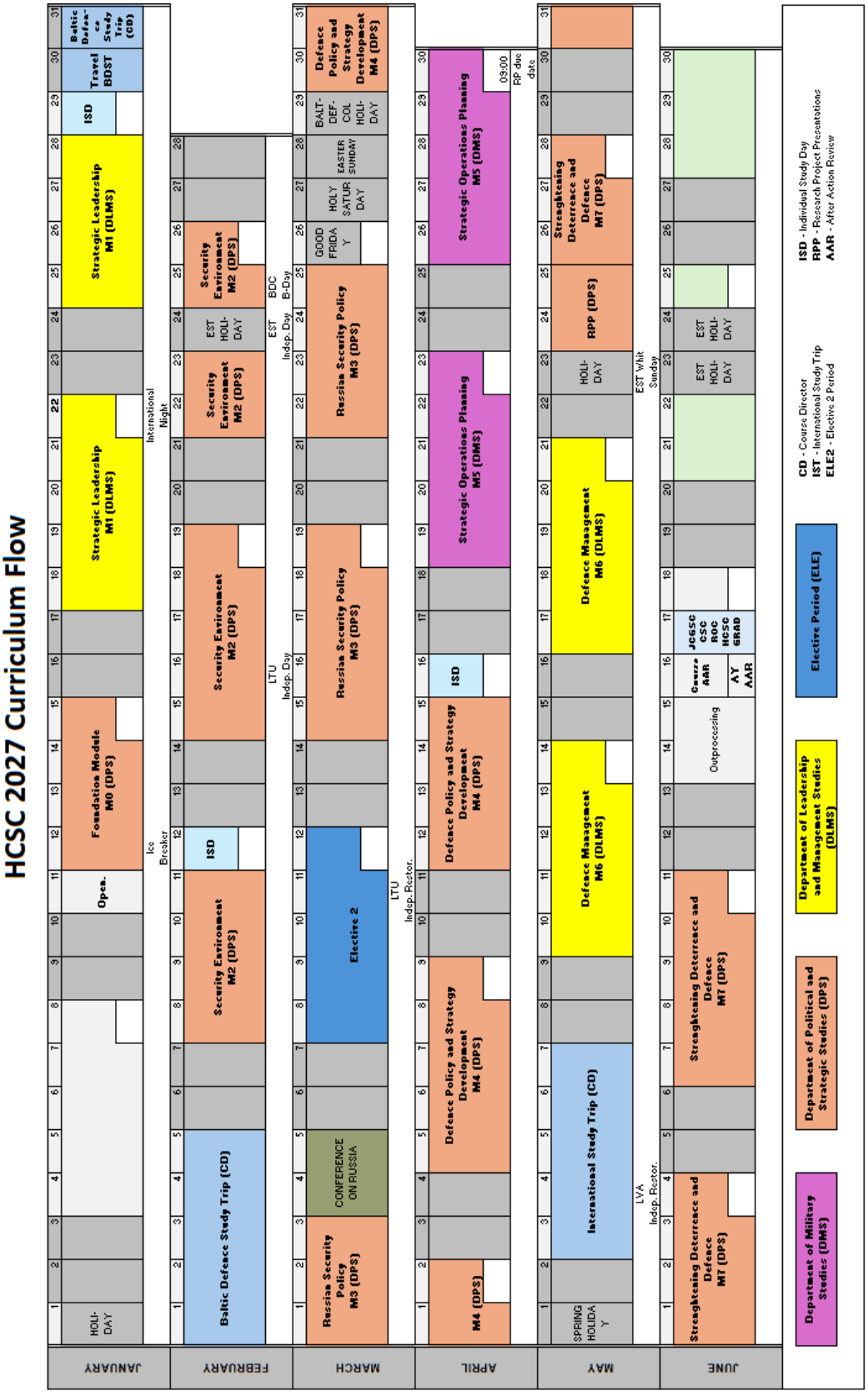
Personal Qualities
Leadership, professionalism, and integrity
Criteria: Does the student display leadership skills? Does he or she demonstrate the ability to command and exert authority, confidence, and determination? Does he or she know how to encourage others who may be subordinate in status? Does the student conduct himself or herself appropriately, and is his or her appearance keeping with professional protocol? Does the student behave ethically, both as a team player and as a leader? Can he or she communicate with tact and discretion?
Openness and participation
Criteria: Is the student open to transformation and new ideas? Does the student contribute to group activities, such as syndicates and discussions? Does he or she provide an 'added value' to any activity, as well as to the course itself?
Academic Capacities
Creativity and rigour
Criteria: Is the student a creative, critical thinker? Does he or she actively seek to generate new ideas? Is the student's work neat and rigorous?
Insight and expertise
Criteria: Does the student have the necessary insight to evaluate and analyse information? Has he or she actively sought to develop good institutional and strategic knowledge?

Student's Comments

_____
Student

_____ _____
Course Director **Date**

ANNEX C | Curriculum Flow



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