

The Nomination and Appointment Process

The Nomination

All appointments to the service academies are made by the President. To be considered for an appointment to a service academy, an applicant must have a nomination from an authorized nomination source. Title 10, US Code, establishes two nomination categories. The first, usually referred to as “Congressional nominations”, includes the nominations of the Vice-President and Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives. The second, referred to as “service-connected or military-affiliated nominations”, includes the selections of the President and the nominations of the Secretary of the appropriate service.

Applicants who meet eligibility requirements may apply for and receive nominations in both categories. In fact, applicants should apply for as many nominations as they may be eligible for.

Vacancies

Each US Senator and Representative may have a maximum of five cadets or midshipmen at each service academy at one time. A Member of Congress may nominate up to ten candidates per vacancy.

Congressional Nominations

Members of Congress may nominate applicants who meet the eligibility requirements established by law. Senators nominate from applicants in their entire state. Representatives nominate from applicants domiciled in their congressional districts (as constituted at the time of their election). Applicants may apply for and receive nominations from both their United States Senators and from their Representative. Applicants may also apply to the Vice President of the United States, who can nominate applicants from the country at large.

Service-Connected or Military Affiliated Nominations

The President of the United States may select for appointment to the service academies children of members of an armed force who are currently on active duty or were retired from active duty. The President may also appoint the children of Medal of Honor winners. The Secretary of the appropriate service may nominate for appointment enlisted members of the regular and the reserve components of the appropriate service, members of the service’s own Reserve Officer Training Corps and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs, and the Junior Reserve Officer Training programs of the other service which have been designated as Honor Units with Distinction.

Who is Eligible?

Each applicant for a nomination must meet the following eligibility requirements as of July 1 of the year of admission to an academy:

AGE: Must be at least 17 years old, but not have passed 23rd birthday.

CITIZENSHIP: Must be a United States Citizen.

MARITAL STATUS: Must be unmarried, not pregnant, and have no legal obligation to support children or other dependents.

General Admission Standards

Before nominating an applicant, Members of Congress should carefully evaluate each applicant’s overall qualifications, including the legal domicile, to confirm that the applicant is domiciled within the boundaries of the Representative’s Congressional District. The three academies consider evidence of character, scholarship, leadership, physical aptitude, medical fitness, goals and motivation in determining each nominee’s “whole person” evaluation.

Character

Absolutely critical in the course of evaluating a candidate is a positive determination of the candidate’s characters. Absence of good moral character is cause for disqualification. Candidates are considered to have good moral character unless evidence exists to suggest otherwise.

Scholarship

Each element of a candidate’s academic record is carefully evaluated by a service academy’s admissions board. The elements evaluated include a complete high school record (and college record, when applicable), class standing, and either the ACT or SAT scores. All strengths and weaknesses in a candidate’s academic background are taken into account.

Leadership

Participation and achievement in organized athletics, student body and class government, clubs and class extra-curricular activities, scouting, boys/girls state, church or other community-related activities demonstrate evidence of leadership potential. Candidates who have found it necessary to work to provide family support are considered to have demonstrated desirable leadership potential.

Physical Aptitude

Measuring Strength, endurance, agility and coordination, the Army’s and Navy’s physical aptitude examination (PAE) and the Air Force’s candidate fitness test (CFT) are designed to determine each candidate’s readiness to undertake the rigorous athletic and physical education program at the academies. Each academy has its own test requirements. Results of the examination are evaluated, assigned a numerical score and included in the whole-person evaluation by West Point. The Air Force and the Naval Academies evaluate the results on a pass/fail basis.

Medical Fitness

Candidates who meet minimum scholastic standards will be scheduled to take a service academy qualifying medical examination at a military or civilian contract facility near the candidate’s home. Although medical qualification standards vary for each of the academies, only one exam is required. Additional test may be necessary and may vary depending upon the academy. Scheduling and evaluation of the exam is accomplished by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB). Medical scheduling and evaluation are time-consuming processes, especially if consultation, retesting or corrective action are required. The process may take from six weeks to four months.

Motivation

An attempt to measure motivation may be made through observation of the candidate’s interest level in attending an academy and serving as an officer in the armed forces. Motivation may be measured through an evaluation of correspondence and personal contacts. Motivation is an intangible quality and difficult to evaluate; however, since it is most frequently the factor that determines an appointee’s success or failure at a service academy, the effort must be made.

Whole-Person Evaluation

All of the preceding factors are part of the “whole person” evaluation used by each of the academies. These qualities are required of an individual in order to meet the challenges of the academy programs and, following graduation, as commissioned officers.