

CALL FOR PAPERS:

CRITICAL THINKING IN PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION



Following the roundtable at the 2025 International Society of Military Sciences Conference in Amsterdam, ISMS Working Group 9 Military Education invites abstracts for a peer-reviewed edited collection on critical thinking in PME, with a special focus on the role of the humanities in developing this essential skill.

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BACKGROUND AND FOCUS:

Critical thinking is commonly acknowledged to be a crucial skill for the military professional. It is considered particularly relevant for managing the complexities and rapidly shifting dynamics of conflicts and warfare in the 21st century, and it is one of the goals of higher professional military education on which there is near-universal agreement (Enstad & Hagen, 2025).

Yet, despite consensus on its importance, conceptions of critical thinking vary widely across military education systems. Critical thinking is variously regarded as a set of analytical tools or as academic reasoning skills, but it is rarely regarded in terms of autonomous thinking despite this being an important component of this skillset (Antrobus & West, 2022; Parenteau, 2021).

The aim of this edited collection is to explore how PME may support military professionals in developing this fundamental skill. What characterises critical thinkers in the profession? What are the critical thinking skills military professionals will need to master to successfully navigate rapidly shifting and complex security and operation environments? How can future military professionals be equipped to think, act, and lead effectively in a reflective, ethical, and responsible manner?

WG9 invites abstracts for papers that explore these questions with a view to deepening our understanding of both challenges and opportunities facing PME.

TOPICS OF INTEREST include (but are not limited to):

- Critical thinking in military practice
- Professional judgement or practical wisdom/phronesis; the reflective practitioner
- Critical thinking as leadership development

- Critical thinking and military culture
- Critical thinking pedagogies
- Interdisciplinary approaches and holistic education
- Critical thinking and technological development
- Experience-based forms of knowledge and experiential learning
- Officers and senior NCOs as critical thinkers
- The role of the humanities in developing critical thinking

Professional education programmes such as civil engineering, medicine, and policing are increasingly employing approaches from the humanities disciplines in teaching transversal skills such as critical thinking. We are therefore particularly keen to include papers that examine the role of the humanities in developing critical thinking in PME.

We invite contributions from both academics, military practitioners, and students.

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Interested contributors should submit a short **abstract** (<500 words) for articles of 6,000-8,000 words, accompanied by a short **biographical note** suitable for the contributor list (<200 words).

Your abstract must:

- Present a clear research question
- Outline your approach and positioning in the field
- Include original theoretical or empirical research
(*Note: Descriptive accounts of programmes or institutions will not be considered.*)

Send your abstract and biographical note to: annemhagen@mil.no.

Deadline: 10 Jan 2026

PROJECT TIMELINE

- **10 Jan 2026:** Abstract submission deadline
- **10 Feb 2026:** Notification of acceptance
- **Mar 2026:** Online authors' meeting
- **30 Apr 2026:** Proposal submitted to publisher
- **31 Aug 2026:** Draft chapters due
- **Oct 2026:** Discussion at ISMS Conference, Tartu (hybrid)
- **Sep 2026–Mar 2027:** Internal editing
- **Apr 2027:** Manuscript submission to publisher

References

- Antrobus, S., & West, H. (2022). 'This Is All Very Academic': Critical Thinking in Professional Military Education. *The RUSI Journal*, 167(3), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2112521>
- Enstad, K. & Hagen, A.M. (2025). "No common understanding"? A scoping review of Professional Military Education in the 21st century". *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. DOI: 10.1080/00313831.2025.2459408
- Parenteau, D. (April, 2021). Teaching Professional Use of Critical Thinking to Officer-Cadets: Reflection on the Intellectual Training of Young Officers at Military Academies. *Journal of Military Learning*. [Teaching Professional Use of Critical Thinking to Officer-Cadets](#)