

Assessments and Rubric

The course has three graded layers: weekly assignments, a midterm, and the capstone. Everything is designed to test the concept, never the tool (doctrine/08). A cross-cutting assessment bank — an ethics scenario and a Section-K reps/certs register — sits below the layers and can be slotted into any of them. This file is the grading contract — students and graders share it.

Philosophy of assessment

Three principles:

1. **Concepts, not recall.** We test whether a student can *do* the discipline — read a document, build a structure, make a call — not whether they can recite definitions.
2. **The rubric is public.** Students see exactly how their work is judged before they do it. This mirrors the doctrine's own discipline: criteria written before the work begins.
3. **Real artifacts.** Every major assessment is built on a real, published solicitation. There is no “invent an RFP” in this course.

Layer 1 — Weekly assignments (30%)

Each weekly assignment is a concrete deliverable. Graded on a 4-point scale for each criterion:

Criterion	4 — Excellent	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Not yet
Correctness	Right structure, right facts, no material errors	Right structure, minor errors	Partially correct	Major errors or fabrications
Completeness	Every part of the prompt addressed	One part thin	Several parts thin	Large omissions
Doctrine use	Correctly applies the doctrine (pipeline, gates, ORBITAL)	Applies most of it	Superficial application	No visible doctrine
Clarity	A reader can act on it	Readable	Hard to follow	Unusable

Criterion	4 — Excellent	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Not yet
Evidence	Every claim grounded — in the solicitation, a proof point, or a published record; no unsupported assertions	Claims mostly grounded; an occasional assertion without support	Several claims asserted without evidence	Unsupported or fabricated assertions throughout

What “Evidence” means. The first four criteria test whether the work is right, complete, doctrinal, and readable. Evidence tests whether the work is *supportable* — and it is the criterion most often missing in real proposals. A pWin asserted without a factor-by-factor defense is not an estimate, it is a guess (doctrine/05). A compliance claim without a section-and-page citation is not compliance, it is decoration. Evidence rewards claims a student could defend to an evaluator or a hostile board: grounded in the solicitation’s own language, backed by a proof point or a published record, and never asserted because it sounds right. It also mirrors the capstone rubric’s “Score and bid/no-bid” dimension, which already tests this discipline at full weight.

The weekly deliverable list (from the syllabus): - Money map of one agency (Week 2) - One-page pipeline diagram (Week 3) - Gate charter for one pursuit (Week 4) - Compliance matrix from a real RFP (Week 5) - Strategy reading of a NOFO (Week 6) - One-page ORBITAL (Week 7) - Scored pursuit sheet with a bid/no-bid recommendation (Week 8)

Layer 2 — Midterm: break down a real NOFO (25%)

The task. In class, with a real (published, closed) NOFO you have not seen before, produce in 75 minutes:

1. **Purpose** — in two sentences, what is the agency funding and why?
2. **Eligibility** — who may apply? Any restrictions? Is this a hard gate?
3. **Review criteria** — the factors and, if given, their weights. What does “excellent” look like per the agency’s own language?
4. **Deadlines and logistics** — the submission deadline, the portal, the format.
5. **Budget sketch** — a one-page budget for the project period with the two largest line items justified.
6. **Bid/no-bid recommendation** — a one-paragraph recommendation with a score (pWin × value) and reasoning.

Rubric (100 points):

Section	Points	What earns them
Purpose	15	Accurate, sharp, in the agency's own frame
Eligibility	15	Correct gate determination — go/no-go
Review criteria	20	Correctly identified; the weights read correctly; "excellent" described in agency language
Deadlines & logistics	10	Complete and accurate
Budget sketch	20	Realistic, aligned with the work, justifications defensible
Bid/no-bid	20	Honest score, clear reasoning, defensible call

The trap being tested: students who write a beautiful proposal-shaped essay instead of *reading the document as the agency wrote it*. The midterm rewards reading, not writing.

Layer 3 — Capstone: build an ORBITAL (35%)

Full brief in course/capstone-build-an-orbital.md. The capstone is done in teams of 3–4, presented and defended in Week 14.

Rubric (100 points):

Dimension	Points	4 — Excellent	2 — Developing
Solicitation mastery	20	Every required element located and used correctly; compliance matrix complete	Several elements missed
ORBITAL quality	25	All seven axes filled with real, sourced content; budget and indicators defensible	Axes thin or unfilled

Dimension	Points	4 — Excellent	2 — Developing
Score and bid/no-bid	20	pWin honestly argued factor-by-factor; value grounded; threshold call defended	Score asserted, not argued
Governance and gates	15	Gate points identified, criteria written, decision owners named	Gates absent or after-the-fact
Presentation and defense	20	Clear, credible, survives a hostile board; doctrine used correctly under questioning	Evasive or unsupported

The trap being tested: the capstone is *stack-free* — students may use paper, a whiteboard, a spreadsheet, or any word processor, but the deliverable never depends on a product. The skill being tested is whether they can take a real solicitation and produce a structure, a score, and a call.

The assessment bank — cross-cutting tasks

Two reusable tasks sit below the layered weights and can be slotted into any of them. Each is graded on the shared rubric, and each carries a criterion-specific pass of its own. They exist because two competencies the market cares most about — ethics and compliance literacy — need a home in every semester, not only in the weeks the layers happen to cover them.

Ethics scenario — an OCI risk, an unallowable cost, a misrepresented past-performance reference

Tests doctrine/04's hardest sentence: private gates and public law are two halves of one system — and the person in the process has to catch the violation before the process does.

The format. A student (or team) is handed a short scenario in writing, drawn from the family of real failures in the federal market. Three variants rotate across the semester and the program, so the *pattern* is taught, not the answer:

1. **An OCI risk.** Ravonics is positioning for an agency award. The capture lead learns the requirements document for that very solicitation was drafted by a large contractor — and proposes teaming with that contractor, arguing “it’s just teaming, everyone does it.” The contractor would bring insider knowledge of the requirement it wrote.

2. **An unallowable cost.** The pricing draft for a Ravonics proposal includes a steakhouse dinner and a first-class flight billed as business development. The capture lead says to bury the line item in overhead — “everyone does it, it’s small.”
3. **A misrepresented past-performance reference.** To satisfy a past-performance requirement Ravonics cannot fill, the capture lead proposes listing INSTAR Lab’s STTR work as Ravonics’s own and adding a “three-year prime contract” that never happened.

What the student must produce (30 minutes in class, or as a take-home):

1. **The violation** — what is wrong here, precisely, in one or two sentences.
2. **The rule** — the governing principle at concept altitude: the FAR’s integrity and fair-competition posture (for OCI, the conflict-of-interest rules; for cost, the allowability principles; for past performance, the truthfulness of certifications). Name the principle, not the clause number.
3. **The correct action** — what the student would do next, and who owns the call, in the gate frame (trigger, criteria, decision, owner) from doctrine/04.

The trap being tested: students who treat ethics as a sentiment instead of a discipline. A correct answer identifies the violation, grounds it in the rule, and names an action with an owner. “This feels wrong” is the beginning of the answer, not the answer.

Grading note. Use the shared rubric with Evidence weighted: the action must be grounded in the scenario’s facts (Evidence), the rule stated accurately (Correctness), and the decision assigned an owner (Doctrine use). A student who catches the violation but cannot name the rule earns partial credit; a student who names the rule but proposes no action has not finished the task.

Section-K reps/certs identification task

Tests the compliance layer of doctrine/02 and the reps-and-certs literacy of the D5 domain: a response carries legal certifications whether or not the writer knows it.

Why the excerpt is synthetic. Every major assessment in this course is built on a real, published solicitation. This is the deliberate exception. Section K is a standardized form — the same representations and certifications recur, in near-identical language, across thousands of solicitations — so the fastest way to teach the pattern is a controlled excerpt that isolates the reps and certs without the page-hunting. The skill transfers directly to the real Section K of any RFP.

The task. The student is handed a one-page fictional solicitation excerpt — a Section K (representations, certifications, and statements of offerors) written in standard uniform-contract-format language. The excerpt carries, among others: the SAM.gov / UEI / CAGE registration representation; the small-business self-certification; the set-aside representations (HUBZone, 8(a), WOSB, VOSB, SDVOSB); the NAICS-code and size-standard representation; the certification

on lobbying (31 U.S.C. 1352); the certification on contingent fees; the debarment / suspension and tax-delinquency certification; and an authorized-negotiators statement. At least one item is easy to miss.

The student must produce:

1. **The register** — every representation and certification the excerpt requires, named in the student’s own words.
2. **The assertion** — for each item, one sentence on what a responder is asserting to the government.
3. **The consequence** — for each item, what could go wrong if it were falsely certified (loss of award, debarment, false-claims exposure).
4. **The compliance checklist** — a table mapping each item to the evidence that satisfies it, who signs, and when it must be confirmed before submission.

The trap being tested: students who register the obvious items — name, SAM registration, small-business status — and miss the ones that carry legal weight: the lobbying certification, the contingent-fees certification, the false-claims exposure. The complete register is the deliverable. A partially complete register is an incomplete one — the same standard the compliance matrix holds in DL 302.

Grading note. Grade the register the way a compliance matrix is graded: every item either present and correctly characterized, or it is a miss. Then grade the assertion and consequence columns on the shared rubric (Correctness, Evidence, Doctrine use).

Layer 4 — Participation and peer review (10%)

The course runs on professional conduct: prepared students, honest peer review, the discipline of the gate. This layer rewards showing up as the person the market could trust — on time, honest, and useful to teammates.

The integrity note

The federal market only works because competitors and agencies trust the published process. This course treats integrity as a professional skill, not a rule. Fabricated evidence, invented solicitations, or misrepresented work fails the relevant assessment outright and is reported per the host institution’s policy.