

Degree Completion Tips

Where do you start? There are several ways you can complete your degree. Several options are outlined for your consideration. You may elect to mix and match the options as you think best. For instance if you have a good foundation in English Composition and write proficiently, you might want to consider taking the CLEP General Examinations. If, however, you are not as confident when it comes to a particular subject, you might want to take a course either through distance learning or in a college class room. It's your choice to decide how to complete the degree requirements. Keep in mind that most plans will require some resident courses through that specific college/university. Consider the following options.

Step 1 DANTES Sponsored Academic Examinations

CLEP General Examinations

The **CLEP General Examinations** (CLEP) consist of a series of examinations that test college level knowledge gained through military classes or technical assignments, or through personal reading, travel, and intellectual curiosity. The Examinations measure achievement in five basic areas of "general" or "liberal" education. Each examination has a 90-minute time limit. The multiple-choice questions cover material taught in required courses most students complete in their first two years of college.

There is no penalty for guessing so when in doubt, give your best guess. Each of the examinations is recommended for six semester hours of college credit. Therefore, if you complete all five of the CLEP general examinations, you will have earned 30 semester hours of college credit. Thirty semester hours equates to one year of college coursework. Additionally, the examinations are free of charge to USCG personnel: active duty, reservists, spouses of active duty members, and civilian employees.

The CLEP General Exams are the following:

- 1. College Composition Modular with or without essay** (Most colleges will NOT accept this exam without the essay.)
- 2. Social Sciences and History**
- 3. Natural Sciences**
- 4. Mathematics**
- 5. Humanities**

Other College Credit Examinations

There are at least 200 additional college credit examinations that may help meet your degree requirements. The exams are also free of charge and can save you a great deal of time and money. The other college credit examination programs include the following:

- CLEP Subject Examinations**
- DANTES subject Standardized Tests (DSST)**
- Excelsior College Examinations**

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Examination Guide/DSST Fact Sheets

The examination guides are copyrighted and available free of charge either from your Education Services Officer (ESO), your DANTES Test Control Officer (TCO), or the CGPORTAL (Home>Training & Education>Education>Registrar's Office>College Prep Resources>CLEP Study Guides).

The examination guide/DSST Fact Sheets provides an outline of the content of the test, sample questions and answers. Additionally, there are on-line practice CLEP exams located on the CGPORTAL (Course Catalog > Adult Basic Education > Study Guide for DANTES Exams). If you can pass two-thirds of the questions correctly on the practice test, you CAN pass the test.

Study Materials

If you don't do well on the practice test, you might want to study and try again. The USCG Institute has developed an on-line study library at the USCG Institute Website (<http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/>) follow the path [cgi](#) > [active duty](#) > [go to college](#) > [earn credits](#) > [dantes library](#) or go to http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/earn_credits/dantes_library/default.asp

There are additional study guides and practice exams available from Peterson's DoD MWR Libraries (<http://www.petersons.com/dod/>). Some study guides or textbooks may have to be purchased by the student.

NOTE: DANTES will only pay for one test. If the member fails the test, the member will have to pay for subsequent tests.

You can learn more about the exams at <http://www.collegeboard.com/testing/>.

Testing

The CLEP examinations are administered by authorized DANTES Test Control Officer. Usually the TCO is also the ESO. If your unit does not have a DANTES TCO, the ESO should be able to contact the nearest TCO and make the arrangements for your test. If your ESO is not available, you may go on-line at the DANTES homepage and go to the Test Center Lookup page and find the nearest TCO <http://dantestlookup.prometric.com/DEMISPublic/TestCenterSearch/OnBaseTestCenterSearchOption.aspx>

GRE Subject Examinations

The GRE Subject Examinations are usually required for admission to certain graduate programs. However, a few colleges may award some credit for the GRE Subject Examinations. As many as 30 semester hours (18 of which are upper level) may be awarded to those who pass at the 80 percentile or higher. The GRE subject examinations cover material normally covered in ten college classes and are therefore, considered fairly difficult. Study guides may be downloaded free of charge from the GRE web site at <http://www.gre.org>.

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Step 2 College Courses

College courses from any regionally accredited institution may also satisfy the degree requirements. The courses may be resident courses or distance learning courses. Be sure to note that most colleges require that students complete a specified number of credits through their institution. Try to satisfy the residency requirement, as soon as possible while stationed in the geographic area. If the institution offers courses at a distance, the distance learning courses will count toward the residency requirement.

After July 1, 2009, members of the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) on active duty for a period of more than 30 days and their spouse or dependent children will be eligible to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state where they reside or are permanently stationed. Once a Service member or the family members are enrolled and paying in-state tuition, they will continue to pay the in-state tuition rate as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the institution even if the Service member is reassigned outside the state.

This change is included in section 135 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H. R. 4137) (HEOA) which was signed into law on August 14, 2008 and amends and extends the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). This requirement applies to all public institutions that receive funds under a program authorized by the HEA. In the rare cases where these steps don't resolve the situation, please contact the Department of Education's Ombudsman's office (toll-free at 877 557-2575) or via the internet. The online [Ombudsman Assistance Request Form](https://ombudsman.ed.gov/index.html) can be found at <https://ombudsman.ed.gov/index.html>.

More than 6,000 courses from dozens of regionally accredited colleges and universities are listed in the DANTES Independent Study Catalog. You may enroll in them whenever you want as they have open enrollment and you have one year to complete the course. You will want to search the postsecondary section for the academic code listed on your degree plan. The catalog is available on-line at the DANTES web page at the following site:

http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Sub%20Pages/DL/DL_Main.html

Taking courses through the SOCCOAST (Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Coast Guard program) institutions assures greater transferability of credit. When enrolled with a SOCCOAST Institution, the institution is obligated to provide the student with a SOCCOAST Student Agreement after completing 6 semester hours of course work with the home college. The agreement specifies the courses required to complete the degree and lists the course number for the degree. By using the SOCCOAST Handbooks (available on-line at <http://www.soc.aascu.org/soccoast/Default.html>), you can determine the course category code and locate other colleges that offer that course. Your ESO may be able to help you with the SOC Codes. Also, you may call SOC at 800-368-5622 or an education advisor at the Institute.

There are four colleges recognized as **military credit recognition degree programs** that do not have a residency requirement or very limited residency requirement. These institutions are Excelsior College, Thomas Edison State College, Charter Oak State College, and the University of Phoenix. These institutions offer enrollment options where you can choose to take courses through them or to transfer in all the credits. If you elect to transfer in all the credits, be aware that there is an annual maintenance fee.

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Be sure to apply for tuition assistance for the courses. The tuition assistance request form and instructions is available on the Institute homepage.

Step 3 College Enrollment

When you are ready to enroll with a SOCCOAST college or university, go to the institution's web site and download the college enrollment form. You can find a list of SOCCOAST colleges and their web sites at the following link: <http://www.soc.aascu.org/dnstools>

Complete the form and forward it to the Institute. Other documents you to include with the enrollment form are the following:

1. **Prior College Transcripts:** Any prior college work you have completed must be transcribed by the originating college. Request an official transcript from all prior colleges to be sent to the college with which you are enrolling or include sealed copies with the enrollment package. It is recommended that you include all sealed transcripts with the enrollment package. That way, the entire package will be complete when it is sent to your college, but do not open the sealed transcripts.

2. **College credit examinations completed **prior** to June 1994** must be transcribed by the appropriate testing agency. After June 94, the Institute established an electronic link with the testing agencies and will transcript the test scores. To ensure that you receive proper credit for all examinations taken, attach a copy of your official score report with the enrollment form.

3. An official transcript documenting your military learning experiences will be completed by the Institute and forwarded to the college along with your application. The Institute will enclose a copy of the student agreement along with the official CG transcript. By processing your application, the Institute becomes your liaison with the college and will assist in resolving problems when possible. Direct liaison with your college advisor is also strongly encouraged.

Remember that the education counselors work for the Coast Guard and not the college. Therefore, they have YOUR best interest at heart. They will be glad to assist you with your questions. Contact the counselor who prepared your package if you have any questions.

Step 4 Contact Information

Advising Support: If you need assistance, please feel free to call the education specialists in the College Degree Branch who processed your educational package:

Mailing address:

Commanding Officer (RO)
USCG Institute
5900 SW 64th Street, Room 228
Oklahoma City, OK 73169-6990

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Homepage: <http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi>