

TraCen Cape May Education Update #300

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Congratulations!!

The following personnel in the Cape May area passed Coast Guard Institute end-of-course, AQEs, and other tests since the last update:

Name	Work Site	Test
HS2 Jennifer Perin	HSWL Field Office, Cape May	HS1
HS3 Colleen Walter	HSWL Field Office, Cape May	HS2*

* First attempt

Well done, both of you!!

And if you've just finished a degree program or have any other noteworthy academic achievement to brag about, please let me know so I can recognize you for it.

Question of the Week

Q: I've taken my end-of-course test three times and still haven't passed. My ESO says I'm in too much of a rush, that I should take more time. But I either know the material or I don't, so I don't see how taking more time will help. What am I doing wrong?

A: Well, I wouldn't say you're doing anything wrong. But think carefully about what you're telling yourself ("I either know the material or I don't"). There's a hidden assumption in that statement: I completely understand what the question is asking.

Keep in mind that multiple-choice test questions are often written to steer you toward an incorrect answer. Test writers count on people reading them too quickly, and then answering the question they thought was printed on the page only to find they read a different question.

You have to read the question carefully to avoid falling into the trap of picking the obvious answer to a question that wasn't asked. Some people call these trick questions. Test writers call them questions that call for careful reading.

Most end-of-course tests are untimed. So there's no reason to rush. And even the timed tests give you an hour, which usually translates into multiple minutes per question. Use the time you're given.

Try this technique: cover up the answers available to each question before you read them or the question. Then read the question carefully and answer it in your mind before viewing the answer choices. Read *all* the answer choices carefully before selecting one; don't pick the first one that sounds plausible.

If you do this, assuming you really know the material you're being tested on, you'll find there are no trick questions.

If you have a question you'd like answered as a Question of the Week, e-mail it to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

Plan Ahead!!!

I'm going to be on TAD for the annual ESO symposium from 23 through 27 August, and on leave from 9 through 27 September. The Education Center will be closed during both periods.

Please plan ahead, especially with respect to tests and tuition assistance applications.

Frequently-Confused/Misused Words

The English language is a marvel of versatility and precision. But because it has absorbed words from so many sources, many sound or are spelled similarly but mean completely different things. This results in hundreds of words which leave people unsure as to which they should use in a given situation. Today, the words in focus are ***climactic*** and ***climatic***.

Climactic is an adjective pertaining to a climax ("The climactic event in her life was being elected president").

Climatic is also an adjective, but it pertains to climate ("Climatic conditions have changed noticeably in the past 50 years", "The forest had reverted to a previous climatic type").

If there are any words you often mix up, please e-mail them to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

New YN2 Course and Tests

ALCOAST 378/10 announced that the course books for a new YN2 course (0276-2) are now available to download from the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<https://learning.uscg.mil>). However, as 1000 on 16 July 2010, the course books for 0276-2 had not yet been uploaded to the Learning Portal.

This course is the first of its kind in the Coast Guard: a hybrid of traditional course materials and on-line lessons.

YN3s must complete the most current YN2 EPQs before they will be eligible to take the YN2 end-of-course test (EOCT). Also, they must pass the EOCT course before 01FEB2011 to be eligible for the MAY 2011 servicewide exam (SWE). Reservists must pass it before 01JUL2011 to be eligible for the OCT 2011 SWE. Although it's not clear from the ALCOAST, apparently YN3s may qualify for the SWE by passing either the current version of the EOCT (0276-1) or the replacement version (0276-2).

Clarification will be published here as details become available.

New ET1 and ET2 Courses

ALCOAST 0359/10 announced new course books for the ET1 (0122-3) and ET2 (0222-3) courses. You can order these courses via your ESO from the Coast Guard Institute starting on 01 August 2010. Also starting on that date you'll be able to download the courses from the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<https://learning.uscg.mil>).

The latest EPQ form is also available from the Coast Guard Learning Portal.

ETs must complete the most current EPQs before they will be eligible to take the relevant end-of-course test (EOCT). ETs may qualify for the remaining servicewide exams (SWEs) this year by passing either the EOCTS associated with the current courses (0122-2 and 0222-2) or the EOCTS associated with the replacement courses (0122-3 and 0222-3). However, to compete in any of the 2011 SWEs, they must pass the latest EOCT (0122-3 or 0222-3).

The last date ETs may take the older version of the EOCT (0122-2, 0222-2) is 01 August 2010.

Turn Your ICS/IS Courses Into College Credit

Frederick Community College (FCC) in Frederick, MD will award college credit for many FEMA courses (including ICS-100, 200, 700, and 800) taken through its Emergency Management Institute (<http://training.fema.gov/IS/>). These credits are applicable to FCC's Associate of Applied Sciences degree in Emergency Management or may be transferred to other schools.

For more information, go to http://www.frederick.edu/courses_and_programs/degree_emergency_management.aspx.

Avoid Student Loans!

There's very little reason to take out student loans when so much money is available from scholarships and other (free) sources of financial assistance for college. In addition to tuition assistance for Coast Guard employees (military and civilian) and the various versions of the GI Bill (for current military personnel, veterans, and in some cases dependents), there are scholarships, fellowships/grants, grants-in-aid, and awards of many types.

You don't have to be a brainiac or jock to qualify for scholarships.

TraCen's Education Center has a few copies of a hardback book – *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents* – which lists dozens, if not hundreds, of these for you or your dependents. There are only a couple more of these books available, first come, first served.

When using this book, remember: there are thousands of scholarships that aren't listed in it which you or your son/daughter may qualify for. Leave no stone unturned when looking for scholarships and check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

The Education Center also has a number of other references you can use to find scholarships and grants.

Career Assessment & Planning Tools

TraCen Cape May has a number of career assessment and planning tools available at no charge. These include:

- Dr. John Holland's *Self-Directed Search (SDS)*,
- the *Strong Interest Inventory*,
- the *Kuder Career Planning System*, and
- *DISCOVER*.

The SDS and Strong Interest Inventory are paper-based instruments; the Kuder and DISCOVER systems are computer-based. For info on how to use them, contact me by e-mail to set up an appointment.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

After you've completed a course paid for with tuition assistance (TA), remember that to avoid a nastygram from the Navy, you must submit a grade report for that course to your ESO at most 42 days after the end date listed on your authorization. It's your responsibility – not your school's – to provide this grade report.

If at all possible, please send your grade report, rather than your transcript. We're interested in seeing only the grades you earned for the courses listed on your authorization, not all grades earned at a particular college or university.

The grade report you send to your ESO must include your employee ID number or SSN, either on the grade report itself or in the text of the e-mail you use to send it to your ESO.

BM Strikers

If you're striking for BM3, you've already got the BM3 course, which includes charts, dividers, and other useful stuff. But consider also getting the Basic Radar User (BARAD) and Maneuvering Boards (MANBD) courses which are also available from the Coast Guard Institute through your ESO.

The BARAD courses "provides training in basic radar operation of the AN/SPS-64 and 66 radars, scope interpretation, and plotting" while the MANBD course "provides training in the uses of maneuvering boards in solving problems which involve relative motion; speed; CPAs; collision avoidance; station taking; contact interception; true, relative, and desired wind; and direct plotting procedures."

Each of these courses has been evaluated by ACE and the credit associated with them may be applicable to a college degree. The fact that you took the initiative to take these courses and pass the associated tests also looks good on your EER.

Interested in College, but Unsure How to Get Started?

If you're a total novice when it comes to college, check out these sites:

- <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/basics.asp>
- College 101 (on the Learning Portal, <https://learning.uscg.mil>). Once you've logged in, follow this path: Course Catalog > Education > College 101

If you're interested in getting a degree related to your Coast Guard rate, check out the Coast Guard Institute's web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cqi/ve/roadmaps.asp>) for sample degree plans.

If you're unsure what to do next, check out the step-by-step plan for getting started taking college courses, at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>.

Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel Course

A lot of people want to know if they can use tuition assistance (TA) or the GI Bill to pay for a vessel captain's license course. The general rule for TA is that the course has to be offered by a nationally- or regionally-accredited institution AND must yield transferable credit (i.e., credit you can apply at another accredited school toward a degree program).

As to the GI Bill, it all depends on whether the state in which the course is offered has approved the course for GI Bill funding. For more info about whether a particular course is covered by the GI Bill, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-o.asp#saa>.

Mr. Monty Mathis, full-time ESO at Sector St. Petersburg, has identified what seems to be the only college which offers distance learning courses to prepare you to take the 100-ton captain's license (Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel or OUPV) exam. According to Sarah Soukup at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (which offers these

courses), “The OUPV courses are setup at Associate Degree college credit level. They will appear on an official transcript with the college after successful completion and can be applied to other college programs as they fit within the curriculum of each particular program.” This being the case, you can use TA to pay for them.

For more information, go to <http://www.nwtc.edu/academics/certificates/Pages/Charter-Boat-Operators.aspx> and <http://www.nwtc.edu/academics/ProgTeamSites/publicsafety/specializedtraining/Documents/OPUV.pdf>.

Tuition Assistance for NAF Employees

As of 17 June 2010, PSCINST 12900.1 standardized the policy with respect to the conditions under which certain Non-Appropriated Fund employees can obtain tuition assistance (TA). Here are some of the provisions:

- employees may be reimbursed for one course per term and three courses per fiscal year;
- employees will be reimbursed only upon completion of a course with a grade of “C” or better;
- the maximum amount available per employee is \$2,250 per fiscal year;
- employee’s may receive up to \$250 per credit for tuition only;
- courses must be directly related to the employee’s job or a NAF job s/he might reasonably aspire to;
- the course must be offered by an accredited institution.

TA under this policy will be approved only when budgets allow. If the number of requests exceeds available funding, funds will be disbursed on a pro-rata basis to those who have approved applications in that school term.

The instruction includes a form the employee fills out and submits after completing the course for which s/he wishes to receive reimbursement.

Foreign Language Software & CG Foundation Grants

Before dropping a few hundred dollars for software to help you learn a foreign language (such as Tell Me More <http://www.tellmemore.com/>, Rosetta Stone <http://www.rosettastone.com/>, and others), make sure it suits your needs and your budget. If you’re interested in being able to use the target language in social situations, this software may be what you’re looking for. On the other hand, if you want to develop fluency so you can put it to work in Coast Guard-specific situations, you should definitely check it out before you buy it.

Also, although the Coast Guard Foundation has added the cost of foreign language software to its list of reimbursable items, be aware that funding for these grants is not guaranteed and is sporadic. The money for these grants comes from private donors who may or may not make regular contributions in amounts which may vary greatly from person to person and month to month. As a result, you shouldn’t expect to receive a grant just because you request it.

The bottom line is that if you can’t afford to be out the cost of the software for a long time (maybe forever), don’t buy it.

For information on CG Foundation grants and the application process, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>.

CG Foundation & Vander Putten Grants

Many recipients of grants under the Coast Guard Foundation and Vander Putten grant programs are unaware that the money they receive is a generous gift of individuals who contribute their own money to fund the programs. Many tens of thousands of dollars of their own money.

That is, when you apply for one of these grants, there is no guarantee that there will be money available to fund it and you shouldn’t expect there will be. Moreover, common courtesy dictates that when you receive one of these grants you should thank those who made it possible. You can easily send a quick thank-you note via the Coast Guard Institute’s web site (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cqi/tag/fg_feedback.asp).

Those who contribute to these grant programs are truly interested in knowing if the money you receive made a difference to you and, specifically, how it made a difference. Without feedback, they may assume it's not all that helpful or (worse) that it's going to people who are ungrateful. Please . . . take five minutes to send some feedback.

Are On-line College Courses for You?

The University of Georgia has come up with an on-line assessment tool you can use to determine if computer-based distance learning is for you. It's called SORT (Student Online Readiness Tool, <http://www.alt.usg.edu/sort/html/sortlau1.html>) and is based on research that says there are "six main topics closely related to a student's success in the online learning environment". These are, Experience with Technology, Access to Technology, Study Habits, Lifestyle, Goals and Purposes, and Learning Preferences. "Each section of SORT has a brief description followed by a questionnaire. Based on your responses to questions, feedback is provided on your personal readiness profile, along with suggested strategies for success and links to more information."

Reservists, TA, and the GI Bill

Reservists often ask about receiving GI Bill benefits and using tuition assistance (TA) at the same time, as well as other related questions. There are a number of rules, but they're relatively straightforward.

- If you're eligible for TA (i.e., haven't used up your annual \$4,500 allowance) and are taking fewer than 6 credits in a term you must use TA rather than MGIB-SR benefits. [10 U.S. Code §16131] (This assumes the college/university defines "full-time" as 12 credits per term.) This rule does not apply to Reservists filing for REAP or MGIB-AD benefits.
- If you're **not** on active duty and are eligible for TA and REAP, you may receive both benefits for the same course(s). The total amount of TA and REAP paid for the course (whether to you or to the school) may not exceed the total cost of the course. [ALCOAST 045/06]
- If you're on active duty and are eligible for TA and REAP, you may use TA or receive REAP benefits, but may not receive both benefits for the same course(s). [ALCOAST 045/06]
- If you're going to submit a REAP claim for a course, the amount of TA your school will receive will be the difference between the total cost of the course and the amount of REAP payments you receive during the school term. That is, the total benefit you and/or your school receive (TA & REAP) can't exceed the total cost of the course. In no case may the amount of TA paid to the school exceed the maximum per-credit amount it would receive if you weren't submitting a REAP claim. [ALCOAST 258/06]
- You may **not** receive GI Bill benefits (MGIB-SR or MGIB-AD) for courses paid for by TA. [Art. 11.H.2.e.11., *Performance, Training, & Education Manual*, COMDTINST M1500.10C]
- You may receive GI Bill benefits (MGIB-SR, REAP, or MGIB-AD) for some courses and use TA to pay for other courses you're taking during the same term whether you're taking them at the same school or at different schools.

Wondering What to Major In?

Are you interested in getting a college degree, but unsure about what to major in? Drop by the Education Center and pick up a copy of *College Majors that Work*. This book has an excellent, easy-to-follow system for determining what major best matches your interests.

You should also check out chapters 3 ("Career Exploration Information") and 5 ("Researching Employer and Labor Market Information") of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Before you dive into a major, with the intention of going into a particular career field, read these chapters. They can help you figure out if there's actually a future in your chosen field. The last thing you want is to invest a lot of time and money in getting a particular degree only to find when you're done that there aren't many jobs available in the field you prepared for or that advancement in that field is slow or frozen.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

Tests at TraCen Cape May are administered by appointment according to the following schedule:

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs*

Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT or AQE on a Tuesday morning, you can take it on a Thursday morning.

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

If you call and I don't answer the phone, I'm usually administering a test (and, because of the noise, can't talk on the phone) or otherwise busy with someone in the office. E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me.

Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site

(http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program.

Including a new on-line way to determine if you're eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers:

http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time.

Check out the information on my web site related to career transition

(<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute

(<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later.

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans

(<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

Microsoft Software Home Use Program

If you're on the Coast Guard's payroll (i.e., not a contractor), you're eligible to participate in Microsoft's Software Assurance Home Use Program. The program enables you to get a licensed copy of most Microsoft® Office desktop PC applications to install and use on your home computer. You're also eligible for discounts on other Microsoft software via the Employee Purchase Program.

For more information, go to <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/my poc/?uri=wcm%3a5b18ff004d89b9a6ae7fbe259abd3cf4>.

Free College Reference Books

The following books are available in limited quantities in the Education Center:

- *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents (2008-2010)*
- *Guide to Online Learning*
- *College Majors That Work*

Also available, are the following:

- *Need a Lift?* (this is the American Legion's guide to educational opportunities, scholarships, grants, student loans, careers, and employment)
- *DANTES College Career Workbook*
- *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*
- *College.edu – Online resources for the cyber-savvy student*
- *Don't Miss Out – the ambitious student's guide to financial aid*
- *Best Career and Education Web sites: A Quick Guide to Online Job Search*

If any or all of these interest you, drop by and pick one up – first come, first served.

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

One more thing: the new campus's classrooms, labs, and library are all state-of-the-art. Even if you're not ready to register for classes right away, you should take the opportunity to visit the campus and look around. The Director of Academic and Student Services has extended a personal invitation to anyone who'd like to use the library to study, for research, or for pleasure reading. It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.

Quick Reference Study Guides

The TraCen Education Center also has a binder full of SparkCharts Quick Reference Guides on almost 40 subjects. You're welcome to use these in the Education Center or make copies to take with you. You can check out the subjects available at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp#spark>.

Education Center Library

In addition to SparkCharts, the Education Center also has a library of books on leadership, management, Coast Guard history, and other topics. Also in the library are the latest Professional Qualification Guides (PQGs) for each rating.

The Education Center also has dozens of brochures and books on college, financial aid, the officer program application process, and other things. If there are multiple copies, you're welcome to take one.