

TraCen Cape May Education Update #335

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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
BM3 Louis Aversano	Station Atlantic City	DWINTO
SN Adam Broussard	TraCen (gym)	E-PME-4*
BM2 Matthew Alber	CGC Finback	DWINTR
MKC Clayton Ward	CGC Finback	E-PME-8

* First attempt

Well done, all 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'm a coxswain and to maintain my certification, I have to take and pass one of the deck watch officer tests at least every five years. Someone told me that if I take and fail the open-book test less than five years after passing the closed-book test, I lose my certification. Is that true?

A: I can't provide any information about your coxswain certification. But I can tell you about the testing policy. Paragraph 5.a.1. of COMDTINST 16672.5C (published 25 April 2011) states: "Initial DWO Exam (DWINTO) (Closed Book). Required for those members who have not previously passed the DWO Exam, or have exceeded a period of five-years since the date of their last examination."

This means that once you've passed the DWINTO test, you have five years before you have to take another DWO test (either the DWINTO or DWINTR). It also means that you can take either the DWINTO or the DWINTR any time within that five year period, to keep the material fresh in your mind. If you pass, you have five years from the date you took the test before you have to take it again. If you fail, you suffer no penalty.

The confusion may lie in misinterpreting the second sentence of the next paragraph (5.a.2.) of the COMDTINST. It states: "Renewal DWO Exam (DWINTR) (Open Book). Administered to members who have previously passed an Initial Exam or a Renewal Exam within the last five years. This five-year period of eligibility commences on the date of their last examination. This test is proctored open book, permitting the candidate to use a new, corrected-to-date, but otherwise unmarked copy of reference (a)."

This doesn't mean that if you don't pass a DWINTR test taken within the five-year period you lose your eligibility. It means only that your five-year period of eligibility begins on the date of the last exam you passed.

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.

Web Page in the Spotlight

There's a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **The Narrative Memo** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/narrative.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, we'll look at *import* and *in port*. (from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Import can be a verb or a noun. As a verb it means to bring from a foreign or external source: "Until 1775, the 13 colonies imported most manufactured goods from Britain." As a noun, it describes the items which are brought from a foreign or external source: "The main imports were finished cloth and tea."

In port is a phrase, not one word, describing the state of a ship or its crew: "Both *Dependable* and *Vigorous* have been in port for a number of weeks" or "We were in port until just after Memorial Day."

If there are any word usage, grammar, or similar issues you've encountered, please e-mail them to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

Veterans Technology Certificate Program

Syracuse University, in conjunction with JPMorgan Chase, has created a new Veterans Technology Certificate Program around the university's Global Enterprise Technology (GET) curriculum. GET integrates "coursework with real-world, on-the-job experience. The purpose of the program is to help veterans interested in technology careers in global companies to move toward that goal.

The program is self-paced and computer-based (completely on-line). Program administrators estimate it will take approximately 240 hours (six weeks of full-time work) to complete. The only application requirements are that you:

- Have served on active duty since 10 September 2001,
- Have demonstrated a genuine interest in and aptitude for technology,
- Are able to commit a minimum of four hours per day to the program, and
- Submit a complete application (consisting of an application form, a résumé, and two references).

For more information, go to <http://veterans.syr.edu/JPMC/faq.html>. To download the application, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VTCP.pdf>.

Applying for an Officer Program?

Check out the revised page on the Narrative Memo (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/narrative.asp>) all enlisted applicants must submit as part of their applications for any Coast Guard officer program. Among the changes is an additional bullet with a link to the Harvard College Writing Program's "Strategies for Essay Writing".

New College Info

Periodically, the TraCen Cape May's Education Center receives flyers, brochures, posters, and other information from colleges and universities around the country. This material is available any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is available does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

Here are the most recent offerings from regionally-accredited schools with tuition well under the max allowed by tuition assistance.

Excelsior College has sent its current course guide for courses beginning in July and September, as well as a new catalog for its School of Liberal Arts, which encompasses the humanities (with majors in English, Music, and Communications), natural science (with majors in Mathematics and Biology), and social science (with majors in Psychology, Sociology, Economics, History, Political Science, and Criminal Justice). Also new are flyers on master's degrees offered by Excelsior.

For more information, drop by the Education Center or go to www.excelsior.edu and www.excelsiorMIL.com.

Ohio University has a wide variety of courses and degrees offered by distance learning, including many independent study courses (with no set beginning and ending dates). For more information, drop by the Education Center or go to www.ohio.edu/independent/.

Thinking of Taking College Courses?

If you're considering taking college courses and working toward a degree, make sure you really need to have a degree do the kind of work you want to do in the future.

Many Coast Guard personnel are more interested in working with their hands (for example, carpentry, gunsmithing, plumbing, locksmithing, electrical work) than they are in sitting in class for five hours a day to get a degree. Still, everyone tells them they need to get a degree to succeed in the civilian labor market so they feel they have to do so.

But before you jump into a degree program, think about your ultimate employment goal and work backwards from it. When planning a car trip, you don't just start driving and hope to end up somewhere you wanted to go. You have a destination in mind and figure out the best route to get there. This should be the way you also plan your career, both in the Coast Guard and in the civilian world.

Let's say you want to work as a video game designer. Assuming you want to work for a company that does nothing but design and market video games, call a half dozen of them and talk with someone who makes hiring decisions in the HR department or the like. Ask what kind of training and/or education they're looking for in new hires. Ask specifically if the people they hire need a degree, a certificate of some kind, or if demonstrated ability (e.g., a portfolio or other samples of work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly ***a third to half the courses you take to earn a degree fall into this category.*** If you're more interested in acquiring the knowledge necessary to start working in the field that interests you, a degree may not be for you.

There are a number of paths you can take once you know whether most likely employers require a degree. You can

- work with someone who has the knowledge you want to acquire (a mentor-protégé or apprenticeship relationship, formal or informal);

- learn it on your own via resources available for free (often on the Internet, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>);
- take college courses just in your area of interest and, perhaps, earn an academic certificate in the process (see “Academic Certificates” at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degreedesc.asp#certs>); or
- take non-credit courses that you have to pay for, for example Excelsior College’s Professional Development courses (<http://www.excelsior.edu/web/center-for-professional-development>) or the Graduate School’s courses (<http://graduateschool.edu/>), which GI Bill education benefits will likely cover.

The point is, determine whether a degree is something you need or want. If you don’t need a degree, but you want one and/or what you learn will be useful, by all means work toward one. But don’t jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

So You’ve Decided You Need a Degree, Now What?

The path to a degree is relatively straightforward, but it does require a lot of work – some of which may be tedious. The steps on that path are described in detail at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp> and pages for each of those steps.

Get Those Assessment Requests In ASAP

Beginning on 01 July, if you don’t have an undergraduate (associate’s or bachelor’s) degree and are going to be using TA for the first time you’ll need to have requested an assessment of your Coast Guard training and received a transcript no more than four years ago.

To avoid delays in TA processing (pending completion of your assessment), submit your assessment request ASAP. You can download the form at http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf. Make sure you read the instructions for each section before filling out that section.

Spouse Education Grant Application Deadline Extended

Until 24 June 2011, the Coast Guard Foundation will accept applications for a needs-based education grant for spouses of Coast Guard enlisted personnel. The grant (\$500) is intended to help the spouses of personnel on active duty (E-3 through E-6) in the regular Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Applicants need only show enrollment in an education program or proof of a course completion. Types of courses for which reimbursement is available include those offered by vocational and certification programs, as well as those offered at colleges and universities. Download the application form: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1570.pdf>

Applicants will not need to provide receipts for expenses, but they will need to itemize expenses. They will also need to list some basic financial information. Transportation and child care expenses can be listed as legitimate expenses for the grant. Also part of the application process is an essay (no longer than 500 words) which addresses what it means to the applicant to be a Coast Guard spouse and describing the difference education has made to the applicant’s life and the lives of the applicant’s family members. ***There will be an open application period from 1 April until 24 June.***

In June, a selection committee will convene to select grantees. The Coast Guard Institute expects as many as 50 spouses will receive assistance. This grant will be a somewhat different from the other grants administered by the Coast Guard Institute in that the Institute will handle the paperwork and selection processes while the Coast Guard Foundation will actually write the checks.

FS Advanced Education Opportunity Deadline Approaching

If you’re an FS1 through FSCS, you may be eligible for the Coast Guard’s new 24-month Food Service/Culinary Arts program leading an associate’s or bachelor’s degree in food service management or culinary arts. For more information, see ALCOAST 190-11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST190-11.pdf>). ***The application deadline is 19 July.***

New MK EPQs

ALCOAST 239/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST239-11.pdf>) announced that a new set of EPQs for MKs has been published and is available via the CG Portal (<http://elearning.uscg.mil>) by following this path: Training & Education > Learning Management System > Enlisted Advancement > Hull and Engineering Group. Click on any of MK links and download the “MK Enlisted Performance Qualifications (02/11)”.

As noted in the ALCOAST, “All MK personnel are encouraged to begin using the new EPQ form . . . as soon as practical because it accurately reflects current occupational requirements.” This means that new EOCT and the May 2012 SWE will be based on the new EPQs.

New Deck Watch Officer Exam COMDTINST

COMDTINST 16672.5C (http://www.uscg.mil/directives/ci/16000-16999/CI_16672_5C.pdf) was recently published, finalizing the DWO exam completion requirements for BM advancement and coxswain certification. Here are the most significant changes:

- The Coast Guard Institute’s “Rules of the Road” course and related EOCTs are no longer authorized for BM advancement or coxswain certification (para. 5.c).
- Prospective afloat COs, OICs, XO’s, and XPOs must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before executing their orders. (para. 6.a.(1))
- Prospective afloat OPS officers and petty officers (i.e., those being assigned to PAL-designated OPS billets) must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before executing their orders. (para. 6.a.(2))
- Those designated by their commands as underway OODs and PAL-designated Deck Watch Officers must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before they can perform underway OOD duties. If they don’t pass the exam within 6 months (vs. 9 months in the previous version) after reporting, that fact will be noted in a Page 7 and the person will be transferred during the next assignment season. (para. 6.a.(3))
- To advance, BMs must remain current with respect to the DWINTO/DWINTR test. BMs who don’t meet this requirement can’t advance or be put on a supplemental or striker eligibility list. (para. 6.a.(4))
- All prospective coxswains (regardless of rate) must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before they can be certified as a coxswain. Coxswains who last passed a DWINTO/DWINTR test more than 5 years earlier will lose their certification until they pass the appropriate test. (para. 6.a.(5))
- A new sample list of DWO test questions and answers is available at http://uscg.mil/nmc/training/2010q3_sample_deck_questions.pdf.

Reserve Servicewide Exams

ALCGRSV 024/11 was published earlier this week laying out the guidelines for the Reserve servicewide exams this year. The exams will be administered on Saturday morning, 15 October 2011. For details (including what is required of all examinees), see the ALCOAST (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGRSV024-11.pdf>).

If you meet all the qualifications for advancement by 01 July 2011, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your Personal Data Extract (PDE). **Your ESO has nothing to do with PDEs and you cannot request a SWE.**

When your PDE is made available on DirectAccess (by the middle of July), make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC.

- Are you going to be on leave or TAD on the date of your SWE?
- Will you be in-transit due to a PCS move on the date of your SWE?
- Are you going to be away from the unit on the date of your SWE for any other reason?

If so (and if you want to take the SWE), do the following:

- find a unit you know you'll be geographically near on your SWE date,
- contact the ESO at that unit and ask if it's OK to take your SWE there,
- assuming the ESO says "yes", ask for the unit's OPFAC,
- notify PPC (e-mail address: PPC-DG-ADV) of the name and OPFAC of that unit so the info on your PDE is changed.

PPC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

Substitute exams are authorized ONLY in emergencies. Regular leave (even if you scheduled a Caribbean cruise six months ago) is not an emergency. A wedding – even your own – is not an emergency. For more information on just what circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 5.D.3. of the *Personnel Manual*.

If you change the Exam Board on your PDE and later find out you won't be able to take your SWE at that location, let your ESO know immediately.

For info on studying and test-taking skills, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studying.asp>.

Future Economic Value of Specific College Majors

(thanks to Brion Newman, ESO at Base Seattle for bringing this to my attention)

For years, policy-makers and educators have been telling young people why additional education after high school is a good idea. Statistics from the New Jersey Council of County Colleges show that

- Graduates of associate's degree programs will earn nearly \$400,000 (in today's dollars) or 37% more over their lifetimes than people who have only a high school diploma or GED.
- Individuals with a one-year community college certificate earn as much as 16% more than people who have only a high school diploma or GED.
- For every \$1 a person spends on community college education, his/her lifetime earnings will increase by almost \$8.
- Individuals who take community college courses recover all costs – including earnings forgone while attending school – within six years.

For more on this subject, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/whymore01.asp>

Now, researchers at Georgetown University have just published a report showing the future economic value of specific college majors within bachelor's degree programs. Quoting the press release announcing this report, "some undergraduate majors pay off a lot more than others. In fact, the difference in earnings potential between one major and another can be more than 300 percent."

Before going any farther, please be aware that your decision to pursue a specific major should take into account many factors in addition to future earning potential. To quote Meaghan Donchak – a 22-year-old junior at Drexel University from East Windsor, NJ – "The most important thing is not the money. It's really hard to convince people of that, especially people our age. It's doing what you love to do. You don't want to wake up every day dreading going to work."

To read the full report, go to <http://cew.georgetown.edu/whatsitworth/>. For a graphic representation of some of the report's findings, go to <http://chronicle.com/article/Median-Earnings-by-Major-and/127604/>.

Scholarship for Locals

The Wildwood chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is offering a \$500 scholarship for seniors at Wildwood High School or Wildwood Catholic High School.

For more information, contact Mr. John Burgin (TraCen Cape May Facilities Engineering) at 609-898-6948 or 609-536-2754.

Civilian Career Myths

Excelsior College's alumni magazine often includes articles of use to military personnel about to enter or re-enter the civilian work force. The latest issue has an article entitled "Fact or Fiction: The Truth About Career Myths" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/careermyths.pdf>). You can also read "Skills Employers Seek" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skills.pdf>) and the Fall/Winter 2008 issue.

Check 'em out!

How to Go to College Almost for Free

Whether you'd like more money for your own education (even if you're using TA or receiving GI Bill benefits) or for a dependent, you should check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#strategy>. You'll see that finding money for college *is* possible using a logical, linear (and not all that daunting) methodology devised by Ben Kaplan.

Also, the Education Center recently acquired Mr. Kaplan's video, "Finding College Cash in Tough Times" (<http://www.cityofcollegedreams.org/store/finding-college-cash-in-tough-times>). After a short introduction it covers the following topics:

Part I: Exploding 3 Myths about Paying for College
 Part II: 3 Strategies for Maximizing Need-based Financial Aid
 Part III: 3 Steps for Finding Merit Scholarships
 Part IV: 3 Components of a Winning Scholarship Game Plan
 Part V: 3 Strategies for Making Your Application Shine
 Part VI: Concluding Thoughts & Final Quiz

Although I can't lend out the video, you can watch it in the Education Center. Please contact me (andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil) if you're interested in seeing it. The total running time is 71 minutes. If there's enough interest to warrant it, we'll show it in the auditorium; otherwise, in the Education Center.

Reserve Resource Guide

In addition to the web site of the Coast Guard Office of Reserve Affairs (<http://www.uscg.mil/reserve/>), Reservists should also check out TraCen Petaluma's Reserve Resource Guide (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/tracenpetaluma/RRG/>). Together, these provide info on and links to info on every facet of Coast Guard affairs related to service in the Reserve.

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 at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

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>).

Also, stop by the Education Center to check out the (small) supply of booklets related to rejoining the civilian work force. Here are the topics of the booklets:

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience
- The Follow-up Letter
- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

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 (or a transcript) 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>).

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.

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.

Education Center Library

The TraCen Education Center 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>.

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) and Enlisted Performance Qualifications (EPQs) 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.