

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #342

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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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Work Site</b>	<b>Test</b>
MK3 Roberto de la Rosa	TraCen (FE)	MK2*

\* First attempt

Well done, PO de la Rosa!

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 applying for OCS and have a teacher from college who says she'll write me a recommendation, but she wants to know who to address it to. What should I tell her?

**A:** Since letters of recommendation will be included in your application folder (on the right side), along with your CO's endorsement of your narrative memo, it doesn't have to be addressed to anyone in particular. Recruiting Command's main address is fine:

Coast Guard Recruiting Command  
2300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 500  
Arlington, VA 20598-7500

The whole application will be sent where it needs to go by your local recruiting office, via your ESO.

As to the salutation, “To: Whom it may concern” or the like is fine.

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](mailto: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 ***Application Process for Non-Academy Officer Accession Programs*** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused/mispronounced words. This week, *aggravate* and *annoy* (definitions are from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

The verb **aggravate** has two common meanings, one of which has “become the object of disapproval since about 1870”. To make worse, more serious, or more severe, to intensify unpleasantly is the universally accepted meaning: “He was convicted of aggravated assault” or “Scratching the insect bite aggravated the infection”.

The meaning which currently causes heartburn (although it has been used in this way since the 17<sup>th</sup> century) is to rouse to displeasure or anger usually by persistent or often petty goading: “The president was greatly aggravated when dignitaries of lesser rank refused to join the motorcade in the assigned sequence” or “The two neighbors aggravate each other from time to time”.

Those who disapprove of the second meaning of *aggravate* perhaps believe **annoy** should be used instead, since it means to disturb or irritate, especially by repeated acts; to harass, especially by quick brief attacks.

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Amazon Announces Digital-Textbook Rentals

(from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 July 2011)

If you’d rather not have to deal with heavy (and expensive) paper books for your college courses, this may be for you.

Amazon has rolled out an e-textbook-rentals program (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/?docId=1000702481>), which could bring more attention to the emerging model of treating textbooks like online subscriptions.

Students can now download temporary copies of textbooks on Amazon’s Web site for reading on a Kindle e-book reader or on a computer, tablet, or smartphone running free Kindle software. The system lets customers specify rental periods lasting anywhere from a month to a year. Amazon argues that the digital rentals can save students up to 80 percent compared with traditional print textbooks.

For example, one textbook, *Intermediate Accounting*, which retails at \$197 in print and \$109 as an e-book, would cost \$57 to rent from Amazon for three months. Students have the option to purchase the e-book during or after a rental period, and can extend rental period in daily increments.

Students will also be able to refer to any margin notes and highlights they made in their digital textbooks after the rental period is over. Amazon has tens of thousands of titles available for digital rental from major publishers like John Wiley & Sons and Elsevier and Taylor & Francis.

“Textbooks by nature are a disposable product,” said Sarah L. Glassmeyer, a faculty services and outreach librarian at Valparaiso University School of Law, in Indiana.

Ms. Glassmeyer, who is also an assistant professor of law at the university, said she supports the move by publishers to offer more digital-textbook options, which she says can save students money and lighten their backpacks — especially when it comes to heavy case-law books.

She said the ability for students to quickly and cheaply access textbooks and margin notes appeals to a generation of students she described as “digital learners,” and she expects digital rentals to catch on.

CourseSmart, a digital-textbook seller started by major textbook publishers, allows rentals but only for periods of six months or more. “CourseSmart has found that the current rental periods offered are those preferred by students as they align with the length of a course,” said Emily Peck, senior account executive at CourseSmart.

## Unofficial Deadlines for Officer Program Applications

The Coast Guard’s Recruiting Command (CGRC) has published an unofficial list of application deadlines for officer programs in FY12 on its web site (<http://www.gocoastguard.com/find-your-career/officer-opportunities/programs/program-forms-and-deadlines>). Official deadlines are expected in the near future via an ALCGRECRUITING message.

Note that although deadlines are listed for submitting your completed application to your ESO, this date may be flexible. Check with your ESO if you think you’ll need more time. All that matters is that your ESO can get your application to the local recruiting office by the deadline listed.

## Online Academic Skills Course

“Peterson’s Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) is designed for individuals who want to build a solid academic foundation by improving their math and verbal skills in order to score well on exams, advance their education, and excel in their careers. . . . OASC is available for free 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the web to service members (regular and Reserve), civilian employees, and their families.”

The course (at <http://www.nelnetsolutions.com/dantes>) includes

- a pre-test (to gauge your strengths and weaknesses)
- a Customized Learning Path™ (a personalized set of lessons based on your pre-test results)
- lessons which include interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, and practice tests,
- a post-test (to evaluate your progress).

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/oasc-faq.pdf>.

## What Does SOC Do for Me?

A lot of people have at least a passing knowledge of SOC (Servicemembers’ Opportunity Colleges, pronounced like the word *sock*), but few know much about what it can do for you.

SOC was created to help military personnel pursuing a college degree avoid having to re-take college courses as they moved from one unit to the next and found that the college in their new area wouldn’t accept credits earned from a college near their previous unit. (All schools in a SOC network will automatically accept credits earned from other schools in the same network.)

Even though the number of distance-learning college programs has exploded in the last few years, SOC (and its Coast Guard branch, SOCCOAST) still serves an important function. First, although distance learning allows students to take courses from practically anywhere, it’s not for everyone. A recent study by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University found that community college students enrolled in on-line courses fail and drop out more often than those who take in-class courses. (See “Community-College Students Perform Worse Online Than Face to Face” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, on 18 July 2011.) Many students just prefer in-class to on-line courses or those provided by other distance-learning methods.

Second, some schools which offer degrees by distance learning don't offer all the courses needed to complete a degree. That means you may have to take one or more courses from other schools and transfer the credits to the degree-granting school.

Third, some colleges are known to change their degree requirements which can mean courses a student has already taken don't apply to the degree plan any longer, making it necessary for the student to take more courses and to finish her degree later than she'd planned.

Before you jump into a particular degree program, check out SOCCOAST (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/soccoast.asp>) and the 2- and 4-year college degree networks to see if the major you want to pursue is offered and which schools offer it.

## Reserve Servicewide Exam PDEs Now Available

Personal Data Extracts (PDEs) for Reservists eligible to take the October 2011 servicewide exams (SWEs) are now available in DirectAccess. Please make sure you check **everything** on the PDE carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC. PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your PDE. **Your ESO has nothing to do with PDEs and you cannot request a SWE.**

- 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.

ALCGRSV 024/11 lays 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>).

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

## 15 Seconds to "Read" Your Résumé

Did you know that when you submit your résumé for a job opening it will probably be "read" for a mere 10 to 15 seconds by the employer's HR person? If you're applying for a job outside the Coast Guard, you owe it to yourself to read a recent article by a civilian job recruiter (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/resume023.doc>).

And for more short articles on preparing a civilian résumé, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/articles2.asp#01>.

## Career & Education Planning Tools

Many people in the Coast Guard – military and civilians alike – are unsure of what career fields best match their personal interests and abilities. While you might be extremely competent at what you're doing in the Coast Guard, you might have skills you'd rather put to use in some other field. ESOs throughout the Coast Guard (including TraCen Cape May's) have access to many different tools you can use to assess your interests and possible ways to earn a living while pursuing those interests.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/discover.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sitestest.asp>.

## More DSST Test Sites

(thanks to Jose Velazquez, Education Services Specialist at PSC)

In addition to national test centers open to anyone (<http://www.getcollegetcredit.com/search.html>), military personnel have another venue at which they can take DSST exams which ESOs can't administer (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>). Strayer University offers DSST exams at no charge to servicemembers.

For more information please contact your nearest Strayer University campus (<http://www.strayer.edu/>).

## TA & Dropped/Changed Courses

If you drop a course you're using TA to pay for, remember you have to go down two separate but parallel paths: the school's and the Coast Guard's.

With respect to the school's path, make sure you follow its procedures for dropping a course; don't just stop going to class.

And after you've dropped the course, be sure you let your ESO know. If you don't, the Coast Guard Institute (and Navy) won't have any idea you're not taking it and will expect a grade report after the course ends. When you fail to provide a grade report, two things will happen. First, eTA will be locked (meaning you won't be able to request TA again until it's unlocked). Second, you'll get a series of nastygrams from the Navy telling you to provide a grade report or repay the TA paid to the school for the course. This will happen even if you didn't take the course, even if the school didn't submit a bill to the Navy for payment for the course!

The same is true if anything about your course changes: dates, number of credits, course name, course number, tuition cost – anything. That is, make sure you've done whatever your school requires to be done (if anything) and make sure you send whatever information changed to your ESO along with the previous information. For example, if you couldn't get into a course that's on your authorization and everything but the name of the course is the same, send your ESO the name and number of the course you planned to take as well as the name and number of the course you actually will be taking. She'll have a new authorization generated which will contain the corrected information. That authorization will be sent directly to you and you'll give it to your school.

When you substitute a correct authorization for another one, make sure the people you talk with at your school know that the previous version is no longer any good, that they should shred it (or give it back to you to shred), and that they must send the replacement (not the original version) to the Navy for payment.

## Military Scholarship Opportunity

Until 02 September 2011, the National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services (NAIMES) is accepting applications for the 2011 Student Spotlight Scholarships. All Coast Guard personnel (regulars and reservists) who are on active duty and are currently pursuing a degree using tuition assistance are eligible to apply.

A \$1,200 cash prize and commemorative plaque will be awarded to the top project in three categories: (1) undergraduate student with less than 60 credits earned; (2) undergraduate student with 60 or more credits; and 3) graduate student.

To demonstrate your academic achievement, the selection committee would like you to address, in any format you select (essay, prose, art, video, etc.) how your military service has contributed to your sense of citizenry. (Art and video projects must be submitted electronically or on DVD.)

You may address the theme from a macro or micro perspective; the key is to identify what you consider your academic accomplishment(s) and then link the accomplishment(s) to your military career. Note: There is not a set minimum or maximum page length for an essay or other written submission.

The application deadline is Friday, 02 September 2011. Application, resume, and project must be submitted online at [www.naimes.org/upload.asp](http://www.naimes.org/upload.asp). Winners will be notified no later than 28 October 2011.

For detailed information about the NAIMES Student Spotlight Scholarship, to go [www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp](http://www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp) or contact Ms. Cheri Arfsten, Director, Military and Veterans Programs, Pikes Peak Community College at 719-502-3054 or [cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu](mailto:cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu).

## 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](mailto: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.

## Do I Need a Degree to Get the Job I Want?

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., via a portfolio or other samples of your work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly 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.

First find out if 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. The point is, don’t jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

## Is Distance Learning for You?

Because of its convenience (no need to leave the house to attend classes), distance learning appeals to working people – especially to military personnel. This fact means many Coast Guard personnel (who are often not near large population centers) have opportunities for higher education they might not have had in the past.

But before you plunk down the application fee for a distance learning course, check out the information about distance learning at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp>. And before you hop on the on-line course bandwagon, spend a little time with the University of Georgia’s on-line assessment tool to help you determine if computer-based distance learning is for you (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#01>).

## Credit-by-Exam Test Preparation

If you’re preparing to take a credit-by-exam test (e.g., CLEP test, DSST, or ECE), check out the Coast Guard Institute’s new library of study materials (including, in most cases, on-line courses) for each of the 111 different tests. Everything’s accessible via the Internet at [http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active\\_duty/go\\_to\\_college/earn\\_credits/dantes\\_library/default.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/earn_credits/dantes_library/default.asp).

## 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!

## 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](mailto: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.