

TraCen Cape May Education Update #354

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Links from this page to non-Coast Guard sites are provided as a customer service and do not represent any implicit or explicit endorsement by the United States Coast Guard of any commercial or private issues, products, or services presented there.

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
HSC Rachel de Vore	HSWL FO Cape May	E-PME-8*

* First attempt

Well done, Chief!

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 was in the Air Force Reserve before joining the Coast Guard. During that time, I used six months of my GI Bill benefits. I'm now finishing my first regular Coast Guard enlistment and am thinking of going back into the Reserve. Will I be able to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and, if so, how many months of benefits will I have?

A: Assuming you didn't serve on active duty for 90 days or more while in the Air Force Reserve, the benefit you used during that time was probably the Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reservists (MGIB-SR).

When you came into the regular Coast Guard you should have been automatically enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and given the opportunity in boot camp to accept that enrollment (and pay \$1,200) or to

decline it (and pay nothing). If \$1,200 was deducted from your pay during your first year after Coast Guard boot camp, then you're eligible for MGIB-AD benefits.

And in light of your service in the regular Coast Guard, you're almost certainly now also eligible for benefits under the new (Post-9/11) GI Bill.

To get new GI Bill benefits, you'll need to relinquish either your remaining MGIB-SR benefits or your MGIB-AD benefits. If you give up your MGIB-SR benefits, you'll have 30 months of new GI Bill benefits because that's how many unused months of MGIB-SR benefits you have left. If you give up your MGIB-AD benefits, you'll have 36 months of new GI Bill benefits because that's how many months of those you had to use.

Keep in mind that if you're entitled to benefits under more than one GI Bill program, you're eligible for a total of 48 months of benefits under any combination of programs.

So, if you gave up your MGIB-AD benefits you could have 36 months of new GI Bill benefits and 12 months of MGIB-SR benefits. Or, if you gave up your MGIB-SR benefits you could have or 30 months of new GI Bill benefits and 18 months of MGIB-AD benefits.

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 **Studying & Test-taking Skills** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studying.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 *lose* and *loose* (definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

The word *lose* is a verb (expressing action): "I always lose my keys" and "She hopes they don't lose the game."

The word *loose* is an adjective (modifying nouns and pronouns): "I always wear loose shirts when I'm in Puerto Rico" and "My fan belt is loose."

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.

Low-cost College Courses for Dependent Spouses

Coastline Community College (a regionally accredited school) offers on-line college courses to military dependents (civilian spouses and children). These courses are a real bargain, for \$79 per credit, a \$50 book voucher, and no other costs. (<http://military.coastline.edu/msp/page.cfm?LinkID=1332>).

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. There are a number of web sites at which you can find information useful to military personnel transitioning to civilian life and veterans.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has a veterans' employment web site called "Feds Hire Vets" (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>). Its purpose is to implement the federal government's strategy for recruiting and employing military veterans. It's intended to be the preeminent source for federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. And the main federal government jobs web site is at <http://www.fedjobs.gov/>.

And (courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle) the state of Maryland also has a similar site called the Military to Federal Jobs Crosswalk (Mil2FedJobs, <http://www.mil2fedjobs.com/>) to help you "translate military occupations to federal jobs".

Finally, don't overlook government jobs entities at other levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – which provide benefits similar to those available through the federal government.

Thinking of Starting Your Own Business?

If you're thinking about starting your own business, either while you're still in uniform or after you leave the Coast Guard, check out a sampling of resources for entrepreneurs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>. There you'll find general resources applicable to all types of small businesses on many different subjects (e.g., drafting a business plan, finding funding, etc.).

There are also sections aimed at those interested in starting not-for-profit businesses and those interested in social entrepreneurship. Contrary to the popular notion, not-for-profit doesn't mean "no profit" or that you can't earn a substantial salary. It just means most of the profit has to be put toward specific things, usually plowed back into the business. There's also a section with links to labor market information.

Finally, drop by the Education Center to pick up a copy of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Chapters 7 (“Self-Employment and Small Business”) and 8 (“Temporary Work, Contract Employment, Freelancing, Teleworking, and Volunteering”) have many great leads.

No More Paper & Pencil CLEP Tests

DANTES Test Control Officers (TCOs, who are ESOs with authorization from DANTES) can no longer order CLEP tests to administer locally. TCOs may administer tests they already have on-hand until 31 December 2011, but if your TCO doesn’t have the test you want to take, you’ll have to find a national test center (http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp) at which to take it.

Why is this happening? The number of paper-and-pencil CLEP tests (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/clep.asp>) in use (and which TCOs could administer) was cut back to 14 out of a total of 34 tests. To quote from the official announcement, “The College Board has decided to terminate this service due to the decreasing number of PPT test takers. Over 95 percent of military examinees test on the CLEP computer-based exams either at an onbase or on-campus national test center. The Service members utilizing the computer-based exams benefit from instant score results and access to all 33 CLEP eCBT test titles. . . .”

Because the closest test site to TraCen Cape May for computer-based tests is Rowan University (in Glassboro, NJ – about an hour and a half’s drive), I’m working to find alternatives for Coast Guard personnel in southern New Jersey. It’s unlikely my efforts will bear fruit before the end of the year, however. For the time being, Prometric (another testing company) will continue to offer DSSTs in a paper format. Check out the offerings (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>) and see if some of them might fit into your degree plan.

Using Skillsoft at Home: Free On-line Courses on Hundreds of Subjects

Most Coast Guard personnel are unaware of the free resource they have at their fingertips wherever they have computer access. This resource is called SkillSoft and it’s accessible through the CGPortal (<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/>). Just click on the “Training & Education” button on the blue menu bar and scroll down. You’ll see “Skillsoft Single Sign-On” where you can log in to use it at work. Below that you’ll see “SkillPort Dependent Registration”. To log in from home, the URL is <https://uscg.skillport.com/skillportfe/login.action>.

The courses fall into these general categories:

- Business skills & certifications
- Desktop applications
- IT professional curricula & certifications
- CG Unit Leadership Development Program
- Information systems technician
- Information systems management
- Legal compliance curricula
- Environmental, safety and health, and transportation curricula
- DHS training requirements

In addition, you can also Books 24x7, an on-line library of hundreds of books covering topics related to business, IT, office and personnel management, and office computer applications.

Future-Proof Your Education

"How do you prepare for uncertain career paths where technical knowledge doubles every two years? You pay attention to the skills that surround the content: Interact, Flex, Learn, Explain, Analyze, and Focus." Check out "Future-proof Your Education" at http://prezi.com/gsoot_1arnmk/future-proof-your-education/.

For best viewing, roll your cursor over "More" (in the bottom right corner) and select "Fullscreen". Then, use your keyboard's left/right arrow keys (or click on the arrows) to go forward or backward in the presentation. If a small window entitled "Hups. Bzzr." appears in the middle of your screen, you'll need to view the presentation/video on a computer other than your CG workstation.

Staying Current with Deck Watch Officer Test Requirement

If you're in a billet that requires you to remain current with respect to a Deck Watch Officer test, you can find a synopsis of the policy, a link to the COMDTINST 16672.5C, and a link to some sample test questions at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/nrt4.asp>. (If you'd like a hard copy of the COMDTINST, drop by the Education Center.)

Also be aware that if it's been less than five years since you last passed either the DWINTO (closed-book) or the DWINTR (open-book) test, you can take either test (subject to the prohibition against re-taking the same test title more often than every three weeks).

If you're looking for a way to study for the test besides the NavRules course from the Coast Guard Institute (which is available through your ESO), you might want to consider investing in a copy of RulesMaster Pro software from Australia (<http://www.rulesmaster.com/>). This program makes the nautical rules of the road come to life, with sound signals and lights as you'd see them underway at night from all angles.

Tuition Assistance for FY12

Currently, the Coast Guard Institute is authorized to process tuition assistance (TA) requests for courses beginning in both October and November 2011. You can use eTA/WebTA (<https://eta.cnet.navy.mil/>) to apply for a course that begins before the end of November 2011.

Remember: requests submitted via eTA expire after two weeks. So if you want to apply for a course that begins later than October, you'll need to use the PDF application form (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cqi/forms/CG_Form_4147.pdf) rather than eTA to submit your TA request. The Coast Guard Institute will keep your PDF request on file and process it as soon as funds become available, in the order in which it was received.

Keep in mind that ESOs may not process TA requests for any course that begins more than three months from today.

Foreign Language Proficiency Pay

If you're proficient in a language other than English and are assigned to a designated interpreter or linguist billet, you may be eligible for Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP). The Coast Guard recently changed its policy on who's eligible for FLPP.

Until the end of FY11, there were only two categories: Interpreter and Linguist. Individuals who received a score of at least 2+ on both the listening and reading portions of the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) were entitled to the higher FLPP of a Linguist. Those who received a score of at least 2 on both tests were entitled to Interpreter FLPP. The revised policy created four Interpreter categories and two Linguist categories. Which level you qualify for depends on your DLPT scores, and whether you're assigned to an Interpreter or Linguist billet.

For more information about the DLPT and to see what the payment rates are for the different Interpreter and Linguist categories, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>.

Learning Another Language & Foreign Language Testing

There are a number of software applications that help you learn a foreign language. “Tell Me More” (http://us.tellemore.com/free_demo) and “Rosetta Stone” (<http://www.rosettastone.com/>, which everyone’s seen on TV) are but two of these.

But don’t go out and buy one just because everyone’s talking about it. Before you order the software, do some research, including <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/LanguageLearning.pdf>.

- **Check the price.** The only direct Coast Guard-related funding available to reimburse you language software you buy on your own is the Coast Guard Foundation grant – which is only available to regular Coast Guard enlisted personnel and Reserve enlistees on active duty (i.e., not drilling Reservists or officers).
- **Ask around; see if you can find others who have it.** Find out if it helped them learn what they need to know to talk about Coast Guard-related matters (e.g., law enforcement) in the target language. Unless you just want to learn another language for fun, if the software doesn’t help you learn what you need to learn it’s probably not worth buying.
- **Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP).** If you want to earn FLPP as one of your unit’s designated interpreters, it’s highly unlikely a commercially-available language course will give you the proficiency needed to get the necessary rating on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>). And keep in mind that even if it does, your unit has to have designated interpreter billets *and* you have to be formally assigned to one of those billets. (Most operational units have only two or three interpreter billets.)

If you really need to know a second language for work, the Coast Guard will probably pay for you to learn it. But a method other than software may be more effective. That is, if all you can do after months of using a computer program is make small talk that helps you locate a good restaurant, it’s probably not worthwhile for Coast Guard purposes.

Check around to see if there are any intensive language training courses available in your area through a college/university, a commercial language school, or a government agency. For example, now that the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection agency work for the same cabinet secretary, you may find that you can get into a CBP language training program that either the Department or Coast Guard will pay for.

And, of course, you can always take college courses in the target language. Tuition assistance will pay for them and you’ll also earn college credit from them.

You can also find loads of (mostly) free resources for learning foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

On-line College Language Courses

If you’re interested in taking one or more language courses on-line and either don’t want to or can’t afford to use those which are commercially available, check out the dozens of courses available from many different regionally-accredited colleges and universities throughout the country.

The DANTES Independent Study Catalog (<http://www.dantescatalogs.com/DISCSubjectAreas.aspx?MajorSubjectArea=PC>) lists them, gives a short description of what they entail, and lists all costs associated with them. Tuition assistance (TA) can be used to pay for all or most costs of all these courses and you’ll earn college credit for them as well.

If you're specifically interested in Spanish, another option comes from Ms. Kristi Hilton (full-time ESO at Sector Columbia River). She found courses offered by the University of Texas at <http://courses.webhost.utexas.edu/dec/college/searchresults.cfm>. You'll also earn college credit for these courses and the cost is only \$147.60/credit. If you want to use TA, there's a "Military Tuition Assistance" option on the payment page. If you run into snags trying to use TA to pay for the course, the school's Registrar, Ms. Carol Tremaine (at 512-471-2906), will answer any questions you have about the procedure.

Thinking of Applying for an Officer Program?

If you're considering applying for one of the Coast Guard's officer programs, be sure to give yourself plenty of time to complete all the required documents and steps. You can't get everything done in a manner that will give you a good shot at being selected if you spend less than six months on the application process.

Keep in mind that you can't just request an interview and expect everyone will be able to drop everything on a moment's notice to do it. You need to plan ahead so that whomever is charged with setting up interviews can find officers of the required ranks who can all meet in the same place (availability of which must be worked out) at the same time to interview you. For example, TraCen Cape May, CGAS Atlantic City, and Sector Delaware Bay only interview applicants once a quarter in rotation according to a schedule published a year in advance (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/interview.asp#sked>). This gives applicants plenty of time to schedule an interview.

Remember that the date of your interview is **completely** unrelated to dates published in the most recent ALCGRECRUITING message (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcgrecruiting010-11.pdf>): not the date your application has to be completed and submitted, not the date the selection board meets. You can (and should) schedule your interview relatively early in the process so you're not under the gun to get it done before the submission deadline. But bear in mind, too, that certain things have to be done in a certain order.

For example, your application folder's not complete unless a report from the interview board is in it. You have to provide a number of documents to the interview board before your interview, one of which is your current CO's endorsement of your narrative memo. Most commands require applicants to forward a draft of the CO's endorsement up through the chain of command – which can take as much as a month. And your chain of command can't revise the draft endorsement unless it has your narrative memo done.

For information on the officer program application process, go to my web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>.

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/sitest.asp>.

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>).

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.

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.