

TraCen Cape May Education Update #399

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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
ME2 Shawn Springer	VBST Cape May	ME2

Well done, PO Springer!

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 – How do I see how many college credits I’ve earned from military training?

Q: I just finished a “C” school and want to see how many college credits I now have. What do I do?

A: It all depends on who ran your “C” school. If it was a Coast Guard “C” school, you just request an assessment from the Coast Guard Institute using the “Application for Transcript” form (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step5.asp>). If it was a DoD school, you’ll need to submit a transcript request to the service that ran the school using that service’s procedures

(<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step5.asp#dod>).

In the not-too-distant future, the Coast Guard and all the DoD services will be transitioning to what will be called the Joint Services Transcript (JST). The JST will produce a uniform transcript of all military training and experiences to for all military personnel, regardless of which branch they serve in. The Coast Guard Institute has not yet announced the date the Coast Guard will begin using this new electronic transcript service, but it is scheduled to go on-line on 01 January 2013.

Keep in mind that just because the transcript you receive shows lots of credits (for an example, see http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/choose_major/degree_roadmaps/EM/Rating_EM.pdf), you shouldn't assume that those credits will all count toward a degree in your chosen major. Every college and university in the U.S. determines for itself whether it will accept credits from any other source, what the credits they do accept will apply to, and whether they'll be accepted at full value.

Also be aware that only Coast Guard (and eventually all military) training will be included on these transcripts. That is, credits you earned from other sources (e.g., previous college courses, CLEP tests, DSSTs, etc.) will not appear on the transcript.

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 three pages: **Requesting a Coast Guard Transcript** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step5.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

A number of people have asked that I expand my weekly "Frequently-Confused/Misused Words" entry to cover grammar and usage questions other than confused/misused words as well. This week, **mollify** and **pacify**. (These definitions are taken from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

The word *mollify* is a verb usually used to mean to soothe in temper or disposition, to appease: "Her comments angered him, but she mollified him with flattery" or "Neville Chamberlain mollified Hitler's saber-rattling by giving in to his territorial demands in Czechoslovakia".

Pacify is also a verb and means to allay the anger or agitation of, to soothe ("The young father pacified the crying child") or to restore to a tranquil state ("The United States sent Marines to the Dominican Republic in 1965 to pacify the country").

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.

Common Latin Phrases Everyone Should Know

Per se: by, of, for, or in itself; intrinsically. "This candidate is not a pacifist per se, but he is in favor of peaceful solutions when practicable."

From: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/per%2Bse>

Articles of Interest

During the past week, I came across the following articles you may find interesting, useful, or both.

- “Justified Jargon: Yet Another New Word for a Serious Reality” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/edmisc010.pdf>) talks about the dangers of over-specialization in the workforce.
- “What Makes a Top-Tier Online Education?” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/edmisc030.pdf>)

Servicewide Exams are Here!

If you’re expecting to take the SWE next month but didn’t get an e-mail invitation/reminder from me telling you that I received a SWE for you, you should contact your SPO/YN immediately to find out why that’s the case.

At TraCen Cape May, SWEs will be held in Learning Resource Center #1 (Munro Hall) according to the following timetable:

- PO3 taking PO2 exam – Thursday, 01NOV (morning)
- PO2 taking PO1 exam – Thursday, 01NOV (afternoon)

For full details, please read all of the e-mail I sent you and (*after you’ve read it*) click “ACCEPT” or “DECLINE” at the top.

Student Loan Interest Rate Too High?

If you’re not eligible for a student loan forgiveness program or find that even after consolidating your student loans the interest rate is still too high, be aware that the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act requires your lender to reduce to 6% the interest rate on any student loan you incurred after 14 August 2008 and before you entered the military, for as long as you remain in uniform. That is, if you have a student loan with an interest rate higher than 6%, you can get it reduced to 6% retroactive to the date you entered the military or 14 August 2008, whichever was later.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/loans.asp#max>.

Short-Fuse Scholarship Deadline

I just found out that the National Naval Officers Association has a scholarship for college juniors and seniors who are pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math (http://nnoa.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/Scholarship/appendix_two_stem_scholarship.pdf). *The deadline is 09 November 2012.*

For complete details and contact information for your questions, go to http://nnoa.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/Scholarship/nnoa_stem_scholarship2012.doc.

Another Scholarship Source

Among other things, the web site ScholarshipAmerica (http://scholarshipamerica.org/open_scholarships.php) has descriptions of and links to not-so-widely-known scholarships. (The less well-known they are, the more likely you are to be successful in getting them.) The descriptions include opening and closing dates.

Trying to Figure Out Your Future?

A lot of people drop into the Education Center to tell me “I want to take on-line classes” without any idea what courses they want to take or what they want to do with the courses they do take. While I could respond with “Pick a course and we’ll set you up with TA”, any ESO would be doing you a disservice if that was her/his response.

Why? First, every college and university in the country decides for itself whether to accept credits from any other source. So if you just blindly start taking courses without knowing where you want to get your degree or what you want to major in, you may find that the school you start with doesn’t offer your desired degree or major. Worse, you may also find that when you try to transfer the credits you earned the school that you want to get your degree from won’t accept them.

Also, you may not need a degree to accomplish what you want in life. Do you want to open your own car repair shop, picture framing business, or beauty shop? You probably don’t need a degree to do so. That’s not to say you don’t need specific education (and training), but you can often get that for free or without taking all the courses needed to get a degree.

So before jumping into college courses, work backward from your ultimate goal. Start by asking yourself this question “Do I need a degree to _____?”

To answer the question, call the HR department of companies (or government agencies) which hire people who do what you want to do. (Make sure you make it clear you’re not looking for a job, but just information.) Or, if you want to work for yourself, drop by some businesses which do what you want to do and ask the owners.

In either case, ask them: do I need a degree to _____? If they say “Yes”, ask what you should major in, whether you need an associate’s, bachelor’s, or master’s degree, and what schools you should look at to get the required degree in the required major. If the answer is “No”, ask what kind of training, education, and/or experience you need.

A really good source of ideas and information is the Department of Labor’s *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>). It’s a gold mine of information about every career field imaginable including what prospects for finding work are for each field, what training/education you need to get into it, etc. Another is “G.I. Jobs” magazine (<http://gijobs.com>) which – every month – highlights career fields that do and don’t require degrees.

The bottom line is that you shouldn’t just start taking courses – even general education courses – unless you know whether you’ll be able to use them to complete your chosen degree and whether you even need to get a degree.

Looking for a Post-CG Career with a Future?

If you’re looking for a recession-proof career, you might consider companies that generate and distribute energy. Nearly 40% of current workers in utility companies are expected to retire or leave within the next five years. Openings include security officer positions, which you might be hired for without specialized training (depending on your current rate), engineers, line workers, plant operators, pipe fitters, welders, and others.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development is a non-profit consortium of electrical, natural gas, and nuclear utilities and their associations formed to help utilities develop solutions to the coming workforce shortage in the utility industry. Check out its Troops to Energy Jobs initiative at the bottom of this page (<http://www.cewd.org/index.asp>) and <http://engineers.getintoenergy.com/index.php>.

And once you’ve read a bit about the types of work that’s likely to become available, check out the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>) to find out more about

- the nature of the work,

- required training,
- other qualifications,
- advancement opportunities,
- current and future employment prospects,
- earnings,
- related occupations,
- sources of additional information.

Bismarck State College in North Dakota (<http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>) can get you ready for these careers via its **on-line degree, certification, and non-degree programs** in the following energy-related fields:

- Electric power
- Electric transmission systems
- Energy management
- Instrumentation & control
- Mechanical maintenance technology
- Nuclear power technology
- Petroleum production
- Power plant technology
- Processing plant technology
- Renewable generation
- Water & waste water.

If you follow the news, you know that these industries are crying for people with training in these areas.

The maximum per-credit tuition is currently \$227 (depending on which program you're pursuing) with fees totaling approximately \$22/credit. For more information, go to <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>.

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.tellmemore.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 and/or practicing foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

Software Home Use Programs

Anyone who has a valid Coast Guard e-mail address (uscg.mil) is eligible to participate in home/personal use programs from Microsoft, Adobe, and McAfee. To quote ALCOAST 437/12, "Software purchased through the home use programs may be used for as long as the purchaser remains employed or associated with the Coast Guard and maintains a uscg.mil email account. Upon termination of Coast Guard employment or association, the home use software must be removed from your computer. Software purchased under the Adobe personal use program does not have to be removed from your computer upon termination of Coast Guard employment or association."

See ALCOAST 437/12 for details.

USMAP

USMAP (United Services Military Apprenticeship Program, <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>), is a program through which active duty enlisted personnel can earn certification for skills learned on-the-job and through related technical instruction.

You can complete apprenticeships in 125 trades through USMAP by documenting work experience you acquire on the job, while performing your regular military duties. No after-hours work is required.

The only extra work you have to do is keep track of hours spent in each category of work, fill out your record sheets, and once a quarter send a report of your accumulated hours to USMAP to receive credit for them.

"USMAP enhances your job skills and shows your motivation for more challenging military assignments." Once you've completed the required work hours in each of the skills listed for the trade, your record will be verified then submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor from which you'll receive a certification that you've completed the specified apprenticeship program. This will be "a definite advantage in getting better civilian jobs since employers know the value of apprenticeships."

For more information about USMAP, go to <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>.

RPQs, EPQs, and Practical Factors

At your earliest opportunity, you should go to the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>) and download the current version of your RPQs (Rating Performance Qualifications: what used to be called EPQs and, before that, practical factors).

Click on “Course Catalog” then scroll down and click on “Enlisted Advancement” and, finally, find your rating. The RPQs for all pay grades within your rating are available under any of the headings you’ll see. That is, if you’re preparing to advance to BMC, you can find the RPQs for BMC (as well as BM3, BM2, BM1, BMCS, and BMCM) under “000112 Boatswain's Mate, First Class (BM1)”, “000212 Boatswain's Mate, Second Class (BM2)”, or “000312 Boatswain's Mate, Third Class (BM3)”.

EPQs for all ratings have been converted to RPQs within the last few months. ***Don't assume the only thing that's different is the use of RPQ instead of EPQ.*** In some cases, the individual RPQs are identical to the EPQs; in some cases there have been changes. Carefully compare the wording of each RPQ with the corresponding EPQ it replaced, to ensure you have all the current ones completed before the 01 February deadline for the May 2013 servicewide exam.

New GI Bill: Switching vs. Transferring

A lot of people seem to think that to transfer new (Post-9/11) GI Bill benefits to dependents, they first have to switch from the Montgomery GI Bill to the new GI Bill. This is not the case, and could delay your dependents by months from using your new GI Bill education benefit.

If you’re enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty), are eligible for new GI Bill benefits, and want one or more dependents to be able to use those new GI Bill benefits, all you have to do is transfer any or all of your 36 months of entitlement to them. To do so follow the instructions you’ll find at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp>. You have to use a Coast Guard workstation to do this.

Help Yourself with a SOC Agreement

If you’re taking courses from a school that’s part of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) consortium, do yourself a favor and get a SOC agreement as soon as you’ve completed the number of credits your school requires for you to complete its residency requirement. Do so even if you’re not in a SOCCOAST program.

Why? Because a SOC agreement (a degree plan and contract with your school) locks in the courses you have to pass to get your degree.

Why is this an issue? Unfortunately, colleges sometimes will change degree requirements while you’re working on your degree. (Essentially, they move the goalposts.) If you have a SOC agreement with your school, the school has to honor it – even if the school changes the requirements for completing the degree program you’re pursuing.

To find out if your school’s a SOC school, go to SOC’s web site (http://www.soc.aascu.org/pubfiles/socmisc/SOC_Cnsrtm_Schools_2012-07.pdf).

Is Distance Learning for You?

If you’re trying to decide between taking courses in a classroom or via distance learning (aka distance education), you owe it to yourself to use one or more of the on-line assessment tools available from DANTES and various colleges (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#01>). Spending some time with these tools could save you time and a lot of aggravation down the road.

CLEP's Forgotten Cousin

In addition to CLEP (the College Level Examination Program) tests, which most people have heard about, there are also DSSTs. Like CLEP tests, DSSTs are essentially final exams for college courses. They earn you 3 credits, which means that unlike the five most popular CLEP tests (which earn you 6 credits each), there's less material covered in each of DSST. And, unlike CLEP tests (which are now only available in a computer-based format), you can take paper-based DSSTs through many ESOs.

For a complete list of DSSTs that are available, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>. A number of these tests cover subjects you've mastered during your Coast Guard service, either on-the-job or in training you've received. You may be able to pass the tests below with very little preparation, depending on your rate.

- Introduction to Computing
- Principles of Finance
- Principles of Financial Accounting
- Management Information Systems
- Organizational Behavior
- Personal Finance
- Human Resource Management
- Principles of Supervision
- Ethics in America
- Fundamentals of Counseling
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- Here's to Your Health
- Principles of Public Speaking
- Technical Writing
- Criminal Justice
- Introduction to Law Enforcement

The first time you take a DSST (like a CLEP test), it's free. If you need to re-take it, you have to pay for it. The waiting period between your tests is 90 days.

Keep in mind that these are tests – not courses. The links to each exam you'll find at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp> take you to that exam's short fact sheet which outlines the topics covered on the test, provides suggested references to study to prepare for the test, and a number of sample questions. But, on the whole, you have to find study materials that will work for you and study without a curriculum or instructor.

Online Academic Skills Course

Another resource to use both for tests like the AFCT/ASVAB and for college courses is Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC). To quote its web site, it's "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>.

Giveaways in the Education Center

In addition to for-the-taking booklets on college majors and financing college, the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) also many copies of

- *College.edu – Online Resources for the Cyber-Savvy Student*
- *College Success Guide: Top 12 Secrets for Student Success*
- *Best Career and Education Web Sites*
- *Online Learning*
- *DANTES College Career Workbook*
- *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*

Drop by and see what's available.

Scholarships

Below are descriptions of a number of scholarships open to military personnel, their dependents, or both. ***Be aware, however, that these are just a few of thousands of scholarships you or your dependents may be eligible for.*** They're the low-hanging fruit, the ones most often publicized and (as a result) the ones that have the most applicants. If you really want some serious money from scholarships, you'll apply to all you're eligible for – especially those not widely known. For more about scholarships (including how to find and apply for them in a systematic manner), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

Waldorf College

(courtesy of Mr. Marc Fagenbaum, full-time ESO at Base Miami)

To recognize the sacrifices made by the family members of military servicemembers and public safety personnel (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs & dispatchers) Waldorf College in Iowa will award eight scholarships for on-line students and two for residential students in 2012 through the Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship Program.

Two scholarships (one for the military spouse or dependent and one for the firefighters/law enforcement officer spouse or dependent) will be presented on the award dates listed. Applicants not selected may continue to apply for a maximum of five scholarship award dates.

Scholarship Application Periods

Scholarship Award Dates

01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012

December 2012 (on-line)

Go to <http://www.waldorf.edu/Online/Tuition---Financing/Scholarships/Hero-Behind-the-Hero> for more information and a link to an on-line application. Or you can e-mail hero@waldorf.edu or call 877-267-2157.

Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you're interested in taking college courses, but are unsure where to start or what to do first, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>. The seven steps provided there will help you

- understand terminology and how you progress toward a degree,
- figure out whether you need a degree to enter the field you want to work in,
- if a degree will be helpful, determine what you want to major in,
- find colleges/universities which offer degrees in your desired major,

- request degree plans from your chosen school(s),
- submit a request to the Coast Guard Institute for an education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

This is the hardest part of the process. Once you've done this, it's just a matter of deciding which type of funding to use (tuition assistance, GI Bill, scholarships, loans, or a combination of these) and applying for it. Tuition assistance (TA) and GI Bill funding is easy to use and readily available. You've got to plan ahead if you want to get scholarships because applications are usually due at specific times of the year that might not coincide with dates your courses begin. And loans, while they're readily available, should be your last recourse.

TraCen Cape May Testing Schedule

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

Mondays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Tuesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Wednesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs* **or** Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT)

Thursdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs; college tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

Fridays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

* If someone has made an appointment to take a DLPT (a 6-hour test), there will be no EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs.

College placement, AFCT, and all other tests will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

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 I'm 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.

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 Rating Performance Qualifications (RPQs) for each rate.

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.