

TraCen Cape May Education Update #278

In this Update:

- Congratulations!!!
- Question of the week
- Frequently confused words
- eTA application glitch
- How do I know when my TA authorization's been approved?
- Interested in instructional technology?
- Degrees vs. certificates
- HS requirements for May 2010 SWEs
- CG Foundation scholarships
- Hispanic College Fund scholarships
- CG Exchange System scholarships
- Studying for a CLEP test or DSST?
- How do I pick a school without CG Institute degree plans?
- Occupational certification & apprenticeship programs
- Studying for CLEP Math/English test (or ASVAB)?
- CG Foundation grants
- *Military Times* Edge
- Vocational courses & financial aid
- TraCen Cape May testing calendar
- Thinking of teaching?
- Leaving the Coast Guard?
- Miscellaneous

Congratulations!!

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

Name	Work Site	Test
HS2 Sarah Reid	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*
SN Shannon Yawn	TraCen (Recruit SPO)	YN3
SN Edgar Martir	TraCen (Recruit SPO)	YN3*

* First time taking test

Well done, all of you!!

And congratulations, also, to TraCen Cape May's CO RDML Cari Batson Thomas on her promotion to flag rank!

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: Do I need to give you anything or do anything to take the SWE? Please let me know so that I am ordered a test for May.

A: Contrary to popular belief, no one orders a SWE for you. The Pay & Personnel Center (PPC) in Topeka automatically sends a SWE to your ESO if you've completed all requirements by the SWE qualification deadline (01 February for the May SWE; 01 July for the October Reserve SWE; and 01 August for the November SWE).

Your PDE (Personal Data Extract) will show what records show you've done with respect to your requirements. If anything's incorrect, must advise your SPO (or whomever forwards PDE corrections to the PPC) what's wrong and

provide proof that it's wrong. Your YN will then forward your changes to the PPC. If all requirements have been met, an exam will be sent to the unit listed near the bottom of your PDE as "exam board".

If you don't want to take the test at the unit listed on the PDE as your exam board, you must advise your YN which unit you plan to take it at (both the unit name and its OPFAC number). Otherwise, your exam will automatically be sent to the exam board listed on your PDE.

For complete information on your responsibilities with respect to the SWE, see the ALCGENL that will be published in the next week or so for the May SWE.

Frequently-Confused Words

The English language includes hundreds of words people are unsure which to use. Over the next several weeks, I'll highlight many of them here. Today: **principal** and **principle**.

The word **principal** is a noun. When describing a person, it refers to someone who has controlling authority or is in a leading position. "The principal expelled the student" or "She was the principal in a five-partner law firm." The word can also describe a sum of money you receive interest on or that's due as a debt.

The word **principle** is also a noun describing a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine or assumption: "The Declaration of Independence laid out the principles on which the United States government and society are based" or "She is a person of principles".

eTA Application Glitch

If you're applying for tuition assistance (TA) using the on-line eTA system (<https://eta.cnet.navy.mil/>), beware of an issue that may prevent you from submitting your application. Apparently, a number of people have submitted the application as usual only to receive an e-mail from the Coast Guard Institute saying it was rejected.

The problem seems to be related to field #18, "Anticipated Graduation Date". This field is supposed to only be filled in if you're going to be graduating in the next twelve months. But at the moment, if you leave it blank, you may find your application rejected.

So, until further notice, enter in field #18 the course ending date for the course you're requesting TA for.

How Do I Know When My TA Authorization's Been Approved?

Once your eTA application has been approved, you'll receive notification by e-mail from the Coast Guard Institute. To get the authorization (the document you take to your school to pay for your tuition), log on at the same web site you went to to apply for TA (<https://myeducation.netc.navy.mil/>) and follow this path: My Tuition Assistance (WebTA) > Existing Applications.

Once on the page entitled, "Existing TA Applications Status Description" click on the word "View" next to the application you submitted. A new page will open. Above the dark blue "Application Status History" line on this new page, click on "Print document" to get your authorization.

Interested in Instructional Technology?

Instructional technology, simply put, is the use of a variety of teaching tools to improve student performance. In the Coast Guard, instructional technology is increasingly used to provide what LT Adam Birst, in TraCen Cape May's Instructional Support Branch, calls "mission ready performers".

San Diego State University has created a new instructional technology certificate program aimed at individuals who don't have a college degree. All five courses are provided completely on-line. The program is also very flexible: the credits you earn can be applied to either a bachelor's or a master's degree and you can take courses in Spring, Summer, or Fall terms. The cost is \$294/semester credit. Tuition assistance (TA) will pay \$250/credit.

You can find more information about the program at <http://edtec.sdsu.edu/it.htm> and by contacting LT Birst (adam.r.birst@uscg.mil).

Degrees vs. Certificates

One thing to consider before jumping into a college-level course is whether to get a degree or a certificate.

An academic certificate program is less extensive than a degree program (typically between 9 and 18 credits, rather than 60 for an associate's degree or 120 for a bachelor's degree). As stated on the University of Kentucky's web site, a certificate is "an integrated group of courses that is designed to have a very clear and focused academic topic or competency as its subject area." Certificates often "meet a clearly defined educational need of a constituency group (such as continuing education or accreditation for a particular profession), respond to a specific state mandate, or provide a basic competency in an emerging, usually interdisciplinary, area." A certificate provides "the student formal recognition of the mastery of a clearly defined academic topic."

Why earn a certificate rather than a degree? An academic certificate can add a new area of expertise to a degree you already hold or allow you to create a specialty in a field related to your undergraduate major or graduate specialty. Or you can use it to explore a whole new academic field to find out whether you want to get a degree in that field. The courses you'll take to get a certificate would count toward your major courses or electives if you're getting an undergrad degree or might count toward your graduate degree, depending on its requirements.

For example, say you're interested in possibly working toward a undergrad degree in homeland security. But you're not sure it's exactly right for you. So you decide to get an undergraduate certificate in Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness (18 credits). When you're done, you'll have the certificate (the courses for which you can apply toward an associate's or bachelor's degree) and quite a bit of knowledge about a specialized field. That should be enough to give you an idea whether you want to take all the rest of the courses necessary to get the homeland security degree or if you'd rather move in another direction.

If you're interested in finding out if a given field is for you (or if the organization you want to work for doesn't require you to have a degree), you might want to consider getting an academic certificate instead of a degree. And in both the civilian world and the military, degrees and certificates are proof of what you've accomplished and, by demonstrating your initiative, set you apart from your peers.

For more on degrees and certificates, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degredesc.asp>.

HS Requirements for May 2010 Servicewide Exams

Despite the fact that it was published in April 2009, there still seems to be quite a bit of confusion as to what HS personnel have to do to qualify for the May SWEs. Paragraph 2 of ALCOAST 246/09 (dated 27 April 2009) is very clear:

"The revised HS1 course (0130-4) and HS2 course (0230-4) will be required for SWE and advancement eligibility effective 01FEB10. Older HS1 and HS2 end-of-course test (EOCT) completions will remain valid until 01AUG09. The last day the older HS1 (0130-3) and HS2 (0230-3) EOCTs will be administered is 01AUG09. The HS EPQ form CG-3303C-HS (rev. 05-2008) must be signed and verified on page two prior to taking any rate training end-of-course test (EOCT)."

Essentially, any HS3 or HS2 who wants to take the HS2 or HS1 SWE in May 2010 has to have passed the current version of the EOCT (0130-4 for HS1, 0230-4 for HS2) on or before 01 February 2010. And to be eligible to take the EOCT, the would-be examinee must first have completed the latest version of the HS EPQs.

If an HS3's or HS2's PDE doesn't reflect that s/he passed the required EOCT, no SWE will be sent to his/her examination board.

Coast Guard Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation is soliciting applications for its scholarship program for the 2010-2011 academic school year.

Four different scholarships are part of this program. The scholarship selection committee will take into account a number of considerations including the applicant's scholastic promise, motivation, moral character, leadership qualities, and good citizenship.

For more information about these academic financial aid opportunities, see ALCOAST 019/10 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST019-10.pdf>). You can also get an overview of these programs, as well as many other similar programs and opportunities, at the Work-Life web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/scholarship.asp#foundation>).

Hispanic College Fund Scholarships

The Hispanic College Fund scholarship program is now accepting applications for awards of up to \$10,000. The program is open to students of Hispanic background majoring in business, finance, accounting, computer science, computer engineering, IT, hospitality management, hotel management, culinary, food & beverage, and other fields. The deadline for applications is **16 February 2010**.

For more information and to apply, go to <http://scholarships.hispanicfund.org/>

CG Exchange System Scholarships

Applicants are being solicited for the CG Exchange System Scholarship Program. One \$1,500, one \$750, and one \$500 scholarship are available for students who are dependents of Coast Guard personnel (regular and Reserve military, retired military, current civilian NAF and appropriated-funds employees, uniformed PHS personnel, and Auxiliaries.) **The application deadline is 27 February 2010.**

See ALCGPSD 059/09 for details on eligibility criteria and application procedures.

Studying for a CLEP Test or DSST?

If you're interested in taking a CLEP test or DSST, keep in mind that these are not gimme tests; you'll likely need to study quite a bit for them to pass. Remember: these are the equivalent to final exams for one or two semesters of college courses.

Among the resources you can use to prepare for these tests are a number listed on my and the Coast Guard Institute's web sites (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp> and http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/downloads/DANTES_exam_matrix.pdf).

How Do I Pick a School Without CG Institute Degree Plans?

As you may have heard, the Coast Guard Institute stopped providing degree plans in mid-December 2009. Those who made well-reasoned requests for degree plans received four plans showing how many credits they currently had were likely to be accepted toward specific degrees and majors and four different schools. This was useful in that it helped satisfy most people's desire to get a degree as quickly as possible.

Now that the Institute isn't providing degree plans, however, you'll need to put a lot more thought into your choice and do more work to find schools that meet your requirements. If you follow a linear process, however, this process can be manageable.

Step 1: Figure out what you want a degree for. To do this, you'll first need to decide what kind of work you want to do once you leave the Coast Guard. Keep in mind that to be successful in many fields you don't have to have a degree. For example, does an interior designer need to have a degree? Or a master welder? Or a home health care worker? I don't know the answers to these questions. The point is, work backwards from your goal (type of work you want to do > education/training requirements to do that kind of work > schools which provide that kind of training/education). This is much more productive than picking a major and degree and hoping it will help you get the kind of work you want to do or, conversely, that your preferred employer will find it useful.

How do you do this? An underused tool is the federal Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>). This on-line publication lists hundreds and hundreds of job titles and much useful information about each. For each job title, there's a separate article. Articles are organized similarly, so you can easily compare similar jobs with different titles. Articles include the following sections:

- Nature of the work
- Training, other qualifications, and advancement
- Employment (how many people are doing this job today?)
- Job outlook & projections (are there going to be more or fewer of these jobs in the future?)
- Earnings & wages (today and in the future)
- Related occupations
- Sources of additional information

The section on training includes education and should answer general questions about the type and amount of training and/or education employers want people who do the job to have.

Step 2: Once you've determined that you'll need a degree (and what to major in), your next step is to find a school that provides that degree in that major. You can find a lot of information that will help you find the college/university that best fits your needs and desires on my web site and links included there:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step4.asp>, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp>, and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp>. At the bottom of the page on the "Selected Schools" page (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp>) you'll find a list of search engines you can use to find schools that meet your criteria.

Step 3: Go to the web sites of colleges you identified via Step 2 above. Be organized. You can use the college comparison worksheet from my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>) or make up your own. The point is that you need to find out the same info about each school on your list so you're not trying to compare apples with oranges with pears with plums. Once you've settled on a couple of schools, find a way to contact a counselor at each and ask what you need to do/provide to get a degree plan.

Step 4: While waiting for the schools to answer (or before you do any of this, if you want) submit a request for an education assessment to the Coast Guard Institute using the "Application for Voluntary Education Services" (form CGI-1561, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1561.pdf>). Before you submit this form to your ESO, make sure you ensure all courses you've taken in the Coast Guard that can be put into DirectAccess *are in* DirectAccess. **Read the instructions on the last page of the form!!!** The Institute's staff will prepare a transcript showing how many college credits your Coast Guard training would be worth if you'd learned the same material in college.

Step 5: Once you've received responses from the schools that interested you, submit an "Official USCG Transcript Request" form (CGI-1564, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1564.pdf>) to the Coast Guard Institute, one form for each school. When the Institute receives this form, it will send a copy of the transcript it prepared (see Step 4) sent to each school you're interested in. From this transcript (plus any college/university and/or DoD service transcripts you'll also need to send to the school) the counselor will create a degree plan for you. This degree plan will list all courses

- needed to complete your desired degree,
- the school will considered completed (based on credit transferred from elsewhere), and
- you still need to complete to earn your degree.

Occupational Certification & Apprenticeship Programs

A number of occupational certification programs are available through your ESO. The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP - <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>) is a program that allows active duty servicemembers to earn apprenticeship certification in 125 skills learned through work experience and related technical instruction. All you have to do is document the experience you gain while performing your regular military duties; no after-hours work is required.

You can also get certified in dozens of different occupational fields (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/certification/deph/pt3/index.htm) through a large number of nationally-recognized certification organizations. You can get certified as a broadcast engineer, crane operator, automotive service professional, dental assistant, contract manager, medical technologist, administrative professional, personal trainer, industrial security professional, safety professional, or any of many other specialties. And if you're eligible for GI Bill benefits, you can likely get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for the cost of each certification exam.

You can also renew or get your initial EMT certification through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (http://www.nremt.org/about/nremt_news.asp).

Studying for a CLEP Math or English Test (or ASVAB)?

If you're preparing to take the CLEP College Mathematics or English Composition test, or if you're trying to improve your ASVAB AR, MK, PC, or WK scores, a free on-line study aid is now available to all Coast Guard personnel.

Although it was designed to help people who don't feel quite ready to take college-level courses, Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) emphasizes subject areas also tested in numerous CLEP tests, DSSTs, and the ASVAB. It diagnoses your "current level of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and math abilities and teaches the concepts and skills needed to increase proficiency in each of these academic areas." Through OASC you have access – via any computer at any time of day – to dozens of lessons and quizzes.

- Pre-tests help you evaluate strengths and weaknesses in each subject area and design customized lessons.
- There are interactive games, lessons, and flashcards as well as practice sets and quizzes.
- There's a post-test to measure end-of-course performance.
- It's self-paced.
- There are different course lengths to fit any schedule and accommodate any time constraints you're under.

In the verbal section are lessons ranging from "Building Your Vocabulary" to "Understanding Difficult Text" to "Understanding the Author's Tone". In the math section are lessons such as "Eliminating Wrong Answers", "Multiplying and Dividing Fractions", and "Percent Increase and Decrease". In addition, there are lessons on "Dealing with Studying Stress", "Wrapping up Your Studying", "Reviewing Math", and "Reviewing Verbal".

And OASC is available to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute is once again accepting applications for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

All applications must be dated with the current (2010) date. Recycled applications with a date from last year will not be accepted. HOWEVER, you can clear the original date, re-date the application, and re-submit it.

Receipts must not be dated more than a year before the date the Institute receives the application. That is, if your application reaches the Institute on 20 January 2010, receipts can't be dated before 20 January 2009. Also, receipts must include a description of the item purchased and must show proof of payment. Copies of receipts must be legible and if you send original receipts, they will not be returned.

Military Times Edge

The current issue of *Edge*, from the publisher of *Navy Times* is available in the Education Center and the Work-Life Offices for anyone who wants a copy. The articles in the current issue are:

- Recipe for Success: retired soldier transforms hobby into fruitful business
- Hook some Help: supplement Uncle Sam with these military-only scholarships
- The Job Searchers: Hiring help on your hunt for a new career
- One Year to a New Career: 12 things you can do in 2010 to find a job you love
- Unfit for Command: How to deal with a bad military boss
- Five Golden Skills: Every employer wants them – here's how to get them
- A Head for Business
- And more ...

Vocational Courses & Financial Aid

As you know, the Coast Guard's tuition assistance (TA) program only funds courses which meet two general criteria: (1) offered by nationally- or regionally-accredited institutions and (2) result in credit you can transfer to another nationally- or regionally-accredited institution. Generally, this means TA can't be used for vocational courses and programs.

However, if you're a member of the regular Coast Guard, didn't turn down the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) in boot camp, and had \$1,200 deducted from your pay (or if you're a Reservist) you can use your MGIB benefits for practically any vocational course or program. (To find out for sure if the course you want to take is eligible for GI Bill reimbursement, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-o.asp#saa>.)

And if you decided the new GI Bill was for you and gave up either the MGIB-AD or MGIB-SR to get it, you can use it for the same courses you could have used MGIB benefits for. If you didn't give up MGIB benefits before electing the new GI Bill, you'll only be able to use it for courses offered at institutions of higher learning (IHLs). Generally, IHLs are accredited degree-granting institutions, which seldom offer vocational courses.

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): colleges tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs**

* If you need longer than two hours to take an untimed test, it will be provided.

** 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 counseling, AFCT tests, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, Mondays are also open for things.

(Thursday afternoons I give a presentation to Reserve recruits on tuition assistance and the four GI Bill programs.)

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

Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program. Including a new on-line way to determine if you're eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time. Check out the information on my web site related to career transition (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later. If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

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

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

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

Quick Reference Study Guides

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

Education Library

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

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

Get It in Writing!

A recent article on military.com by retired Coast Guard Chief Terry Howell (<http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html>) provides extremely good advice about how to avoid making costly mistakes when dealing with the VA about your education benefits.

The advice is equally applicable to dealing with *any* government or corporate bureaucracy, for that matter.