

TraCen Cape May Education Update #369

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Congratulations!!

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

Name	Work Site	Test
MST2 Daniel Lilly	TraCen (FE)	E-PME-6

Congratulations are also in order for Ms. Stephanie Grubb (wife of YN1 Darren Grubb, in Recruit SPO). She just completed an Associate of Science degree in General Studies from Atlantic Cape Community College.

Moving from place to place, holding down jobs, and meeting family obligations can make an education goal seem elusive. But Ms. Grubb is but one excellent example of how military personnel and their spouses can, with persistence and patience, overcome these challenges and reach long-term education goals.

Well done, PO Lilly and Ms. Grubb!!!

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 – What courses do I need to advance?

Q: I am an MK3 Reservist at the Station _____, I was inquiring about how to get the course material for advancement to E-5.

A: What you need is the E-PME-6 (Journeyman) Study Guide. You can view/download it (PDF file) from the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>) or order a hard-copy version.

And if you need the MK2 course, you can order that as well.

If your ESO/CO can't order them for you, I will. Just send me your employee ID number and the address you want them sent to.

If you have a question you'd like answered as a Question of the Week, e-mail it to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

Web Page in the Spotlight

There's a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **The Servicewide Exam** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/swe.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, **their**, **there**, and **they're**. (These definitions are from Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.)

The word **their** is a possessive pronoun: "As a child, I loved going to the Smiths; their back yard was a great place to play" and "We found their car."

The word **there** is usually used as an adverb or a noun; both refer to a location or place: "Stand over there" (adverb); "Take it from there and put it by the garage" (noun).

The word **they're** is a contraction of "they are" and, like all contractions, has an apostrophe: "They're all crazy" and "They're going with me to the park."

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.

Forwarding Servicewide Exams

- 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 listed on your PDE for any other reason on the date of your SWE?

If so, 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,
- let your SPO know to change the "Examination Board" name and OPFAC on your PDE to the name and OPFAC of that unit where you plan to take the SWE.

PPC will automatically send your exam to the unit listed as your exam board on your PDE. But it's your responsibility to make sure you've checked everything on the PDE (including your Examination Board) **before 01 April**.

If you revise the PDE info concerning your exam site and later find out you won't be able to take your exam there after all or at the scheduled date and time, let your ESO know ASAP.

The next servicewide exams (SWEs) will be held on Tuesday, 01 May (for advancement to E-5 and E-7) and on Thursday, 03 May (for advancement to E-6, E-8, and E-9).

Substitute exams are authorized only for emergencies over which you have no control. 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 which circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 3.B.3. of the *Enlisted Accessions, Evaluations, and Advancements Manual*.

For more servicewide exam information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/swe.asp>.

College Costs & Income Tax Deduction/Credit

If you used TA or the GI Bill to pay for one or more courses in calendar year 2011, you may receive from your school an official-looking statement (IRS form 1098-T) showing how much was paid to your school for tuition and fees. This form is provided in case you're eligible for education-related deductions from and credits to your income tax.

Be aware that only money you personally paid for tuition and school fees **and/or** were not reimbursed for can be used to determine if you qualify for such deductions and credits. That is, tuition assistance, GI Bill funds, grant reimbursements, etc. can't be included. Subtract those things from the amount shown on the IRS form 1098-T.

You can find the IRS publication which goes into depth about these deductions and credits is at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf>.

New Advanced Education Program for YNs

The Rating Force Master Chief for Yeomen has advised YNs to be on the lookout for a message announcing the inauguration of an advanced education program for them. Like other enlisted advanced education programs, those selected will have up to 24 consecutive months to complete an associate's or bachelor's degree in business administration or management.

Only YN1s through YNCSs in the regular Coast Guard with at least six years of service as a YN (two in the Coast Guard) will be eligible to apply for the two seats in this program. Those selected will incur a service obligation of 3 months per month of instruction for the first 12 months, and 1 month per month of instruction thereafter. Applicants will need to provide ACT or SAT scores that are less than five years old.

The selection panel is expected to meet late this summer or early in the fall, and those selected will begin school in 2013.

Complete details will be published in the forthcoming ALCOAST/ALCGENL.

Studying for the Servicewide Exam?

If you're studying for the servicewide exam (SWE), an end-of-course test (EOCT), or an E-PME AQE you may be tempted to use one of the iPhone or Android applications available which is advertised as covering what you need to know for the test. **BEWARE!!!** Those reviewed by one of our full-time ESOs are not complete. That is, they don't include all the material that's in the rating course or the E-PME Study Guide.

Is an Emergency Management Career for You?

Read the article by Jessica Lawson from MilitaryTimesEDGE magazine (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/career017.pdf>).

Check Out a Career in the Health Information Technology Field

Estimates from government agencies and independent studies indicate a need for 50,000 to 80,000 more health IT workers so health care facilities can implement and maintain electronic health records (EHRs) and meet meaningful use requirements.

Included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 were grants to community colleges to be used to train "health information technology professionals": people qualified to support information exchange among health care providers and public health authorities and to redesign of workflows within the health care settings to gain the quality and efficiency benefits of EHRs.

If you're interested in finding out more about opportunities these grants create, information on colleges providing this training, their admission criteria, their tuition structures, etc. check out the fact sheet from Region D at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/HIT.pdf>. (The info on this fact sheet applies to all five regions.) And to find a community college in the region nearest you that's offering courses as part of the health IT program, go to http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/community/healthit_hhs_gov_community_college_program/1804.

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>.

Sea Service Women Scholarship

(courtesy of SueAnn Walter, full-time ESO at the Coast Guard Academy)

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,500 scholarship for a relative (male or female) of a sea service woman. The application deadline is ***09 March 2012***.

"Eligibility is open to any female or male relative of a sea service woman who has served or is currently serving in the Navy, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps or their Reserve components." Applicants may be related to the sea service woman by birth, legal adoption, or marriage.

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

CG Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation recently announced its scholarship programs for 2012 (see ALCOAST 584/11, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast584-11.pdf>). Check out the ALCOAST for details on these eight scholarships. ***The application deadline is 15 March 2012.***

Fleet Reserve Association Education Foundation

The FRA Education Foundation offers many different scholarships to eligible full-time students who are U.S. citizens attending accredited colleges and universities in the United States. For more information, go to <http://www.fra.org/foundation>. The deadline for submitting applications is **15 April 2012**.

Are You Taking or Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you are, please take a few minutes to look over the help the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau improve the way colleges and universities communicate financial aid offers to students. Even if you don't plan to use loans, your experience will be useful in helping the Bureau figure out what kind of information students should have and how it should be presented.

With your and other students' input the Bureau is creating a "financial aid shopping sheet" (<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/static/students/disclosure.pdf>). Its purpose is to allow students looking for the best deal on education loans to compare offerings from different lenders and loan packages from different schools.

For more information, go to Know Before You Owe: Student Loans (<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/students/knowbeforeyouowe/about/>) and then provide your input at <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/students/knowbeforeyouowe/about/>.

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>.

Translate Your IT Experience into Opportunity

Cisco Certifications (a subsidiary of Cisco Systems) recently sent us some info on IT certifications you can earn. To quote from its web site,

Whether you are studying for a career in the IT networking industry, researching opportunities, or already in this field, Cisco Certifications can help you build a career in one of the hottest industries available today. Demand for professionals who can design, install, secure, and manage the networks that keep information and communication flowing is growing. In fact, according to projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of network and computer systems administrators is expected to increase by 23 percent through 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Cisco certified professionals are prepared to manage today's complex technology industry—whether it's working with core technologies, optimizing infrastructure, or keeping key applications secure and performing efficiently. Certifications validate skills necessary for various job roles and also provide a competitive differentiator for employers, in and out of the military.

You can take a self-assessment to “discover what you may already know and what gaps exist in your knowledge. Then review the Study Guidance sections for each assessment for recommended study materials from across the Cisco Learning Network to enhance your knowledge.” For more information, go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/military>.

And to see if you have the skills needed for a career in IT networking, take the short test at http://cl1.psychtests.com/take_test.php?idRegTest=2814.

I hope to be able to offer Cisco and many other certification tests at TraGen Cape May sometime later this year. Although these tests aren't free, you can use your GI Bill education benefit to get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for them.

GRE & GMAT Fee Reimbursement

If you've taken a GRE or GMAT within the last 90 days, you may be eligible to get reimbursed for the test fee. To be eligible, you must:

- have a current Geneva Conventions Military and identification card,
- have never taken a DANTES-funded GRE General Test
- be applying to or enrolled in a graduate or business school requiring the GRE revised General Test or be fulfilling a legitimate Service requirement.

After you take the test, you must do all the following to get reimbursed:

- download and complete sections I, II, III, and IV of the applicable form,
- print out the form (after completing it) and sign it with a pen,
- submit the form, documentation showing that you took the test (a copy of your score report), and documentation that you paid for the test (a credit card statement, e-mail payment confirmation, etc.) to an ESO who's been designated as a DANTES Test Control Officer.

For GRE reimbursement, use this form: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GRE-reimb.pdf>; for GMAT reimbursement, use <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GMAT-reimb.pdf>. ***If I'm not your ESO, make sure***

to delete my name and the DANTES Test Center ID Number in the bottom right-hand corner of the form before printing it out.

At the moment, TCOs must submit paper forms and documentation by mail (rather than digital forms by e-mail) to Prometric for processing, so you may not see the reimbursement for a number of weeks after your ESO sends off your request.

AFCT (ASVAB re-test) Preparation

If you really want to improve your ASVAB math or verbal scores, take a course through your local community college.

For example, Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) has review courses in math and English you can use tuition assistance to pay for. Rather than flounder around trying to study on your own, kill two birds with one stone: get a feel for what college courses are like and brush up on the subjects you need to improve to get to "A" school.

Another option is to use prep materials for the math and English parts of the GED. Much of what you'll be tested on in the AFCT (the in-service version of the ASVAB) is covered by the GED tests.

And you can find more resources (especially for math) linked to the TraCen Cape May web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/asvab.asp#preparing>.

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. At the moment, you'll have to find a national test center (http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp) at which to take it.

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.

MilitaryTimesEDGE and G.I. Jobs Magazines

Drop by the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) to pick up the latest or a back issue of EDGE (published by the company that publishes *Navy Times*) and/or G.I. Jobs magazine. They're in the display rack to your right as you walk in.

Professional Development Courses from DoD Services

Many Guardians are unaware that they can take courses from the other services for professional development purposes. And, like Coast Guard courses, you can earn college credit by passing many of them. The firehouse personnel, for example, take a number of Air Force courses (and the corresponding end-of-course tests).

For many of you, this is a great way to get a slightly different perspective on the tasks you perform in your rating and add to your knowledge base. Doing this shows initiative, dedication to your rating, and can look good on your marks. There are also many courses unrelated to your specific jobs in the Coast Guard, but which give you a broader perspective.

For more info on what's available from the various services, here are their web sites:

Army: Army Correspondence Course Program (<http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aipdnew.asp>)

Navy: Navy Advancement Center (<https://www.courses.netc.navy.mil/>) and the Naval War College's College of Distance Education (<http://www.nwc.navy.mil/academics/colleges/cde/overview.aspx>)

Marine Corps: Marine Corps Institute (<https://www.mci.usmc.mil/>), Marine Corps University (<http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/>)

Air Force: Air University (<http://www.au.af.mil/au/afiadl/>)

Careers in High Energy

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 <http://www.cewd.org/index.asp>, the bottom of the page, 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.

Top Colleges for Veterans

Military Times Edge (published by the same company that publishes *Navy Times*) recently created a list of colleges and universities which takes into account criteria 500 student-veterans felt were the most important to them. You can find the list at <http://militarytimesedge.com/projects/best-for-veterans/best-colleges-for-veterans/2011/>.

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 what you want a degree for,
- 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 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.

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>.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0730): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs*

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT, RAT, 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 Mondays and 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 Wednesdays, as well.

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

Leaving the Coast Guard?

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

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

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience
- The Follow-up Letter

- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. ***If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one (or a transcript) later.***

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector. 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.

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.