

TraCen Cape May Education Update #270

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Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
SN Megan Lange HS3 Mindy Sawmiller	TraCen (Admin) HWSL FO, Cape May	E-PME-4* HS2*

* Passed on first try

Well done both of you!!

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.

TraCen ESO Out of Office – Plan Ahead!!

The Education Center will be closed from Thursday, 19 November through Friday, 04 December while I'm on leave and TAD. Please plan accordingly!

Question of the Week

Q: I was on TAD yesterday during the servicewide exams and wasn't able to take mine. Can I get a substitute exam?

A: Maybe. The main question to ask is: were you unable to take the exam through no fault of your own? If you knew you weren't going to be at your usual test site and just expected the test to show up at an alternate location, you're out of luck.

It's your responsibility to make sure every item on your PDE is correct. One of those items is the exam location (labeled "Exam Board"). For the November exams, you have until 01OCT to make changes to your PDE. For the May exams, you have until 01APR. And for the October exams, Reservists have until 01SEP. By correcting the

OPFAC and name of the exam board, you can guarantee the exam will be where you want to take it. But even after the deadline your usual exam board can forward a test to an alternate site if you notify the ESO.

Even if it wasn't your fault that you weren't at your usual test location at the scheduled test time, you still have another hurdle to jump before you can get a substitute exam. Your absence has to have been due to

- emergency leave which, because of the specific situation, precluded you from taking the exam;
- illness or hospitalization (a medical officer has to state that taking the exam would have been harmful to your health or performance); OR
- an operational commitment of such a nature that delaying administration of the regularly scheduled exam was not feasible.

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: *its* and *it's*.

The word *its* is a possessive noun like *his*, *your*, *my*, etc.: "Its wheels fell off" and "The tree lost its leaves."

The word *it's* is a contraction of *it is* and, like all contractions, requires an apostrophe: "It's time to go" and "It's nice to have met you."

E-PME & Rating Sign-Offs & Tests

There are two separate and parallel path enlisted Coast Guard personnel must complete before they can be advanced. One is the occupational specialty or rating path, the other is the professional military education (PME) path. For a description and graphic depiction of the two paths go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cgmilcareerdev.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/EASchart.pdf>.

The rating path involves demonstrating knowledge and skills learned on the job via Enlisted Professional Qualifications (EPQs, formerly practical factors, which are available for each rating on the Coast Guard Learning Portal, <http://learning.uscg.mil>) and through non-resident training courses (which you order through your ESO). Mastery of EPQs must be demonstrated to a Professional Development Coach appointed by your CO/OIC, who is at least one pay grade senior to and of the same rating as you. (See Personnel Manual, Art. 5.C.7.a.3.) All EPQs must be signed off for the next higher pay grade before you can take the end-of-course test (EOCT) for that pay grade. (See ALCOAST 297/08.)

The PME path involves demonstrating knowledge and abilities learned on the job and from the relevant E-PME Study Guide (separate ones for advancement to E-4, E-6, and E-8). Performance Requirements must be demonstrated to a designated supervisor appointed by your CO/OIC (see E-PME Manual, para. 3.D.2.). All Performance Requirements for E-4 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-4 Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE). All Performance Requirements for the E-5 and E-6 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-6 AQE. All Performance Requirements for the E-7 and E-8 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-8 AQE. (See ALCOAST 179/05.) To take the servicewide exams for or otherwise advance to the odd pay grades (E-5, E-7, and E-9) you must first demonstrate mastery of E-PME Performance Requirements for those pay grades.

You do **NOT** have to have your E-PME Performance Requirements signed off before you can take a rating EOCT. You do **NOT** have to have your EPQs signed off before you can take an E-PME AQE.

Attention California Residents and Future Residents!!

Last February, the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU) system issued an executive order which allows the admission of veterans and serving military personnel who may not meet the usual admission standards (e.g., SAT/ACT scores, high school GPA, etc.). Instead, assessments of admission eligibility may be based on factors such as training, readiness for the academic environment, and likelihood of success at a specific campus as described in an endorsement from your last CO.

If you're in the regular Coast Guard or Coast Guard Reserve, will be honorably discharged before September 2010, are either now a California resident or plan to reside in California after separating, and don't meet regular eligibility requirements (<http://www.calstate.edu/veterans/freshman.shtml>), there's an education program for you.

Through the CSU Chancellor's initiative, specific numbers of seats are allocated to each of the armed forces. The Coast Guard has 10 seats at 8 CSU campuses as follows: East Bay (2), Humboldt (1), Long Beach (1), Maritime Academy (1), Monterey Bay (1), Sacramento (1), San Diego (1), and San Francisco (2). A board will convene to select the best qualified applicants. If one or more of the services does not fill its allocated seats, they will be made available to the other services.

The **deadline** for submitting applications is **Friday, 04 December 2009**. NOTE: Command endorsements typically take a month to complete. You should get the ball rolling on your endorsement immediately. You can find the Eleventh District message describing this initiative and application requirements at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CSUVAP.pdf>. And you can find the application content requirements (including a sample cover memo) at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CSUVAPrequirements.doc>.

Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

eKnowledge Corporation and the NFL have teamed up to provide free SAT and ACT preparation software to servicemembers and their families. If you received the software last year, you'll need to get a free upgrade. While the software is free (retail price \$200), you must pay \$13.84, which covers the cost of technical and customer support, registration, licensure, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Parents of high school students applying for college next year should get this software early, so their children can begin preparing ASAP.

To order, go to www.eknowledge.com/nfl or call 951-256-4076. You will need to provide a "Sponsorship Code", which I'll be glad to send you if you send me a request by e-mail. Please don't share this code with anyone.

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/>.

Military Friendly Schools Booklet Give-Away

Periodically, the Education Center receives give-away items from colleges and other entities that are looking for your business. These include things like pens, mouse pads, notebooks, refrigerator magnets, sewing kits, and the like. Right now, we have two boxes of 130-page booklets entitled "2010 Guide to Military Friendly Schools".

If you'd like to check out what's available and take any we have, please stop by the Education Center and look on the deck just inside the door to your right (under the light switch).

While there's a lot of good information in this publication, keep a few things in mind as you thumb through it:

- The schools that have ads in it paid for them. Without ads, this publication wouldn't exist. There's not necessarily anything wrong with a school paying for ads. But having an ad in a publication like this is no guarantee of quality or military friendliness however you measure it. It only guarantees the school had money for advertising. Many excellent – and military-friendly – schools may have small or no advertising budgets.
- One of the items used to determine a school's military friendliness is participation in the new GI Bill's Yellow Ribbon program. Read the "Question of the Week" above about the Yellow Ribbon program.
- Don't choose a college or university based only in the information in this publication. Schools are like ice cream: there's a flavor for every taste. Don't assume that just because School X is listed as having all the qualities you're looking for that you're going to like the school. Be deliberate and selective. Even if you think it doesn't matter where you go since the government is paying for it, you should consider your investment of time. If you find after even a semester that the school's not for you, you've wasted a semester and will have to start your search again.

GI Bill & Certification/Licensing Tests

Did you know that your GI Bill education benefit program will reimburse you for the cost of license and certification exams (up to \$2,000 per exam) – and that there will be no charge to your 36-month entitlement? It's true!

If you're eligible for benefits under the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP (or if you gave up one of these to get benefits under the new GI Bill), you can take an unlimited number of license and certification tests.

If you're eligible for new GI Bill benefits and didn't give up one of the others, you can take only one test during your lifetime.

What kinds of tests fall under this benefit? Here are a few:

- Lawyer license (aka bar exam)
- C++ certification
- HVAC journeyman
- Cosmetology license
- Safety professional certification
- Dental assistant
- Residential mechanical inspector certification

To find out if the test you want to take is one of those which qualifies for reimbursement, go "Search for Approved License and Certification Programs" on the Department of Veterans' Affairs's web site (http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/search_programs.htm).

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 won't be able to use it for anything but courses offered at institutions of higher learning (IHLs). Generally, IHLs are accredited degree-granting institutions, which seldom offer vocational courses.

Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute has advised ESOs that all funds have been exhausted for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

The Institute will continue to accept applications until 1 December 2009. If you have not received a check by 31 December 2009, you may resubmit a new application to cover unpaid expenses beginning 1 January 2010. Please remember that you must submit your grant request less than a year after the date on your receipt.

Aviation-related Degrees

If you're interested in a post-Coast Guard career in aviation or if you're currently in Coast Guard aviation and would like to get a degree related to what you're now doing, you should know there are a number of accredited colleges and universities around the country which offer these degrees, some by distance learning. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (<http://worldwide.erau.edu/index.html>) is the most widely known of these. But there are others with equally good programs such as Mercer County Community College (<http://www.mccc.edu/aviation/>) in New Jersey and Utah Valley University (<http://uvu.edu/aviation/>).

Before you set your mind on one school over another, do your homework; compare what each school has to offer – including a price within your financial aid limits. To keep track of what you find out about each school, and for ease of comparison, use the college comparison worksheet (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>).

Career Myths

Excelsior College's alumni magazine often includes articles of use to military personnel about to enter or re-enter the civilian work force. The latest issue has an article entitled "Fact or Fiction: The Truth About Career Myths" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/careermyths.pdf>). You can also read "Skills Employers Seek" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skills.pdf>) and the Fall/Winter 2008 issue.

Check 'em out!

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.

Military Times Edge

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

- Why some online degrees are better than others
- Find the perfect job: researching, networking, and building your personal brand
- College pitfalls
- Ace the interview with responses to 5 likely job interview questions
- Balancing act: TV host doubles as Reservist
- My great new life: Army vet finds happiness as a personal trainer
- From the Corps to the diamond: former Marine on making it to the majors
- 3-year bachelor's degrees
- Film company solicits scripts
- Business cards
- And more ...

On-line Test Scheduling

Training Center Cape May is trying out an Internet-based program for scheduling tests, officer program interviews, and pretty much anything the imagination can come up with.

So, if you'd like to schedule an EOCT or AQE, you can now go to the reservation web site (http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen_Cape_May/EOCTs).

Other ESOs who want to create a similar testing reservation system (it's free!) should contact me for information.

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](http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html) 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.