

TraCen Cape May Education Update #336

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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
SN Jonathan Harper	TraCen (ceremonial)	E-PME-4
DC3 Ryan Hristov	TraCen (Firehouse)	DC2

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.

Question of the Week

Q: I just made third class and want to get started on the process of advancing to second. I was told to get my practicals from you.

A: What were once called “practical factors” have been called EPQs (enlisted performance qualifications) for about a decade. EPQs lay out everything a person needs to know and be able to do to advance from E-4 to E-9. They're also the basis for course materials for each rating, for end-of-course tests (EOCTs), and for servicewide exams (SWEs).

To obtain EPQs for your rate, go to the CG Portal (<http://cgportal.uscg.mil/>) and follow this path: Learning Management System > Enlisted Advancement. Then select the group which covers your rate and scroll down to the heading “Course Materials”.

Your course materials are available in PDF format there. Or, with the exception of a few ratings (e.g., YN2, IT2, IT1) you can ask your ESO to order a hard-copy version of the course for you. Just provide your ESO with your employee ID number and the name of the course you want to order.

NOTE: the system described above has begun to be replaced with a new Rating Performance Qualifications System. This new system will be in effect for all rates by 2015. Under it, EPQs and courses will be replaced by RPQs (Rating Performance Qualifications).

For each rating, RPQs (like EPQs) will be the core performance requirements that you must successfully perform to be eligible for advancement. They will also provide the foundation for “A” school training and all advancement examinations. In addition to replacing EPQs, RPQs will also replace rating courses.

Each RPQ provides more specific guidance and direction to both the performer and the supervisor than the EPQ. In addition to the task to be performed, the RPQ includes required steps to perform the task, conditions under which the task must be performed, and the standard to which the task must be performed. Required references are linked to each step of each task. Supervisors and designated professional development coaches (PDCs) may transfer signatures from current EPQ document (CG-3303C) to the new RPQ document (CG-3303D) but only when the RPQ is identical with the EPQ it replaces. Final validation signatures for each RPQ may only be signed when you have performed all enabling objectives as indicated.

Each rating and grade (E-4 to E-7) will have its own RPQ pamphlet. To see what RPQs will look go to the bottom of the page which shows the various the groups which cover the rates and click on “Rating Performance Qualification System”.

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 Narrative Memo** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/narrative.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, we'll look at *gambit* and *gamut*. (from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Gambit is a noun with a couple of different meanings. It's a move in a chess game in which a player risks one or more minor pieces to gain an advantage in position. More commonly, it's a remark intended to start a conversation or make a telling point: “The president's speech on the budget was a gambit intended to begin the bargaining process with Congress.”

Gamut is also a noun today meaning an entire range or series: “Her remarks ran the gamut from praise to contempt.”

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.

Spanish for Law Enforcement Academic Certificate

California University of Pennsylvania has an undergraduate certificate program in Spanish for Law Enforcement. This program “is specifically designed to meet the needs of law-enforcement officers, correctional officers, public and private security personnel, and for those students seeking employment in a relevant field.”

The program consists of four 8-week courses which all students (regardless of existing language proficiency) must take. Students complete this program in one academic year and “learn basic practical language skills that will assist them as criminal justice practitioners in a number of situations such as law-enforcement commands and dealing with suspects, victims, and witnesses; prison populations; and border and immigration issues. Students will also learn about Hispanic culture and customs so they can better understand the needs of members of their communities.”

Tuition is below the maximum authorized by tuition assistance (TA), but there are fees not covered by TA (approximately \$160 per semester).

The school also offers an Arabic Language and Culture undergraduate certificate program. For more information, go to <http://www.calu.edu/prospective/global-online/index.htm>.

Veterans Technology Certificate Program

Syracuse University, in conjunction with JPMorgan Chase, has created a new Veterans Technology Certificate Program around the university's Global Enterprise Technology (GET) curriculum. GET integrates "coursework with real-world, on-the-job experience. The purpose of the program is to help veterans interested in technology careers in global companies to move toward that goal.

The program is self-paced and computer-based (completely on-line). Program administrators estimate it will take approximately 240 hours (six weeks of full-time work) to complete. The only application requirements are that you:

- Have served on active duty since 10 September 2001,
- Have demonstrated a genuine interest in and aptitude for technology,
- Are able to commit a minimum of four hours per day to the program, and
- Submit a complete application (consisting of an application form, a résumé, and two references).

For more information, go to <http://veterans.syr.edu/JPMC/faq.html>. To download the application, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VTCP.pdf>.

Deadline Fast Approaching for Spouse Education Grant Applications

Until 24 June 2011, the Coast Guard Foundation will accept applications for a needs-based education grant for spouses of Coast Guard enlisted personnel. The grant (\$500) is intended to help the spouses of personnel on active duty (E-3 through E-6) in the regular Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Applicants need only show enrollment in an education program or proof of a course completion. Types of courses for which reimbursement is available include those offered by vocational and certification programs, as well as those offered at colleges and universities. Download the application form: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1570.pdf>

Applicants will not need to provide receipts for expenses, but they will need to itemize expenses. They will also need to list some basic financial information. Transportation and child care expenses can be listed as legitimate expenses for the grant. Also part of the application process is an essay (no longer than 500 words) which addresses what it means to the applicant to be a Coast Guard spouse and describing the difference education has made to the applicant's life and the lives of the applicant's family members.

In June, a selection committee will convene to select grantees. The Coast Guard Institute expects as many as 50 spouses will receive assistance. This grant will be a somewhat different from the other grants administered by the Coast Guard Institute in that the Institute will handle the paperwork and selection processes while the Coast Guard Foundation will actually write the checks.

Don't Combine Fees & Tuition on TA Applications

OK; this is your first time applying for tuition assistance (TA) and you're not exactly sure what to put in a couple of the boxes on the application. Specifically, "Cost per Credit" and "Course Fees".

The "Cost per Credit" field (#35 on the WebTA application) is where you put your per-credit tuition. Field #36 ("Course Fees") is where you put fees that are covered by TA and nothing else. The rule of thumb is that if a fee is directly related to the course you've listed on the same line, it's covered by TA. If you're taking a course to learn how to draw blood correctly and there's a fee associated with it to cover the cost of masks and gloves, that fee's covered by TA. These fees are generally listed next to the course in the school's course guide.

Fees that all students have to pay regardless of which course they're taking are not covered by TA. These are generally listed in the school's course guide inside the back cover and include things like parking fees, student activity fees, etc.

If you have to pay a fee that is covered by TA (a course fee), *don't* add it to the tuition or enter that total in field #35. If you do, you'll end up paying more than if you entered only the tuition in field #35 and only your course fee in field #36. Here's an example. Let's say your school operates on a quarter system and charges tuition of \$151/credit. You're taking one 3-credit course that includes a \$75 course fee.

If you add your tuition and the fee together, here's what'll happen. You'll enter \$226 as the "Cost per Credit", or \$678 for the total cost of the course. But since TA pays no more than \$166.67/credit for quarter-based courses, TA will pay \$500.01 to the school ($\166.67×3) and you'll be left having to pay the difference or $\$678 - \500.01 or \$177.99.

If you fill out the form correctly, however, you'll list your tuition as \$151/credit in field #35 and your \$75 fee in field #36. Since TA will cover up to \$166.67/credit and your tuition is only \$151/credit, the difference between the two ($\$15.67/\text{credit}$ or \$47.01 for the course) that will be applied to your \$75 course fee, leaving you to pay only $\$75 - \47.01 or \$27.99.

The bottom line is: enter the correct tuition – and *only* the tuition – in field #35 and enter only fee(s) directly associated with your course in field #36. You'll end up having to pay less out of pocket than if you combine the two in field #35.

Send In Those Assessment Requests ASAP

Beginning on 01 July, if you don't already have an undergraduate (associate's or bachelor's) degree and are going to be using TA for the first time you'll need to have requested an assessment of your Coast Guard training and received a transcript no more than four years ago.

To avoid delays in TA processing (pending completion of your assessment), submit your assessment request ASAP. You can download the form at http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf. Make sure you read the instructions for each section before filling out that section.

So You've Decided You Need a Degree, Now What?

The path to a degree is relatively straightforward, but it does require a lot of work – some of which may be tedious. The steps on that path are described in detail at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp> and pages for each of those steps.

New Deck Watch Officer Exam COMDTINST

COMDTINST 16672.5C (http://www.uscg.mil/directives/ci/16000-16999/CI_16672_5C.pdf) was recently published, finalizing the DWO exam completion requirements for BM advancement and coxswain certification. Here are the most significant changes:

- The Coast Guard Institute's "Rules of the Road" course and related EOCTs are no longer authorized for BM advancement or coxswain certification (para. 5.c).
- Prospective afloat COs, OICs, XOs, and XPOs must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before executing their orders. (para. 6.a.(1))
- Prospective afloat OPS officers and petty officers (i.e., those being assigned to PAL-designated OPS billets) must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before executing their orders. (para. 6.a.(2))
- Those designated by their commands as underway OODs and PAL-designated Deck Watch Officers must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before they can perform underway OOD duties. If they don't pass the exam within 6 months (vs. 9 months in the previous version) after reporting, that fact will be noted in a Page 7 and the person will be transferred during the next assignment season. (para. 6.a.(3))
- To advance, BMs must remain current with respect to the DWINTO/DWINTR test. BMs who don't meet this requirement can't advance or be put on a supplemental or striker eligibility list. (para. 6.a.(4))

- All prospective coxswains (regardless of rate) must pass the appropriate test (DWINTO/DWINTR) before they can be certified as a coxswain. Coxswains who last passed a DWINTO/DWINTR test more than 5 years earlier will lose their certification until they pass the appropriate test. (para. 6.a.(5))
- A new sample list of DWO test questions and answers is available at http://uscg.mil/nmc/training/2010q3_sample_deck_questions.pdf.

Applying for an Officer Program?

Check out the revised pages on the Narrative Memo (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/narrative.asp>) all enlisted applicants must submit as part of their applications for any Coast Guard officer program and on the Interview (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/interview.asp>). Among the changes is an additional bullet, on the Narrative Memo page, with a link to the Harvard College Writing Program's "Strategies for Essay Writing".

Thinking of Taking College Courses?

If you're considering taking college courses and working toward a degree, make sure you really need to have a degree do the kind of work you want to do in the future.

Many Coast Guard personnel are more interested in working with their hands (for example, as a carpenter, gunsmith, plumber, farrier, electrician, etc.) than they are in sitting in class for five hours a day to get a degree. Still, everyone tells them they need to get a degree to succeed in the civilian labor market so they feel they have to do so.

But before you jump into a degree program, think about your ultimate employment goal and work backwards from it. When planning a car trip, you don't just start driving and hope to end up somewhere you wanted to go. You have a destination in mind and figure out the best route to get there. This should be the way you also plan your career, both in the Coast Guard and in the civilian world.

Let's say you want to work as a video game designer. Assuming you want to work for a company that does nothing but design and market video games, call a half dozen of them and talk with someone who makes hiring decisions in the HR department or the like. Ask what kind of training and/or education they're looking for in new hires. Ask specifically if the people they hire need a degree, a certificate of some kind, or if demonstrated ability (e.g., a portfolio or other samples of work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly **a third to half the courses you take to earn a degree fall into this category**. If you're more interested in acquiring the knowledge necessary to start working in the field that interests you, a degree may not be for you.

There are a number of paths you can take once you know whether most likely employers require a degree. You can

- work with someone who has the knowledge you want to acquire (a mentor-protégé or apprenticeship relationship, formal or informal);
- learn it on your own via resources available for free (often on the Internet, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>);
- take college courses just in your area of interest and, perhaps, earn an academic certificate in the process (see "Academic Certificates" at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degreedesc.asp#certs>); or
- take non-credit courses that you have to pay for, for example Excelsior College's Professional Development courses (<http://www.excelsior.edu/web/center-for-professional-development>) or the Graduate School's courses (<http://graduateschool.edu/>), which GI Bill education benefits will likely cover.

The point is, determine whether a degree is something you need or want. If you don't need a degree, but you want one and/or what you learn will be useful, by all means work toward one. But don't jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

FS Advanced Education Opportunity Deadline Approaching

If you're an FS1 through FSCS, you may be eligible for the Coast Guard's new 24-month Food Service/Culinary Arts program leading an associate's or bachelor's degree in food service management or culinary arts. For more information, see ALCOAST 190-11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST190-11.pdf>). **The application deadline is 19 July.**

Reserve Servicewide Exams

ALCGRSV 024/11 was published earlier this week laying out the guidelines for the Reserve servicewide exams this year. The exams will be administered on Saturday morning, 15 October 2011. For details (including what is required of all examinees), see the ALCOAST (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGRSV024-11.pdf>).

If you meet all the qualifications for advancement by 01 July 2011, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your Personal Data Extract (PDE). **Your ESO has nothing to do with PDEs and you cannot request a SWE.**

When your PDE is made available on DirectAccess (by the middle of July), make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC.

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

If so (and if you want to take the SWE), 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,
- notify PPC (e-mail address: PPC-DG-ADV) of the name and OPFAC of that unit so the info on your PDE is changed.

PPC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

Substitute exams are authorized ONLY in emergencies. 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 what circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 5.D.3. of the *Personnel Manual*.

If you change the Exam Board on your PDE and later find out you won't be able to take your SWE at that location, let your ESO know immediately.

For info on studying and test-taking skills, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studying.asp>.

Future Economic Value of Specific College Majors

(thanks to Brion Newman, ESO at Base Seattle for bringing this to my attention)

For years, policy-makers and educators have been telling young people why additional education after high school is a good idea. Statistics from the New Jersey Council of County Colleges show that

- Graduates of associate's degree programs will earn nearly \$400,000 (in today's dollars) or 37% more over their lifetimes than people who have only a high school diploma or GED.
- Individuals with a one-year community college certificate earn as much as 16% more than people who have only a high school diploma or GED.
- For every \$1 a person spends on community college education, his/her lifetime earnings will increase by almost \$8.

- Individuals who take community college courses recover all costs – including earnings forgone while attending school – within six years.

For more on this subject, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/whymore01.asp>

Now, researchers at Georgetown University have just published a report showing the future economic value of specific college majors within bachelor's degree programs. Quoting the press release announcing this report, "some undergraduate majors pay off a lot more than others. In fact, the difference in earnings potential between one major and another can be more than 300 percent."

Before going any farther, please be aware that your decision to pursue a specific major should take into account many factors in addition to future earning potential. To quote Meaghan Donchak – a 22-year-old junior at Drexel University from East Windsor, NJ – "The most important thing is not the money. It's really hard to convince people of that, especially people our age. It's doing what you love to do. You don't want to wake up every day dreading going to work."

To read the full report, go to <http://cew.georgetown.edu/whatsitworth/>. For a graphic representation of some of the report's findings, go to <http://chronicle.com/article/Median-Earnings-by-Major-and/127604/>.

Civilian 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!

How to Go to College Almost for Free

Whether you'd like more money for your own education (even if you're using TA or receiving GI Bill benefits) or for a dependent, you should check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#strategy>. You'll see that finding money for college *is* possible using a logical, linear (and not all that daunting) methodology devised by Ben Kaplan.

Also, the Education Center recently acquired Mr. Kaplan's video, "Finding College Cash in Tough Times" (<http://www.cityofcollegedreams.org/store/finding-college-cash-in-tough-times>). After a short introduction it covers the following topics:

- Part I: Exploding 3 Myths about Paying for College
- Part II: 3 Strategies for Maximizing Need-based Financial Aid
- Part III: 3 Steps for Finding Merit Scholarships
- Part IV: 3 Components of a Winning Scholarship Game Plan
- Part V: 3 Strategies for Making Your Application Shine
- Part VI: Concluding Thoughts & Final Quiz

Although I can't lend out the video, you can watch it in the Education Center. Please contact me (andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil) if you're interested in seeing it. The total running time is 71 minutes. If there's enough interest to warrant it, we'll show it in the auditorium; otherwise, in the Education Center.

Reserve Resource Guide

In addition to the web site of the Coast Guard Office of Reserve Affairs (<http://www.uscg.mil/reserve/>), Reservists should also check out TraCen Petaluma's Reserve Resource Guide (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/tracenpetaluma/RRG/>). Together, these provide info on and links to info on every facet of Coast Guard affairs related to service in the Reserve.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs*

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

* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT or AQE on a Tuesday morning, you can take it on a Thursday morning.

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

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

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 (<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.

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.