

TraCen Cape May Education Update #281

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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
BMC Todd Hampton	TraCen (recruit training)	DWINTO

Congratulations, Chief! 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.

Questions of the Week

Q: Was it required that \$1,200 be deducted from my pay if I didn't refuse the GI Bill in boot camp? That is, to receive the GI Bill benefits, did I have to contribute \$1,200?

If I decide to switch from the GI Bill I got in boot camp to the Post- 9/11 GI Bill, will I get a refund of the \$1,200?

If I refused the GI Bill in boot camp, and did not contribute any money, can I later apply directly for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and is there a payment required?

Finally, if I turned down the GI Bill in boot camp, and now want it, will I be required to start payments of \$100 a month for 12 months now?

A: Since these are all related, I'm responding to them all at the same time. I'm assuming you enlisted in the regular Coast Guard and are talking about the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB-AD).

If you enlisted in the regular Coast Guard, you were automatically enrolled in the MGIB-AD. That meant that \$100/month would be deducted from your pay each month for 12 months starting with your first pay check after graduating from boot camp. This \$1,200 contribution is mandatory if you want benefits under the MGIB-AD.

If you chose to reject this automatic enrollment, they signed a statement to that effect on a form. A copy of this form is in your PDR. This rejection is irrevocable. That is, once you decided you didn't want the MGIB-AD, you couldn't later on get it.

As to the relationship between the MGIB-AD and the new GI Bill, it's rather complex. But here are the highlights.

If you did not reject the MGIB-AD (and \$1,200 was deducted) and later decide to relinquish it so as to have benefits under the new GI Bill, you will have all the benefits available under the new GI Bill AND those available under the MGIB-AD. This means you can use it to take vocational courses, go to culinary school, enroll in an apprenticeship or OJT program (including police and fire academies), or get a college degree. You'll also be eligible for the Buy-up option (see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-30.asp#buyup>). If you exhaust all benefits (i.e., use up your 36 months of benefits), the \$1,200 that was deducted for the MGIB-AD will be refunded into your last month's benefits during which you're receiving the housing allowance. (If you're not receiving the housing allowance when you exhaust your benefits, you won't get the \$1,200 back.)

But if you rejected the MGIB-AD (and no money is deducted), you can later elect benefits under the new GI Bill (once you've met the eligibility criteria). There are no deductions required for this benefit. But you'll only be able to use the benefits for courses taught by Institutions of Higher Learning. The DVA defines this term, essentially, to mean degree-granting institutions. With a few exceptions, this means that the new GI Bill, for this person, is only available for courses applicable to a degree; no vocational courses.

Oh, by the way, if you didn't reject the MGIB-AD and are still paying \$100/month toward it, you can stop those deductions at any time but you won't be eligible for MGIB-AD benefits. You will, though, be able to get a refund of the amount deducted so far as described above (after exhausting all 36 months of new GI Bill benefits, but only if you're receiving the housing allowance).

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.

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: **devise** and **device**.

The word **devise** is a verb with a number of meanings. In normal usage, it means to invent, conceive, imagine, or plot. In legal usage, it means to give real property via a will. "She devised a complex scheme for robbing the art museum", "He devised his farm to his daughter."

The word **device** is a noun, also with more than one meaning. In general usage, it can be machine or piece of equipment ("Leonardo da Vinci created amazing devices"). It's also used to describe a figure of speech in a literary work ("The screenwriter's signature device was a twist ending") or a convention used in a play to achieve a particular dramatic effect ("A stage whisper is a typical dramatic device").

If there are any words you often mix up, please e-mail them to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

New ME Courses

Courses and end-of-course tests (EOCTs) for the new ME1 and ME2 ratings are now available. To order a course, e-mail your ESO with your employee ID number.

TraCen Cape May (like many other Coast Guard units) is what's called a "library units". This means it has most tests on hand all the time: there's generally no need to order a test any more. The Coast Guard Institute is sending ME1 and ME2 EOCTs to library units upon request.

May 2010 Servicewide Exam

The message describing responsibilities related to the May servicewide exams (SWEs) was published recently (ALCGENL 014/10, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGENL014-10.pdf>). If you're expecting to take a SWE in May, make sure to read this message immediately and carefully.

And if you're expecting to take a SWE at TraCen Cape May (**especially HSWL personnel**), carefully check the Examination Board information on your PDE. If this information is incorrect or missing, immediately advise your SPO as to where you want to take the exam (and provide the OPFAC number of that command).

SWEs for everyone using TraCen Cape May as his/her examination board will be held in the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Building. Once I receive the exams (usually in early April), I'll provide details to everyone for whom I receive an exam.

If you're expecting to take a SWE in Cape May and don't receive an e-mail from me by mid-April, let me know ASAP!!

Free Education Pubs!

If you're considering taking college courses, remember that TraCen Cape May's Education Center has many free pubs that you (or your dependents) may find helpful.

In particular, the *DANTES College Career Workbook*, *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*, and *College Success Guide: Top 12 Secrets for Student Success* have a lot of good information for those who have never taken college courses before or are returning to college after a long absence.

If you're comfortable using a computer, but not are unsure how to find college-related information, pick up a copy of *College.edu: Online Resources for the Cyber-Savvy Student* or *Best Career and Education Web Sites*.

If your spouse or children are looking for financial assistance, we have *Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid, Loans and Grants from Uncle Sam: Am I Eligible and for How Much?*, and *Need a Lift?*

In addition to these, you can also pick up info on the various GI Bill programs and brochures with the following titles:

- "Using Your Chapter 30 GI Bill Education Benefit While on Active Duty"
- "Coast Guard Tuition Assistance"
- "Tuition Assistance Top-up Caution"
- "I Don't Know What to Major In"
- "Is a Business Degree for Me?"
- Why Should I Get My Degree from a SOCCOAST School?"
- "Is Distance Education Right for You?"
- "Selecting the Right Degree and Major"
- "Choosing a Distance Learning College"
- "Degrees vs. Certificates"
- "The Enlisted Professional Military Education System"
- "The Supervisor & the Performance Qualification Guide"

And there's more. Any time the door to the Education Center is open, you're welcome to drop in. If you'd like a place to read and eat lunch in quiet, keep the Education Center in mind.

Build Skills for Education Success

If you're about ready to start taking college courses or want to improve one or more ASVAB scores, check out the Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) from Peterson's. It's designed to help you build your math and verbal skills, which will help you score well on exams and excel in your career – in or out of the Coast Guard.

OASC is available free 24/7 to you and your family on the Internet.

How does it work? You first take an initial test to measure your strengths and weaknesses. Then you'll receive a personalized set of lessons based on your test results. Those lessons will engage you with interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, and practice tests. Once you've completed all the lessons, you'll take another test to evaluate your progress.

For more information, to register, and to get started, go to <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.

If you want to take an exam to be licensed in a particular field (such as physical therapy), you can receive a CG Foundation grant for the books you use to prepare for the exam.

Keep in mind that although there are **currently no funds for these grants**, funding is expected to be available in the not-too-distant future. Applications will be processed in the order in which they were received until funds have been exhausted.

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.

TA & Unexpected Operational Commitments

Normally, if you use TA to pay for a college course and then withdraw from the course after the college's full-refund deadline, you have to repay the Coast Guard for any amount not refunded.

However, if you have to withdraw from a course – even after the full-refund deadline – because you're unexpectedly deployed (e.g., in support of relief efforts in Haiti), the repayment requirement may be waived.

The Coast Guard Institute doesn't want you to drop courses, but just wants you to know that if you have to withdraw, you may not have to repay the Coast Guard for it.

To request a waiver, use the form you can find at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4147-1.pdf>.

Interested in Instructional Technology or Human Performance 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).

In related news, the University of West Florida also offers a four-course graduate certificate in human performance technology (<http://uwf.edu/ect/HPTcert.cfm>). You earn three credits per course at a cost of \$260.47/credit, for which students will receive all course materials and a PDA. "Participants ... can complete their courses anytime, anywhere as long as they can access an electrical outlet to recharge the battery. Participants who successfully complete three courses can keep their PDAs." Like the San Diego State courses, you can roll these courses into a degree program.

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 an 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/degreedesc.asp>.

New E-PME Performance Requirements Form

You may already know that the E-PME Performance Requirements form (CG-1510-2) has been updated, but I didn't until this week. The current form has a space in the "Remarks" section of page 2 (to be signed by the supervisor or division

officer of anyone who wants to take an AQE) that reads as follows: "I certify that the person named below satisfactorily completed all EPME performance requirements and related course work for pay grade E-_____ and is eligible to take the Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE)." You can download this form from http://www.uscg.mil/forms/cg/CG_1510_2.pdf,

In accordance with ALCOAST 179/05, ESOs are not authorized to administer AQEs to individuals whose supervisors (or division officers) have not certified that they have completed the E-PME Performance Requirements.

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.

New DSST Exam

A new DSST has been published by the testing company, Prometric. The test is *Business Ethics and Society*, and those who pass it earn 3 upper-level college credits. Unlike other DSSTs, there's a 2-hour time limit for taking this 100-question exam. Topics covered on the test include:

- Business ethics
- Moral philosophies and business ethics
- Social responsibilities of business
- Regulation of business
- Employer-employee relations
- Ethics of information
- Ethics in international business
- Corporations and stakeholders
- Ecology and global business
- Business and government

You can find a list of all DSSTs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>.

DSSTs: The Other Credit-by-Exam Program

Most everyone in the military has heard someone talk about CLEP tests. CLEP (College Level Examination Program) tests are a way to earn up to 12 college credits for taking a test – the equivalent to one or more college final exams. Few people know about another series of tests from which you can earn college credit: DSSTs.

CLEP is owned and run by the CollegeBoard, the same people who bring you and your kids the PSAT and SAT. The DSST program is owned and run by another testing organization (Prometric) which specializes in licensing and certification tests (e.g., the NREMT exams). DSSTs are offered in a number of subjects and are evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) as the equivalent of 3 college credits (including some upper division credits).

The nice thing about DSSTs is that a number of them test knowledge of material most Guardians have acquired in their first year or two of service (e.g., **Substance Abuse** and **Here's to Your Health**). By the time you've advanced to PO2, you'll most likely also have received training in or (from personal experience learned) subjects like **Personal Finance**, **Principles of Supervision**, and (depending on experience and rating) **Introduction to Law Enforcement** and **Criminal**

Justice. Anyone who's gone through a LAMS course, Chiefs and PO1s can probably add **Fundamentals of Counseling** and maybe **Organizational Behavior** to the list.

What I'm saying is that the tests listed above could be relatively easy college credit for you who have paid attention in classes and presentations most of you have had to attend. I'm not saying you won't have to brush up on the subject matter, but you most likely won't have to spend weeks studying \$150 text books to pass the test.

For more information on the subjects covered by DSSTs and links to the fact sheets which describe each test in detail, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>.

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). And don't ignore Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC), available free to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

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.

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. **The application deadline is 01 April 2010.**

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>).

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 ...

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 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.

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.