

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #361

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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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Work Site</b>	<b>Test</b>
HS2 Marvin Ainsworth	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*
HS3 Alexis Burke	HSWL FO Cape May	HS2*
ETC Christopher LeNy	ESD Cape May	E-PME-8*
GM3 Jason Fisher	TraCen Cape May (Armory)	GM2*
MK2 Jamison Smith	CGC Finback	MK1

\* First attempt

Well done, all 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'm studying for the May servicewide exam and would like to get a copy of each of the E-PME Study Guides (E-4, E-6, and E-8). How do I do that?

**A:** You'll need to give your ESO your employee ID number and the names of the study guides (or courses) you want. However, the E-PME-4 (Apprentice) Study Guide is no longer available in hard copy. Instead, you'll find it on the CG Portal's Learning Management System at <https://elearning.uscg.mil>.

The Journeyman (E-PME-6, covering E-5 and E-6 Performance Requirements) and the Master (E-PME-8, covering E-7 and E-8 requirements) Study Guides are still available in hard copy format.

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](mailto: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 **Accreditation** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/accreditation.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 **fewer** and **less**.

Both words are adjectives. **Fewer** usually denotes number. "There were fewer people at the party than she expected", "The grocery store has a separate cash register for shoppers who are buying fewer than 10 items", and "It took fewer than four hours to get there".

**Less** generally denotes amount or degree. "The recipe called for less than a teaspoon of salt" and "The bucket held less than he thought it would".

There are exceptions, but here's a general rule for figuring out which to use: If you can put it in a container, use **less**. If you can count whatever it is you're talking about, use **fewer**.

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## MST Eligibility for May SWE

ALCOAST 578/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast578-11.pdf>, published 22DEC2011) laid out servicewide exam (SWE) eligibility requirements for MSTs. Even so, there seems to be confusion among MSTs about whether they have to take the RAT to be eligible to take the May 2012 SWE. Here's the bottom line.

Paragraph 5 of ALCOAST 033/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast033-11.pdf>) stated that MST2s who had passed the MST1 end-of-course test (course code 0134, edition 6) would *not* have to take the MST1 RAT. This had to be done on or before 19 October 2011. However, they *must* complete the MST1 RPQs before 01 February 2012 to be eligible for the May 2012 SWE.

An MST2 who didn't take and pass this EOCT on or before 19 October must take the MST1 RAT (after completing the MST1 RPQs) to be eligible for the May 2012 SWE.

## 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.

## On-line Engineering Certificates and Degrees

If you're interested in engineering and certain technology-related degrees, you've probably been frustrated not to be able to find many available through distance learning. Bismarck State University in North Dakota has engineering certificate and degree programs, particularly in the electrical, petroleum, and nuclear energy fields, which you can pursue on-line.

It also offers many other non-engineering certificates and degrees.

The total for tuition and fees is \$138.54 per semester credit. This applies to active duty military personnel, veterans, and their dependents. For more information, go to <http://bscmilitaryonline.com/default.asp>.

## Certifications & Academic Certificates

Two of the lesser-known products (for want of a better word) education accomplishments you can find out about from your ESO are certifications and certificates. Despite the similarity of their names, they're totally different. However, both can increase your employment opportunities and earnings in the civilian sector.

**Academic Certificates** – You can also earn an undergraduate or graduate certificate in a specific field (e.g., Homeland Security – Natural Disasters) by taking a set number and type of academic courses. A certificate program from an accredited college or university is less extensive than a degree program (9-18 credits rather than 60 or so credits for an associate's degree or about 120 credits for a bachelor's degree). Paraphrased from the University of Kentucky's web site, a certificate is "an integrated group of courses that is designed to have a very clear and focused academic topic or competency as its subject area." Certificates often "meet a clearly defined educational need of a constituency group (such as continuing education or accreditation for a particular profession), respond to a specific state mandate, or provide a basic competency in an emerging, usually interdisciplinary, area." A certificate provides "the student formal recognition of the mastery of a clearly defined academic topic."

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

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

**Certification** – Certification is the process of taking a test (and sometimes demonstrating particular skills) in a specific subject through a trade group. To quote DANTES certification handbook:

Certification examinations allow you to demonstrate what you know and establish your professional credentials. By obtaining certification or licensure in your specific field, you will effectively show you have the initiative and

self-reliance required to advance toward higher skills and levels of responsibility. This professional recognition may also enhance your military occupational standing within your rating. Certification or licensure translates military training into civilian terms. It promotes association with civilian counterparts and provides an opportunity to document your skills while you are still on active duty. This documentation is readily understood and accepted in the professional occupational civilian community.

For example, the International Association of Administrative Professionals certifies individuals as Certified Professional Secretaries, the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence offers eight different vehicle maintenance certifications and passing the Business Espionage and Countermeasures Association's test makes you a Certified Confidentiality Officer.

In both the civilian world and the military, certifications and academic certificates are proof of what you've accomplished and, by demonstrating your initiative, set you apart from your peers.

## Summer Career Academy

The National Energy Center of Excellence at Bismarck State College (North Dakota) is offering the first annual Summer Career Academy to youth ages 14-16 on 19-21 June 2012. The academy will provide participants with an exciting opportunity to engage in energy-related lab experiments, tour energy facilities, and learn from faculty teaching at a world-class center known for training the industry's workforce.

The cost of attending? Nothing. Participants will attend free of charge thanks to support from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power Cooperative, and Bismarck State College. Students will stay in the college's dorms and food will be provided.

Space is limited to 20 students. Interested students need to apply by 01 March 2012. Applications are at <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/nece/academy/>. Students who are selected will be notified by 23 March 2012. For more information on the academy, contact Joan Trygg at 701-224-2445 or at [Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu](mailto:Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu).

## Attention Reservists!!

If you've graduated from one of the Coast Guard's direct petty officer programs in the recent past, keep in mind that you must complete all requirements for your rate within two years after you completed IADT.

That is no more than two years after finishing your initial active duty for training you must complete the EPQs and the EOCTs and all E-PME Performance Requirements and the corresponding AQE. For example, if you went through DEPOT to become an MK2 you must have completed all of the following before the second anniversary of your graduation from DEPOT:

- MK3 EPQs
- MK3 EOCT
- MK2 EPQs
- MK2 EOCT
- E-3 through E-5 E-PME Performance Requirements, and
- E-PME-4 AQE.

The consequences of not meeting these requirements are laid out in Chapter 4, Section B of the Reserve Policy Manual (COMDTINST M1001.28 (series)).

## CGMA Grant Applications

If you've been meaning to submit an application for a CGMA Supplemental Education Grant (SEG), keep in mind that to get reimbursed for an education-related expense you have to submit your request no more than 12 months after the expense was incurred.

CGMA also wants you to know that "there are two weeks left for members to submit their school book/supply receipts to receive a CGMA SEG grant for 2011. **The official cutoff date is 12/29/2011**; the system will not allow Representatives to cut checks on 12/30 or 12/31. Checks cut after 12/29 will be applied to the 2012 calendar year."

## College Credit for Some SkillPort Courses

In addition to being free to Coast Guard personnel and dependents, SkillPort courses may also earn you college credits. "It really depends upon which course the member took", says Sue Riley at the Coast Guard Institute, and whether it was evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE). If it was, "the member has to take a test proctored by the ESO and receive a passing score."

Ms. Riley continues, "There is a form that must be completed and signed by both the member and the ESO" which the ESO sends, along with the passing score report, to the Institute. "We will notify ACE of the passing of the score. Those can be placed on the assessment and ultimately the transcript since the Coast Guard pays for SkillPort courses."

## Get Certified in Software Engineering

(courtesy of Donna Duellberg, full-time ESO at PSSU Honolulu)

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) offers two levels of software development certification – Certified Software Development Associate (CSDA) and Certified Software Development Professional (CSDP) – which you earn after taking an exam. GI Bill benefits will reimburse you for the cost of these exams.

What are the benefits of certification? For you, it . . .

- bridges the gap between your educational experience and real-world work requirements,
- verifies your understanding of fundamental software engineering principles,
- shortens your training cycle and quickly increases your contribution,
- demonstrates your commitment to expanding your knowledge and increasing responsibilities and level of professionalism,
- confirms your proficiency of established software development practices, and
- sets you apart from others via a credential developed by, and for, software engineering professionals.

For employers, it . . .

- reduces the new-hire training cycle,
- protects the organization's investment in a competent and proficient workforce,
- standardizes software development practices, and
- provides independent assurance that employees can perform on real-world projects.

For more information, go to <http://www.computer.org/portal/web/certification/GI-Bill>.

## Having Difficulty with Math?

Are you brushing up on math basics before re-starting a delayed degree? Mystified by physics? Stymied by certain concepts in your college math course? If so, the on-line Khan Academy may be just what you're looking for to help get

over academic hurdles. A recent article in *Wired* magazine ([http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff\\_khan?rXFb&mbid=su\\_ppc\\_mag\\_3&rQZb](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff_khan?rXFb&mbid=su_ppc_mag_3&rQZb)) will tell you all about it.

Or go to the Khan Academy web site (<http://www.khanacademy.org/>). It's a fantastic tool for learning a whole subject or just mastering a particular concept.

## Students at For-Profit Colleges

An article in the October 2011 issue of *Harper's Magazine* is a must-read for any student attending or considering attending a for-profit college or university. If you're not sure whether a school is for-profit, ask your ESO.

The article, "Leveling the Field: What I learned from for-profit education" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/edmisc022.pdf>), mainly discusses the University of Phoenix. However, new rules from the Department of Education will likely make what the author describes (especially the required "general education" requirements) common to all for-profit schools.

## Tuition Assistance Top-up

If you're in the regular Coast Guard on active duty, are under the new (Post-9/11) GI Bill, and are using tuition assistance (TA) for courses that cost more than TA covers, this is for you.

In that specific situation you can save yourself the hassles associated with using TA (and at the same time save the Coast Guard some money) if you use your GI Bill benefit by itself to pay for your college courses rather than use TA and Top-up. Huh?

No matter which of those paths you choose (GI Bill alone or TA and Top-up), the deduction from your 36-month entitlement is the same. Either way, one day times your rate of pursuit will be deducted from your entitlement for every day of your school term. (The *rate of pursuit* is the number of credits you're taking divided by the number of days your school considers to be full-time attendance.)

For example, if you're taking one 3-credit course, and 12 credits per term is considered full-time, the number of days deducted from your entitlement will be the number of days in your school term multiplied by 0.25 (i.e., 3/12).

The bottom line is that Top-up (for under the new GI Bill) is an illusory benefit, given the way that the Department of Veterans' Affairs currently calculates deductions from your entitlement.

## American Home Inspectors Training Institute Courses Not Covered by TA

You may have seen an e-mail from the American Home Inspectors Training Institute advertising "Home Inspection Training at NO Cost to Service Members". The organization apparently doesn't know that uniformed Coast Guard personnel are servicemembers, since this is not true for Coast Guard personnel – at least not if you want to use tuition assistance (TA). You have to read the organization's web site (<http://www.ahit.com/news/approved-military-tuition.htm>) completely to get this information.

In any case, don't submit a TA request to pay for this course. It will not only be a waste of your and your ESO's time, but it will be rejected.

## Get Ready for College

(courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle)

If someone you know is a high school student in the New York City or Boston metropolitan areas who feels overwhelmed by the process of getting ready for college, check out Let's Get Ready (<http://www.letsgetready.org/>). The program helps high school students through the entire college application process by "enlisting college student volunteers who serve as Coaches in the program providing not only SAT instruction, but the inspiration, enthusiasm and confidence to go to college as well."

## 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>

## How to Ace a Job (or Officer Program) Interview

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=10349736n?tag=bnetdomain>

## 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,
- are preparing to separate (e.g., checking out or attending a TAP seminar before separating) or are a veteran,
- 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://get-vet.syr.edu/>.

## CGES Scholarships

The Coast Guard Exchange System is accepting application for three scholarships (\$1,500, \$750, and \$500) based on academic achievements, accomplishments, interests, and participation and leadership in school-oriented and volunteer activities. The deadline for applications is 28 February 2012.

You can find complete details at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGPSC145-11.pdf>.

## How to Get a Great Letter of Recommendation

Check out this web site if you need to get letters of recommendation for college or an officer program:

<http://matt.might.net/articles/how-to-recommendation-letter/>. Here are some of the points covered:

- Pick your letter-writers well
- How to get a good letter
- How to get a great letter
- How to ask for a letter
- How to follow up
- Should I draft my own letter?

## Thinking of Starting Your Own Business?

If you're thinking about starting your own business, either while you're still in uniform or after you leave the Coast Guard, check out a sampling of resources for entrepreneurs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>. There you'll find general resources applicable to all types of small businesses on many different subjects (e.g., drafting a business plan, finding funding, etc.).

There are also sections aimed at those interested in starting not-for-profit businesses and those interested in social entrepreneurship. Contrary to the popular notion, not-for-profit doesn't mean "no profit" or that you can't earn a substantial salary. It just means most of the profit has to be put toward specific things, usually plowed back into the business. There's also a section with links to labor market information.

Finally, drop by the Education Center to pick up a copy of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Chapters 7 ("Self-Employment and Small Business") and 8 ("Temporary Work, Contract Employment, Freelancing, Teleworking, and Volunteering") have many great leads.

## 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 (0800): EOCTs 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 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](mailto: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.