

Military OneSource Podcast — DANTES Academic Skills Course

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource Podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

[Bruce Moody]:

Welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody. Today, we'll be talking about the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, also known as DANTES. We'll be getting into their Online Academic Skills Course. And to do that, we have with us today, Farra Winters. Farra, welcome to the podcast.

[Farra Winters]:

Thank you so much for having me, Bruce.

[Bruce Moody]:

Good to have you with us. Go ahead and tell us where you work and what it is that you do.

[Farra Winter]:

I am the client relationship manager for Peterson's. And Peterson's works alongside with DANTES and provides the Online Academic Skills Course training.

[Bruce Moody]:

You have the Academic Skills Training program, and within that, there's the Online Academic Skills Course. Let's just back up and define both of those and how one fits into the other.

[Farra Winters]:

Absolutely. The Academic Skills Training, which is also known as AST, this assesses academic strengths and weaknesses to help improve basic math, English and science skills for college-level course placement, qualifications for reclassification or advanced training, and also any sort of military advancement within their service branch. Now, the Online Academic Skills Course is a self-paced, prescriptive online course, which is available as a standalone or a supplemental course within the Academic Skills Training program. Now, this online course can either be completed via web browser, that's any

web browser, like on a tablet, on a PC, even on your mobile device. But additionally, it's also offered as a mobile app.

[Bruce Moody]:

Ok so who can use the program in the course?

[Farra Winters]:

Primarily our focus is for this to be used with service members. But in addition to service members, service members' immediate family can also use this as well as DOD civilians who'd like to brush up on their math, English and science skills. Because this is offered by DANTES, I really want to emphasize that this is offered at a no cost to all of the eligible users that I just mentioned.

[Bruce Moody]:

I guess the question is why take this course? How does the Online Academic Skills Course prepare users for their educational and professional goals?

[Farra Winters]:

First users take the pre-assessments in the course. These are computed to get a My Academic Predictor, which is also known as a MAP score. These MAP scores serve as a predictor for the service members' general technical score within their service branch. This is also called a GT score. This aids service members with MOS Reclassification. Additionally, it also helps with preparation for college coursework. For other users of the program that are not service members, the pre-assessments help them know where their strengths and weaknesses are so that they can complete the coursework as quickly as possible.

[Bruce Moody]:

Got it. After the user takes the pre-assessment course and then begins the actual course, what kind of support can users expect to have?

[Farra Winters]:

We offer lots of free support. I just want to reiterate how free this program is to our service members. We have our academic help desk. Now, this is for service members who have a specific question. Let's say, for instance, five divided by 0.25. They would send that into our inbox. A tutor would get right on that and send them a video message or a very detailed explanation of how to solve that problem. Additionally, inside of the platform, we have free on-demand tutoring services, and when I say it's on demand, it really is on demand. It takes around 43 seconds to get a tutor. We also have some Spanish-speaking tutors available for some of our ESL service members. Also, we have lots of practice tests to prepare service members and others who are using this platform. We have AFCT practice tests. We also have ESL practice tests and some additional resources like math formula sheets, flashcards, all of that.

[Bruce Moody]:

All that. But let's focus specifically on our service members for a moment. What would you consider a realistic goal for service members who use the course?

[Farra Winters]:

Well, everyone will start at the start here module. There the plans will be laid out for essentially what they will need to do to complete the program. Next, they'll move on to the pre-assessments. The pre-assessments are what are calculated into the MAP score that I mentioned a bit earlier. This MAP score works to prescribe lessons so that service members can obtain their certificate of completion. Once they've completed the post-assessments at an 80% or higher, they'll be able to get their certificate. Additionally, service members can link their OASC, that is the Online Academic Skills Course. They'll link that account to give their service education counselors access to their progress.

[Bruce Moody]:

Got it. And now I know how to pronounce the acronym, OASC. But still, it's the Online Academic Skills Course. And which aspects of this course are required for each service branch to complete before obtaining a certificate of completion?

[Farra Winters]:

Well, it is dependent upon the service branch. Most of our users are from the Army. They require you to get math and English post-assessments at 80% or higher to get that certificate. Our second-largest service branch that we serve would be the Marines. They require math, English and science modules. And then for other branches, it's subject to their service branch's requirements during that time. But more than likely, it will be the math and English modules that they'll have to complete.

[Bruce Moody]:

Where can service members and service education counselors sign up to access the Online Academic Skills Course? And feel free to really get excited about the fact that you have a new website when you're talking about this.

[Farra Winters]:

Learners and counselors can register for the OASC, web-based program. This can be found at dantes.petersons.com. That's D-A-N-T-E-S.petersons.com. If they would like to go for the mobile application. And let's put in a reminder here that the web-based platform and the mobile app are two different products, meaning that there's no synchronization. If you start with the web-based platform, you're going to want to end with the web-based platform, and the same with the mobile application. To find the mobile application, you're going to search the OASC. That's O-A-S-C in the Google Play or Apple Store. And there is a new place that you can find this. There's this wonderful new DANTE's website. That's dantes.mil. You're going to look for Academic Skills Program under the educational programs tab. That is where you'll find access to the OASC.

[Bruce Moody]:

And lastly, we're going to put in the program notes, the various social media accounts, and of course, a link to your beautiful brand-new website. Farra, great talking to you. Any final impressions as you're working with DANTES on this? Any thoughts about this course or the program?

[Farra Winters]:

Well, it's a wonderful course for anyone who may need to brush up on some skills to prepare for their next step in their life, whether it be academic preparation or a little bit of preparation for the next part of their career. The OASC can help them on that journey.

[Bruce Moody]:

Excellent. And it's free.

[Farra Winters]:

And it is free.

[Bruce Moody]:

Excellent. Farra Winters, thank you so much for joining us today. I appreciate you being with us.

[Farra Winters]:

Thank you for having me.

[Bruce Moody]:

Absolutely. I want to remind everybody that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department, and we want to hear from you. We have a link in the program notes along with the link to the new website that DANTES has. Anyway, you can click on our link and send us a note, a comment, maybe even idea for another podcast episode. And be sure to subscribe to our podcast wherever you listen to your podcast, because we cover a wide range of topics to help military families navigate military life. I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you so much for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.