



# 1 SERVICE-WIDE EXAM

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### GENERAL

**1. Why the change from two service-wide exams (SWE) annually to one?**

One SWE a year for E-6s and E-7s means they are eligible for an entire year and benefits them when competing for assignments and applying for advanced education programs. Changing E-4s and E-5s to one SWE annually will allow members to be notified of upcoming advancement six months earlier and provide fair competition at the start of the assignment year. It provides the service member, families, units, and CG more time to plan and prepare for advancement and likely transfer. Additionally, it provides members and commands increased awareness of billets due to open in the upcoming Assignment Year.

**2. If the current two cycle service-wide exams (SWE) occurred in May and November, when will the one cycle SWE be administered?**

The 1-SWE will be administered annually each May beginning in May 2022. There will be no November 2022 SWE for E-4s competing for E-5 and E-5s competing for E-6.

**3. Who is affected by this 1-SWE?**

This change only affects active duty E-4s and E-5s as active duty E-6s and E-7s already compete in one SWE annually in May. This changes does not affect the Reserve component.

**4. Does this change mean there will be less advancements in a calendar year?**

No, enlisted advancements are based on Coast Guard personnel service needs, special assignments, advanced education, enlisted to officer appointments (i.e. CWO, OCS), and losses such as retirements, separations, and Release from Active Duty requests. These numbers vary each year and ultimately determine the final number of enlisted advancements. The number of SWE competitions administered during the calendar year has no impact on the number of advancements.

**5. Does the 1-SWE affect the Reserve members?**

No, the Reserve SWE is already administered annually in October. There are no changes to the Reserve SWE.

**6. When will initial cuts be made for the 1-SWE? And when will subsequent cut revisions be made?**

Initial cuts will be published in July/August. At a minimum, one revised cut will occur each quarter of the fiscal year and additional cuts will be released as necessary.

- 7. When will the 1-SWE advancement list be published and what is the lifecycle of the list?**  
The advancement eligibility list will be published in June. The list will be effective 1 January of the following year to 16 December (e.g. the May 2022 SWE list will be effective from 1 January 2023 to 16 December 2023).
- 8. Will there be a need to create additional Supplemental Lists for ratings that are exhausted early in the advancement cycle?**  
At this time, there are no plans to increase the use of Supplemental Lists beyond BM2. The strength of each rating will be re-evaluated and additional Supplemental Lists will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 9. Will there be any schedule changes to the administration of the 1-SWE in May 2022?**  
The current schedule administers the SWE in 2 days during the first week of May. Discussion is underway to extend SWE administration to 4 days due to an increase in SWE participants.
- 10. Do these changes affect the E-SWE initiative and updated ERATS for future SWE testing?**  
No, the policy updates outlined here support a transition to an annual SWE for all grades. It affects SWE eligibility requirements and current administration protocols rather than testing format. The initiative to update the SWE format and any updates to ERATS can be viewed on FORCECOM's portal page at [ERATS - Home \(uscg.mil\)](https://uscg.mil/ERATS-Home).

## **ELIGIBILITY**

- 1. What will the SWE eligibility date (SED) be?**  
The SED for 1-SWE will remain the same - 1 February of the SWE year. For example: the SED for May 2022 SWE will be 01 February 2022. All SWE competition requirements are required to be met by the SED to be eligible to receive a SWE.
- 2. What if a service member does not have the required EER to be eligible for a SWE? Will they have to wait a whole year to compete through examination?**  
Service members are required to meet all eligibility requirements by the SED, which includes an evaluation in their current grade and a "Ready" Advancement Recommendation by their Commanding Officer/AO. If a service member is missing an eligibility requirement, including an in-grade EER by that date, he/she will not be eligible for the current SWE administration and must complete all requirements to be eligible by the next SED.
- 3. What if a service-member receives a mark of not ready? Will they have to wait a whole year to compete through examination?**  
To be valid for the current SWE, a service-member must be marked f "Ready" on the most recent EER with an effective date after the SED of the previous SWE cycle and on or before the SED of the current SWE cycle. This advancement recommendation must be maintained from the recommendation date up to the advancement date. Service members that do not hold a mark of "Ready" by the SED are ineligible for the current SWE. These members can be eligible for the next SWE competition by meeting all requirements including a mark of "Ready."

**4. Are professional growth points (PGP) and High Year Tenure (HYT) policies changing to increase time in grade due to lowering SWE testing from twice per year?**

There are currently no proposed changes to the HYT policy or PGPs.

**5. Will SWE eligibility requirements change in order to allow more competition?**

At this time, all current competition and advancement requirements remain the same.

**ENLISTED EVALUATION REPORTS (EERs)**

**1. Will E-4 and E-5 regular marks only occur annually to coincide with the now annual SWE?**

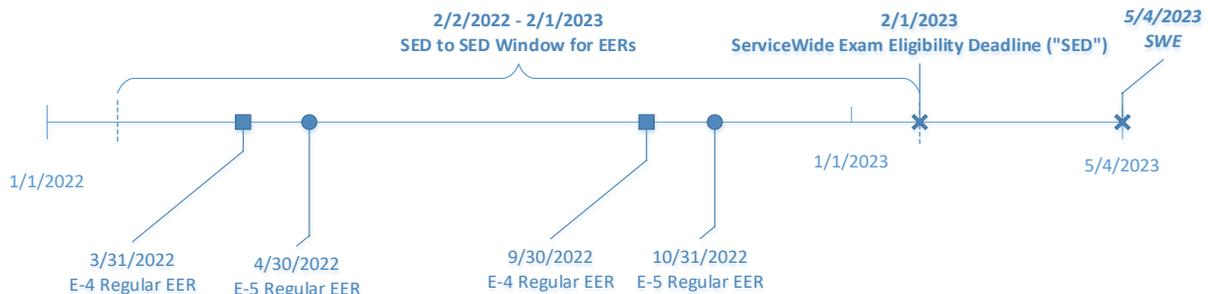
No, E-4 and E-5 regular EERs will maintain the biannual schedule. E-4s will receive regular, scheduled EERs in March and September. E-5s will receive regular, scheduled EERs in April and October.

**2. Why are E-4 and E-5 regular EERs not changing to an annual schedule?**

As junior petty officers grow both as technicians and leaders, formal frequent feedback will assist in that growth. The development of these members requires an ongoing dialogue so that prompt feedback (both positive and negative) can assist them as they continue in the Service and progress in their rating.

Further, a biannual regular EER schedule gives E-4s and E-5s two opportunities per SWE cycle to receive an in-grade EER to fulfill SWE eligibility requirements. The EER requirements for SWE eligibility are: 1. An in-grade EER, 2. A full EER w/evaluation competencies marked with numbers, and 3. A "Ready" on the most recent in-grade EER. For visual reference, an example for the 2023 May SWE is below.

**EER Timeline for SWE Eligibility**



**SWE eligibility EER requirements:**

- 1) In-grade EER completed after last SED and up to current SED**
- 2) Full EER w/ numbers (i.e. Regular, Transfer, Discipline, etc.)**
  - CORC EERs do not qualify for this requirement
- 3) "Ready" Advancement Potential on most recent EER**
  - CORC EERs will suffice

### **3. When is a command able to issue a SWE EER?**

A SWE EER is meant to fulfill the evaluation requirement for SWE eligibility. A SWE EER is only permitted when an in-grade evaluation was not completed since the previous SED. A SWE EER is not meant to raise the sum on an individual factor or change the conduct block. Further, A SWE EER will not be permitted if a CORC EER will suffice to change a member's Advancement Potential. Finally, a SWE EER is only permitted if the member was observed for 30 days or more.

### **4. Why are there so many restrictions on a SWE EER?**

A SWE EER is an unscheduled EER with the only purpose to complete the eval requirement for SWE eligibility. Combined with the other changes to facilitate a 1SWE and maintaining a biannual regular schedule for E-5 and below, the necessity for a SWE EER is forecast to diminish as most members can solely rely on the regular EER for SWE eligibility. If needed, a CORC EER to update a member's Advancement Potential to "Ready" will complete the evaluation requirement rather than a full SWE EER.

### **5. Why the 30-day observation requirement for SWE EERs?**

Previously, SWE EERs required members to be observed at least 92 days or more for E-5 and below and 184 days or more for E-6 and above. The reduction of this observation requirement allows commands to evaluate the member sooner if needed for SWE Eligibility.

### **6. How can a command evaluate someone in a SWE EER while only observing them for 30 days?**

If the command determines the member meets the requirements of a "ready" Advancement Potential, even after 30 days, that command can complete a SWE EER to serve as the in-grade EER for SWE eligibility. The first requirement of a "ready" is for all commandant requirements (i.e. RPQs, EPQs, LAMS, etc.) to be complete prior to the SED. Like every other EER, Commanding Officers/Approving Officials are then entrusted to determine if the member is ready to assume the duties and responsibilities of the next grade. If both of those items are met, a command **MAY** issue a SWE EER. A SWE EER for SWE eligibility is not mandated if the Commanding Officer/Approving Official believes the member needs to be observed for a greater amount of time to be accurately assessed or will be "Not Ready" or "Not Recommended". Further, commands can update the Advancement Potential via a CORC EER if required at any time after the SWE EER for any sufficient reason.

### **7. Can you provide an example of how a SWE EER can assist a member?**

1. A YN3 reported to Base Alameda from "A" school in December. YN3 quickly completed all RPQs and EPQs and requires only an in-grade EER to qualify for the SWE. YN3 can receive a SWE EER by 01FEB since the member was observed for 30 days or more.

2. An AMTC reports to ALC Elizabeth City in August after completing a 1-year advanced training. AMTC was last marked over a year ago as an E-6. AMTC will not be observed for enough time by the E-7 regular EER in September (less than 184 days). The AMTC can receive an in-grade SWE EER by the 01FEB SED since the member was observed for more than 30 days.

### **8. Is the observation period of an EER required to all be in the member's current pay grade?**

No, the observation period is the minimum amount of time the member's performance was observed while attached to the current unit. Regardless of paygrade, if a member was observed for the minimum

amount of time (92 days or more for E-5 and below or 184 days or more for E-6 and above) and an EER is required, the member should receive an EER for the grade in which they are at the time of the EER effective date.

**9. Can you provide some examples when a member would be observed over two different grades?**

1. CGC LEGARE had a CS report from "A" School on June 1<sup>st</sup> as a SNCS and then advanced to CS3 on August 1<sup>st</sup>. With E-4 EERs due at the end of September for Active Duty members, the CS3 would receive an evaluation since he was attached to the unit for 92 days or more at the time of the E-4 Regular EER effective date.

2. A Base Portsmouth MK3 advanced to MK2 on 01JUN. Member was last evaluated on 31MAR for an E-4 regular EER. The MK2 is PCS transferring to a new unit on 05JUL. MK2 will receive an E-5 transfer EER on the date of transfer since 92 days or more were observed since the last evaluation.

**10. My last EER was a Discipline EER and I will not have another EER scheduled prior to the SED. How do I become eligible to participate in the SWE?**

Commands are now authorized to issue a Commanding Officer's Recommendation Change (CORC) EER at any time, even after a Discipline EER, to change a member's Advancement Potential. The decision to issue a CORC lies solely with the Commanding Officer/AO after carefully weighing the capacity of the member to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the next higher pay grade in addition to completion of all other advancement requirements. A CORC EER does not change previous evaluations, numerical scores, or performance averages, but can be sufficient for SWE eligibility if an in-grade EER was already completed.

**11. Who can issue a CORC after Discipline EER?**

The current Command, regardless if the previous Discipline EER was issued by another unit. Though a CORC may be issued at the discretion of the Commanding Officer/Approving Official, it is not required to be issued solely for SWE eligibility purposes. Commanding Officers/Approving Officials should ensure that members have, in their view, been observed for a sufficient period of time and performed at a level that would earn a "Ready" Advancement Potential. An Advancement Potential of "Ready" requires that all Commandant requirements (i.e. RPQS, EPQS, LAMS, etc.) are met and, in the Commanding Officer's/Approving Official's judgment, the member is ready to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the next higher grade.

**12. What other scenarios allow the use of a CORC EER?**

A CORC EER may be issued at any time for any sufficient reason. The Advancement Potential of any previous EER (regular, transfer, discipline, SWE, etc.) can be updated via a CORC if circumstances require. Contact CG PSC EPM-3 with any questions.

**13. I have a member that is in a Pipeline/training status. Due to the time gaps between different training/pipeline periods the member performs rated duties for 92 days or more for E-5 and below, 184 days or more for E-6 and above during this marking period. Are we able to evaluate this member?**

Yes. As long as the member performed duties outside of formal pipeline/training schools for more than half of the marking period (92 days or more for E-5 and below or 184 days or more for E-6 and above) then they should receive the appropriate EER (regular, transfer, etc.)

### **Administration:**

#### **Q: Why has the normal two-day schedule been changed to four days?**

A: The 1 SWE initiative intends to maximize the number of eligible candidates for the servicewide by updating policy and processes. In order to adequately achieve the goal of a larger candidate pool, changes to the testing process were considered. One change successfully executed during the COVID impacted SWE cycles was expanded date ranges and dual session capabilities. This change moves the previous two day cycle to a four day cycle and authorizes a dual morning and afternoon session per grade. This allows for greater operational flexibility and increased testing opportunities.

#### **Q: Will dual sessions or expanded date ranges for testing impact the security of the test if members have the ability to share information?**

A: The ability to share information has always been present with testing sessions occurring across different time zones throughout the Coast Guard. Members are prohibited by policy from sharing information, and members who do engage in prohibited activity are subject to punitive measures. The publishing of questions for EPME and the upcoming RPQ question banks will change the way in which members study and prepare for testing opportunities.

#### **Q: How does the underway delay changes to the SWE administration schedule impact our testing regimen?**

A: The previous policy was unclear on the specific reasons for delaying an underway SWE examination and did not specifically outline the reasons for the deviation from the scheduled date policy. The new policy clarifies the reasons for a deviation and includes terminology allowing for a shore side administration. The biggest takeaway from this change is that if the SWE is delayed due to WX or operations, the vessel can make port and moor before immediately giving the exam rather than staying underway to execute it.

#### **Q: Why was the maximum period for taking substitute examination changed?**

A: In order to adequately account for the increased number of reasons why a substitute examination can be approved, the maximum period was increased to 35 days. This allows commands and members flexibility in scheduling substitute exams, while minimally impacting the SWE timeline.

#### **Q: Why were the authorized reasons for substitute examinations updated?**

A The original reasons for a substitute examination remain in effect, this policy expands the reasons to include parental and convalescence absences, court appearances as a witness, and judicial proceedings for divorce, custody, adoption, or jury duty. These additional reasons are vital in supporting a changing workforce and increasing the work life balance.

#### **Q: How can commands best apply the changes to the substitute examination policy as they relate to convalescence and parental absences? How is the date computed to determine when a substitute examination will be administered?**

A: A substitute examination must still be administered on the first available date when the member returns to full duty status and that date cannot exceed the 35 day window for returning the answer sheet to PPC. Any combination of medical/sick leave coupled with convalescence or parental absence

can be utilized to compute a scheduled date of substitute examination. The timeline for convalescence and parental leave is not to be confused with the 42/21 caregiver absence policies.

**Q: Why can't substitute servicewide examinations be delayed more than 35 days?**

A: A strict timeline is necessary to prepare an accurate servicewide advancement eligibility master list. The timing of the master list and release significantly impact personnel planning and decision processes.

**Q: Who makes the determination on if a member can be granted a substitute exam?**

A: PPC-ADV remains the approval authority for approving substitute examinations however, PPC-ADV will rely on the member's commanding officer to substantiate the absence due to a birth event, convalescence or parental absence, or other reason. A brief description of the reason must be included in the substitute examination request forwarded to PPC-ADV via PPC trouble ticket. Requests for reasons not specifically addressed in the updated policy will not be approved.

**Q: Can you give some examples of a birth event impacting the normally scheduled SWE examination schedule.**

A: A member to member couple has recently had a baby two weeks before the exam. The baby and birthing person are now home and convalescing. The birthing person won't be due back at work for a couple of months due to convalescence and parental leave, the absence is beyond the maximum scheduled date for a substitute examination. The member may choose to attend the regularly scheduled date or may schedule a date for a substitute after the normally scheduled date but no later than the 35<sup>th</sup> day. The secondary caregiver authorized 21 days absence may choose to attend the regularly scheduled exam or request a substitute examination after the regular one but no later than when the 21 days expires (measured from when the 21 days began) and immediately upon returning to work.

A single parent has a baby well before the servicewide but the combination of convalescence and caregiver absence expired 10 days after the regularly scheduled exam. The member can be authorized a substitute examination to be administered immediately upon returning to work 10 days after the exam. In this case, the combined authorized absences expired prior to the end of the maximum substitute examination period and the member must test at the earliest opportunity.

Do you have a question that was not addressed in the FAQs above? Email your questions specific to the 1-SWE to [HQS-SMB-CGPSC-EPM-1-Advancements@uscg.mil](mailto:HQS-SMB-CGPSC-EPM-1-Advancements@uscg.mil) and it can be incorporated into the FAQs. Please include 1-SWE FAQ in the Subject title of the email.