

Milestone

It is hard to believe we are publishing Newsletter # 100. We began publishing the newsletters in October 2008 prior to the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill[®] (Chapter 33). Here we are seven years later still trying to provide you with the latest and best information available to assist you in your job as a School Certifying Official.

Keys to Success

Two VA publications are the keys to your success as a School Certifying Official:

- School Certifying Official Handbook, Revision 5.0 (5th Edition) September 18, 2015
http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job_aids/SCO_Handbook.pdf
- VA-ONCE Quick Reference User Guide, Version 8, March 2015
http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/school_training_resources.asp

Both publications can be downloaded from the GI Bill web site in hardcopy or to your desktop. We highly recommend you have these two publications handy and refer to them often.

Reporting Fees to Institutions

At the beginning of each calendar year, a listing of students who were receiving assistance during the previous calendar year is printed by VA for each institution. Schools are provided a reporting fee based on the number of students who were certified to VA at least once during the year and received VA educational benefits. SCOs should compare the student list and report any students not included on the list to your ELR. In the event of errors, SCOs should provide a list of students and their enrollment dates to the ELR.

38 U.S.C. 3684(c) mandates that reporting fees must be used for the purpose of certifications or otherwise supporting programs for Veterans. This money, which must be accounted for separately at the institution, is to help schools cover the cost of administering their VA programs, including, but not limited to attendance at VA sponsored training conferences. Proper use of reporting fees will be verified during compliance surveys.

Changes to an Enrollment Certification

If an enrollment certification has been submitted for a student who has registered for classes and if the student changes their registration PRIOR to the first day of the term, an adjustment should be submitted in VA-ONCE with the new hours and the tuition and fees charges associated with the new hours.

If an enrolment certification has been submitted for a student who had registered for classes and the student changes their registration ON OR AFTER the first day of the term:

- An amendment should be submitted to report the tuition and fees for the original number of hours the student began the enrollment period with on the first day of the term.
- The next day, an adjustment should be submitted with the new hours, the tuition and fees associated with the new hours, the reason for adjustment, mitigating circumstances (if they apply), and the effective date of the new hours.

Clarification on Repeating Courses

Classes that are successfully completed may not be certified again for VA purposes if they are repeated. However, if a student fails a class, or if a program requires a higher grade than the one achieved in a particular class for successful completion, that course/class may be repeated and certified to VA again. Students should be advised that repeating courses will use entitlement.

Example 1: If a nursing program requires a “B” or better in Biology, then that class may be repeated and certified to VA again if a “B” or better was not earned. The requirement for the “B” or better must be in the school’s catalog. Students should be notified that repeating courses/classes will use entitlement.

Example 2: If a course is required for graduation, a student may repeat the course and be certified for it until it is successfully completed. No further information needs to be provided to VA regarding those courses. Students should be notified that repeating failed courses/classes will use entitlement. Students who continually fail courses/classes should be referred to the school’s academic or career counseling office for assistance.

Example 3: If a student chooses to repeat a course/class that was successfully completed, just to improve their GPA, that course cannot be certified to VA. The exception to this is a student Rounding Out in their last term. (See page 49, SCO Handbook, Revision 5.0 (5th Edition))

Rounding Out

See page 49, SCO Handbook, Revision 5.0 (5th Edition).

A VA student can round out a schedule with non-required courses to bring their course load up to a full-time schedule in their last term only. This allows students to continue to receive

benefits at the full-time rate in their last term of enrollment, even though fewer credits are required to complete the program. This can only be done once per program. It is recommended that the student take courses/classes related to their major to “round out.”

In rounding out a full-time schedule, VA students may use any credit hour unit subject, including a subject that has been previously completed (received a passing grade). This is the only time a VA student may be certified for a course/class that was previously successfully completed.

Note: A VA student may only “round out” if they have remaining entitlement and have not yet reached their delimiting date.

Example: A VA student needs to complete 120 credit hours to obtain a B.A. degree. After passing 117 credit hours, the VA student may enroll in the 3-credit hour course/class required to complete the 120 hours and to complete the B.A. degree. In addition, the VA student may enroll in and be certified for three additional 3-credit hour courses/classes which would round out the student to 12-credit hours (full-time at a 12-hour full-time school) and would allow VA to pay full-time assistance during this last term.

Resident Training and Independent Study (Distance Learning)

Resident training is certified in VA-ONCE as “Res.” Independent Study or Distance Learning is certified in VA-ONCE as “Dist.” These two distinct types of training cannot be combined in the Res and Dist fields in VA-ONCE. See pages 52-53, SCO Handbook, Revision 5.0 (5th Edition) for the definitions of Undergraduate and Graduate Resident Training and Undergraduate and Graduate Independent Study (Distance Learning).

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Public Schools Only

On November 1, 2015, change P042 was installed in VA-ONCE. This change is in compliance with the Choice Act for Chapter 30 and Chapter 33 students. As of this date, all Pennsylvania Schools are in compliance with the Choice Act. Unfortunately, P042 is not currently available on the GI Bill web site. Please check the GI Bill web site frequently for Change P042 to download and print out that change. We are providing the information from VACO System Advisory, dated November 2, 2105, below:

Changes for School Users

- A column has been added to the Standard Programs page. The column is titled "702 Compliant". If the school is compliant, there will be a check next to each program. This is read only.
- If the school/program is not compliant with section 702, an edit has been added to prevent the submission of certifications with a begin date after 1/1/16.
- If the school/program is compliant, and submits an Enrollment Certification with a begin date after 1/1/16, the school certifying official (SCO) will be asked if out-of-state tuition and fees are being charged.
- If out-of-state tuition and fees are being charged, the SCO must select a reason. The fact that out of state tuition and fees are being charged and the reason will be inserted in the remarks field of the enrollment certification.

If you are a public school we recommend you access VA-ONCE, go to Admin, then Maintenance, then Standard Programs to ensure all your programs are checked as compliant. If you have problems with these changes or need technical assistance please e-mail: vavbawas/co/vaonce@va.gov.

Web Sites for Veterans

The Department of Veterans has consolidated several web sites to one for ease of use. The web site is <http://www.va.gov>. This web site includes Health Care, Benefits, and Burial and Monument information. This web site can be given to veterans for their general information. All veterans are encouraged to visit this web site to view all the information available to them.

The education web site remains <http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL> and can be accessed from the web site above..

All service members, veterans, retirees, and family members who have received a benefit by transfer should establish a premium account at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

Share This Newsletter

This newsletter is being e-mailed to Certifying Officials at each school. Please share this newsletter with all other Certifying Officials, the Bursar's or Comptroller's Office, **Financial Aid Office** and other interested individuals at your school. It is extremely important that the information in this newsletter

receives the widest dissemination in order that veterans receive the GI Bill[®] and other educational benefits to which they are entitled.