

Revised School Certifying Official Handbook

Revision 5.0 (5th Edition) of the School Certifying Official Handbook has been published by VA. The revised handbook can be downloaded from the following link:

http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job_aids/SCO_Handbook.pdf

This handbook makes some major changes in certification and payment. Please see **page 8** for the revisions. It is important that you read and become familiar with the provisions of this revised handbook.

Training Rates Effective October 1, 2015

Training rates effective October 1, 2015 can be found on the GI Bill® Web site www.benefits.va.gov/gibill. A handout of the Institutional Training Rates can be downloaded from the Veterans/Military Education web site at: <http://www.education.va.gov/Postsecondary-Adult/Veterans%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>. If you need hardcopies of the rates, please call 717-787-2414 to request them.

Designation of Certifying Official, VA Form 22-8794

Note: The only acceptable VA Form 22-8794 is dated May 2011. All previous editions of this form are not to be used and should be destroyed (shredded). The May 2011 edition of the VA Form 22-8794 is available from your Education Liaison Representative (ELR) or Tab 14 of the Certifying Official CD, April 2015. Please note also the requirement for all School Certifying Officials to complete the on-line training before being granted access to VA-ONCE and that fact is affirmed by the person designating the certifying officials and signing in Block 7 of the VA Form 22-8794

Non-College Degree Institutions

If a program is measured in clock hours, benefits are paid based on clock hours of attendance **per week**. The beginning date, ending date, and the number of clock hours a student is scheduled to attend **each week** must be certified. If clock hours vary **and** the benefit amount is affected, the variance must be reported for calendar weeks, Sunday through Saturday, between the beginning and ending dates. If, and only if, a variance must be reported, the remarks field may be used.

Do not submit adjustments for absences that are allowed within the school's approved attendance policy. You may not extend enrollment for students who need additional hours simply because of absences. However, if a student failed a portion of the program and has to repeat it, that portion may be re-certified as long as the student continues to meet the Standards of Progress.

Transcript Requirement

VA has no legal authority to require schools to withhold certification because of the unavailability of a transcript. However, schools should make every attempt to have students provide a transcript from prior schooling in order that the school may evaluate that transcript and grant credit for prior training as appropriate.

Transcripts for prior military service can be requested from <https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do>. Please review the American Council on Education (ACE) Guide for military courses (classes) which may be compatible with courses (classes) offered at your school.

If a transcript cannot be obtained, a school may continue to certify enrollment as long as the student has matriculated. Review of prior credit policies will be conducted during compliance surveys and treated as approval issues if the school is not complying.

See pages 49-50 of the School Certifying Official Handbook, Version 5.0 (5th Edition) September 18, 2015 for detailed information on Prior Credit.

Stand Alone NCD Schools

Students attending a stand alone NCD school are subject to the annual cap in effect at the time the program begins. Entitlement at these schools is charged based on that cap amount. A one month programs that costs the full cap would use a full year of entitlement or a six-month program that costs the full cap would use a full year of entitlement. Reference, Public Law, Section 105(g)(3).

Repeating Courses

Classes that are successfully completed may not be certified again for VA purposes if they are repeated. If a student chooses to repeat a class that was successfully completed, just to improve their GPA, that class cannot be certified to VA.

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.

Example 1: If a nursing program requires a “B” or better in Biology, then that class may be repeated and certified to VA if a “B” or better was not earned. That requirement must be in the school catalog.

Example 2: If a course (class) is required for graduation, a student may repeat the course (class) and be certified until it is successfully completed. No further information needs to be provided to VA regarding the course. SCOs should inform students that repeating courses that are certified to VA use entitlement.

Rounding Out

Question: A Chapter 33 student needs 3 credit hours to graduate. Does the student need to take additional courses to be full-time in their last semester for a degree course taken on a quarter, semester, or term basis.

Answer: The student does not have to take additional courses to round out to full-time however, they make take additional courses up to and including full-time in their very last enrollment period. In this case the student could just take the 3 credit hours needed for graduation or they could take courses up to and including full-time. Note: Additional courses should be directly related to the students program of instruction.

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.