

Yellow Ribbon Program – Institutions of Higher Learning

VA has posted Updated Frequently Asked Questions about the Yellow Ribbon Program for Academic Year 2015-2016. There are 29 excellent questions and answers in this update. Download the update at:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/letters/Yellow%20Ribbon%20FAQ%20March%202015.pdf>

2015-2016 Yellow Ribbon Institution Participants

VA has posted the 2015-2016 Yellow Ribbon participants. You can check your institution's listing at:

http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/yellow_ribbon/2015/states/pa.asp

Section 702, Choice Act (Public Schools Only)

As indicated in Newsletter # 97, the Pennsylvania Legislature passed and the Governor signed House Bill 131 (Act 11) which requires Pennsylvania public schools to charge in-state (resident) rates of tuition and fees for "covered individuals." On March 26, 2015, VA conducted a webinar on Section 702. Public schools should visit the following link and print out the slides from this webinar. Note: this webinar took place prior to the passage and signature of HB 131 on June 29, 2015. Pennsylvania is fully in compliance with Section 702 as of July 1, 2015.

Webinar link: http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/presentations/SCO_Webinar_03-26-2015.pdf

Link to compliant states: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/702.asp>

Link to HB 131:

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2015&sessInd=0&act=11>

Changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)

There have been several changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill® proposed. As of this date, we know of none of these proposals which have become law. If and when any of these proposals become law and make changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill®, we will notify the school by newsletter and provide appropriate links to VA websites that implement the changes. In the meantime we highly recommend School Certifying Officials visit the GI Bill® website at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill on a regular basis.

June 17, 2015 Webinar Questions and Answers

VA has posted additional questions and answers to the June 17, 2015 webinar. See the link below:

http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/presentations/SCO_Webinar_06-17-2015.pdf

Slides 35-44 contain the updated Q & A.

Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Payment Rates for 2015 Academic Year (August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016)

http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits_resources/rates/ch33/ch33rates080115.asp

Mitigating Circumstances

Please note that slides 17 thru 24 of the June 17, 2015 webinar discuss Mitigating Circumstances. It is very important that students who must drop classes or withdraw from classes provide mitigating circumstances if they exist. Mitigating Circumstances make a big difference in the amount of debt that may be created for Post-9/11 (Chapter 33) students.

Slide 18 states “If a student drops a course or withdraws from school after the drop/add period and receives a non-punitive grade, VA must reduce benefits effective the first day of the term unless the student provides evidence of “mitigating circumstances.”

Slide 19 states: “If a student drops hours and does not provide acceptable mitigating circumstances, instead of reducing last day of attendance, VA will reduce/terminate beginning of the term.”

SCOs should report mitigating circumstances if the student presents them. SCOs are not responsible for determining whether mitigating circumstances are acceptable. VA will do that. But SCOs can help students by reporting mitigating circumstances in VA-ONCE. See slides 21 thru 24 on VA-ONCE procedures.

Slides 17 thru 24 can be found on the June 17, 2015 webinar at:

http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/presentations/SCO_Webinar_06-17-2015.pdf

2015-2016 Academic Year Monthly Housing Allowance Rates (Chapter 33 Only)

The following Monthly Housing Allowances rates went into effect on August 1, 2015. Note they actually go into effect with the first enrollment certificate on or after August 1, 2015. You and/or your students must enter the actual zip code of the school to determine the E5 with dependents rate for your school. Use the following link to enter the zip code:

<http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bahCalc.cfm>

Remember, the Monthly Housing allowance is prorated based on the individual student’s rate of pursuit, the students tier level, and the number of days in the month of enrollment. To receive any MHA, the student must be enrolled at a rate of pursuit that is greater than 50% (i.e., 51% or more). If the student drops below 50% rate of pursuit, the MHA is no longer paid. FAQ # 1480 provides a great deal of information on Monthly Housing Allowance: https://gibill.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1480/kw/monthly%20housing%20allowance.

For information on increases and decreases, see FAQ 1412 at the link below:

https://gibill.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1412/kw/1412/session/L3RpbWUvMTQzODc3NjI3Mi9zaWQvamIzUlk4dG0%3D

Please note the last sentence on FAQ # 1412: For the academic year August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016, the full-time MHA for an individual eligible at the 100% benefit level is \$16 more than BAH.

We have received information from the Buffalo RPO that the \$16 increase in BAH (MHA) will be applied to all students prorated on their Rate of Pursuit and their Tier Level Percentage.

Example 1: An undergraduate student who is 100% on the Tier Chart and is taking 9 credit hours at a school where 12 credit hours is considered full-time. The student would have a rate of pursuit of 75%. For the MHA that would be rounded up to 80%. The student would receive 80% of the \$16 or \$12.80 added to his MHA for a full month.

Example 2: A student attending a school taking 12 credits where 12 credits is full-time at the school. The student is 50% on the Tier Level Chart. The student would receive an additional \$8.00 each full month of MHA. ($\$16.00 \times 50\% = \8.00)

SCOs do not have to do anything different. Simply report actually and accurately the beginning and ending dates and the number of credits or clock hours per week. The VA will make the MHA calculations and the appropriate amount will be added to the students MHA. If the student changes their enrollment, simply do an adjustment in VA-ONCE and VA will calculate any changes in MHA.

Enrollment Certifications

Enrollment certifications are submitted initially when a student enrolls in a course (class) the first time. If the student changes that enrollment in that particular enrollment period, a new enrollment certification should NOT be submitted. The School Certifying Official (SCO) should submit an Adjustment in VA-ONCE to change the number of credits or clock hours per week. Adjustments allow you to report a decrease or increase in the number of credits or clock hours per week for the enrollment period in question. Adjustments also allow the SCO to change the tuition and fees, if necessary, due to the decrease or increase in the number of credit hours or clock hours per week. Note: When the SCO does an Adjustment, they will have to enter the Last Date of Attendance or the Effective Date of the decrease or increase. To modify the initial enrollment certification with an Adjustment, refer to pages 78-85 VA-ONCE Quick Reference User Guide, Designed for Certifying Officials, Version 8, March 2015. The VA-ONCE User Guide is available on the GI Bill® website at: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/school_training_resources.asp.

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.