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The Veterans Handbook

**A Reference Guide
to Using Your
VA Educational Benefits
at**



Seminole Community College

Foreward

Veterans Affairs (VA) Educational Benefits are designed to provide eligible individuals with an opportunity for educational and career growth. They are certainly the most valuable benefits afforded to veterans and qualifying dependents and should be wisely utilized. Veterans have earned the right to use their educational benefits. Seminole Community College is pleased and honored to assist you in utilizing them to your best advantage. We welcome you to SCC and hope you will significantly benefit from your training.

Veterans Specialist

Contact: Tyrone Major, Veterans Specialist II
By Phone: 407.708.2242
By Fax: 407.708.2029
By Email: majort@scc-fl.edu
Office Hours: Monday through Tuesday 8 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday 10 a.m. — 7 p.m.
Thursday through Friday 8 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.

The Veterans Specialist at SCC is not an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs. His responsibility is to interpret, explain, and administer VA regulations as they apply to you at SCC.



Seminole Community College

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Before Applying for VA Educational Benefits

The Department of Veterans (DVA) requires each applicant for VA Educational Benefits be formally accepted to an approved curriculum (program of study) before initial certification of attendance can be sent to the DVA.

Formal acceptance is achieved by completion of the following*:

1. SCC admissions application (this should be completed and submitted before any other steps are taken).
2. Submission of official high school transcripts, official copies of GED scores or Adult High School diploma.
3. Submission of official transcripts from all other colleges attended.
4. CPT/TABE placement test.
CPT, for college placement.
TABE, for Vocational Certificate Programs.
5. Meeting with a counselor for final admissions approval.

*Some programs may request additional admission requirements.

Note

All forms required by Veterans Affairs start with VA.

Example: Application for Education Benefits is VA Form 22-1990.

Benefit Programs and Requirements

All forms necessary for application for educational benefits are available at the Veterans Affairs Office. Application requirements for educational benefits vary from program to program. Your application package must be complete. Partial application packages will not be accepted. Furthermore, ONLY the veterans specialist will accept your completed application package.

Benefit programs requirements:

Chapter 30 - Montgomery GI Bill

- Category I: veterans who served active duty after June 30, 1985
- Category II: veterans who transferred VEAP before being involuntarily separated after February 2, 1991

Application package includes:

1. Seminole Community College admission approval (as outlined on pg. 2 of this handbook)
2. Form 22-1990 Application for Educational Benefits
3. Certified DD214s-these can be obtained at the County Veterans Service Office.
4. Statement of Understanding and Compliance (pg. 16 of this handbook)

- Category III: veterans with remaining entitlement under the Vietnam Era GI Bill

Application package includes:

1. Seminole Community College admission approval (as outlined on pg. 2 of this handbook)
2. Form 22-1990 Application for Educational Benefits
3. Form 21-686C Declaration of Status of Dependents
4. Certified copies of ALL DD214s - these can be obtained at the County Veterans Service Office.
5. Form DD4C Delayed Entry Contract - for those who signed a delayed entry contract before January 1, 1977 and began their active duty experience prior to January 2, 1978.
6. Form 21-674 for dependent children over 18 but still enrolled in either high school or college.
7. Statement of Understanding and Compliance (pg. 16 of this handbook)

Chapter 31 - Vocational Rehabilitation

This benefit is designed to assist veterans with a service-related disability in obtaining and maintaining employment. A service-related disability rating is required as part of the eligibility requirements.

Veterans should apply for vocational rehabilitation through the County Veterans Service Office. They will receive guidance from the Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Division of the DVA regarding application and admission requirements.

Chapter 35 - Survivor's and Dependent's Educational Assistance

Chapter 35 benefits surviving spouses and children of veterans who:

- Suffered a service-related death,
- Died as a result of a service-related disability, or
- Maintain a 100 percent permanent service-related disability.

Application package includes:

1. Seminole Community College admission approval (as outlined on pg. 2 of this handbook).
2. Form 22-5490 - Application for Survivor's and Dependent's Educational Assistance
3. Each child's application must be accompanied by a birth certificate.
4. Statement of Understanding and Compliance (pg. 16 of this handbook)

Chapter 1606 - Reservist Benefit

Students currently serving in the Selected Reserves may qualify for this benefit.

Application package includes:

1. Seminole Community College admission approval (as outlined on pg. 2 of this handbook).
2. Form 22-1990 Application for Educational Assistance
3. DOD Form 2384 - Notice of Basic Eligibility (NOBE). This form is issued through the Reserve Unit.
4. Statement of Understanding and Compliance (pg. 16 of this handbook)

Note:

Many of the programs detailed on the previous pages require certified copies of DD214s. Certified copies can be obtained through the Seminole County Veterans Service Office if an original is presented.

Additional documentation (i.e. birth certificates) may also be required to certify true copies or originals. The Veterans Service Office representative can certify photocopies of these documents if he/she witnesses an original or certified copy. You will not be asked to surrender your original copies.

Correspondence

Utilization of VA Educational Benefits will generate a continuous stream of College and VA correspondence. All correspondence is important and should be read carefully upon receipt. Any misunderstandings or discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the SCC Veterans Affairs Office immediately for clarification or correction when appropriate. We urge you to create and maintain a file for all VA and College correspondence. It is also recommended you keep a photocopy of each check received.

The documents you will receive include enrollment certifications and changes in student status from the Veterans Affairs Office, and Verification of Enrollment forms from the DVA Regional Office.

Enrollment certifications contain information about the classes you are taking. They are sent to the VA periodically and a photocopy will also be sent to you. Look over this form carefully. Verify personal data such as address, date of birth, social security number and name. Pay particular attention to the dates and hours reported. If any information is incorrect, please notify the Veterans Affairs Office immediately.

Notices of Change in Student Status are usually sent to the DVA after an initial enrollment certification has been sent. Again, a photocopy will be sent to you. These forms reflect a change in hours either as a result of dropping a class, being dropped from a class by the instructor, or the beginning of a new semester. You should **carefully** review this form to verify name, social security number, and hours reported. If the information appears incorrect, please contact the Veterans Affairs Office so the information can be explained or corrected.

The Verification of Enrollment Form will be sent directly to your mailing address. It verifies your enrollment as previously reported. New students should bring the initial form to the Veterans Affairs Office for assistance. Check the form **carefully**, paying close attention to the dates and hours reflected. If the information is incorrect, bring it to the Veterans Affairs Office for correction. If a change is necessary, your payment may be delayed. The DVA will not process the payment until they have received a Notice of Change in Student Status from the College that reflects the same information you have given them. Please enclose a copy of the Change in Student Status with the verification form when you return it to the DVA in the blue envelope provided. Failure to complete and submit these monthly verification forms in a timely fashion may result in delayed checks and possible termination of educational benefits.

Telephone Certification for Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30)

Students receiving Chapter 30 education benefits can certify their monthly verification by calling 1-877-823-2378.

Additional Financial Assistance

There are several additional forms of financial aid you may be eligible for to supplement your DVA educational assistance. These include DVA educational loans, special assistance for the educationally disadvantaged, scholarships, and Pell Grants.

DVA Educational Loans

Educational loans may be authorized by the DVA to certain veterans with Chapter 34 eligibility and to spouses and surviving spouses with Chapter 35 eligibility who have not passed their period of eligibility for educational assistance benefit payments or have unused months of entitlement. The loan program is based on financial need. Loans are generally not granted to students training at the community college level as the cost of education is considered to be affordable without assistance. You may contact the VA Regional Office at 1-888-442-4551 for further information.

Special Assistance for the Educationally Disadvantaged

Veterans training under Chapter 32 and Chapter 34, and eligible surviving spouses under Chapter 35, may receive reimbursement for the cost of tuition and fees to pursue courses leading to a secondary school diploma (GED or Adult High School Diploma). The student's entitlement to educational assistance benefits will not be reduced when payments are based on tuition and fees. Veterans, spouses and surviving spouses may, instead, elect to receive regular monthly payments based on their training time. Students electing to receive monthly payments based on training time should be aware their entitlement will be charged accordingly.

Scholarships

Scholarships do not have to be repaid. They are available from many sources, including the College, state agencies, professional and service agencies, private foundations and some employers.

Grants

The largest and best known source of grants is the Federal Pell Grant. Grants are awarded based on need and do not have to be repaid.

Loans

Student loans are borrowed money and must be repaid. They are available from the Federal government, banks or private financial institutions.

Work-study jobs

Work-study programs allow students to earn money toward their education while attending school.

Contact 407-328-2046 for financial aid information.

Supplemental Educational Benefits

Tutorial Assistance

Assistance may be arranged for eligible persons training under Chapters 30, 31, 32, and Chapter 35 to offset the cost of tutoring. This allowance is considered a supplement to the claimant's monthly educational assistance check and it is paid without entitlement charge for those training under Chapters 31 and 35. However, for students utilizing Chapter 30 and 32 benefits, an individual's period of entitlement will be charged with respect to the amount of tutorial assistance paid in **excess** of \$600.

The DVA will pay up to \$10 an hour and maximum of \$100 per month for tutorial assistance. The maximum assistance to which a claimant will be eligible throughout the duration of his/her entitlement is \$1200.

Tutorial Payment for Chapter 30, 32, and 35 - Payment for tutorial services is sent to the student. The student is responsible for paying the tutor.

Tutorial Payment for Chapter 31 - The DVA is billed for tutorial services by Seminole Community College. Payment is then sent to the College for distribution to the tutor.

Work-Study

The DVA Work-Study program offers paid employment opportunities to eligible veterans. DVA work-study payments are not taxable. Eligible veterans may contract for a minimum of 25 hours per week and total of 1300 hours per fiscal year.

Veteran students are employed in one of three locations: the County Job Service Office of Sanford, Casselberry or Apopka. A veterans representative at the office of your choice can assist you in placement and completion of an Application for Work-Study Allowance form.

General Guidelines

Initial Check for First Time Applicants

Generally, the Veterans Specialist cannot certify a new student at SCC until the first day of class in the term for which the student has applied. The DVA requires six to eight weeks to process an award and begin payment.

The amount of your monthly VA educational award may be prorated if necessary. For example, if the first term of your enrollment begins on the 15th of the month, the VA will divide your monthly rate by 30 (the number of days in a standard month). This will provide your daily rate. Your daily rate is then multiplied by the number of days you are attending class that month. This is the amount of your check for the first month of attendance.

Payment is made at the end of each month.

Annual Certification Cycle

VA regulation dictates that enrollment certifications cannot exceed a period of 12 months. All certifications at Seminole Community College are designed for termination at the end of each spring term.

If you register for the following summer semester, re-certification will take place automatically by the Veterans Affairs Office. There is no need to resubmit all educational benefit application packages again. You should receive a check for the break between the two terms after the DVA processes your summer semester certification.

The checks issued in June for attendance in May will be prorated as described above.

Hour Requirements

It is important for students utilizing VA Educational Assistance to be aware of hour requirements for each pay status.

Hour Requirements for Technical, College Transfer and Vocational Programs

Credit Hours	Training Time	Amount of Pay
12 or more	Full Time	Maximum Allowance
9 - 11	3/4 Time	75% of Maximum Allowance
6 - 8	1/2 Time	50% of Maximum Allowance
5 or less	Below 1/2 Time	Tuition and Fees**

**For training less than 1/2 time, the DVA will pay total tuition and fees only.
Payment may be issued in a single check or on monthly basis.

A Special Note Concerning Split Sessions for Degree-Seeking Students

SCC offers split sessions referred to as "accelerated sessions" by the DVA. This means the DVA will accelerate pay status in proportion to the rate of the split sessions. A full-time course load will be different for students enrolled in the split sessions. For this reason, you should check with the Veterans Affairs Office to be sure of the actual rate of acceleration.

For example, a student enrolled in the full semester (16 weeks) will need to have 12 credit hours or more in order to be considered full-time.

SCC's full-time status and financial aid requirements may differ from the VA hour requirement. Confirm full-time credit hour requirements with the financial aid and registration offices.

Changes

All changes made after your initial application or certification are forwarded to the DVA Regional Office and should be brought to the attention of the Veterans Affairs Office so the change can be reported.

The most common changes include:

Changes in status of dependents:

This applies to students utilizing Vietnam Era GI Bill benefits and Vocational Rehabilitation. These groups of veterans receive an additional allowance for each dependent.

Changes can occur when:

- A dependent child reaches the age of 18. If the dependent child is still in high school or enrolled in college, the veteran may continue to receive an allowance for that child. This requires the veteran complete and submit a 21-674 Form available through the Veterans Affairs Office.
- A child is born. Submit a certified true copy of the child's birth certificate.
- A divorce occurs. Submit a certified true copy of the divorce decree.
- A dependent dies. Submit a certified true copy of the death certificate.
- A veteran marries. Submit a certified true copy of the marriage license.

Change in address:

If you move during your enrollment at SCC, you will need to change your address with the Records Office and the Veterans Affairs Office. Changing your address with only one office will not automatically change your address with the other. This change requires two forms, both available from the Veterans Affairs Office.

Change in major:

Should you decide to change your major, be aware there are SCC and VA forms to complete. The College's curriculum change form is available in the Counseling Office. The Veterans Affairs Office also requires you to complete a VA Form 22-1995 or 22-5495.

Change in credit hours:

This occurs when you drop a class(es) or are dropped from a class(es) by the instructor. Notify the VA office immediately.

Withdrawal from school:

If you plan to withdraw from all classes, contact the Veterans Affairs Office before doing so. There are many concerns you should be aware of before withdrawing completely.

Anticipated change in place of training:

If you are transferring from SCC, you should notify the Veterans Affairs Office as soon as possible.

Failure to report changes constitutes fraud and is the primary cause for delays in educational checks and overpayment. Changes may be reported to the Veterans Affairs Office in person or by telephone.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you challenge a course and can I get paid for it? When you challenge a course, you take a test to determine if you meet the qualifications for passing the class **without actually taking the class**. Guidelines for challenging courses are in the Seminole Community College catalog. The VA will not pay you for any courses you challenge successfully. Educational benefits are paid for attendance; if you pass the test and get credit for the course, you are not attending the class and will not get paid for the course.

Can I audit a course and get paid for it? No. When you audit a course, you take the class as a refresher for skills you already have. For example, if you are currently taking shorthand dictation at 80 wpm and want to keep that up, you can audit the shorthand classes. You get the experience of taking the dictation but are not graded on tests. Guidelines for auditing courses can be found in the Seminole Community College catalog. The VA will not pay for these courses. Educational benefits are paid only for credit classes.

Must I maintain a certain GPA in order to keep my VA Educational Benefits? All students utilizing VA educational benefits must maintain certain standards of progress as detailed in the Seminole Community College catalog. VA regulations allow students to attend school under a probationary status for two consecutive terms while they continue to receive educational benefits. However, benefits will be terminated following the second consecutive term of attendance under probationary status if the student's cumulative grade point average does not meet the College's published standards of progress.

Students utilizing VA educational benefits who take remedial or deficiency courses will have their benefits terminated for "unsatisfactory progress" if they accumulate failing grades in two courses. They will not be re-certified until they have been advised by an SCC counselor and have maintained a 2.0 GPA for at least one semester. Students requesting re-certification following termination for "unsatisfactory progress" must meet with the Veterans Specialist.

How do I drop/withdraw from a course and how does it affect my VA educational payments? If you need to drop or withdraw from a course, you need to complete a form in the Registrar's Office and obtain the appropriate signatures. There are two types of grades you can get from dropping a course - punitive and non-punitive.

The College will establish the last date to withdraw. If you drop a class, withdraw from all classes, or are dropped by the instructor before that date, you are assigned a non-punitive grade. Remember, this means your GPA will not be penalized. However, the

DVA treats a non-punitive grade as if you never attended that class. If the drop changes your attendance status, the DVA will require repayment of any amount you have received for attendance in that class unless you have mitigating circumstances. If you feel you have a valid reason for dropping the class or withdrawing from all classes, you can write to the DVA and ask that you be allowed to maintain your prevailing rate of pay up to the last date of attendance in the course(s). The new rate of pay would be effective the day after your last date of attendance.

If you claim mitigating circumstances, the DVA will require in-depth statements and supportive documents before allowing payment for a course from which you dropped or were dropped by the instructor. Mitigating circumstances the DVA accepts include:

1. Illness or injury of the veteran
2. Death, illness, or serious injury of a family member
3. Relocation due to employment
4. Work schedule conflict
5. Hardships

Additional circumstances may also be considered, in writing, by the DVA.

If you drop a course, withdraw from all courses, or are dropped by an instructor after the last date to withdraw, you may be assigned a punitive grade. This grade will be figured into your grade point average as 0.00 points (F). The DVA will allow payment at the prevailing rate of pay up to the last date of attendance as reported by the instructor. The new rate of pay will begin the day after the last date of attendance.

You should try to avoid dropping courses after the last date to drop/withdraw as it does affect your GPA.

Can I take a course by independent study and receive payment for it? Yes. Guidelines for independent study can be found in the Seminole Community College catalog.

How can I determine what classes I should take? The Seminole Community College catalog outlines all programs and academic plans available at SCC and what courses are required for graduation in each. All courses must be drawn directly from the outline as it appears in the catalog in effect at the time of your enrollment. You will be certified for only those courses required for your degree. For example, if you are enrolled in the accounting program and register for Welding 101, you will not be paid for that course, as it is not required for graduation in the accounting program.

Furthermore, a student who is not in continuous attendance must graduate under the provisions of the catalog in effect at the time of re-entry or a subsequent issue if elected. Summer semester attendance is not necessary to be considered in continuous attendance.

A counselor must approve your registration form to certify that you have taken all prerequisite courses.

Can I take a remedial or deficiency course and still get paid for it? Most VA educational benefit programs allow students to take remedial or deficiency courses. Students utilizing Chapter 1606 (Selected Reserves) benefits are allowed compensation for remedial/deficiency level courses only if they have signed a six-year enlistment contract.

Remedial courses can only be certified if a need for the course is proven by a placement test or if the course is required as a prerequisite for another course in your major.

How can I tell which courses count as electives? Students pursuing associate-level transfer degrees are limited to the number of elective credit hours that can be certified for VA educational benefits. Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees are designed to total 64 general education and elective credit hours for graduation. Generally, any course taken from one of the general education areas and in excess of the requirement for that area is considered an elective.

For example, a transfer student is required to take 12 semester hours in humanities and fine arts. If a student takes more than 12 hours of humanities and fine arts classes, the extra course(s) will count as electives provided the student had not met the elective credit requirement.

Students pursuing associate degrees in technical areas such as accounting, office systems, and nursing are often required to take electives from certain discipline areas. For example, a student in the accounting program may be required to take a social/behavioral science elective, a humanities/fine arts elective or an approved business elective. These will be listed in the catalog under the outline for that program.

Additional courses may count as electives. Confirm electives with the Veterans Specialist.

If a course I need to take is not being offered this semester, can I substitute another class? Course substitutions are permissible if appropriately approved. The school catalog includes a list of approved substitutions for which no further approval is necessary. However, substitutions not listed in the catalog require written approval by the department chairman, the Vice President for Student Success, and the Registrar. All substitutions, regardless of method of approval, must be brought to the attention of the Veterans Affairs Office.



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Statement of Understanding and Compliance

I hereby certify that I have read the Veterans Assistance Handbook. I understand the provisions and agree to comply with all rules, regulations, and guidelines as set forth.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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