

# VERNON COLLEGE HANDBOOK FOR VETERANS

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### VA Regional Offices:

Department of Veteran Affairs  
701 Clay Avenue  
Waco, Tx 76799

Department of Veteran Affairs  
P. O. BOX 8888  
Muskogee, OK 74402

### VA Phone Numbers:

Education Information:	1-888-442-4551
General VA Information:	1-800-827-1000
VA Verification Number:	1-877-823-2378

### VC Veteran's Coordinator :

Debra Alexander  
Email: [dalexander@vernoncollege.edu](mailto:dalexander@vernoncollege.edu)  
(940)696-8752 in Wichita Falls  
(940)552-6291 in Vernon

## VERNON COLLEGE VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE

The Veterans Affairs Office is located at the Century City Center in Wichita Falls at 4105 Maplewood, Suite 110. For information, please come by the office during regular business hours or call us at (940) 696-8752 in Wichita Falls or (940)552-6291 in Vernon.

The role of the Vernon College Veterans Affairs Office is to assist the student in pursuing the student's educational, professional or vocational objective. The VA Coordinator is available to answer questions about Veteran educational benefits, to certify enrollments for the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and monitor student degree plans and academic progress.

Although VC works to ensure DVA regulations are satisfied, the College has no authority to make judgments regarding benefit status. Only the Department of Veteran Affairs may determine the eligibility of individuals for veteran educational benefits and approve or disapprove payment of benefits.

The National Toll-Free number for the Department of Veterans Affairs for education benefits is **1-888-442-4551**. All other VA questions should be directed to **1-800-827-1000**. They may be reached M-F, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM.

The VC Veteran Affairs Office highly recommends that veterans take all original DD Form 214's to a County Courthouse to be placed on record. This enables the veteran to obtain a certified copy at any time in the future, should the original become damaged or lost. The student's DD Form 214 is a valuable document and may be needed in future years. Guard it carefully.

## APPLYING FOR EDUCATION BENEFITS

First-time applicants can complete the online application at the Electronic Application Form link at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) or print and complete the application from the Education Forms link at the same website. Applications are also available from VC. Applications for education benefits should be submitted directly to the Department of Veteran Affairs Regional Processing Office. The Regional Office that services this area is in Muskogee, Oklahoma. The following documents may also be submitted to the VA Regional Office to expedite processing:

- Veterans must submit copies of all DD Form 214's.
- Students in Active Reserves should obtain DD Form 2384 from their Reserve Unit.
- Veterans with benefits remaining under the old GI Bill must bring original documents proving status of dependents (birth certificates, marriage license, adoption papers, etc.)
- Dependents and spouses of 100% disabled or deceased veterans may need to submit copies of birth certificates or marriage licenses.

Application for benefits is completed one time only. If the student has previously received educational benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs at another school, the student must complete VA Form 22-1995 or 22-5495, Change of Place of Training, at the new school.

If the student has even **one** day of active duty service during the term the student will be attending VC, the student must apply as active duty and have the form completed by an Armed Forces Education Services Officer.

Once the DVA Regional Office has processed the application for benefits, the veteran student will receive a Certificate of Eligibility from them. A copy of this form should be submitted to the VC VA Office, along with a copy of the veteran's DD214.

***The only time the application should be turned in at the VC VA Office is if the student is requesting Advance Payment.***

**Note:** First time applications may take up to 60 days to process **after** they reach the appropriate DVA Office.

### **ATTENDING VERNON COLLEGE**

All prospective VA students to Vernon College must complete and Application for Admission and submit copies of all college transcripts. Those who have not previously attended any colleges must submit a copy of their high school transcript or GED scores, whichever is applicable.

Students are also required to attend New Student Group Advising through the Student Services Office. Students should also check with them to see if any entrance testing is required. The Student Services Department will inform the student regarding advising and scheduling.

Complete the paperwork in the VA folder as needed.

### **MONTHLY VERIFICATION**

Veteran students (not spouses or dependants) are required to verify their enrollment each month on the last day of the month. Students may either call their verification in at 1-877-823-2378 or verify online at [www.gibill.va.gov/wave](http://www.gibill.va.gov/wave).

### **CERTIFICATION**

The certifying official at the VC VA Office is a College employee who has been trained by the Department of Veterans Affairs to process documents relating to VA educational benefits. As the certifying official, this person certifies to the DVA:

- The student is enrolled in an eligible program at VC.
- The classes in which the student is enrolled are required for the program the student is pursuing.

DVA educational benefits apply to courses that are required and are completed. Continuing Education courses are not eligible for certification.

### **DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE PLAN**

All students wishing to obtain VA education benefits must enroll in a program that has been approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA). The degree or certificate plan is kept in the student's file in the VC VA Office. Courses not required in the plan cannot be certified for payment. Substitutions require departmental approval. Prerequisites may be certified only if taken before the required course. Remedial courses can be certified only if test results indicate developmental work is needed.

### **CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS**

Veteran students must submit a copy of the statement of student account to the VC VA office each semester in order to be certified for that semester. The certification of enrollment will be processed in the order in which the Statement of Account is received by our office. The copy may be submitted in person, mailed in or faxed in. Estimates of Account ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.

The VA Office at Vernon College will make every effort to submit the certification of enrollment to the Department of Veteran Affairs in a timely manner. Most certifications are submitted by the end of the second class week of each semester. However, the certification can be submitted to the VA up to one year from the term start date.

The Department of Veteran Affairs will generally process an award within 30 days of receipt of the certification. If a student is in their initial enrollment period, this process could take up to 60 days while the VA is establishing their education file.

In order to receive payment each month, most students are required to verify enrollment either by phone or online. Since the VA needs 30 days for processing **after** they receive certification from the school, students may not be able to verify on the last day of the first month of enrollment. Students should keep trying to verify each day until the award has been processed. The VC Veteran Affairs office should not be called UNLESS 30 days from the term start date have passed and there is still nothing to verify.

***The student is responsible for ensuring the courses they enroll in are required in their respective program.***

### **EVALUATED CREDIT / PREVIOUS TRAINING**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) requires credit for previous training be applied to the student's educational program.

DVA regulations will not allow benefits for repeating of a course that the student has previously completed with a satisfactory grade. **It is the student's responsibility to determine if they are repeating a course.**

The College will evaluate the military transcript (AARTS or SMART) received for each student. If no transcript is received, four semester hours of physical education credit will be granted based on DD Form 214 information. (Note: This credit will not be allowed if the student is majoring in physical education.) Credit is not posted until the student has completed 6 hours at the college.

Air Force veterans need to submit a CCAF transcript. Since CCAF is an accredited college, the registrar's office will evaluate that document.

### **CHANGE OF PROGRAM**

The student who wishes to change the program they are pursuing should come by the VC VA Office and complete the Change of Program Form 22-1995 or 22-5495. Receipt of the program change will be confirmed to the VA along with certification of enrollment.

Career counseling is available through the Department of Veterans Affairs and through Vernon College.

### **ADVANCE PAYMENT**

Eligible students wishing advance payment must apply with the VC VA Office at least 60 days before the semester begins. (Check the calendar in the Catalog for term dates.) The first VA check will be sent to VC and released at registration. To be eligible for advance payment the student must:

- Enroll for at least half-time training
- Enter or re-enter training after an interval of one full semester or more from the student's previous period of enrollment.

Advance payment covers the first partial month and the next full month of the semester. When the student receives an advance, the student's second payment will be sent directly to the student after the end of the third month of training.

Advance payment is not allowed for:

- students under Section 901
- active duty servicepersons
- students who have a debt with the DVA
- students enrolling less than half time

If the advance payment is not received prior to registration, the student must be prepared to utilize other resources.

### **BREAK PAY**

Break Pay allows a student to be paid for the time between semesters. The student must be enrolled for at least 1/2 time in the semester before the break and the semester after the break. Break Pay can be obtained for the interval between Fall and Spring, Spring and Summer, and Summer and Fall terms. In most cases, break pay does not cover a period that is longer than 30 days. It does not apply to the entire summer.

### **SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

The student must meet the satisfactory criteria given in the VC Catalog (or its addenda for specific programs) to be eligible to receive VA educational benefits. Students on academic suspension must be reported to the Department of Veterans Affairs for unsatisfactory progress.

Once reported for unsatisfactory progress, benefits cannot be resumed unless the Department of Veterans Affairs finds that the cause of unsatisfactory progress has been removed and the program is suitable to the student's aptitudes, interests and abilities.

### **REPEAT COURSE WORK**

The Department of Veterans Affairs will not allow payment for course work for which a student has already received credit (a grade of D or better). **It is the student's responsibility to ensure they do not repeat a course which they have previously completed and passed.**

### **REMEDIAL COURSES**

Persons eligible for benefits under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 35 and Section 903 are authorized payment for Remedial Study courses. Persons eligible for benefits under Chapter 1606 are eligible effective 1 October 1990, if the student has a six-year commitment on or after the date of certification. Persons eligible for benefits under Section 901 are NOT authorized payment for such courses.

Test score results or evaluation from a program division chair must be available in VA files to prove need for remedial courses. Perceived need by the student or counselor for remediation is not a basis for educational benefits.

Remedial courses at VC are:

- ENGL 0300, 0301, 0302, 0303, 0304, 0305
- MATH 0300, 0301, 0302, 0303, 0304, 0305
- READ 0300, 0301, 0302, 0303, 0304, 0305

### **TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE**

Tutorial assistance is an authorized benefit only under Chapters 30, 31, 32 and 35. The instructor must submit a written statement verifying the student's need for a tutor and VA Form 22-1900t must be filled out. The DVA may pay up to \$100.00 per month for tutoring and up to a MAXIMUM of \$1200.00 during the eligibility period. The student pays the tutor and requests a reimbursement from the DVA. Check with the VC VA Office before entering into a contract with a tutor. Tutoring is provided free of charge to all VC students through the PASS centers.

### **DROPS, ADDS, AND WITHDRAWALS**

It is the student's responsibility to report to the VC Veterans Affairs Office when the student drops or adds a class or withdraws from a term.

Unreported drops or withdrawals may burden the student with an overpayment liability. Any course load reduction must be reported by the student and by the VC VA Office to the DVA. If the student has mitigating circumstances for dropping a class and the VA approves, the student may be paid up to the last day of attendance. If not, the student will not be paid for the dropped course, retroactive to enrollment date.

### **OVERPAYMENTS**

To avoid overpayments of educational benefits the student should:

- report changes in enrollment promptly
- understand the consequences of dropping a class or withdrawing from a term
- report changes of dependency, if applicable
- attend classes regularly

An instructor may drop the student for non-attendance and the student would then have to repay benefits for that course from the beginning of the term. If an overpayment is created, the VA is required to take prompt and aggressive action to recover the overpayment. The VA may take any of the following actions:

- add interest and collection fees to the student's debt
- withhold future benefits to apply to the student's debt
- refer the student's debt to a private collection agency
- offset the debt from the student's federal income tax refund
- offset the debt from the student's salary if the student is a federal employee
- file a lawsuit in federal court to collect the debt
- withhold approval of a VA home loan guarantee pending payment of the student's debt

**Mitigating Circumstances:** If the student changes enrollment after the regular add/drop period and wishes to receive educational benefits up to the drop date, the VA will want a statement explaining the events surrounding the change. The law states that no payments will be made for a course from which the student withdraws, or for which the student receives a non-punitive grade, unless there are "mitigating circumstances". The VA defines mitigating circumstances as "the unanticipated and unavoidable events that interfere with a student's pursuit of a course."

Examples the VA may accept are:

- Prolonged illness or serious injury.
- Severe illness or death in the student's immediate family.
- Unscheduled changes in the student's employment that are beyond the student's control.

- Unanticipated difficulties with child care arrangements made for the purpose of allowing the student to go to school.
- Recall to active duty or deployment.

The student will normally be expected to submit evidence to support the statement that the event was not anticipated and was beyond the student's control; for example, a letter from the student's employer in the case of employment change. Examples of events that the VA will not accept include:

- withdrawal to avoid a failing grade
- dislike of the student's instructor
- too many courses attempted

Dropping a course without mitigating circumstances means the student is not entitled to benefits for that course from the beginning of the term. If payment has already been processed for the course, the student has been overpaid and must repay that portion to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Effective June 1, 1989, the DVA will consider "mitigating circumstances" exist in the "First Instance" of withdrawal for courses totaling not more than 6 semester hours. "First Instance" means first instance occurring after 6-1-89. The "First Instance" consideration applies to all benefit types except Section 901. This "6-hour exclusion" is a one-time consideration.

### **WORK STUDY PROGRAM**

The Department of Veterans Affairs Work Study Program permits eligible veterans to perform services for DVA in return for a monetary allowance equal to the higher of State or Federal minimum wage. The maximum number of hours a student may work will be based upon 25 times the number of weeks in the student's enrollment period.

Work study services may be performed at:

- DVA Regional Offices
- DVA Medical Facilities
- Educational Institutions
- National cemeteries
- Other organizations approved for outreach activities

The service must be DVA related. To be eligible, the student must be pursuing programs of education or training at three-quarter (3/4) time rate or more. Chapters 30, 31, 32, 35, 106 and Section 903 are eligible.

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

VA Educational benefits are non-taxable.

Additional aid may be available. For information regarding additional financial assistance for which the student may be eligible, contact the Financial Aid Office at VC.

It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the information in the College Catalog and Student Handbook. Both of these items can be accessed online from the Vernon College home page at: [www.vernoncollege.edu](http://www.vernoncollege.edu).

### **HAZLEWOOD EXEMPTION**

Veterans who have exhausted their veteran's educational benefits and whose benefits will expire soon should look into the Hazlewood Exemption for Texas Veterans. The Hazlewood Act (Section 54.203, Texas Education Code) exempts Texas Veterans from payment of tuition and certain fees at state-supported institutions of higher education. The following requirements must be met:

- Must have been a legal resident of Texas at the time of entering the military service, as noted on the DD214

- Must have resided in Texas for AT LEAST 12 Months immediately prior to registration
- Must have been HONORABLY discharged, excluding active duty training in the Reserves
- Must have exhausted all entitlement to other VA education benefits
- Must have applied for and be found not eligible for any form of Federal Student Aid, including Pell grant, SEOG, TPEG, and SSIG
- Must not have defaulted on any student loan guaranteed by the State of Texas.

This benefit may also apply to the children of deceased Texas veterans. Students interested in obtaining the Hazlewood Exemption should contact the VA Office at VC.

**REMEMBER:**

*It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they only take classes required for their degree, they do not repeat any courses for which they have already received credit, they notify the VA Coordinator any time they have a change in enrollment hours, and they provide a copy of their Statement of Account to the VA Coordinator for each term they wish to be certified.*

**WELCOME TO VERNON COLLEGE!!!**