

NUMBER: STAF 6.12

SECTION: Division of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: University V.A. Policies and Procedures

DATE: June 1, 1992

REVISED: October 18, 2016

Policy for: Columbia Campus  
Procedure for: Columbia Campus  
Authorized by: Vice President for Student Affairs  
Issued by: Veterans Services

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## I. Policy

The following policies and procedures are of primary concern to veterans and other eligible persons who receive veteran benefits, collectively referred to in the text as "veterans."

- A. Certification by the University VA Certifying Official in the Office of Veterans Services is required for eligible students who wish to receive VA educational assistance. Students must initiate their own requests for enrollment certification, as the certifying official will process certifications to the VA only for those students who have made such a request and completed the necessary documentation.
- B. Normally, the VA requires that eligible students must have completed full university admissions requirements and matriculation into degree-seeking status before they may receive VA educational benefits. However, those students admitted as "Provisional", "Military Special", "Transient" or students enrolling for prerequisite courses required for admission into a professional degree program or school, may request VA certification if they provide appropriate documentation. VA students in these categories should contact the University Veterans Services Office for details. Only the federal VA has the final authority to award benefits to students in such admissions categories.
- C. All VA students who have earned college credit at another school or in another USC degree program are required to provide the University Office of Veterans Services with a transfer credit evaluation from their major department. The VA generally pays such students for one semester only pending receipt of the amount of "prior credit" applied to their current degree program.
- D. Students can best ensure receipt of benefits by informing the University Veterans Services Office of their intent to register for classes and by supplying the number of credit hours for which they enroll each semester.

- E. Eligible VA students may request certification on an annual basis, and should recertify for each new academic year at least 45 days in advance. However, pursuant to federal law, VA students who are enrolled less than one-half time must request certification on a semester-by-semester basis.
  - F. Normally, VA payments may be made only for those courses that are required by the academic department for the student's current degree program. All students receiving educational assistance from the VA are responsible for notifying the University Veterans Services Office of any changes in their degree program and/or course load during the semester, to include drop/add, withdrawal, audit status, invoking pass/fail option in a course, or enrollment in any distance education course, independent study, internship, or practicum courses
- II. Procedure
- A. Academic Suspension: Veterans academically suspended from another school cannot be certified for benefits at USC until they have received counseling from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Regional Office. Veterans placed on academic suspension at USC, and later readmitted after suspension term(s), may be certified for benefits based on the evidence presented by the students and their academic departments that the cause of the prior unsatisfactory academic progress has been removed and a more favorable condition for satisfactory academic progress now exists. The DVA has the final decision regarding resumption of payments to the students.
  - B. Audited Courses: The DVA will not pay for courses that are audited. Payment of benefits will be based upon the number of credit hours for which a student is fully enrolled for credit toward his/her degree program.
  - C. Correspondence Courses: Veterans taking correspondence courses for credit toward graduation requirements in their degree program may be certified for payment with documentation from their academic advisor that the courses are requirements for graduation. Payment will be reimbursement of tuition only for a semester in which students enroll only in courses via correspondence. However, students taking classroom courses in conjunction with correspondence courses might receive monthly DVA payments, depending on their training time. Specific information may be obtained from the University Veterans Services Office.
  - D. Dropping a Course: Veterans who drop a course, resulting in a reduction in DVA training time (i.e. full-time to 3/4 time, etc.) should promptly report the reduction to the University Veterans Services Office. A drop after 30 days from the beginning of the semester will create an overpayment of benefits computed from the first day of the semester if the drop results in a grade of "W." The DVA will take into consideration any mitigating reasons causing the student to drop the course. Veteran students should report any mitigating circumstances to the University Veterans Services Office or to the DVA Regional Office.

- E. Distance Education Courses: Policy for distance education courses is the same as for correspondence courses (see above). USC distance education courses are considered the same as classroom courses for DVA payment.
- F. Excessive Credit Hours: Veterans must enroll only in courses specified for their degree program, and applied electives, up to the number of elective credits required in their degree program.
- G. Independent Study: Policy for Independent Study course is the same as for correspondence and distance education courses (see above).
- H. Internship Courses: Prior to enrolling in any internship course, veterans should check with the University Veterans Services Office and make certain the internship course has been approved for DVA payments. Most internships offered at the University are approved for DVA payment; however, some have been disapproved and some may require submission for individual approval each time a veteran enrolls.
- I. Non-attendance: DVA educational benefits are paid to students maintaining satisfactory attendance by school standards. A professor's or instructor's report of a DVA student's excessive absences in a class, or cessation of attendance without a formal withdrawal or drop transaction, will probably result in an overpayment of benefits to the student.
- J. Non-Degree Students
  - 1. Special non-degree students may be eligible for DVA payments for the equivalent of two full USC semesters, provided these students are in the process of making full application to a degree program and are enrolled in courses required for graduation in that degree program.
  - 2. Transient students, or those taking prerequisites for admission to a professional school or graduate program, may not be limited to a two semester equivalent number of courses but may be paid only for courses specified by their parent institution or professional school or graduate program.
  - 3. Proper documentation will be required for all students in these categories before the USC Office of Veterans Services will certify for DVA payment (contact the Office of Veterans Services for details). The US Department of Veterans Affairs will make the final decision regarding payment.
- K. Overpayment: Any overpayment of benefits must be returned or reimbursed to the DVA. The student is responsible for maintaining up-to-date information in the Veterans Services Office so that overpayments do not occur.
- L. Pass/Fail: Students taking the pass/fail option in a course must provide proof from their academic department that the pass/fail course(s) are required for them to meet graduation requirements in their degree program. However, students who fail a pass/fail course after

submitting documentation and receiving payment for the course may be charged with an overpayment of DVA benefits for that course.

- M. Practicum Courses: Policy for practicum courses is the same as for Internship Courses (see section H above).
- N. Repeating Courses: Veterans may repeat a course required for graduation in their degree program if they fail the course and a passing grade is required for them to graduate.
- O. Program Change: Veterans who have received benefits in one program and enroll in a new degree program must provide proof of acceptance into the new program and their transfer credit evaluation form from their major academic department before they visit the University Veterans Services Office to complete the necessary forms to change their degree program with the DVA. Veterans are entitled to one program change by law; a second change requires DVA counseling and approval. Dependents are required to have DVA counseling and approval for each program change.
- P. Teacher Certification: Veterans may request DVA payment for courses required for State Department of Education certification in teaching, administration, and guidance. Students must provide a copy of their certification worksheet from the State Department of Education. Payment from the DVA will be limited to specific courses required for the student to be certified in their field.
- Q. Transfer Credit: Transfer credit hours accepted by USC from all prior college attendance should be turned in to the University Veterans Services Office within the student's first semester at USC. The DVA could suspend payment of benefits pending receipt of the amount of prior credit accepted by USC from the student's previous attendance.
- R. Withdrawal From School: Follow the same procedure as dropping a course (see section D above).
- S. Student Responsibility
  1. Veterans are responsible for making certain they are certified to the DVA each semester they enroll. The University Veterans Services Office does not automatically certify students for benefit payments. Students should complete a Certification Request Form at the University Veterans Services Office for each semester they enroll at the University.
  2. A statement of responsibility to notify the University Veterans Services Office of any change in enrollment appears on the Request for Certification Form (USC-VSR-I) which veterans complete with each new enrollment certification period. This statement reads: "The information I have provided on this form is true. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to notify the USC Veterans Services Office of any changes in my degree program and projected credit hours schedule, to include drops or withdrawal." A student's notification to the campus Veterans

Services Office of any reduction in credit hour load via drop, withdrawal, audit, or pass/fail option invoked should be in the form of a letter or an office visit.

(NOTE: Any student who reduces credit hour load by drop, withdrawal, audit, or pass/fail option is required to first follow the university's formal procedure for taking such action prior to notifying the school DVA office.)

3. For a complete review of all approved School Standards of Progress or any other veteran-related policies, procedures, and regulations, please contact University Veterans Services Office.

### III. Related Policies

STAF 6.11 Veterans Services Eligibility Policy <http://www.sc.edu/policies/staf611.pdf>

### IV. Reason for Revision

Policy organization, content, and accuracy reviewed in October 2016; no substantive revisions required.