

VA Education Benefits

What Faculty Need to Know

A School Certifying Official's perspective

Education • Awareness • Partnership

Purpose

- Give faculty a practical understanding of how VA education benefits connect to the classroom.
- Explain the information and changes that can affect a student's certification.
- Clarify when faculty should contact the Veterans Education Benefits (VEB) Office.
- Build a partnership that helps students receive accurate, timely benefits.

You do not have to become a VA expert.

Why This Matters

- VA benefits are tied to enrollment information reported by the institution.
- Changes in a student's course participation, enrollment, or course structure can affect certification and payments
- Timely faculty communication gives the School Certifying Official (SCO) a chance to review and report changes accurately.
- Accurate information helps prevent avoidable payment delays, debt issues, and student frustration.

Faculty information → SCO review → VA reporting → Student benefits

Education Benefits: The Basics

- VA education benefits support Veterans, service members, and eligible family members.
- Common programs at APSU include:
 - Chapter 33 — Post-9/11 GI Bill®
 - Chapter 30 — Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty
 - Chapter 31 — Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
 - Chapter 35 — Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA)
 - Chapter 1606 — Montgomery GI Bill® Selected Reserve
- ***Each program has its own eligibility and payment rules. The SCO reports enrollment; the VA determines entitlement and benefit payments.***

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Ch.31 VR&E

- VA program to help veterans and active-duty servicemembers with service-connected disabilities find and keep suitable jobs
- Services and Tracks
- Academic Advisor
 - # 1 – 8 (skip #7)
 - Send to SCO



VEB Data and Student Population

Fall 2025 & Spring 2026

- By the numbers...
 - 6,291 VA certification requests processed
 - 2,445 unduplicated in-person office visits
 - 6,829 phone calls with students, faculty, and staff
 - 10,987 emails with students, faculty, and staff
- Facilitated \$22,169,120.94 in tuition and fees benefits
 - \$11,788,567.79 paid directly by VA to APSU (Post 911 and Veteran Readiness & Employment only)
- Approximately \$4.7 million in Post 911 Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA for Post 911)
- Military-Affiliated Accounting processed over \$14.7 million in military contracts

What the SCO Does

- Serves as the link between the institution and VA.
- Certifies accurate enrollment information to VA through VA systems.
- Reports changes in enrollment when appropriate.
- Maintains records and supports compliance and audit/inspection activities.
- Helps students understand the school's certification process and where to go for benefit questions.
- Coordinates with campus partners when academic or enrollment information affects certification.

The SCO certifies what the school knows—not what we assume.

What Faculty Need to Know

- Faculty are **NOT** responsible for determining a student's VA eligibility.
- Faculty are **NOT** responsible for calculating a student's benefit payment.
- Faculty **ARE** an important source of accurate academic information.
- Pay attention to:
 - Course start/end dates and schedule
 - Instructional modality and location
 - Student participation/academic engagement
 - Withdrawals, nonattendance, or significant changes
 - Changes to course structure or delivery

Why Accurate Information Matters

- VA certification depends on accurate institutional records.
- Course dates can determine when a student is considered enrolled.
- Credit hours and course structure can affect training time or enrollment status.
- Modality and instructional methodology may matter when determining how a course is certified.
- Small changes can become important when they affect the student's certified enrollment.

When in doubt: document the change and contact the SCO.

Common Faculty Situations

- Student stops attending or participating.
- Student tells you they are withdrawing or dropping the course.
- Student never begins the course or never participates.
- Course is canceled, rescheduled, shortened, or extended.
- Course modality changes (for example, in-person to online).
- Independent study, internship, practicum, clinical, or other nontraditional course arrangements change.

Attendance & Academic Engagement

- Attendance is more than simply being listed on the roster.
- Academic engagement can include meaningful participation in academically related activities, depending on the course and institutional records.
- Faculty documentation can help establish when a student actually participated.
- If a student stops participating, notify the appropriate campus process rather than trying to determine the VA consequence yourself.
- Keep normal academic records—attendance, participation, assignments, exams, or other engagement evidence—as required for your course.

Your role: report what happened. The SCO determines what must be reported to VA.

Attendance

Attendance reporting is federally mandated for the purpose of monitoring attendance and ensuring the accuracy of enrollment certification by the Veterans Education Benefits Office. APSU does this by using the FN and FA grades.

Failure to follow the procedure for FN and FA grades may result in a federal or state audit finding and financial penalties for the University. Faculty are encouraged to read the section on Dropping Courses, Grades Awarded, and Withdrawals in the current APSU Bulletin for more information.

After a student has officially registered for a course, the student is considered to be a member of the course unless the student:

- officially drops the course prior to the first day of the term,
- officially withdraws from the University,
- is removed from the course by administrative authority, or is permanently excluded by the Student Academic Grievance Committee.

The VA will not pay benefits to the student for a course from which the student does not attend or stops attending. All financial obligations to APSU are retained when the student discontinues course attendance without officially dropping or withdrawing from the course or APSU.

The FN grade is “the grade awarded for courses when a student **never attends the course.**”

- An FN grade must be reported within the first 14 days of the course.
- An FN grade is considered as an unofficial withdrawal from the course.
- An FN grade may impact the enrollment status of a student which may result in a debt with the VA and a billing from APSU.

The FA grade is “the grade to be assigned as of the date at which the faculty member has determined the student has **stopped attending the course** and is no longer receiving instruction.”

- An FA grade must be reported within 14 days of the last date of attendance.
- An FA grade must include the last date of attendance.
- An FA grade may impact the enrollment status of a student which may result in a debt with the VA and a billing from APSU.

If the faculty later agrees to allow the student back into the course, then the FA grade will need to be removed and the faculty will need to notify the Veterans Education Benefits Office in writing of the student's grade change and verify attendance.

The F grade is not an attendance grade and should be given when a student has failed and attended the course through the end of the term.

- A student who never attended or stopped attending the course cannot earn an F grade.

***NOTE:** A grade change to F or W does not indicate participation in the course and will not allow certification of the course to VA.

Changes That Must Be Communicated

➤ Notify the VEB Office/SCO as soon as you become aware of a change that may affect enrollment.

➤ Examples:

Student stops attending or participating

Student withdraws or drops

Course dates or delivery change

Course is canceled or significantly modified

Faculty-led or special instructional arrangements change

You discover that the actual course delivery differs from the official record

➤ Use established APSU reporting channels—do not wait until the end of the term if the change is known earlier.

Common Misconceptions

“The VA pays the student, so this is between the student and VA.”

The school must provide accurate enrollment information to VA.

“If the student is enrolled, attendance doesn’t matter.”

Participation and academic activity can matter when determining enrollment changes.

“The SCO can fix it later.”

Early notice gives the SCO more options and reduces avoidable problems.

“I need to know all VA regulations before I contact the SCO.”

No. Contact the SCO when you see something that may affect a VA student.

Real-World Scenarios

What would you do?

Scenario 1 — A student stops attending after the second week. What information should the faculty member document and who should be notified?

Scenario 2 — A course originally scheduled in person moves substantially online. What should happen before/when the change occurs?

Scenario 3 — A student says, “I’m dropping this class because my VA benefits are going to be affected.” What should the faculty member do?

Best first response: pause → document → notify the appropriate office.

Real-World Scenarios

Course Drop

Original Certification to the VA:

Enrollment: 12 hours in classroom

Tuition & Fees: \$4,151.50

Prior to 1st day of classes

- Drop one course before the 1st day of classes
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

Dropping a course prior to the first day of the term is within the 100% fee adjustment by Student Account Services

- VA will charge a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.
- Austin Peay refunds \$919.15 to the VA.

During drop without record (by the 14th day of classes)

- Drop one course on the 14th day of classes
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

Typically, the 14th day of class is the last day to receive a 75% fee adjustment by Student Account Services.

VA may charge a school debt up to \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

You will owe the difference between the 75% fee adjustment and what the VA charges Austin Peay.

For example:

- After the fee adjustment has been applied, the dropped course tuition and fees is \$229.79
- VA charges a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds \$919.15 to the VA.
- You will owe \$229.79 to Austin Peay.

Drop during W period

- Drop one course during the W period and no longer in a fee adjustment period
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

VA may charge a school debt up to \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

For example:

- The dropped course is still charged all of the tuition and fees.
- VA charges a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds \$919.15 to the VA.
- You will owe \$919.15 to Austin Peay.

Retroactive Withdraw from Course

- Drop one course at end of the term or after the term is complete
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

VA may charge a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

For example:

- The dropped course is still charged all of the tuition and fees.
- VA charges a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds \$919.15 to the VA.
- You will owe \$919.15 to Austin Peay.

VA determines the amount of the overpayments and debts of tuition and fees

Real-World Scenarios

FA/FN

Original Certification to the VA:

Enrollment: 12 hours in classroom
Tuition & Fees: \$4,151.50

FN Grade (never attended)

- A FN grade has been reported for one course
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

VA will charge a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

- The course with a FN grade is still charged all of the tuition and fees.
- VA charges a school debt of \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds \$919.15 to the VA.
- You will owe \$919.15 to Austin Peay.

FA Grade (stopped attending)

- A FA grade has been reported for one course
- Enrollment is now at 9 hours in classroom.
- Tuition & Fees is \$3,232.35

VA may charge a school debt up to \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

- The course with a FA grade is still charged all of the tuition and fees by Austin Peay.
- VA may charge a school debt up to \$919.15 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds up to \$919.15 to the VA.
- You will owe up to \$919.15 to Austin Peay.

VA determines the amount of the overpayments and debts of tuition and fees

Real-World Scenarios

Withdraw

Original Certification to the VA:

Enrollment: 12 hours in classroom
Tuition & Fees: \$4,151.50

Prior to 1st day of classes

- Withdraw from the term before the 1st day of classes

Withdraw prior to the first day of the term is within the 100% fee adjustment by Student Account Services.

- VA will charge a school debt of \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.
- Austin Peay refunds \$4,151.50 to the VA.

Unofficial Withdraw during or after the Term

FN (never attended) grades are reported for all courses

- You are still charged all of the tuition and fees for the courses.
- VA will charge a school debt of \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.
- Austin Peay refunds \$4,151.50 to the VA.
- You will owe \$4,151.50 to Austin Peay.

FA (stopped attending) grades are reported for all courses

- You are still charged all of the tuition and fees for the courses

- VA may charge a school debt up to \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.
- Austin Peay refunds up to \$4,151.50 to the VA.
- You will owe up to \$4,151.50 to Austin Peay.

Official Withdraw during the Term

If you withdraw during one of the fee adjustment periods by Student Account Services, then the amount of tuition and fees will be adjusted.

- **For Example:** If you withdraw from the term by the 14th day of classes, then typically Student Account Services will apply a 75% fee adjustment to your tuition and fees.

VA may charge a school debt up to \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.

You will owe the difference between the 75% fee adjustment and what the VA charges Austin Peay.

For example:

- After the 75% fee adjustment has been applied, the amount of tuition and fees for the term is \$1037.87.
- VA charges a school debt up to \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay.
- Austin Peay refunds up to \$4,151.50 to the VA.
- You will owe \$1,037.87 to Austin Peay.

Retroactive Withdraw

Withdraw at end of the term or after the term is complete

- VA charges a school debt of \$4,151.50 in tuition and fees to Austin Peay State University.
- Austin Peay refunds \$4,151.50 to the VA.
- You will owe \$4,151.50 to Austin Peay.

VA determines the amount of the overpayments and debts of tuition and fees

How Faculty Can Help

- Keep course information accurate and current.
- Follow normal attendance and academic-record procedures.
- Communicate changes promptly.
- Do not promise a student that a change will or will not affect VA benefits.
- Direct benefit-specific questions to the VEB Office/SCO.
- Remember: early communication is usually easier than correcting an issue after the fact.

You don't have to be a VA expert. You just need to know what changes can affect a student's benefits and when to notify the SCO.

Questions?

Veterans Education Benefits (VEB) Office

Austin Peay State University

School Certifying Official / Veterans Education Benefits Team

Use the APSU VEB Office's established contact channel for faculty questions and student-specific certification concerns.

Thank you for helping us support our Veterans, service members, and military-connected students.

Questions • Scenarios • Discussion

Designated School Certifying Officials (SCO)

Elizabeth Stonerock – Director of VEB and Compliance

Jessica Cortes-Rosalez – VEB SCO

Melissa Martin – VEB SCO

Jose Mendoza – VEB Senior SCO

Alyssa Pearce – VEB SCO

Gregory Summers – VEB SCO

Logan Grisham – VEB Technology Specialist

Shanon Manly – Military-Affiliated Accounting Supervisor

Kylie Harp – Military-Affiliated Accounting Specialist

Because Superhero was not an Official Job Title