

## **DigiPen Institute of Technology**

### **VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS HANDBOOK**

Descriptions of VA policies and procedures within represent our best understanding of VA policy. Students are encouraged to double check this information, either at the VA Education Benefits Website or with a VA service representative.

In order to receive Veterans Benefits on a continuing basis students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress as defined by the Financial Aid Office. For more information on the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy visit <http://www.digipen.edu/financial-aid> or stop by the Financial Aid Office located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of DigiPen's Redmond Campus Building to request a printed copy of the policy.

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## POST-9/11 – CHAPTER 33 (W/O YELLOW RIBBON)

### TUITION COVERAGE

Students receive tuition coverage up to a certain percentage of their tuition, determined by the VA. This percentage is also capped by the VA's Maximum Tuition & Fees Payable to Private Colleges. For the 2019-20 academic year, that maximum is \$24,476.79. For example, a student with 80% coverage under chapter 33, the VA will pay 80% of their tuition and fees up to \$19,581.43 for the academic year. This may result in a larger balance due in the spring semester as the cap will have been met.

Classes that do not apply to your degree or classes being repeated despite having received a passing grade (or a grade necessary to progress, if higher) cannot be certified with the VA. If a student is taking courses that cannot be certified with the VA, they will be responsible for any associated charges. In the event that it is the difference between full and part time enrollment, they will be responsible for the difference between the full time tuition and what the per-credit tuition would be without the classes. There is an exception for a student's final semester; see Rounding Out later in this handbook.

VA Tuition benefit is not added to a student's account until funds are received, after the semester has started. Students and families are not expected to pre-pay the anticipated tuition coverage, although students may receive late payment notices or a hold on their account. You may e-mail [veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu) if you would like an estimate of your anticipated tuition coverage.

### MONTHLY HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Students receive a Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) from the VA. The MHA is based on E-5 with dependents for the zip code of the school in most cases. For the 2019-20 VA Academic Year, MHA is \$2,574. The student receives the percentage of that amount for which they qualify (i.e. a student with 80% coverage will receive 80% of MHA). It is also prorated during months where classes are in session for part of the month; students will receive proportionally reduced amounts for August, December, January and, possibly, April or May, depending on the academic calendar. It is also prorated based on enrollment level if less than full time.

Payments are made at the end of the month (i.e. September's payment is made around September 30) and are made as checks to the student unless the student has set up direct deposit with the VA. Active duty service members and their spouses do not receive the MHA.

Students living in DigiPen housing are required to pay room charges at the regular due date. You will need to prepay the costs or set up payment arrangements with the Accounting Office and use the MHA to reimburse yourself.

### BOOK STIPEND

Students receive a book stipend of \$1,000, prorated by their percentage of benefit eligibility and paid out per credit based on 24 credits (or about \$41.67 per credit for the first 24 credits). For example, a student with 60% coverage will receive \$25 per credit for their first 24 credits, up to \$600 total.

## WITHDRAWING FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

Withdrawals must be reported to the VA along with what tuition and fees would have been if certified without the dropped class(es) at the beginning of the semester. Students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. For undergraduates remaining above full time, the difference will be any course fees associated with the dropped course. If a student drops below full time, they may be responsible for the difference between a full-time course load and the part time tuition.

The VA does not require us to report when non-attendance in a single class results in an F.

## POST-9/11 – CHAPTER 33 W/YELLOW RIBBON

### TUITION COVERAGE

The Yellow Ribbon program supplements the normal tuition coverage under Chapter 33 and is only available for students with 100% coverage who are not active duty or spouses of active duty service members. The maximum tuition coverage for the 2019-20 academic year, is \$24,476.79. Yellow Ribbon can cover up to another \$10,000 per year, which normally covers fall and spring tuition for undergraduate and graduate students. Students may have out of pocket tuition costs if they enroll in the Summer.

Classes that do not apply to your degree or classes being repeated despite having received a passing grade (or a grade necessary to progress, if higher) cannot be certified with the VA. If a student is taking courses that cannot be certified with the VA, they will be responsible for any associated charges. In the event that it is the difference between full and part time enrollment, they will be responsible for the difference between the full time tuition and what the per-credit tuition would be without the classes. There is an exception for a student's final semester; see Rounding Out later in this handbook.

VA Tuition benefit is not added to a student's account until funds are received, after the semester has started. Students and families are not expected to pre-pay the anticipated tuition coverage, although students may receive late payment notices or a hold on their account. You may e-mail [veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu) if you would like an estimate of your anticipated tuition coverage.

### MONTHLY HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Students receive a monthly housing allowance (MHA) from the VA. The housing allowance is based on category E-5 with dependents for the zip code of the school (90852) in most cases. For the 2019-20 VA Academic Year, MHA is \$2,574. It is prorated during months where classes are in session for part of the month; students will receive proportionally reduced amounts for August, December, January and, possibly, April or May, depending on the academic calendar. It is also prorated based on enrollment level if less than full time.

Payments are made at the end of the month (i.e. September's payment is made around September 30) and are made as checks to the student unless the student has set up direct deposit with the VA.

Students living on campus are required to pay room and board charges at the regular due date. You will need to prepay the costs and use the MHA to reimburse yourself.

### BOOK STIPEND

Students receive a book stipend of \$1,000, paid out per credit based on 24 credits (or about \$41.67 per credit for the first 24 credits).

### WITHDRAWING FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

Withdrawals must be reported to the VA along with what tuition and fees would have been if certified without the dropped class(es) at the beginning of the semester. Students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. For undergraduates remaining above full time, the difference will be any course

fees or professional tuition associated with the dropped course(s). If a student drops below full time, they may be responsible for the difference between a full-time course load and the part time tuition.

The VA does not require us to report when non-attendance in a single class results in an F.

## **APPLYING FOR YELLOW RIBBON BENEFIT**

Only students who are eligible for 100% tuition coverage under Chapter 33 (post 9/11 VA education benefits) may qualify for the Yellow Ribbon Program. Active duty service members and their spouses are ineligible for Yellow Ribbon, however dependents of active duty service members are still eligible.

The DigiPen has 70 undergraduate Yellow Ribbon spots and 5 graduate Yellow Ribbon spots available. Per VA regulations, these spots must be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis within the application process determined by the school.

Students who wish to use Yellow Ribbon benefits at DigiPen must identify themselves to the VA Certifying Official on a first come first serve basis. Students will be put on the Yellow Ribbon waitlist and will be given 14 days to submit their Certificate of Eligibility to the Office of Financial Aid. If they do not submit their COE within 14 days, their yellow ribbon spot will be passed to the next student on the waitlist. They can reapply for Yellow Ribbon at a later date by getting back on the waitlist.

## CHAPTER 31 – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

### TUITION

Vocational Rehab pays varying amounts of tuition and fees depending on benefit level. The DigiPen will work with the student's case worker to process payment.

### HOUSING PAYMENTS

If you are receiving the Chapter 33 amount instead of the subsistence allowance, please review the subsection on Monthly Housing Allowance of the Chapter 33 with Yellow Ribbon section.

### BOOKS & SUPPLIES

Students attending under the Chapter 31 – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program are allowed to purchase required books and supplies. The VA authorizes all purchases and a course syllabus or documentation from the course instructor/head of the department is normally needed to determine what items are required and when.

Chapter 31 students may acquire a voucher to purchase books and supplies. The VA also has a list of additional authorized supplies considered acceptable for purchase from the bookstore once each term.

### WITHDRAWING FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

Withdrawals must be reported to the VA along with what tuition and fees would have been if certified without the dropped class(es) at the beginning of the semester. Students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. For undergraduates remaining above full time, the difference will be any course fees or professional tuition associated with the dropped course(s). If a student drops below full time, they may be responsible for the difference between a full-time course load and the part time tuition.

The VA does not require us to report when non-attendance in a single class results in an F.

## MONTGOMERY GI BILL® – CHAPTERS 30, 35, 1606

### MONTHLY STIPENDS

Students receive monthly stipends, which are sent directly to the student. The current rates can be found at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits\\_resources/rate\\_tables.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits_resources/rate_tables.asp). Direct deposit can be set up at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/manage/contact>. We can only certify classes that are required for the student's degree and that are not repeats of classes taken and passed (or taken and passed with a grade required for progression if higher).

### WITHDRAWING FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

Student's monthly stipend is based on enrollment level (full time,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, half time,  $\frac{1}{4}$  time, less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  time). So long as students remain enrolled within their level, there should be no change to their benefit. If their enrollment level changes, students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. Failure to complete a course, including the final exam, is considered a withdrawal by the VA.

The VA does not require us to report when non-attendance in a single class results in an F.



## THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Each semester, the DigiPen is required to submit to the VA the credit load, tuition and fees for all students wishing to use their benefit. This is known as certification.

### INITIAL CERTIFICATION

In order to start the initial certification process, students will need to provide the School Certifying Official with a copy of their Certificate of Eligibility (obtained from the VA), copy of DD-214 (if veteran student), and complete DigiPen's *VA Benefits Certification Request Form*. If students need to complete any other documents or forms for the VA, the School Certifying Official will notify the student of the requirements.

### SEMESTER CERTIFICATION

Once registration happens, the Office of Financial Aid will send out an email with the ***VA Benefits Certification Request Form*** attached each semester for completion. **Students will not be certified for the semester until the VA Benefits Certification Request Form is return, completed with all necessary signatures.** If a student does not want to be certified they do not need to fill out the certification request form, however, they will receive reminders to do so until they notify the Office of Financial Aid.

Submitting the VA Benefits Certification Request Form will indicate a student's interest in being certified for the semester as well as show that all of the courses they are registered for count towards their degree progression.

Students certifications will be reviewed as they are submitted and students will be certified in the VA Once system once all required documentation is received.

Your initial certification will be based on enrollment as reported on the VA Benefits Certification Request Form as of the date the certifying official processes fall certifications. This is so any non-tuition payments are made promptly. After add/drop final semester registration will be certified to the VA.

## IMPORTANT DEADLINES

### 2019-20 VA BENEFITS CALENDAR

Academic Year Dates + Deadlines	2019-2020
<p><b>FAFSA</b> available for coming aid year. Complete the FAFSA as early in October as possible for maximum consideration.</p>	<p>October 1, 2018</p>
<p><b>Priority FAFSA receipt deadline.</b> FAFSA must be received by the Financial Aid Office for maximum consideration. You may still complete a FAFSA after this date and be considered for aid, however, your aid maybe delayed.</p>	<p>February 1, 2019</p>
<p>Priority deadline for <b>all students</b> to provide VA Certifying Official with their updated Certificate of Eligibility for the year.</p>	<p>July 15, 2019</p>
<p>Priority deadline for <b>all students</b> to provide VA Certifying Official with the VA Benefits Request for Certification for <b>fall semester</b>.</p>	<p>July 15, 2019</p>
<p>VA Benefit students are certified for fall semester.</p>	<p>August 3, 2019</p>
<p>Fall semester <b>Tuition due</b>.</p>	<p>August 15, 2019</p>
<p>VA Benefit payments for fall semester start to arrive.</p>	<p>August 15, 2019</p>
<p>Fall semester <b>starts</b></p>	<p>September 3, 2019</p>
<p>Fall <b>undergraduate and graduate census</b> date.</p>	<p>September 16, 2019</p>
<p><b>Final grades for fall semester</b> are certified to VA after fall grades post. Students with punitive grades could owe funds back to the VA.</p>	<p>December 13, 2019</p>
<p>Priority deadline for <b>all students</b> to provide VA Certifying Official with the VA Benefits Request for Certification for <b>spring</b> semester.</p>	<p>December 1, 2019</p>

Academic Year Dates + Deadlines	2019-2020
VA Benefits for spring semester are certified.	December 6, 2019
Spring semester <b>Tuition due.</b>	December 15, 2019
First Day of <b>Spring Semester</b>	January 6, 2020
Spring <b>undergraduate and graduate census</b> date.	January 20, 2020
<b>Final grades for spring semester</b> are certified to VA after spring grades post. Students with punitive grades could owe funds back to the VA.	April 26, 2020

## VA BENEFITS & FINANCIAL AID

The Office of Financial Aid recommends that all students file a FAFSA every year, even though it is not required to receive VA benefits. By filing a FAFSA, students may qualify for additional grant money, specifically the Pell Grant, which can be claimed in addition to VA benefits.

Filing a FAFSA also prepares a student should they no longer qualify for VA benefits. Should this happen, having a FAFSA already filed means a quicker turnaround time for getting a non-VA financial aid award letter and processing federal loans.

## VA BENEFITS & LATE CERTIFICATION

All chapter 31 or 33 VA students who have submitted a copy of their Certificate of Eligibility to the School Certifying Official by the first day of classes will not receive a late fee, be denied access to classes, libraries, or other institutional facilities, have their account frozen or be required to cover any covered portion of their financial obligation due to delayed disbursement funding from the VA.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS DEGREE

Only courses that satisfy requirements outlined by the DigiPen Course Catalog can be certified for VA Benefit purposes. If a student takes courses that do not fulfill a program requirement, it cannot be certified for VA purposes.

If students are unsure if their course count towards their degree requirements, please check with your Student Success Advisor prior to enrolling. The VA Certifying Official can be contacted with any questions regarding eligibility of VA benefits and enrolled credits.

## REPEATING COURSES

Classes that were successfully completed may not be certified again for VA purposes if they are repeated. However, if a student fails a class, or if a program requires a higher grade than the one achieved in a particular class for successful completion, that class may be repeated and certified to the VA again.

## ROUNDING OUT

During a student's final semester only, a student needing less than a full time course load to graduate may take additional courses to qualify as a full time student in order to maintain full housing benefit. The term that the VA uses for this is "rounding out".

Students can only do this once per school, so if a student is planning on using VA benefits towards a second degree at the DigiPen they may wish to determine whether or not waiting to round out is better.

Federal financial aid and DigiPen institutional aid operate differently. **A student considering rounding out who is also using other aid** should e-mail [veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu) and ask for an overview of their financial aid package.

## RESOURCES

DIGIPEN RESOURCES	Email	Phone/Location
Certifying Official, Molly Walsh	<a href="mailto:veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu">veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu</a>	425.629.5002 Redmond Campus, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor
Financial Aid Office	<a href="mailto:faid@digipen.edu">faid@digipen.edu</a>	425.629.5002 Redmond Campus, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor
Accounting Office	<a href="mailto:accounting@digipen.edu">accounting@digipen.edu</a>	425.629.5025 Redmond Campus, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor