

# Veterans Affairs Benefits Handbook

**2023–2024**

Revised 06/29/2023

**Office of Financial Aid**

DigiPen Institute of Technology

9931 Willows Road NE, Redmond, WA 98052

Phone: 425.629.5002, Toll Free: 866.478.5236

Email: [\*veteranbenefits@digipen.edu\*](mailto:veteranbenefits@digipen.edu)

[\*www.digipen.edu\*](http://www.digipen.edu)

# Table of Contents

<b>VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS HANDBOOK .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>VA EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS AT DIGIPEN .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 33: Post-9/11 GI Bill® .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Tuition & Fees Coverage.....	4
Yellow Ribbon Program.....	4
Monthly Housing Allowance.....	5
Book Stipend .....	5
<b>Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 31: Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&amp;E) .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Tuition.....	6
Housing Payments .....	6
Books & Supplies .....	6
<b>Chapters 30 and 1606: Montgomery GI Bill® and Chapter 35 (DEA) .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Monthly Stipends .....	6
<b>HOW TO APPLY FOR YOUR VA EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Military Transcripts .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Initial Certification .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Requesting Certification of benefits .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Late Certification .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IMPORTANT DEADLINES.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2023–2024 VA Benefits Calendar.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>VA BENEFITS &amp; FINANCIAL AID.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>VA BENEFITS &amp; ACADEMIC PROGRESS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Progress Towards Degree.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Repeating Courses.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Rounding Out .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Changes in Enrollment/Withdrawing from School .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Adding Classes.....	12
Dropping Classes or withdrawing from DigiPen .....	12
<b>DIGIPEN RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## Introduction

Descriptions of VA policies and procedures within represent our best understanding of VA policy. Students are encouraged to verify this information through 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 in the DigiPen Course Catalog. For more information on the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy, please view the [\*23-24 DigiPen Course Catalog\*](#).

## VA Educational Benefit Programs at DigiPen

Below you will find a description of all the VA Educational Benefit Programs in which DigiPen participates.

### Chapter 33: Post-9/11 GI Bill®

The GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by the VA is available at the official U.S. government website at [benefits.va.gov/gibill/](https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/).

#### TUITION & FEES COVERAGE

Students receive tuition and fees coverage up to the percentage determined by the VA. This percentage is also capped by the VA's Maximum Tuition & Fees Payable to Private Colleges. For the 2023-24 academic year, that maximum is **\$27,120.05**. For example, for a student with 80% coverage under Chapter 33, the VA will pay 80% of their tuition and fees for the academic year. Because VA benefits are front-loaded with a majority of benefits paid at the start of the academic year in fall semester, this may result in a larger balance due in the spring semester, as the maximum will have been met.

VA Tuition benefit funds are added to a student's account when they are received from the VA, 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. You may e-mail [veteranbenefits@digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@digipen.edu) if you would like an estimate of your anticipated tuition coverage.

#### YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

The Yellow Ribbon Program supplements the tuition coverage benefit under Chapter 33 and is only available for students with 100% coverage who are veterans or dependents of active duty service members. *Prior to August 1, 2022, active duty service members are not eligible for Yellow Ribbon.* In addition to Chapter 33 tuition coverage, Yellow Ribbon can cover up to another **\$16,000** per academic year with the DigiPen match. Chapter 33 benefits plus Yellow Ribbon will typically cover fall and spring tuition for undergraduate and graduate students. Students may have out-of-pocket tuition costs if they enroll in the summer semester.

The amount of students who can receive Yellow Ribbon annually is limited. DigiPen has 70 undergraduate and 5 graduate spots available and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis per VA regulations.

**How to apply for Yellow Ribbon:** Students who wish to use their Yellow Ribbon benefits at DigiPen must identify themselves to DigiPen's VA School Certifying Official (SCO) by either calling (425) 629-5002 or emailing [veteranbenefits@digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@digipen.edu). Students are then added to the Yellow Ribbon waitlist. From this point, students have 14 business days to submit their Certificate of Eligibility (see instructions below) to the School Certifying Official. Failure to submit the Certificate of Eligibility within 14 days may result in the student losing their spot on the waitlist. If a student loses their spot on the waitlist, they can reapply for Yellow Ribbon at a later date by repeating this process.

## MONTHLY HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Students receive a Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) from the VA if they are enrolled in at least seven credit hours. For the most up to date coverage, visit [the VA Comparison Tool](#). The MHA is prorated based on the student's length of duty percentage (i.e. a student with 80% coverage will receive 80% of MHA). It is prorated during months in which classes are in session for part of the month. Students will receive proportionally reduced amounts for August, December, January, March and April or May, depending on the academic calendar. Additionally, MHA is prorated based on enrollment level and modality of classes. Online classes will be eligible for MHA that is half the national average. *Active duty service members and their spouses do not receive the MHA.*

Payments are made at the end of the month (i.e. September's payment is made around September 30) through check distribution unless the student has set up direct deposit with the VA. 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 your MHA to reimburse yourself.

Monthly enrollment self-certification with the VA directly is required for all Chapter 33 beneficiaries to continue receiving their MHA. Detailed information is available at

[https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/isaksonroe/verification\\_of\\_enrollment.asp](https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/isaksonroe/verification_of_enrollment.asp).

**Resident courses conducted in person and hybrid courses that have at least one in-person class session will be eligible for full MHA entitlement. Students must be enrolled in at least 12 resident or hybrid credits for full MHA eligibility.**

**Online classes will be eligible for MHA that is half the national average rate. Please refer to <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/covid19educationbenefits.asp> or call the Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 for the most up-to-date information.**

## 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.

## Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

The Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship is available for students who have exhausted or are close to exhausting their Chapter 33 benefits AND are enrolled in an eligible STEM program.

Recipients of the STEM Scholarship will receive up to 9 months of additional benefits (or a maximum of \$30,000). You may be eligible to apply for the STEM Scholarship if:

- You have exhausted or will exhaust your Chapter 33 benefits within the next 6 months
- You are enrolled in an eligible STEM program (undergraduates only)
- You have completed at least 60 credits toward your degree program

Additional notes about this program:

- Graduate programs are not currently approved for use of the STEM Scholarship.
- The STEM Scholarship shares the same annual caps as Chapter 33. For example, if you use up your annual Chapter 33 benefits in fall and spring semesters, you will be unable to use the STEM Scholarship during summer semester.
- The Yellow Ribbon Program cannot be used with the STEM Scholarship.

If you are awarded the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship, you will need to notify the VA School Certifying Official of the award and follow the same instructions below in The Certification Process.

For more information, please visit: <http://benefits.va.gov/gibill/fgib/stem.asp>

## Chapter 31: Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)

### TUITION

VR&E pays varying amounts of tuition and fees depending on benefit level. The DigiPen School Certifying Official will work with the student's caseworker to process payment.

### HOUSING PAYMENTS

Students receiving the Chapter 33 MHA amount instead of the subsistence allowance should review the subsection on Monthly Housing Allowance of the Chapter 33 with Yellow Ribbon section.

### BOOKS & SUPPLIES

Students attending under the Chapter 31 – Veteran Readiness and Employment Program (VR&E) 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.

## Chapters 30 and 1606: Montgomery GI Bill<sup>®</sup> and Chapter 35 (DEA)

### MONTHLY STIPENDS

Students receive monthly stipends, 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>.

## How to Apply for Your VA Educational Benefits

In order to determine your eligibility for VA educational benefit programs, students will need to visit <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> to begin the application process.

Once the VA has verified benefits, they will provide the student with a **Certificate of Eligibility (COE)**, which describes program eligibility and educational benefits. The student will need to forward a complete copy of the Certificate of Eligibility to the School Certifying Official in the Office of Financial Aid.

### MILITARY TRANSCRIPTS

If you are a veteran, please submit all military transcripts to admissions when applying to DigiPen Institute of Technology. A review of your military transcripts will determine if any credits can be transferred to your degree program.

## The Certification Process

Each semester that a student wishes to use their VA educational benefits, DigiPen is required to report the student's degree-related credits, tuition and fees to the VA.

### INITIAL CERTIFICATION

In order to start the 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 Enrollment 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.

### REQUESTING CERTIFICATION OF BENEFITS

Around the time of early registration for the upcoming semester, the School Certifying Official will send the **VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form** to all eligible students through email. Completing and signing this form serves as a student's request to be certified for the semester. Students will need to have their Student Success Advisor or the Office of the Registrar review and sign their form confirming course modality and that all of the courses they are register for count towards their degree progression. **Students will not be certified for the semester until the VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form is returned and completed with all necessary signatures.**

Initial semester certification will be based on enrollment, as reported on the VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form, as of the date the school certifying official processes certifications for that semester. This is so any non-tuition VA payments such as MHAs and stipends can be made promptly to the student. After the add/drop census period, the final semester registration will be certified to the VA.

If a student does not want to be certified for a particular semester, they do not need to fill out the certification request form, however, they will receive reminders to do so until they notify the School Certifying Official at [veteranbenefits@digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@digipen.edu).

## 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 pay any covered portion of their financial obligation due to delayed disbursement funding from the VA.

The Financial Aid Office has **30 days** after the first day of the term to submit all certifications of benefits to the VA (see 2023-2024 VA Benefits Calendar for specific date deadlines). If a student has not submitted their VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form (as well as all other required eligibility paperwork) by the deadline, their VA benefit, including tuition, stipend or MHA may be delayed. The amounts paid are always at the discretion of the VA. If the VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form is not submitted for the semester, it will be up to the student to cover their debt with the Office of Accounting through other means. For extenuating circumstances regarding your benefits or enrollment, contact the School Certifying Official directly at [veteranbenefits@digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@digipen.edu).



# Important Deadlines

## 2023–2024 VA Benefits Calendar

ACADEMIC YEAR DATES + DEADLINES	2023-2024
<b>FAFSA</b> available for coming aid year. Complete the FAFSA as early in October as possible for maximum consideration.	October 1, 2022
<b>Priority FAFSA receipt deadline.</b> FAFSA must be received by the Office of Financial Aid for maximum consideration. You may still complete a FAFSA after this date and be considered for aid, however, your aid maybe delayed.	February 1, 2023
Priority deadline for <b>all students</b> to provide VA Certifying Official with the 23-24 VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form for <b>fall semester</b> .	August 15, 2023
Fall semester <b>tuition due</b> for non-Chapter 33 and 31 students. <b>Housing balance</b> for fall is due for all students.	August 15, 2023
Fall semester starts	August 28, 2023
Fall <b>undergraduate and graduate</b> census date	September 11, 2023
<b>Final day</b> to submit initial 23-24 VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form for fall semester.	September 15, 2023
Priority deadline for <b>all students</b> to provide VA Certifying Official with the VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request Form for <b>spring semester</b> .	December 1, 2023
<b>Final grades for fall semester</b> are certified to VA. Students with non-punitive grades could owe funds back to the VA.	December 15, 2023
Spring semester <b>tuition due</b> for non-Chapter 33 and 31 students. <b>Housing balance</b> for spring is due for all students.	December 15, 2023

<b>ACADEMIC YEAR DATES + DEADLINES</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
First Day of <b>Spring Semester</b>	January 8, 2024
Spring <b>undergraduate and graduate census</b> date	January 22, 2024
<b>Final day</b> to submit initial 23-24 VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request for spring semester.	January 26, 2024
<b>Priority filing date</b> for summer 23-24 semester VA Benefits Enrollment Certification Request.***	April 15, 2024
<b>Final grades for spring semester</b> are certified to VA. Students with non-punitive grades could owe funds back to the VA.	May 6, 2024
<b>Summer 2024 semester</b> starts	May 6, 2024
Summer 2024 <b>census day</b>	May 20, 2024
<b>Final grades</b> are certified to VA. Students with non-punitive grades could owe funds back to the VA.	August 5, 2024

**\*\*\*Note about Summer semester: Chapter 33 students who attended full time during fall and spring semesters and were certified for both semesters will likely have depleted their VA tuition benefits. Students in this situation can be certified to receive summer housing benefits. However, we recommend against this as it counts against your total months of education benefits. Please contact the VA School Certifying Official to discuss the impact on your total benefits if you request summer certification or summer MHA.**

## VA Benefits & Financial Aid

The Office of Financial Aid recommends that all students file a FAFSA each 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.

In the event that a student no longer qualifies for VA Benefits, having a FAFSA on file helps prevent any delays in federal funding needed to cover tuition and other expenses.

## VA Benefits & Academic Progress

### Progress Towards Degree

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

If a student is unsure if a course counts toward their degree program requirements, they will need to check with their Student Success Advisor prior to enrolling. The VA School 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. 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".

Beginning July 5, 2022, students can round out in their last term if they are taking classes that are approved for their program of education. For example, if a student has a choice of two different requirements to fulfill a degree requirement and chooses option A for their degree. They can round out by completing option B in their final semester. Classes that have been previously completed cannot be used to round out the student's course load. If the student has taken every class as part of their degree program, they can round out with any class.

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.

## Changes in Enrollment/Withdrawing from School

***Please note that it is the student's responsibility to report changes in their enrollment to the VA Certifying Official as soon as possible.***

### **ADDING CLASSES**

Students wishing to add classes after they already submitted a VA Benefits Certification Request Form will need to complete an updated VA Benefits Certification Request Form, have it reviewed and signed by their Student Success Advisor or Office of the Registrar and submit it to the School Certifying Official. Classes may only be added during the regular add/drop period at the beginning of the semester.

### **DROPPING CLASSES OR WITHDRAWING FROM DIGIPEN**

Dropped classes or full 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 repaying all or part of the difference. The VA determines the amount which must be returned, and it is DigiPen's responsibility to return these funds to the VA on the student's behalf. The student may end up with a balance owed to DigiPen, see Financial Responsibility below.

If a student withdraws from DigiPen, prior to attending any courses in a semester, all funds will be returned to the VA by DigiPen.

Students who are considering a full withdrawal from DigiPen (mid-semester or end of semester) should consult with the VA School Certifying Official (SCO) prior to withdrawing to discuss opportunities for mitigating circumstances and credit hour exclusion. The one time Six (6) Credit Hour Exclusion and Mitigating Circumstances VA Forgiveness Programs are in effect, and the evaluation of extenuating circumstances will be determined at the VA's discretion.

### **Non-Punitive Grades**

When students receive non-punitive grades, i.e. NP, W, or HW, those grades must be certified to the VA. The VA considers a non-punitive grade to be an uncompleted course. Those uncompleted courses will be certified to the VA, and it is possible that students could owe funds back to DigiPen for the credits in which they received non-punitive grades.

### **Financial Responsibility**

In accordance with new legislation – ***Public Law 116-135, Section 1019***, effective 1/5/2021, there has been a change in financial responsibility for students using Chapter 33 and Yellow Ribbon benefits. Any credit reduction, including full institutional withdrawal, after the 100% refund period may result in a debt to DigiPen, which if not paid can freeze your student account, access to registration and on campus services.

## DigiPen Resources

### **School Certifying Official**

Email: [veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu](mailto:veteranbenefits@us.digipen.edu)

Phone: (425) 629-5002

Office Location: Redmond Campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

### **Office of Financial Aid**

Email: [faid@digipen.edu](mailto:faid@digipen.edu)

Phone: (425) 629-5002

Office Location: Redmond Campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

### **Accounting Office**

Email: [accounting@digipen.edu](mailto:accounting@digipen.edu)

Phone: (425) 629-5054

Office Location: Redmond Campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor