Military-Affiliated Students

Policy Type: Board of Visitors
Responsible Office: Office of Military Student Services, Division of Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Initial Policy Approved: see Revision History section
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Policy Statement and Purpose

Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes the unique needs of military students and students who are dependents of those in the armed forces. The purpose of this policy is to describe programs and exemptions available to such military-affiliated students at VCU in compliance with applicable law and state policy governing such students.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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Who Should Know This Policy

Military-affiliated students and university employees (including faculty) are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.
Definitions

Call to Active Military Duty
Any operation, including a defense crisis, in which the President of the United States declares a sudden mobilization of any part of the U.S. Armed Forces, including reserve forces or the U.S. National Guard. This includes involuntary inactive duty for training (IDT) and annual training for Reserves and National Guard forces.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
CLEP is a group of standardized tests that assess college-level knowledge in several subject areas by students pursuing college degrees in non-traditional formats.

Continuous enrollment
Students who withdraw from all courses after the first week of the semester are considered to have been enrolled for the semester. Students who do not attend VCU for three or more successive semesters excluding summer sessions must submit an application for readmission to Undergraduate Admissions.

Course Requirements
Components that must be completed in order to obtain credit for a course, which may include, but is not limited to, papers, tests, quizzes, class participation, contact time, examinations, projects, experiments, work experience, or clinical experience.

Credit Hour
A credit hour is defined as a reasonable approximation of not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. Credit is based on at least an equivalent amount of work for other academic activities including laboratory work, internships, practice, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours and established by individual programs. This definition represents the minimum standard. Student time commitment per credit hour may be higher in individual programs.

Dependent
Military dependents are the spouse(s), children, and possibly other familial relationship categories of a sponsoring military member for purposes of pay as well as special benefits, privileges, and rights.

DSST Exam
Academic tests offered by DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) for college credit.

JST
The Joint Services Transcript (JST) is a synchronized transcript presenting data for the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard.

Military-Affiliated Student
A military student or a dependent of a military student.
Military Student
An active-duty member, or veteran, of a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, including reservists, or of the U.S. National Guard, or of the U.S. Coast Guard.

USAF Transcript
The USAF Transcript is a synchronized transcript presenting data for the Community College of the United States Air Force (USAF), federal program offered by the Air Force that grants two-year Associate of Applied Science degrees in association with Air University.

Contacts
The Office of Military Student Services (MSS) officially interprets this policy. MSS is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct all policy questions to MSS militaryserv@vcu.edu.

Policy Specifics and Procedures

1. Military In-State Tuition and Academic Advising: This policy and procedure accords eligible military-affiliated students in-state tuition rates regardless of residency status, as required by applicable law, including the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (“Choice Act”), as amended.
   A. VCU will charge the following covered individuals a rate of tuition not to exceed the in-state rate for tuition and fees:
      I. A veteran using educational assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill–Active Duty Program or the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, who lives in Virginia while attending a school located in Virginia (regardless of their formal state of residence) and enrolls in the school within three years of discharge or release from a period of active duty service of 90 days or more.

      II. Anyone using transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits who lives in Virginia while attending a school located in Virginia (regardless of their formal state of residence) and enrolls in the school within three years of the transferor’s discharge or release from a period of active duty service of 90 days or more.

      III. Anyone described above while they remain continuously enrolled (other than during regularly scheduled breaks between courses, semesters or terms) at the same school. The person so described must have enrolled in the school prior to the expiration of the three year period following discharge or release as described above and must be using educational benefits under either the Montgomery G.I. Bill–Active Duty Program or the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.

      IV. Anyone using benefits under the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship who lives in Virginia while attending a school located in Virginia (regardless of his/her formal state of residence).
V. Anyone using transferred Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits who lives in Virginia while attending a school located in Virginia (regardless of the individual's formal state of residence) and the transferor is a member of the uniformed service who is serving on active duty.

B. VCU will inform students of their in-state or out-of-state (non-resident) status once the admissions office has completed the student's application review. Non-resident students in one of the categories described in section 1(A) above must contact MSS to confirm eligibility and provide necessary supporting documentation for the 702 Choice Act waiver. VCU classifies students eligible for a waiver as non-residents for reporting purposes but charges the in-state tuition rate for any credit earned up to 125 percent of the credit hours needed to complete their academic program.

C. If a student using the 702 Choice Act waiver described above exceeds 125 percent of the credit hours needed to complete their academic program, the waiver is void, and VCU will charge the non-resident tuition rate for all credits above the 125 percent limit. At that time, VCU will charge the student the difference between the in-state and non-resident rates for all credits above the 125 percent level.

D. VCU offers academic advising to any student eligible under section 1(A) regardless of their degree-seeking status.

2. **Awarding Credit for Military Education**: Military students admitted to a degree-seeking program may receive credit towards their degree for completion of equivalent coursework and/or educational experiences while serving in the armed forces.

   A. A student seeking credit for military education must submit any JST or USAF Transcript and all relevant documents to admissions to determine eligibility for credit. VCU will consider documentation in light of previous decisions made in other cases by VCU, by other Virginia colleges and universities, and by other accredited universities to the greatest extent possible.

   B. Such credit may be awarded for:

      I. Courses that have received the positive recommendation of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences of the American Council for Education for undergraduate credit as stated in the most recent edition of the “Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services.”

      II. Acceptable scores earned on Dantes/DSST subject tests.

      III. Acceptable scores earned on CLEP subject tests.

      IV. Acceptable scores earned on the Excelsior College examination.

      V. Individualized portfolio evaluation, which may be conducted by faculty at the individual colleges or by using the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) guidelines or CAEL’s LearningCounts.org, a national online prior learning assessment service.
C. Schools and colleges are not required to award credit for coursework that is not offered at VCU or is not reasonably comparable to coursework that is offered at VCU. Any denial of credit shall include documentation of an educationally grounded rationale.

D. Any credits for military education count towards degree requirements but are not a factor in calculating GPA.

E. VCU may grant advanced standing to veterans, Junior ROTC graduates or members of the Reserves/National Guard after the relevant academic department chair’s review of academic records and verification of ROTC academic alignment. The number of credits accepted toward graduation requirements is determined by each school.

3. Early Course Registration: This procedure allows military-affiliated students to register for classes before standard advance course registration as set forth in the VCU academic calendar.

A. A military student is eligible for early registration after completing one semester at VCU. VCU may grant early registration to spouses of military students who petition MSS for early registration if, in the opinion of MSS, the active duty/deployment has sufficient impact on their academic schedule.

B. A military student not utilizing Veterans Administration educational benefits must contact MSS or admissions to request early registration no later than two weeks prior to the published VCU academic calendar’s first day of early registration. If MSS has not yet verified eligibility, the student must provide the appropriate verification documentation to MSS before early registration is activated.

C. All students identified for early registration will receive a notification email with instructions approximately two weeks prior to the early registration date. Students with holds in place must resolve holds before they can register.

D. All students registering for classes early may register on or after the early registration date in the appropriate system. If a military student has any issues registering for classes, they should contact MSS.

E. Students, Academic Advisors, Faculty, Department Chairs, Assistant and Associate Deans, Deans, the Division of Strategic Enrollment Management, and the Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

4. Military Activation Policy: This policy and procedure permits any students called to active military duty during an academic semester to have an opportunity to earn full course credit.

A. A military student who must relocate due to active military duty and seeks full credit for courses in progress must provide MSS with a copy of the student’s active duty orders.
B. If an admissions decision has been rendered and an offer of admission has been made, but the student has not yet enrolled when they are deployed for active duty military service, they may defer enrollment for up to one year from the date of admission by submitting the relevant active duty orders to MSS along with a request to defer enrollment. After a deferral has been granted, the student must provide updated contact information and information for determination of residency for tuition purposes to the office of admissions prior to their enrollment.

C. If activation occurs after the semester has begun, the student may notify MSS in writing of a request for one of the following options, and provide any required additional documentation:

   I. If activation is before the end of the add/drop period, drop all courses and receive a full refund of all payments to the university including deposits. Students will be asked to certify with the registrar that they are not owed and have not received a financial aid refund.

   II. Receive a grade of Incomplete (IM – Incomplete Military) in one or all courses. Students residing in university housing and/or on a dining services contract will receive a prorated refund of these charges including deposits. Students with grades of IM will not receive a tuition and fees reduction for these courses because the student will earn the credits temporarily marked IM once the student completes the work, submits the grade change form, and receives a grade for the credits. Students will have 12 months from the date that they return from active service to complete the course work and earn a course grade.

   III. Accept administrative withdrawal (WM – Withdrawn Military) from all courses as of the effective date of the orders to active duty. Students choosing this option receive a full refund of all tuition and fees, as well as a prorated refund of dining and housing charges, including deposits. If a student received financial aid, the amount recovered to financial aid accounts will follow Federal financial aid policy.

   IV. If a student has completed 75 percent or more of the course requirements at the time of military activation and receives written permission from the instructor, they may receive full course credit. The instructor must determine what percentage of course requirements has been completed and certify this as part of their written permission. The awarding of full credit cannot be made where the uncompleted requirements are essential components of the course or program, or required by law or regulatory bodies, or required for competency in the workplace, or required to complete licensure examinations.

D. Upon receipt of the student’s request, the registrar administers the appropriate enrollment action, posts the appropriate grades, and sends a copy of the orders and the Tuition Relief Form to the Financial Aid
Office and the Student Accounting Office. Any refund payable to a student who is a financial aid recipient shall be subject to the applicable state and federal regulations regarding refunds.

E. If the student returns to VCU from a military leave of absence within five years, or provides notice of intent to return within three years, of completing their active military duty, they may return to VCU and the same program of study without reapplying for admission, as an exception to the university’s standard continuous enrollment policy. If the student reappplies for admission after this period, the reapplication admission fee shall be waived. To the extent permitted by legal, regulatory, or accreditation requirements, any requirements for a program of study to be completed within a certain amount of time will not count the time during which the student was on active military duty.

F. VCU offers deferred or readmitted students academic advising to determine the impact of their absence from the program, the ability to resume study and options if an academic program is no longer available or suitable. Academic programs with specialized accreditation and selective admission requirements shall establish criteria for reinstatement of such students that are consistent with any relevant standards of the respective accrediting agency, if the admission requirements have changed since the student’s original admission.

5. The Military Student Services Office will offer annual policy updates and information for all VCU staff responsible for administering these policies through the VCU bulletin and the MSS website.

Forms

Tuition relief form – https://militaryservices.vcu.edu/media/strategic-enrollment-management/military-services/docs/RRDefCrisRel.pdf

Course request form – https://rar.vcu.edu/media/strategic-enrollment-management/rar/docs/course_request_form2-1.pdf

Related Documents

Military In-State Tuition
1. Veteran’s Access, Choice, and Accountability Act
   http://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/financial-aid/veteranschoiceactfaq.pdf
2. In-State Tuition; Surcharge, Virginia Code § 23.1-509
3. All Volunteer Force Educational Assistance, 38 U.S.C. Chapter 30
5. Educational assistance for service in the Armed Forces commencing on or after September 11, 2001, 8 U.S.C. § 3311
6. Eligibility for in-state tuition charges; domicile; domiciliary intent. Virginia Code § 23.1-502
Credit for Military Education
1. Course credit; veterans; active duty military students, Virginia Code § 23.1-904,
2. Course credit; Advanced Placement, Cambridge Advanced, College-Level Examination Program, and International Baccalaureate examinations, Virginia Code § 23.1-906
3. SCHEV Guidelines on Award of Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience by Virginia Public Higher Education Institutions
   www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/students-section/military-education/guidelines-on-award-of-credit-for-military-training-education-and-experience.pdf

Early Course Registration
1. VCU Undergraduate Bulletin
2. SCHEV Guidelines on Course Registration Policies for Military-Related Students at Virginia Public Higher Education Institutions
   www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/students-section/military-education/guidelines-on-course-registration-policies-for-military-related-students.pdf

Military Activation
1. SCHEV Virginia Tuition Relief, Refund, and Reinstatement Guidelines
2. Tuition relief and refunds and reinstatement for certain students in the Armed Forces, Virginia Code § 23.1-207
3. VCU Policy: Financial Aid Recalculation Due to Withdrawal

Other Related Documents
1. Authority to transfer unused education benefits to family members, 38 U.S.C. § 3319
2. Disapproval of courses, 38 U.S.C. § 3679
Revision History

This policy supersedes and replaces the following archived policies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approval/Revision Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Course Credit: Active Duty Military Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/05/2014</td>
<td>Early Course Registration for Military-Related Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/23/2016</td>
<td>Awarding of Credit for Military Education</td>
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FAQ

1. **What is the credit hours surcharge?**
   If a student exceeds 125 percent of the credit hours needed to complete their academic program, they can lose the subsidized (in-state) rate and VCU will charge the non-resident tuition rate for all credits above the 125 percent limit. At that time, VCU will charge the student the difference between the in-state and non-resident rates for all credits above the 125 percent level.

2. **Can a spouse benefit from early registration?**
   Yes, spouses can petition MSS for this benefit. Criteria for approval will be the impact of the active duty on the academic schedule.

3. **What is early registration?**
   Early registration occurs before the general population of VCU students register.

4. **Why is early registration being given to students outlined in the policy and purpose?**
   Active-duty military and Coast Guard members have current responsibilities for national defense that affect their educational progress. Individual reservists and National Guard members have monthly obligations to the military that may affect their ability to plan and pace their educational pursuits. Students outlined in the policy and purpose may be adversely affected by education benefit restrictions and the course registration schedule.

5. **How does a student become eligible to receive early registration accommodations?**
   To become eligible, a student must provide proof of their military service to the office of MSS.

6. **Where can I find policy updates and information regarding policies related to military students?**
   Policy updates will be posted to the VCU bulletin and the MSS web site.