

VA Education Benefits Student Handbook

Veterans Education and Transition Services (VET Services) Yavapai College

This document highlights essential information for understanding, using and receiving your U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits at Yavapai College. Use this handbook as a reference only. Official benefit information from the VA can be found online at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill; in the “Education” section at www.va.gov; and by calling VA at 1-888-442-4551.

V.E.T. Services

District Office
Prescott Campus, Bldg. 1-209

Website
www.yc.edu/veterans

Phone
(928) 717-7613

Email
vet.services@yc.edu

Fax
(928) 717-7874 – fax

I. Your Educational Goal and Your Benefits

We want you to reach your goals, and the VA does as well! For this reason, benefits are payable only for courses that are required for an approved degree or certificate program that is the declared program in your YC student record. Benefits may only be used for courses which you have not successfully completed previously—either at YC or through credits transferred from another school or military training program. Consult your academic advisor to select a program of study that meets your educational needs and career goals. Once declared, you can use DegreeWorks to view your progress on your program of study, and to plan your classes for each semester. You should also check in with your advisor at least once each semester to plan your classes, and any time you need a bit of clarification or support.

Official Transcripts: To optimize efficiency toward reaching your educational goal, VA requires you to order official transcripts to be sent to your current school from your military branch(es) and all prior postsecondary schools. These transcripts will then be evaluated for transfer credit toward requirements on your current program of study. Visit www.yc.edu/transcripts for more information about sending official transcripts to Yavapai College.

- To order official transcripts from the U.S. Air Force:
<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Barnes/CCAF/Display/Article/803247/>
- To order official transcripts from the U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Marine Corps:
<https://jst.doded.mil/>

All official transcripts should be sent directly from each institution to the following address: *Yavapai College Office of the Registrar 1100 E. Sheldon Street Prescott, AZ 86301*

College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP): You can also receive college credit for prior learning by earning a qualifying score on one or more of the CLEP examinations that Yavapai College accepts for equivalent credit. A list of accepted CLEP and other exams can be found in the [Yavapai College Catalog](#). Please contact the [Yavapai College Testing Center](#) for information on testing.

Changing Your Program of Study: You may ask your advisor to change your declared degree or certificate program, and this should always be done in accordance with your vocational goals. It is best to make such a change prior to the start of the term in which the change will take effect.

Before changing your program of study, you should carefully consider how your existing YC and transfer credits may be applied differently to the new program, and how the change may impact the length of time it will take you to graduate. Use the “What-If” function in DegreeWorks to make initial comparisons, then consult your advisor to fully understand your options before requesting that your program be changed. Your advisor can also address questions about differences in course sequencing, prerequisites, or course applicability to your new program of study.

The 85/15 Rule: 38 Code of Federal Regulations 21.4201(6)(h)

As a protective measure for veterans and other beneficiaries, VA requires that no more than 85% of students in any program of study be using a VA education benefit or receiving direct support from the college. Prior to certifying your enrollment to the VA, we must verify this ratio. If this is your first semester in educational program at Yavapai College, we must verify this ratio prior to certifying your enrollment for the semester. If a program of study fails to meet the acceptable ratio as of the drop/add period for that semester, Yavapai College may not certify enrollment for new students in that program. Aerospace Science programs are currently the most affected by this regulation.

II. Planning Classes for a Successful Semester

Eligible Courses: Meet with your academic advisor each semester to select your classes and ensure that they are required for your approved program of study.

Yavapai College will certify enrollment for the following:

- Courses that are part of your declared program of study.
- Prerequisites to courses that are part of your declared program of study.
- Developmental courses (below 100 level) recommended as the result of placement testing and taken in a traditional classroom format. Veterans' education benefits do not pay for below-100 level courses taken online.

We cannot certify enrollment for the following:

- Courses that you have previously taken and passed with a C or better at Yavapai College.
- Courses which you successfully completed at a prior college or university, and which are accepted at YC for transfer credit.
- Electives in excess of the number required for your degree.
- Remedial courses (below 100 level) taken online. Required remedial courses must be taken in a traditional classroom format to be certified.
- Courses taken only to meet pre-admission requirements for a program of study.

DegreeWorks: Eligible classes will typically appear in the main body of your DegreeWorks worksheet as fulfilling program requirements. Classes that fall under the DegreeWorks section labeled "Not Applicable to Current Degree Plan" are NOT eligible for VA education benefits, unless they meet one of the above criteria for eligible courses.

Repeating a Course: If you fail a course that is required for your program of study, the course may be certified for benefits again if college and program rules allow you to repeat it. Refer to the [Yavapai College Catalog](#) for institutional guidelines on repeating courses.

"Rounding Out" in Your Final Semester: In your final semester toward graduation, the VA allows you to "round out" your enrollment up to a full-time level with courses not required for your declared degree or certificate. You may only round out once for each program of study you complete, and only if the program of study was certified to VA as your goal. Contact VET Services with questions about rounding out before your final semester starts.

Rate of Pursuit and Training Time:

Pay close attention to the start and end dates of each class you take, as this is important for determining how much your benefit payments will be. Taking classes of varying lengths in the same semester may cause your benefit payments to fluctuate.

Below are some guidelines for how to estimate your level of benefit based on your credit load, start/end dates for each class, and type of benefit. Estimated information on rate of pursuit and training time below is provided only for planning purposes; VA will determine actual rates using term and credit information provided by the school. Contact our office for help planning your semester for a consistent benefit if needed. [Click here for VA's rate tables](#). You should call the VA directly at 1-888-442-4551 with questions about your specific benefit payments.

NOTE: Active duty personnel using Ch.33, and their dependents/spouses using a Ch.33 transfer of entitlement, are not eligible for the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA).

- **Standard Semester-Length (16-week) courses:** At Yavapai College, most classes taken in fall and spring semesters are offered in a standard sixteen-week term. Semester-length classes taken in fall and spring, therefore, typically result in the following enrollment loads:
 - **Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Ch.33) – Estimating Rate of Pursuit (ROP):** For a standard semester, VA calculates ROP by dividing the number of credit hours taken by the number of credits considered to be full-time by the school (12 at YC). The resulting percentage, rounded to the nearest 10, is the student’s ROP. Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) requires more than 50% of full time. Typical ROP levels for a standard semester are as follows:
 - 12 or more credits = 100% of Full Time
 - 11 credits = 90%
 - 10 credits = 80%
 - 9 credits = 80%
 - 8 credits = 70%
 - 7 credits = 60%
 - 6 or fewer credits = 50% or less. (**Not eligible for MHA**—tuition & fees and a prorated book stipend only.)
 - **Chapters 30, 31, 35, and 1606 - Estimating Training Time:** VA calculates training time in quarter increments, with 12 credits being the minimum for full-time.
 - 12 or more credits = Full Time
 - 9-11 credits = $\frac{3}{4}$ Time
 - 6-8 credits = $\frac{1}{2}$ Time
 - 4-5 credits = $< \frac{1}{2}$ Time (**Ch.30 and 35 - tuition & fees reimbursement only**)
 - 1-3 credits = $\frac{1}{4}$ Time or less (**Ch.30 and 35 - tuition & fees reimbursement only**)
- **Summer Term and other 8-week courses:** Most classes taken in summer, and many in fall and spring, are offered in an eight-week term. Below are typical enrollment loads for an eight-week term.
 - **Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Ch.33) – Estimating Rate of Pursuit (ROP):** For summer and other non-standard terms, VA calculates ROP using a special formula that takes into account the credits and number of weeks for each period of enrollment. MHA requires more than 50% of full time. Typical ROP levels for an 8-week term are as follows:
 - 6 or more credits = 100% of Full Time
 - 4 credits = 80%
 - 3 credits = 60%
 - 1-2 credits = 40% and below (**Not eligible for MHA**—tuition & fees and a prorated book stipend only.)
 - **Chapters 30, 31, 35, and 1606 - Estimating Training Time:** VA calculates training time in quarter increments, with 12 credits being the minimum for full-time.
 - 6 or more credits = Full Time
 - 5 credits = $\frac{3}{4}$ Time
 - 4 credits = $\frac{3}{4}$ Time
 - 3 credits = $\frac{1}{2}$ Time
 - 1-2 credits = $< \frac{1}{2}$ Time (**Ch.30 and 35 - tuition & fees reimbursement only**)

Taking classes that have different start and end dates in the same semester can cause your rate of pay to fluctuate. When this is unavoidable, it is helpful to evenly distribute your total credits. Overlapping periods of enrollment are combined when VA calculates your benefit payments. Call VA at 1-888-442-4551 for payment details specific to your situation.

Dropping or Adding a Course, or Withdrawing from College: Students using VA education benefits must report all enrollment changes, including complete withdrawal from classes, to VET Services immediately by submitting a new Semester Benefits Request. Consult VET Services in advance of any reduction in your enrollment or anticipated difficulty completing a class. We can help you understand your options and made the best decision in your situation.

Enrollment changes will often affect your eligibility for benefits and rate of pay. Reductions in enrollment may also result in an overpayment of benefits which you would need to pay back to the VA. Benefits are paid based on your participation in classes for which you are certified. If you do not complete a class because you stopped attending prior to the end of the posted end date, you will likely owe money back to the VA. For this reason, and to ensure successful attainment of your educational goals, continued participation in your classes is important.

Pursuing Two Programs at One School: VA education benefits can typically be used for one degree or certificate at a time. However, two concurrent programs may be approved if both programs are reasonably related to a single vocational objective. A “Dual Program Request for VA Education Benefits” form is used to provide a rationale for how the two programs are needed for the single career goal, and to obtain approval for courses under these programs to be certified for benefits. Both programs must be degrees or certificates offered by Yavapai College and approved for VA education benefits by the State Approving Agency. Advisor and VET Services approval should be obtained before registering for concurrent program coursework where possible. NOTE: Aviation programs and courses are not eligible for dual program approval.

Concurrently Attending Two Schools: Your VA education benefits will not pay for two different programs of study taken concurrently at two different schools. However, you may use your benefits to take courses at two different colleges if they apply to a single program of study at one institution. In this situation, the school that will grant the degree or certificate is known as your “primary” or “parent” school; the other is known as your “supplemental” or “secondary” school. You should meet with an academic advisor for prior approval of courses taken at a supplemental school to be sure the courses will meet requirements at your primary school.

- **If Yavapai College is your primary school**, you must meet with your Yavapai College academic advisor to complete our “Concurrent Enrollment Form for VA Benefits” and submit it to VET Services. We will review it and, if appropriate, provide approval to your supplemental school to certify your enrollment there as applicable to your YC program of study.
- **If Yavapai College is your supplemental school**, you must contact your primary school for a “Primary School Letter,” and request that they send it to Yavapai College VET Services. This will grant us permission to certify your YC class(es) to VA as applicable to your primary school program of study. You will be considered a “Guest Student” at YC for VA benefit purposes.

While eligible enrollments at both schools will be combined into a single benefit, your pay will likely fluctuate if the beginning and ending dates of your classes do not exactly match.

III. Activating Your Benefits at Yavapai College

Initial Start-Up: Students using a VA education benefit for the first time at Yavapai College, or returning to YC after a year or more away, will be required to submit a completed/signed VET Services Start-Up form along with proof of eligibility for their specific benefit. Visit www.yc.edu/veterans > “New Students Start Here” for the downloadable form and a secure document upload link.

- **Ch. 30: Montgomery GI Bill® (MGIB) - Active Duty**
 - Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

- DD-214 (Member-4 copy)
- **Ch. 31: VA Veteran Readiness & Employment (VRE)**
 - VRE Approval (Purchase Order provided by your VRE case manager directly to Yavapai College).
 - DD-214 (Member-4 copy)
- **Ch. 33: Post-9/11 GI Bill®**
 - Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
 - DD-214 (Member-4 copy)
- **Ch. 33T: Post-9/11 GI Bill® - Transfer of Entitlement (TOE)**
 - Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
 - Sponsor's DD-214 (Member-4 copy). Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.
- **Ch. 35: Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program**
 - Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
 - Sponsor's DD-214 (Member-4 copy). Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.
- **Ch. 1606: Montgomery GI Bill® – Selected Reserves (MGIB-SR)**
 - Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
 - DD-214 (Member-4 copy)

Eligibility for In-State Resident Tuition: VA benefits do not cover out-of-state tuition charges, so it is important for veterans to demonstrate their eligibility for in-state tuition when getting started. Visit www.yc.edu/residency for guidelines and contact information. Typical documents used to establish in-state residency include the DD-214 showing character of service (Member-4 Copy or similar) and an Arizona Driver's License.

Activating Your Benefits Each Semester:

Request Your Benefits: An online "Semester Benefits Request" form is required each semester authorizing Yavapai College to certify your enrollment to the VA. You can access the online form by logging into your MyYC portal, opening the VET Services tile, and selecting "Semester Benefits Request" from the menu.

- Students using a VA education benefit for the first time at Yavapai College, or returning to YC after a year or more away, will first need to submit new Start-Up paperwork. See above, or visit www.yc.edu/veterans > "New Students Start Here."
- An automated confirmation of your enrollment certification will be sent to your YC scholar email address. If there are special circumstances we want you to be aware of, VET Services may also send you a separate email with this information.

Veterans Payment Plan: The Veterans Payment Plan is your agreement to pay Yavapai College for your tuition and fees by the established deadline, regardless of what may happen with your VA education benefits. Available to students using VA education benefits, this payment plan allows time for your benefits to be processed before payment is due to the college. There is no down payment or set-up fee for this plan, but you will need to provide credit/debit card information as part of the set-up process.

- If you already have a non-VA financial aid award, the system may not give you the option to use this payment plan; this is typically because your financial aid award is sufficient to cover your tuition and fees.
- During certain dates each term, you may include charges for textbooks **up to \$500.00** at the Yavapai College Bookstore in your Veterans Payment Plan if needed; this amount will be added to your balance due to Yavapai College.
- How the Plan Works with Your Benefit

- **Chapter 33 Post-9/11 GI Bill®:** Because this benefit pays tuition and fees directly to the school, you may only have a balance due if one or more of the following applies: you are eligible at less than 100%; you take classes that are not applicable to your approved program; you charge textbooks to your Veterans Payment Plan; or you apply too late for benefits to be paid before the balance due date.
- **Chapter 31 VA Veteran Readiness & Employment (VRE):** The Veterans Payment Plan is not needed if your benefit eligibility is established prior to registering. Contact your VRE Counselor to be sure your coursework has been authorized for payment before you register.
- **All Other Chapters:** You are encouraged to make early payments in order to lower the total balance due on the deadline date. Contact the Cashier's Office at (928) 776-2124 for payment assistance.

Deadlines and other information can be found in the current "Semester Benefits Checklist" in your MyYC account. If you have questions, please call VET Services at 928-717-7613, or the Bursar's Office at 928-776-2138.

Monthly Verification: Chapters 30, 35, and 1606 only

Complete your monthly verification using the automated line at **1-877-823-2378** (if you've had no enrollment changes since your last verification) or online at <https://gibill.va.gov/wave>.

- **Chapters 30 and 1606 GI Bill®:** Verification of your enrollment is required each month for payment.
- **Chapter 35 Dependents Education Assistance:** Verification of your enrollment is required each month for payment only if you are pursuing a certificate (non-degree) program.

IV. Benefit Payments

Monthly benefits are paid at the beginning of each month for the previous month of attendance. Your benefits can be paid as early as the beginning of the first full month of classes if all the required documents have been received and processed by Yavapai College and the VA. While often faster, the VA may take up to six weeks to begin paying your benefits after electronic certification by the college (and your monthly verification of enrollment if using Chapter 30, 1606, or in some cases, 35). Please register early and plan accordingly. You can view your VA Payment History at www.va.gov by selecting the appropriate link in the "Education" menu.

- **Post 9/11 Chapter 33 Education Benefits** are paid based on your percentage of eligibility as confirmed in your Certificate of Eligibility. Your eligibility percentage applies to all Post 9/11 benefits:
 - Tuition and fees - paid directly to the college on your behalf.
 - Textbook allowance - paid to the student, usually just prior to the start of classes.
 - Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) - paid directly to the student at the beginning of each month for the previous month of attendance.

Payment of Federal Financial Aid to Post 9/11 students

- If you are using the Post 9/11 benefit and have also been awarded federal financial aid **prior to the first day of the semester**, you will receive your federal financial aid less any tuition charges owed (if Post 9/11 is less than 100%) textbook, room and board charges, after the drop/add period each semester.
- If you are awarded federal financial aid **after the first day of the semester**, please contact the Bursar at 928-776-2138, for instructions on how to receive your federal financial aid.

Remaining Entitlement and Delimiting Date

VA typically awards 36 months of VA education benefits to eligible beneficiaries who have never used a VA education benefit before. Your "remaining entitlement" is the amount of benefits you have not yet used, expressed as a number of months' and days' worth of full-time benefits remaining. If you attend school full-time, you will use a full month of your entitlement for each month you attend school. Attending less than full-time will use your entitlement more slowly.

- The “delimiting date” is basically an expiration date for your benefits. If you still have any unused entitlement but have reached your delimiting date, those remaining benefits expire. If you have a delimiting date, it will be noted on your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from VA.
- “Forever GI Bill®”: Veterans discharged on or after 1/1/2013 and using Ch.33 Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits qualify for the “Forever GI Bill,” and have no delimiting date. However, their benefit is still limited to the amount of remaining entitlement as noted on your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from VA.

“What if my benefits run out or expire in the middle of a semester?” If you believe you will either exhaust your remaining entitlement or reach your delimiting date during a semester, contact VA at 1-888-442-4551 to find out if you are eligible to continue receiving benefit payments through the end of the semester.

V. Academic Standards

Final Grades: Eligible grades for VA education benefits are “punitive grades,” or grades which impact GPA (A, B, C, D, F) and S grades if acceptable to fulfill program requirements.

- A class with a D or F grade is not transferrable and does not fulfill requirements on your Program of Study.
- Classes with D or F grades are only eligible for benefits if you continued to participate until the end of the term.

The VA will not pay for classes with a grade that does not calculate into your grade point average. The VA considers these “non-punitive” grades. At Yavapai College, a designation of drop (student withdrawal before the first day of class), W (student withdrawal prior to mid-semester), Y (administrative withdrawal by your instructor or the registrar) or U (unsatisfactory) are “non-punitive” grades. Incomplete (I) grades are also non-punitive, and must be converted to a punitive grade by the deadline stated in the Yavapai College Catalog to be eligible for benefits.

Refer to the [Yavapai College Catalog](#) under “Grades and Credits” for definitions.

Academic Standing

The minimum cumulative GPA (grade point average) to maintain Good Academic Standing at Yavapai College is 2.00 (a C average). Students whose GPA falls below this minimum will be placed on Academic Warning, Academic Probation, or Academic Suspension. If you are placed on Warning or Probation, it is important to work with your academic advisor and the VET Services advisor to get the support you need to get back into Good Academic Standing. Schools are required to report academic suspension to VA.

Failure to maintain the required GPA will result in academic probation. You are still eligible for education benefits while on academic probation. However, standards that allow a student to remain in a probationary status for than two consecutive terms without defined improvement in academic standing do not meet minimum requirements for VA approval. GPA calculation information is available online.

Refer to the [Yavapai College Catalog](#) under “Standards of Academic Progress” for more information.

VI. Debts and Overpayments

Repayment of Benefits: If the VA determines you are not entitled to VA education benefit funds you have received, you may be responsible to repay those funds to the VA. This is called an “overpayment of benefits.” An overpayment can result from withdrawn classes, non-punitive grades, lack of participation in classes, and other enrollment issues. You should always reach out to Yavapai College’s VET Services office to discuss any circumstances that you believe may result in your

inability to complete a class successfully, so we can help you understand your options and make informed decisions. Likewise, you may consult a VA representative at 1-888-442-4551 for assistance.

A student is automatically granted a one-time “six-credit exclusion” which forgives the impact of up to six credit hours the first time they withdraw. The VA can tell you whether a six-credit exclusion is still available to you.

The VA may recover overpayments by withholding future benefits until your outstanding debt is paid. To discuss this and other options in the event you are notified that you have been overpaid, do not hesitate to contact the VA Debt Management Center: call 1-800-827-0648 or visit www.va.gov/debtman for more information.

Mitigating Circumstances: In some situations, a student is unable to successfully complete their classes due to unanticipated health issues or other circumstances beyond their control, also known as “mitigating circumstances.” In such a situation, contact VET Services for guidance, then also call the VA at 1-888-442-4551 if you have further questions. If you have received a letter from VA, it is best to use the phone number provided in that letter when inquiring about your case.

VII. Additional Supports for Veterans and Military Families

Be Connected: Be Connected is a statewide network that pulls together legitimate support resources for veterans and military families. If you are struggling, don’t wait for it to become a crisis: visit www.beconnectedaz.org, or call 1-866-429-8387.

Veterans Crisis Line: Do you know—or are you—a veteran in crisis? Get help now: VeteransCrisisLine.net - Confidential chat, text (838255), or call: 1-800-273-8255.

Free Refresher Classes to Improve College Readiness: Feeling a bit rusty on your academic skills? Upgrade your college readiness with free refresher classes, a great alternative to using up benefits on remedial coursework. Contact VET Services to get signed up.

Veterans Club: Join the Veterans Club and network with other military-affiliated students! Visit www.yc.edu/clubs for details about this and other student clubs at YC.

VA Educational Counseling Services: Available to veterans and their qualifying dependents through the Department of Veterans Affairs Phoenix Office, in addition to the career and educational counseling services offered by Yavapai College. Plan your individual career goals, determine the type of education most suited to those goals, and select schools or training facilities that offer the appropriate educational programs. Call 602-827-1000 to schedule an appointment.

Tutorial Assistance: Yavapai College offers group and drop-in tutoring at the Learning Center for various classes. If you need private tutoring, you may receive additional VA tutorial assistance to defer the cost of private tutoring services. Contact our VET Services office for details, or visit www.gibill.va.gov.

VIII. More Financial Resources

Financial Aid: All VA education benefit recipients are also encouraged to submit a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Because your benefits are paid in arrears, having additional financial aid can be especially helpful in the first few weeks of your classes. Completing the FAFSA process each year is also the first step to applying for other financial aid, such as scholarships. For applications and information, visit www.yc.edu/financialaid.

VA Work Study

If you are enrolled and receiving benefits at a 75% rate or higher (Ch.33) or $\frac{3}{4}$ training time rate or higher (other benefit chapters), you can “earn while you learn” with a VA work-study allowance. Subject to available positions and VA approval of the work site. Contact VET Services for more information, or visit the [VA's Work Study page](#).