

# **AU VRC Statement of Understanding (SOU)**

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# VRC Overview

## **Auburn University's Veteran's Resource Center Mission Statement**

The Veterans Resource Center is a service-driven team committed to providing valuable resources, advocacy, & outreach to the military-affiliated community & Auburn family. We strongly support and promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

Core Values: Communication, Dedication, Integrity, Service & Care, Trust

The Auburn University Veterans Resource Center (VRC) helps students make the transition from military life to civilian life. Whether you are a new student who has completed your service, a student who interrupted your education to serve, or a student who began your studies elsewhere and are transferring here, we will help guide you to the resources you need to make the most of your AU experience.

In the VRC, the VA School Certifying Official (SCO) assists veterans, reservists, guardsmen, dependents and survivors of veterans in processing their education benefits for use at Auburn University (AU). The SCO will certify enrollment to the VA for those students who are utilizing Federal VA Education Benefits.

## **Location and Operating Hours**

Located in **020 Foy Hall**, the Auburn University Veterans Resource Center (VRC) helps students Monday – Friday from 8:00AM – 4:45PM. Students can contact our office with any questions or concerns at (334) 844-8167 or [veterans@auburn.edu](mailto:veterans@auburn.edu).

# Reference Guide

The VA School Certifying Official (SCO) assists veterans, reservists, guardsmen, dependents and survivors of veterans in processing their education benefits for use at Auburn University (AU). The SCO will certify enrollment to the VA for those students who are utilizing Federal VA Education Benefits.

Students must read this Statement of Understanding (SOU) and sign acknowledging receipt of the Student Reference Guide for VA Educational Benefits at AU to use VA Educational Benefits at AU.

For enrollment certification for VA, I understand that:

- AU School Certifying Official (SCO) must have all appropriate documents stating my educational benefits.
- Only courses required for my declared program of study at AU will be certified. Repeated courses to obtain a better passing grade will not be certified nor will additional electives not required for declared degree plan.
- I must attend all classes in which I am enrolled. Any change in enrollment will be reported to the VA.
- Class beginning and ending dates, as well as the number of credit hours registered, will affect my monthly housing allowance (BAH).
- To cancel my enrollment certification for a particular semester, I will notify the VRC via email before beginning of term at [veterans@auburn.edu](mailto:veterans@auburn.edu)

For CH30 (MGIB) I understand that:

- I must verify my attendance at the end of each month while enrolled in school. I do so by calling 1-888-823-2378 or going online to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)
- I understand that my BAH is prorated due to the number of hours that I am enrolled.

For CH31 or Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E), I understand that:

- My VR&E counselor must send Tungsten Authorization to the school to charge tuition, fees, books, and/or supplies.
- Books and/or supplies may be charged on specific dates posted in the bookstore each semester.

For CH33 (POST 9/11), I understand that:

- The VA will send both my BAH and book stipend directly to me not the school.

- I must pay any expense not covered per entitlement listed on Certificate of Eligibility (COE) letter from VA. (Examples could be 50% eligibility, out of degree plan course, etc.)
- My BAH is prorated from both the number of hours I am enrolled and my percentage of entitlement.

For CH35 (DEA), I understand that:

- My BAH is prorated from the number of hours that I am enrolled in
- I understand that my benefit is a stipend only paid directly to me and I am responsible for tuition & fees.
- For CH1606 (MGIB-SR) and CH1607 (REAP), I understand that:
- I must verify my attendance at the end of each month while enrolled in school. I do so by calling 1-877-823-2378 or going online to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)
- I understand that my BAH is prorated due to the number of hours that I am enrolled.

I understand that my GI Bill does not pay my tuition up front and I am responsible for covering my tuition costs

# All Students using Federal Benefits

All GI Bill® benefits are subject to approval by the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and must meet all requirements determined by them in order to receive such benefits. Auburn University Veterans Resource Center's (VRC) is a liaison between the student and the VA. The VRC works for Auburn University and is not the VA itself. **THE VRC CANNOT GUARENTEE PAYMENT!** While the student may always seek assistance from the VRC regarding the approval of benefits or the amount of money allocated by the VA, issues other than the correction of hours and the amount of tuition/fees being reported to the VA are outside the control of the VRC.

## Initiating VA Benefits

To start benefit usage, the student is responsible for turning in all forms required by the VRC relating to their federal benefits. Forms are listed at <https://veterans.auburn.edu/required-documents/>. Failure to complete and submit all forms in their entirety may result in processing delays.

## Requesting to Use VA Benefits

Student must submit the enrollment certification request each semester to the VRC to complete their certification to the VA. Failure to complete and submit all forms in their entirety may result in processing delays.

## Residency:

Residency office to determines whether or not a student will be charged resident or non-resident tuition. Military status of any kind does not allow students to be automatically eligible for in-state tuition rate while attending Auburn University.

## Resolving VA Errors

When experiencing any issues with GI Bill® benefits, the first step is to contact the VRC. If the VRC is unable to assist with the issue, the student should contact the National Call Center located at the VA Regional Office in Muskogee, Oklahoma 1-888-442-4551 or go to <https://ask.va.gov/> to send them an email. For emails, you must return to this website and log in to read your answer.

## Coursework:

Federal VA Education Benefits will only pay for coursework required as part of the student's degree plan as core subjects or approved electives. A degree program is the major on record with the Auburn University Office of the Registrar which is reflected in the student record. It is the student's responsibility to know what classes count toward their degree. Any classes taken outside the degree's curriculum will be at the student's own expense. All Graduate students must set up and follow his/her Graduate Plan of Study or temporary plan of study before courses can be approved for VA pay purposes.

It is the student's responsibility to notify the VRC if they register for courses outside of their assigned "time-ticket" and failure to do so may delay certifications during that term.

**Academic Advisor (AA) Approved Schedule:**

It is the academic advisor that is authorized to approve class schedules for VA pay purposes. The student has a responsibility to contact their Academic Advisor to know what classes count toward their degree program and those that do not. Graduate Students must follow their respective Graduate Plan of Study.

**Minors:**

VA WILL NOT PAY FOR A MINOR. Unless the minor is explicitly mandated in the student's curriculum for their chosen degree, the VA will not finance the pursuit of a minor. Students may obtain a minor through creative use of required electives with the help of my academic advisor. If I decide to pursue a non-required minor, it is recommended to reach out to the VRC to understand any financial obligation the student is responsible for.

**Double and Concurrent Majors:**

The VA may pay for more than one major at a time but only if the two degrees are in related areas and lead to a certain career field or employment specialty, and the two degrees are approved by the Alabama State Approving Agency (SAA). Additional paperwork will be required and advanced notice will need to be given to VRC to ensure the degree combination meets both VA and Auburn University guidelines. Failure to meet requirements will result in the suspension or denial of benefits and/or require repayment of benefits already received in one or both majors.

**Change of Major:**

I understand that should I chose to change my major, I am required to notify the VRC reflecting the major change. Students should wait to change their major at the end of the semester or for in a future term. Failure to complete the required VA forms and paperwork will suspend or terminate your VA education benefits.

**Transient Students:**

If the student chooses to study outside AU at another school or college as a guest student, the student must provide the VRC a copy of a Departmental and Registrar-approved Transient Letter. The VRC will complete the guest letter for the student. The student will need to bring the guest letter to their guest school's SCO to get their benefits processed.

**Auburn Study Abroad:**

Students interested in study abroad are required to contact the VRC at the earliest time possible to coordinate use of my benefits. VA benefits typically do not cover study abroad. Approved Auburn Study Abroad paperwork (e.g. Auburn University study abroad forms, course description(s), dates, price break-out and subjects covered) are required. Courses taken during Auburn Study Abroad must be an Auburn Study Abroad Program (Auburn Faculty Run) and for required degree course(s) for the major, not elective courses. Not all study abroad programs are approved for VA pay purposes.

Non-Auburn operated study abroad programs are not authorized for use of VA benefits. See the VRC for more information and instructions.

**Avoiding VA Payment Dependence:**

Students should not depend on my VA checks for any vital living expenses (rent, car payment, University Bursar Bills etc.). While VA checks should come on a regular basis, this is not guaranteed by the VRC or the VA Regional Office in Muskogee, OK.

**Pay Check-Possible Waiting Period:**

VA benefits will be processed over a period of time by the VA Regional Office in Muskogee, OK. It may take several weeks after Auburn has sent my enrollment certification before students begin to receive any VA money. For student's first using benefits, they often see a delay in their first allotment of benefits.

**Breaks between Terms and Monthly Prorated BAH:**

All breaks between academic semesters are periods in which the VA will not pay BAH. The beginning period of each semester will be the first day of class and the last day of the semester will be the last day of exams at AU. Students will only receive BAH for the days school was in session. Any days outside of the semester that the student is enrolled will not be covered. Example: August is the beginning of Fall term and is only 2 weeks long, therefore, students will receive only 2 weeks of BAH.

**Reporting Changes to the VRC:**

Students must report any of the following changes immediately to the VRC and failure to do so may result in the reduction of benefits or suspension/denial of future benefits and/or require repayment of VA benefits already received. Example of changes are:

1. **Any type of Withdrawal** "W" from class for any reason may cause an overpayment.
2. **Resignation or Withdrawal** from school.
3. **Drop** one or more classes.
4. **Add** one or more classes.
5. **Register for classes** each term
6. **Substituted courses & required remedial/prerequisite courses.**
7. **Changes in Address**

# CH33: Post 9/11 Recipients Only:

## Requesting Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees will not be requested from the VA until after the semester's schedule adjustment period has ended. Example: 15th class day for Fall & Spring terms and 5th class day for Summer terms. However, enrollments with \$0.00 Tuition and Fees will be submitted to the VA before the time. This allows the enrollment to be placed in the pipeline for processing of BAH and book stipends. Students will often get a notice that the VRC submitted an enrollment without tuition and fees. **This is normal and should be filed for record keeping.** The VRC will amend certifications once the appropriate time comes.

## Monthly Verification:

Section 1010 of Public Law 116-315 requires GI Bill® beneficiaries to verify their continued enrollment status to continue to receive a monthly housing allowance (MHA) and/or kickers. There are three options for verifying listed below. The preferred and most efficient method is listed first.

1. Through Text messaging. When you opt-in, we'll send you a text message each month asking if you continue to be enrolled. To opt-in to receive text messages, please contact us by either method listed below. Currently, this option is not available for foreign and U.S. territory-based phone numbers.
2. Call the Education Call Center at 1-888-GI-Bill-1
3. You can also use Ask VA online at: [ask.va.gov](http://ask.va.gov). Please select GI Bill® as the category for your question.

## Scholarships:

All external scholarships received must be reported to the VRC. The VRC must have a copy of the scholarship rules stating the stipulations regarding said funds. If the stipulations state the scholarship must be allocated directly for tuition and fees (only for tuition and fees, solely for tuition and fees, the equivalent of tuition and fees, etc.) then the funds will be deducted from the amount of tuition and fees requested from VA.

## University and/or Outside Waivers, Grants or Fellowships:

Any waivers, grants or fellowships received must be reported to VRC. Any tuition/fee specific designated waiver, grant or fellowship will be deducted from the amount of tuition and fees requested from the VA. \*Note\*: Title IV aid (Pell grant, student loans, etc.) does not affect GI Bill®.

## University Bursar Bill:

AU will post a Penny Memo of \$0.01 on my bill for the semester's estimated tuition and fees that will be covered by the VA under my GI Bill® benefits. This penny memo is contingent on the condition that the student is approved to receive benefits from the VA and that the student register for classes during my assigned time-ticket. Once the tuition/fees payment has been received by AU from the VA, the funds will be applied

towards the charges on the e-bill. The student is then responsible for any outstanding bill. If a credit is created, the student will be disbursed the excess to their direct deposit on file. Should the student acquire any other financial aid (e.g. scholarships, loans, grants), these funds will be applied towards the charges, regardless of the amount the VRC expects to receive for the CH 33: Post 9/11 GI Bill® payment.

**Federal Tuition Assistance (TA) and CH 33:**

Active Duty and National Guard/Reserves students cannot receive TA & CH 33 at the same time for the same courses. Ex: If TA has paid for tuition/fees then there is no tuition/fees payment to request for CH 33 and vice versa. There must be a tuition and fees bill for the student to have either of these programs to pay tuition and fees. If there is an unpaid portion of the bill not covered by TA, VA will pay “Top-Up” to cover the unpaid portion of the bill.

**Overpayment of Benefits:**

The veteran or dependent is responsible for any overpayment incurred as a result of not completing courses or courses for that are not degree-applicable. AU’s established refund policies will be followed, and the student is responsible to both AU and the VA for any overpayment made to the student or indebtedness incurred by the student. Tuition and fee payments are paid by the VA to the school on behalf of the student, overpayments of tuition and fees will be charged to the student.

**Kicker previously used under the Montgomery GI Bill®:**

Individuals eligible for a Kicker under other benefits may receive the Kicker under CH 33. The monthly amount will be prorated based on the individual’s rate of pursuit. Payments of Kicker will be issued in a lump sum directly to the student each term. The student is eligible for benefits and the student is entitled to a monthly housing allowance, BAH. NOTE: the \$600 Buy-Up is not payable under CH33 Post 9/11.

**Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) Rates:**

All BAH rates are based off the current DoD rates for the Auburn, AL area (zip 36849) at the E5 with dependents rate. Current DoD BAH rates can be found at <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bahCalc.cfm>. Effective 1 AUG 2018, in accordance with Public Law 115-48 (Colmery Act), BAH will be based on location of the majority of classes being taken by the student. Distance Learning students will receive national BAH average for distance students.

**Undergraduate Course Loads: Full Time ≥ 12 hours**

Total Hours	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
BAH Rate	100%	90%	80%	75% Round up to 80%	70%	60%	0%

**Graduate Course Loads: Full Time ≥ 9 hours**

<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>BAH Rate</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>0%</b>

\*\*Full time will be determined by the Graduate School or Department for special programs such as Executive MBA & Physician's MBA. Distance Learning Graduate Students who attend classes on campus for 2 or more days per term will receive BAH as an in-state resident student attending on campus classes.

**Book Stipend:**

The VA will provide a book stipend at the rate of \$41.67 per hour not to exceed \$1,000 per year. This money is sent directly to the student and not to the school. Example: The student is enrolled in 12 hours for the fall semester.  $12 \times \$41.67 = \$500$ . The VA will send the student a \$500 payment for books for the fall semester.

**CH33 does NOT cover:**

- Admissions Deposits
- Meal Plan
- Parking Permit
- Parking Fines
- Library Fines
- Football Tickets
- OIT Fees
- Other fees determined by VA policy
- ID Cards
- Dorm Charges & Fees
- **Fees not identified on University Bursar Bill (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> day of class fee for golf, scuba, sailing, etc.)**

## **CH 30 (MGIB), CH 35 (DEA), CH 1606 (MGIB-SR) Recipients Only:**

### **Monthly Stipend (BAH):**

These Chapters of the GI Bill® I will receive only monthly stipend from the VA based on (prorated on) the number of hours taken during a given semester. These benefits do not pay tuition and the monthly stipend is sent directly to the student, not the school. Students will receive these payments at the end of every month. These payments are also prorated on the number of days of school for that term in any given month.

The monthly stipend maximum is reached when taking hours equivalent to full time student status or greater as deemed by the VA.

### **Monthly Verification:**

I understand that if I am a CH 30 (veteran or active duty) or CH 1606 recipient I am required to contact the VA to verify my hours of enrollment each month. Upon proper verification of hours to the VA, the VA will issue payment of monthly educational benefits to me. I understand that I can verify my hours in two ways: WAVES, Web Automated Verification of Enrollment at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) or by calling 1-877-823-2378.

## **CH 31 Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) Recipients Only:**

### **Case Manager and VRC:**

The student is required to maintain contact with their VR&E case manager and the VRC to discuss with them any and all changes concerning coursework and major changes.

### **Purchase Orders:**

VR&E purchase orders take the place of the certificate of eligibility. These purchase orders are typically good for a year, unless otherwise established by the VR&E case manager. Students must notify their SCOs when a new purchase order is sent as the office must have the updated form on file to continue certification.

## **Additional References:**

The VA Forms can be found online at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)

- 22-1990            Service Member/Veteran Application for Chapters 30, 33, 1606
- 22-1995            Change of Program or Place of Training (Chapters 30, 33, 1606)
- 22-1999e          Dependent Application for Chapter 33: Post 9/11 Transferred Benefits
- 22-5490            Dependent Application for Chapter 35- Survivors and Dependents
- 22-5495            Change of Program or Place of Training for Chapter 35 recipients

### **Important Phone Numbers:**

- 888-442-4551      VA Education Call Center
- 800-827-0648      VA Debt Management Center