

# GENERAL INFORMATION & RESPONSIBILITIES for Veterans and Dependents using their VA Education Benefits at Santa Ana College

## ADD THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESSES TO YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BOOK

Main Veterans Email: [veterans@sac.edu](mailto:veterans@sac.edu)


SAC Certifying Official: [swayne\\_dorothy@sac.edu](mailto:swayne_dorothy@sac.edu)

You will receive important information about your certification that may affect your payments. Don't let these important messages get placed in your junk mail.



## APPLYING FOR VA BENEFITS

Students applying for the first time must apply online through Vonapp and submit the Form 22-1990, or Form 22-5490 (for dependents) or Form 22-1990e for transfer of entitlement, and Form 22-1990R for VRAP. You must call the VA regional office (1-888-442-4551) or visit their website ([www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)) to determine which benefit you should apply for, whether it be under Chapter 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill), Chapter 30 (MGI Bill), 35 (Dependent/Spouse Educational Benefits), 1606 or 1607 (Reservist benefits). VRAP students will need to use the 22-1990R form. You must make a copy of the submitted form with the confirmation # to the Santa Ana College Veterans Resource Center (VRC) along with other forms requested. If the program the student is pursuing is in Santa Ana College, the primary school of training must always be Santa Ana College, even if the student may be attending classes Santiago Canyon College.

## PROCESSING AT SANTA ANA COLLEGE

The processing time for submission of certification once a complete VA packet is submitted to the Santa Ana College VA Office can take up to 3-4 business weeks during peak periods. Please check the  [VA Packet checklist](#) to determine what forms you need to fill out or documents you need to provide. Once eligible for certification, it is then submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Processing Office in Muskogee, OK for their part of processing the payment. It can take 2-6 weeks for the Servicing Regional Processing Office to complete. During peak periods, the processing time could be longer.

## CERTIFICATION REQUEST FORM (The Purple Form)

All veterans and eligible dependents and spouses must complete the  [Certification Request Form](#) and turn it in to the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) in R-101 once the student is registered in required classes for the semester/term according to his/her educational plan. If this form is not turned in, then the Veterans Affairs Office will assume you no longer wish to continue receiving VA education benefits at SAC. For new students at SAC, other documents ( [refer to the checklist](#)) will be requested along with this form (ex: educational plans, transcript evaluations submitted to Admissions & Records, COE, Form 22-1990, DD-214, etc.). The VA Office follows the payment policy of the district once registered in classes. Be sure to pay for your Tuition and Fees within 72 hours or your classes will be dropped. Applying for a CA Board of Governor's Fee Waiver could waive your unit enrollment fees. If qualified, classes won't be dropped for non-payment.

## PAYMENTS

All payments under all Chapters are sent directly to the student through direct deposit or a check by mail. This includes monthly stipends for Chapter 30, 1606, 1607, 35, and VRAP. BAH and book stipends for Chapter 33 are also sent directly to the student. Payments are made during the 1st week of each month for training pursued the previous month. If there are delays on payment, retro-active payments are made up to the beginning of the eligible term. If you did not provide direct deposit information to the VA, it is important that your address in Admissions & Records is accurate since that address is what we will match your VA records with to report.

Chapter 33 BAH eligibility: Students must be certified in more than half time for the period your classes are in session. You must also have at least one class on campus during the period of your eligible enrollment for the regular BAH stipend. All online courses will be based on the national average BAH. BAH is based on how many units you take and will be paid to the nearest 10th in percentage. Visit our website and click on Payment Rates or call the VA Regional Office for more information: 1/888-442-4551.

Mandatory IN-STATE tuition and fee reimbursement for Chapter 33 (Post 9/11) recipients are sent directly to Santa Ana College from the VA. The VA Office will not process these checks until after the refund date has passed for that term. It can take the VA Office another 4-6 weeks to

send these payments to the cashier's office for verification. It usually takes between 3-6 weeks for the VA to send payment to SAC after certification. Any tuition and fees received will be credited to the student's account and pay fees owed. Any reimbursements to the student will be based on how fees were paid. If a student pays any of the mandatory fees by cash or check, then a check will be mailed to the student. If it is paid with a credit card, then the funds will be returned to the card that was used for payment. A refund may not be issued if the student did not pay fees out of pocket and the VA Tuition and Fees payment were applied to pay the fees owed.

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** The district policy for non-payment of fees apply to all students including Chapter 33 students expecting Tuition and Fee payments from the VA. Since the VA does not send Tuition and Fees payments until 3 to 6 weeks after certification (which also requires verification by the Certifying Official), the student must adhere to the 3-day non-payment drop policy to ensure that the classes are not dropped for non-payment. Either the student can pay out of pocket or apply for a BOG Waiver at the VRC or the Financial Aid Office. If the student qualifies for the BOG Waiver, the Certifying Official will only request the VA to pay for the mandatory remaining fees such as the Health fees and material fees associated with the classes certified. Since parking fees and student ID fees are not mandatory, the VA will not pay for those fees.

## VERIFYING ATTENDANCE

As an inactive duty veteran (Chapter 30), selected reserve veteran or non-veteran (Chapter 1606 or Chapter 1607), or VRAP (Veterans Retraining Assistance Program), you are required to verify your attendance in class/es to the VA Department on the last calendar day of the month. This will generate the payment of your monthly benefit. If you fail to contact the VA Department on the last day of the calendar month, you will have to wait until the following month to verify two month's worth of enrollment. Monthly enrollment verifications can be done by calling 1 (877) 823-2378 or logging on to the WAVES website: <https://www.gibill.va.gov/wave/index.do>

The Post 9/11 Bill (Chapter 33), Dependents (Chapter 35), or Vocational Rehab (Chapter 31) do not have to call in monthly to verify enrollment.

Changes in enrollment must be reported to the VRC. See WITHDRAWALS, DROPS, CHANGES, ADDITIONS TO REGISTERED CLASSES below.

## PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Effective Spring of 2013, SAC gives priority registration to active duty members of the Armed Forces of the United States or former members who have been discharged within the last 15 years of the day before classes begin. Furthermore, any student Veteran processed for VA benefits in the Veterans Affairs Office at SAC is eligible for priority registration. If you are a new student and will be using your Veterans Education benefits in Santa Ana College, please fill out the Priority Registration Request Form and submit it to our office as soon as possible. Students processed for their VA benefits in the current term will automatically be given priority registration for the next term.

Effective Fall 2013, Students could lose Priority Registration eligibility due to a new state legislation if you: (1) are on academic probation for 2 consecutive terms, and/or (2) have accrued 100+ units of degree applicable courses at SAC/SCC. Students can appeal this in Admissions and Records.

## DEGREE OBJECTIVE

To be in compliance with VA regulations, all veterans and eligible dependents/spouse must be striving toward one educational objective while attending Santa Ana College: Either an AA degree, Transfer Program, or Certificate Program (Note: Not all Certificate Programs are VA Approved). This is declared on the Semester Veterans Benefit Request Form and must match the Educational Plan created by the counselor. An undecided major is accepted only if a student's objective is to enroll in a Transfer Program to a specific college (Ex: A student is completing General Education requirements to transfer to CalState Fullerton). However, electives won't be certified until a major is declared. Only one educational goal at a time is permitted for VA certification purposes. For example, if your goal is to obtain an A.A. degree in Liberal Arts, you cannot take courses outside what is required to obtain that goal. You're welcome to take courses outside the plan, but those courses will not be certified for payment.

VRAP students – please check with the VRC staff, there are exceptions for this program when it comes to Degree Objectives.

## APPROVED PROGRAMS

The VA has approved all degree programs and certain Certificate programs at SAC. You can check the link on our website on which specific programs are approved or you can go directly to the GI Bill Website: Click on "Choosing a School," and then click on "Search for approved Education & Job Training Programs." You can then search for Santa Ana College. Click on "Programs" on the WEAMS Institution Search, and then "Non College Degree" for approved Vocational Certificate Programs. If it is not on any of the lists, then it is a program that is not approved or have yet to be approved.

## EDUCATIONAL PLAN

To be in compliance with VA regulations, students using the Veterans Educational Benefits must have a current and complete Student Educational plan on file. A complete educational plan is approved and signed by an academic counselor to help you attain your educational goal as reflected on the SAC catalog. Please schedule a counseling appointment (714-564-6100) to discuss your educational goals with an academic counselor. Depending on funding, the VRC may have counselors available as well. Bring your official academic transcripts from all previously attended colleges to your appointment for proper credit. It is also advised that you set up an appointment with Placement/Testing Center for Math/Reading/English before your appointment. Request a copy of your educational plan for your VA file which you will need to submit to our office. The VA will only pay for courses required to obtain your one educational objective as indicated on the catalog. To avoid delays in payment or possible overpayment, it is your responsibility to adhere to your Student Educational Plan. Please refer to the "What Your Educational Plan Looks Like" hand out for more information on this document.

## REMEDIAL COURSES

Remedial courses include non-degree or pre-collegiate basic skills classes in Math, English, Reading, Learning and Study Skills. Depending on the student's educational goals, remedial coursework may be required and indicated on an educational plan by an Academic Counselor. Required remedial coursework needed to climb up to higher level required coursework may be certified for VA payment. However, **online remedial courses are not approved for certification.**

## MILITARY CREDIT FOR DD-214 HOLDERS

When a veteran petitions for graduation from Rancho Santiago Community College District and needs these units for graduation purposes, the graduation office will verify a request for credit from the form DD-214. The VRC would send a copy of your DD214 to Admissions & Records, if you provided them one. Admissions would apply the following credits: Three (3) units for health education and one (1) unit for exercise science can be granted on the basis of military service under the Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development area under Plan A (Associate Degree Plan) & three (3) units towards Plan B (Transfer to a CSU Plan). Military credit is not accepted under Plan C (Transfer to a UC Plan). The SAC VRC will not certify courses that apply under these areas for students who hold DD-214's. Please avoid taking courses under those areas if you have a DD-214. They won't be certified for payment since the areas will already have been fulfilled by your DD-214.

## CHANGING YOUR EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE FOR CONTINUING SAC STUDENTS

If you elect to change your educational goal/program in the middle of the term, you must notify the VRC immediately. You will be required to provide a new educational plan (Contact your academic counselor). Return it to the SAC VRC. This needs to be done to make sure your current courses apply to the new goal declared according to the new education plan. If your goal does not take effect until the next term, wait to submit your education plan along with the Certification Request Form (Purple Form) for the new term when you're fully registered in your new set of classes.

## OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS (NON-MILITARY)


Official Academic Transcripts from all prior colleges and universities must be evaluated at the Admissions and Records office. If the transcripts are not on file, the Veterans Affairs Office (VRC) may not be able to certify your courses for payment. Furthermore, transcripts are needed in order for Counselors to make an educational plan for you. Once the evaluation is completed, in the event you have satisfactorily completed prior courses and have elected to repeat them prior to transcript evaluation, you may be at risk of overpayment by the VRC. The VRC may stop or reduce your education benefits and you will be required to return any overpayments to the VA determined by the VRC. Overpayments may be retroactive to the beginning of any specific term up to 2 terms. Official Academic Transcripts are required to be submitted during the first term the student attends the college. We will not certify future terms without them.

For VRAP students, Official Transcripts are required before we can certify any of your courses for payment. This is a requirement that we need to enforce according to the VA.

### OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS (MILITARY)

Military transcripts are currently being accepted in Admissions & Records. It may be applied towards electives or actual course equivalency. Official Academic Transcripts are required to be submitted during the first term the student attends the college.

### WITHDRAWALS, DROPS, CHANGES, ADDITIONS TO REGISTERED CLASSES

All veterans and eligible dependents are REQUIRED to report ANY changes of classes, adds and/or drops to the VRC after the add/drop request has been officially processed by the Admissions and Records Office to avoid overpayment or underpayment. This is done by filling out the  **Add/Drop Form** and turning it in the VRC.

Post 9/11 (Chapter 33 students): If you drop to exactly 50% or less in rate of pursuit (usually, 6 units or less in a regular semester) during a term, you will not be eligible for BAH effective the day you withdrew from the class that made your unit status become 50% or less. Check with the VRC first before you drop any courses to see how it can affect your BAH payments. You may also owe book stipend and tuition & fees for the applicable dropped course to the VA. If you completely withdraw from all of your courses during the semester, you will owe all of your benefits back to the VA. You can contact the VA about mitigating circumstances and appeal the overpayment. It will be up to the VA to approve or deny your appeal.

VRAP students: You will only be paid for the time you are enrolled in Full Time status. If you drop below Full Time, you will no longer be eligible for VRAP payments effective the date your drop below Full time.

### VA REPAYMENT POLICY

If you drop a course or if a grade of "W" or "NC" is earned in a course which lowered your payment status, the VA requires repayment. For example, if you drop a class and you fall from Full Time of 12 units to  $\frac{3}{4}$  time of 9 units, the pay back will be the difference between the full and three quarter time after the drop date and will be effective when the class/es were dropped. If you have special circumstances that were out of your control that contributed to the reduction of your units, you may be able to waive the debt (See Mitigating Circumstances below).

### MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

You may be able to submit a mitigating circumstance explanation, if it was out of your control with proper documentation to waive the debt. This is done by filling out Form 21-4138. Search for this form within the GI Bill website. The statement you submit must be a situation you were unaware of when you registered for school. This must be an unexpected occurrence and must be DOCUMENTED (e.g. a letter from your employer regarding shift change or increased hours, a note from a doctor or medical bill, etc.). If the VA accepts your explanation, they may waive your debt. If you fail to submit an explanation or if the VA does not accept your explanation, any money you received after the day of the drop for the class or classes will be considered an overpayment.

Such overpayment is subject to immediate collection or deduction from your remaining benefits.

### ENROLLMENT STATUS: Regular Full Semester Courses

In a regular semester term, Full time is considered 12+ units,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time is 9-11.9 units,  $\frac{1}{2}$  time is 6-8.9 units, 5 units and below are less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  time. For Chapter 33 students, 6 units or less is considered half time or less which is ineligible for BAH. Payments are based on the enrollment status during a period of enrollment.

### ENROLLMENT STATUS: MINI COURSES INCLUDING SUMMER COURSES

Classes not beginning and ending within the regular semester calendar such as an 8-week course are certified only for the period of time that each course is active. The beginning and ending dates used for these types of classes will be determined as outlined in the class schedule. For short term courses including summer, you can calculate your own equivalent enrollment status by using this formula:

$$\text{Units or Credits} \times 18 / \text{Weeks of course/s} = \text{Credit Hour Equivalent} / 12 = \text{Rate of Pursuit Percentage}$$

The enrollment status is based on the period your courses are in session. Ex: If you are taking 7 units total in a semester, where 4 of those units begin on 02/08/10 and end on 06/07/10, and the other 3 units begin on 03/03/10 and end on 05/15/10, then you will only be considered more than half time, but not 3/4 time, between the period your 3 unit class is in session.

### **“F” GRADES, NO PASS, AND INCOMPLETE COURSES**

For any certified courses, your VA benefits will not be affected if you receive an “F” grade or No Pass grade for the first time. The VA Office will confirm from your instructor whether the course/s were pursued or whether you earned the grade because you stopped attending a class, even if you did not officially withdraw. If you received the grade because you stopped attending, it will be reported as a withdrawal effective the last day of attendance to the VA. This will cause an overpayment which you will be responsible for.

If you receive a failing grade the second time, then your first certified “F” or No Pass grade will be reported to the VA as non-punitive and will cause an overpayment for that specific term. This means, you will have to repay back any benefits associated with that class for the entire term to the VA. Please see the Certifying Official for details.

If you receive an Incomplete Grade, it is your responsibility to complete that course and notify the VA Office on the outcome grade of the course whether you passed or not. If you failed the class, the same applies above.

### **REPEATING CLASSES**

**You may repeat courses for VA benefits in the following situations:**

1. A grade of “W” or “NP” was previously received.
2. A grade of “F” was received and the class is listed in the catalog as a requirement for the major (which should also reflect your educational plan).
3. A grade of “F” was received and the class is a Basic General Educational Subject required for graduation.
4. If the grade does not meet minimum requirements for graduation for a specific program.

**You will not be eligible for VA benefits for the classes that fall under the following situations:**

1. A grade of “A,” “B,” “C,” or “D” was received in a course.
2. It does not fall into the above 4 categories.

If you earn an F after repeating a class due to a D, because it did not meet the minimum requirements for graduation for a specific program, the D grade will be reported as Non-Punitive to the VA which could cause overpayments for that term. The F grade replaces the D grade in Admissions.

**Rules apply to certified courses only.**

### **SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

This means that you must maintain a positive grade point average (GPA) of at least a 2.00 or a “C” average, and after attempting 12 units, you must have a completion rate of at least 50%. If you do not maintain this Satisfactory Progress requirement as defined in the current RSCCD catalog, you will be placed on academic probation for one semester. Students who are placed on academic probation or progress will be required to attend a Counseling Intervention Workshop. Admissions & Records will notify the student by email. If you are still not meeting Satisfactory Progress the second semester, your unsatisfactory progress will be reported the Veterans Administration as a warning. The VA Office can still certify your eligible courses for VA benefits.

**If you are still not meeting Satisfactory Progress for the third semester, you may continue in classes, but you will not be entitled to receive VA educational benefits until you regain Satisfactory Progress.** You must schedule an appointment to see your Academic Counselor for a plan of action to regain Satisfactory Progress. **A dismissal status is also not eligible for VA education benefits.**

### **ADVANCE PAYMENT**

Santa Ana College does not participate in the Advance Pay option.

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

You may take courses offered at other colleges/universities, while enrolled at SAC, in order to satisfy your educational objective. The course/s must be equivalent to what is required on your Ed Plan. You must notify the SAC VRC prior to your registration date with other schools to make sure the course can be certified for benefits according to your educational plan by filling out a "[Parent/Primary School Certification Request](#)." This form must be signed by a SAC academic counselor or dean. You will then return it to SAC's VRC for the Certifying Official signature, so they can submit it to the secondary institution you are concurrently enrolled. SAC becomes the parent school and the other institution becomes the secondary school where the student is a guest student. Students who aren't taking any courses at SAC but taking courses at other college/s, must fill out the [Semester Certification Request Form \(pdf\)](#) as well and turn in to the VRC accompanied by the completed Parent letter.

If you discontinue the class at the secondary school, you must notify the secondary school's VA Certifying Official. The secondary school will then adjust the certified units. When grades have been posted for the secondary school term, you will provide the SAC Admissions & Records with an Official Academic Transcript reflecting the grade/s you earned for the term. Failure to provide official transcripts may jeopardize future requests for secondary school certification and could affect your payment/s. Concurrent enrollment at another school may cause delays in monthly benefits. During peak periods, parent school certification requests could take approximately three to four weeks.

\*\*\*Courses being taken at our sister college, Santiago Canyon College (SCC), do not require a parent letter or transcripts after completion of the course/s. The SAC certifying official will internally send the Parent letter to them. Be advised that there will be delays in the certification of courses at SCC. You will be certified there as a guest student.

## ROUNDING OUT - LAST TERM ONLY

You may qualify for the Rounding Out program. Rounding Out is a program which allows a student with a limited number of courses remaining in his/her program to add non-required courses in order to maintain a higher level of monthly benefit. This increases the enrollment status. Eligible students will be permitted to "round out," at one time, on their final term at a 2-year college (final term of AA, AS, Certificate course, or transfer to a 4-year program). The final term is when they will earn the degree or certificate, or able to transfer to the University according to their plan. The VRC must determine if a student is eligible for rounding out. The student must request this in person and meet with a VRC representative prior to registering for the final semester.

## TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR RESERVISTS AND ACTIVE DUTY

Contact your Educational representative in your unit for eligibility. Tuition Assistance paperwork is taken directly to the Cashier's Office once you're registered in your intended courses. Make sure you take it within 72 hours after registration or your courses may be dropped for non-payment. The cashier's office will bill the VA directly. This is not done in SAC's VRC.

## VA DEPENDENT FEE WAIVER

Dependents of Veterans may be eligible for a Fee Waiver if attending a California Community College, or any UC or CalState System in California. You must fill out the [Veteran Dependent Fee Waiver Application Form \(Available on our Website under forms\)](#) and submit it to the local Veterans Service Office for eligibility & processing. Once approved, the approval letter must be submitted to the VRC's Certifying Official for processing. Make you're your SAC student ID is written on this letter. Students eligible under Plan A will not be able to use Chapter 35 benefits. Students eligible under Plan B may be eligible for Chapter 35 benefits.

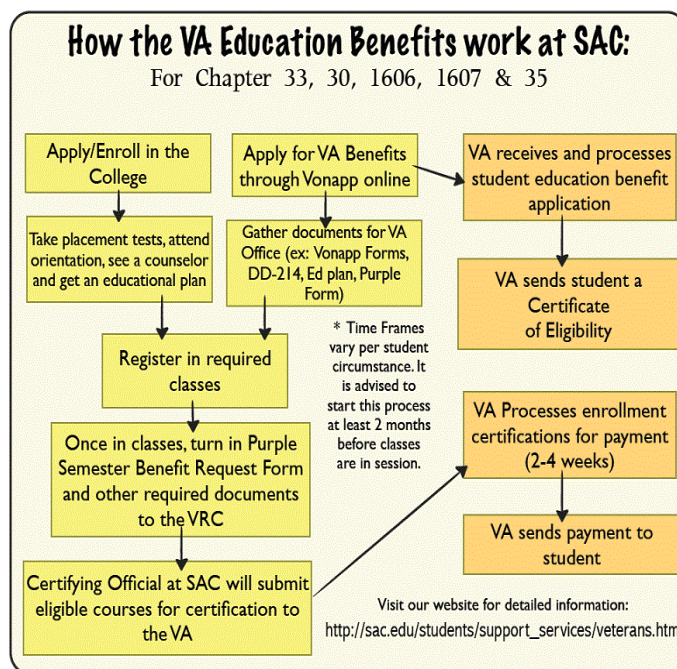
## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (CHAPTER 31)

Vocational Rehabilitation students must call the Veterans Service Office at 1 (800) 827-1000 for eligibility and how to apply. Although educational plans and the Purple Certification Request forms are required, Chapter 31 students must meet with his/her assigned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor first and bring to the VRC his/her approved Form 1905. Please see one of the Certifying Officials at Santa Ana College for more information on how this Chapter works. Please go the [GI Bill Website](#) for more information on this program. Vouchers for the Tuition & Fees and Bookstore supplies are given by the VRC Certifying Official once the 1905 form is received accompanied by all other documents required for certification purposes (See the checklist)

## DISAGREEMENT WITH POLICY

RSCCD follows the Veterans Administration regulations by implementation of all of the above information. Disagreement with any of these policies may be presented to the Veterans Administration Office in Los Angeles by calling 1-800-827-1000 or the Santa Ana College Veterans Affairs Office (Now located in the Veterans Resource Center) at 1-714-564-6050.





The above chart also includes Chapter 31 Voc Rehab and VRAP students

**The Veterans Resource Center – Building R-101**

**1530 W 17<sup>th</sup> St., Santa Ana, CA 92703**

**(714) 564-6050**

**veterans@sac.edu**

**Hours: Mondays to Thursdays 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Fridays 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

**(Subject to change without notice)**

**“Assisting Veterans Transition from Soldiers to Scholars”**