

VA CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

Office of Veteran Certification
Fall Quarter, 2008-09

5th Floor, University Pavilion
(513) 556-6811

Welcome

This issue of the Veterans Certification Office newsletter is to welcome you to the University community and tell you how to receive your VA benefits for Winter Qtr., 2009. It also, contains review information concerning VA benefit processes and important deadlines. Our newsletter is disseminated at the end of each quarter. Make time to read the newsletter, be sure you fully understand its contents, and call our office if you have any questions.

Students should allow 6+ weeks from the date our office sent your paperwork to VA to get a response. Please feel free to contact our office if you want to know exactly when we sent your paperwork to VA if you've not had a response.

VA's toll free number is (1-888-442-4551) for all chapters except Voc. Rehab. (Chpt. #31). Chpt. #31 students should call 1-800-827-1000.

New Office Hours

During our peak busy period 1/5/09 through 1/23/09 our office hours will be 10 A.M.-4 P.M. (EST), Monday-Friday. (UC will be closed 1/19/09 for the holiday.) Beginning 1/26/09 we'll resume our normal 8A.M.-5P.M.(EST), M-F hrs.

Important Reminder

If for any reason you won't be officially registered for Winter Quarter classes at UC on 1/5/09, our office must be notified **before 1/5/09**. Reasons could include payment problems, Ohio Guard tuition or Voc. Rehab. Benefits not being processed, being on Co-op, called to active duty, not attending for personal reasons, etc.

Anyone not officially registered in UC classes as of 8:00 a.m. on 1/5/09 will have their VA chapter benefits interrupted.

Students leaving UC after Fall Quarter and entering a different educational institution should contact our office to make sure there are no loose ends here that could delay benefits at their new school. We can also provide the form to get VA benefits started at that new school.

Attention Dorm Students

All students using dorm addresses for VA mail should notify the VA (1-888-442-4551) and our office of changes ASAP. Failure to do so may cause interruptions in pay & non-receipt of mail.

VA Benefits for Winter Quarter

If you meet all of the following criteria (can answer "True" to each item), you will remain certified for Winter Quarter benefits:

- 1) Your accurately completed **YELLOW** UC Annual Declaration of Responsibility form for this 2008-09 standard academic year is on file in our office,
- 2) You ended Fall Qtr., 2008, with at least a ½ time pay rate (NOTE: "NG, NP, W, X, SP, UP, UW, & Graduate "I" grades reduce your credit hours for VA pay),
- 3) All your Fall Quarter classes met for the entire standard qtr. term (9/24-12/13/08).
- 4) You are officially registered for Winter Qtr. classes as of 8:00 a.m. 1/5/09,
- 5) All of your Winter Quarter courses apply to your current degree and major* (audited courses, surplus credits and non-required repeat classes do not apply),
- 6) You will be continuing in the same UC college, degree, and major,
- 7) Your VA mailing address remains the same,
- 8) You were not registered for all "Online/Independent Study" or all "Flexibly" scheduled type classes Fall Qtr., 2008,
- 9) You were not receiving Voc. Rehab. benefits Fall Qtr., 2008.
- 10) You were not registered in the Clermont Police Academy during the Fall Qtr. 2008,
- 11) You are not receiving "In-service" benefits,
- 12) You are not registered for all "Flex" classes for Winter Qtr. (09W),
- 13) You are not enrolled in a "Distance Learning" program,
- 14) You are not in "Unsatisfactory Progress" by UC standards nor suspended/dismissed,
- 15) You do not have outstanding paperwork.

*For a course to apply to your current degree major it must move you closer to graduation, be a pre-requisite or an approved refresher class that's required by your current college for your current official degree major.

If you do not meet all the aforementioned criteria, you must inform our office, as soon as possible, no later than 4:00 p.m. January 16, 2009, in order to be in compliance with UC policy, and accurately certified for Winter Qtr. Once you're officially registered for Winter Qtr. classes modify them if necessary, **then if** the Winter Qtr. registration results in a change in your pay status, contains any nonapplicable

classes, TV classes or flexibly scheduled classes, contact our office ASAP so we may adjust our records and report the changes in enrollment to VA.

The sooner you finalize your schedule and notify our office, the sooner we may process your paperwork; however, enrollment changes can't be submitted to the VA until it's reflected on the school's database.

INFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED TO US BEFORE 1/5/09:

- 1.) Decisions to enter the Clermont Police Academy for Winter, 2009,
- 2.) Changes in UC college, degree and/or major for Winter Qtr, 2009, **
- 3.) Decisions to discontinue or begin Co-op.
- 4.) Change of address (updating the UC database will not change your address for your file in our office). ***

**** DON'T WAIT UNTIL CLASSES HAVE STARTED TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE CONCERNING CHANGES OF PROGRAM.**

If the change is effective Winter Quarter, contact our office for the required VA paperwork during December, 2008. **Even if** the change is just a change of degree major within your same college or a change from a single to a double major (and vice versa) VA requires program change paperwork to be completed. This completed paperwork must be returned to us **by 1/16/09**. Notification and receipt of paperwork regarding changes of college/degree/major effective Winter Qtr. received after 1/16/09 may cause an interruption of VA pay.

***Address and credit hour changes may be phoned-in to our office.

Information that must be submitted in writing by 4:00 p.m. on 1/16/09, by ALL students, includes the following:

- 1) Students to provide us with a note identifying courses which are not required for their current program, --whether or not the "N/A" classes affect the VA pay rate!
- 2) Completed paperwork required for Winter Qtr. changes in college, degree, and/or major for VA benefit certification.
- 3) Change of address (local or address used for VA) and/or phone number information.
- 4) Notification of planned 2008-2009 CO-OP quarters (If you want to receive VA benefits during CO-OP, you will need to contact our office for that additional form by 10/3/08).

CHANGING YOUR UC DEGREE PROGRAM?

When you start thinking of changing colleges or major, contact our office. We can advise you concerning the effect of the change on your benefits and provide you any required paperwork well in advance. These changes may require documentation from your college office, so don't wait until the last minute. **YOU RISK INTERRUPTION OF YOUR BENEFITS WHEN YOU MISS DEADLINES.**

Special Notes:

Students pursuing "**Distance Learning**" type of programs that are certified during each quarter students still on **Active Duty** and **Voc. Rehab.** (Chpt. #31) students need to contact us once their Winter Qtr., 2009, class registration is "set" on the UC database to be certified for Winter Qtr., 2009, VA benefits.

Students pursuing "Distance Learning" or "Independent Study" type of programs that are certified at the end of each quarter should remember to contact our office as soon as "A, B, C, D, F" grades are posted on the UC database for **all** their Fall Qtr., 2008, classes in order to be certified for eligible Fall Qtr., 2008, VA back-pay. (Remember VA takes approximately 8+ weeks to process school certification reports and has a 1-yr. limit on payment of retroactive benefits.)

Co-op Concerns

If you plan to Co-op Winter Quarter and want to still receive your VA benefits, contact our office immediately for the Co-op Rate "request" form.

If you are already certified at the Co-op Rate but your current "request" form ends with this Fall Quarter, then contact our office immediately to instruct us how you want to be certified beyond Fall Quarter. Whether you want to continue the Co-op Rate or switch to the regular VA pay rate, there is a form you must complete in our office to be certified.

If you plan to Co-op Winter Quarter and do not want any benefits during that quarter, contact our office **immediately** to inform us of this change in your status to minimize any overpayment of VA chapter benefits.

The above forms/information should be submitted to our office ASAP but not before you have completed Winter Quarter registration and **not later than January 16, 2009**. Please feel free to contact our office concerning your status or questions you may have about the Co-op Rate of pay.

Clermont Police Academy

Students certified for the Clermont Police Academy during Fall Qtr., 2008, should make sure their final grade for both Parts I & II are posted on the UC database by 12/19/08. These students will, also, experience an interruption of VA benefits between Fall Qtr. 2008 and Winter Qtr. 2009, and should notify our office as soon as their Winter Qtr., 2009, class registration is "set" on the UC database to be certified for Winter Qtr. benefits if they will continue at UC.

Clermont students that register for the Clermont Police Academy as part of their Assoc: Criminal Justice Tech. major must notify our office before the beginning of the quarter in which the academy classes start. In order to receive VA benefits for this enrollment the credits must fulfill open graduation requirements in their Assoc. Criminal Justice Tech. degree. If any of the academy credits represent repeated coursework our office will need a note from the student stating the number of repeated credit hours before being certified for any academy enrollment.

Also, since the academy dates may differ from the standard quarter dates, students will receive payment for the academy credits only during the academy term dates.

Students should be sure to request an "I" grade at the end of Part I to avoid an overpayment with VA for that academy term.

As of December 2008, our office has not received the required documentation for VA approval of any 2009 Clermont Police Academy sessions. Until this data is received students may not be certified for VA benefits for the academy classes.

CHPT. #31/VOC. REHAB BENEFITS

Chapter #31 recipients must notify our office 24 hours in advance before their Winter Quarter Bookcards will be available. The earliest we may release Winter Qtr. Bookcards is 12/5/08. Our office cannot accept a student's 24-hour notice unless:

- our office has a current benefit authorization,
- your class schedule is finalized on the database
- our office has your completed 2008-09 "Declaration of Responsibility" form on file,
- our office has received your written notification of any nonrequired Winter Qtr. classes. **(This student "N/A" note must also state whether Voc. Rehab. approved payment for these non-applicable classes, or not.)**
- you don't have any outstanding items due to us.

Bookcards may be mailed if you request it. Only one bookcard per quarter may be issued without additional authorization from your VA counselor.

(Note: Chpt. #31 students in Distance-Learning online programs will not be issued Bookcards. The UC Bookstore will have a copy of the #28-1905 on file, however, for any purchases made through them.)

Chapter #31 students with outstanding prior quarter charges not covered by Voc. Rehab. benefits continue to risk a block on future registration if these charges remain unpaid.

Note: You must officially withdraw from any Winter classes you are registered for by 1/12/09 to receive a 100% refund credit.

Chpt.#31 students should remember the following important items:

- you must notify our office after your Winter Qtr. (09W) class registration is "set" on the UC database and you won't make any further changes to your Winter Qtr. enrollment.
- be aware of your #28-1905 authorization period ending date.
- contact your VA counselor at least one month before your current authorization expires.
- make sure your class schedule is "set" on the school's system before requesting a bookcard.
- be sure to promptly notify our office of any changes in your UC status.
- fill out waiver cards for UC Health Insurance by their deadline. (VA will not pay for this fee.)
- register with the Disability Services Office on your campus to find out what other services you may be eligible for at UC. (If you attend main campus call 556-6823.)
- check over your UC bill. If there is a "balance due" contact the UC One-Stop-Center to find out why. (Do this before the bill due date.)
- check with your college program advisor if you have any questions about whether a class is required, or not, for your current degree major. (Do this well before classes begin.)

T.V. COURSES

These are classes that are presented by Video-tape or broadcast on cable T.V. VA requires that these type of classes go through an approval process in order for students to receive VA benefits for them.

If you register for any classes taught by this method contact our office before the quarter begins to make sure your class is approved for this type of delivery mode.

If the class is not approved for VA benefits under this T.V. delivery mode, then you may change your registration for this course to a different type of delivery mode (i.e., standard classroom study or independent study), or you may drop this class and add a different one altogether.

If you remain registered in a T.V. class that is not approved for VA benefits, then **you must write our office a note** identifying the class and stating you realize it will not be included for VA benefit pay. These student notes are due **by the second Friday of the quarter** in order for the student to be in compliance with UC policy and remain certified for VA benefits that quarter.

Flexibly Scheduled Courses

Several UC Colleges currently offer classes that have different begin/end dates than the standard quarter dates. These nonstandard classes are identified in the school's database class offerings as "flexibly scheduled classes", "Weekend College", and "ASAP" classes.

Taking flexible courses will usually affect your VA pay. Since VA pays benefits based on "pursuit" for these types of classes, once the course ends, so does payment for that course in most cases. **Be sure to pay close attention to the class dates when registering for classes.**

You may register for flexible courses at the beginning of the regular quarter or just before the class begins, in most cases. Registering for all your classes at the outset will save time and our office paperwork, but will also mean you may have a larger tuition bill to pay at the beginning of the quarter. Students who wait to register until later in the quarter for these classes must be sure to **NOTIFY OUR OFFICE** of the addition **BEFORE** the class begins. Also, notify us immediately if you withdraw from a flexibly scheduled class.

Students registered for "**Flex**" classes must **provide our office with their final grade within approximately 10 days from the official end of the "Flex" class term.** We need the grade posted on the UC database or provide us with a letter from their instructor (on departmental letterhead) stating the grade they received for each of these courses. (We need this because typically these grades are not usually available until after our reporting deadline.) Students not providing this documentation **within 10 days of the official end of the class** may create an overpayment with the VA since we'll have to report "no grade" (NG) awarded. VA will not pay benefits for "NG" assignments. **It is the student's responsibility for making sure our office receives their**

"flex" class grades in a timely manner. Student's failing to comply with this policy will have to contact our office for possible retroactive certification for all future "Flex" classes.

If you have questions about how you will be paid when taking accelerated courses, please contact our office. If we cannot give you a definite answer we will be able to supply you with specific class term dates so that VA can better assist you.

"NP", "X", "SP", "UP", "NG", "I", "F" & "UW" GRADES

Because "**NP**" and "**NG**" grades and Graduate "**SP**" and "**UP**" grades are nonpunitive (do not ever figure in your GPA) VA will not pay benefits for them. (Exceptions are made for students in the Colleges of Law or Medicine and those Graduate students registered for courses titled "Thesis" or "Dissertation" Research that receive "NG" or "SP" grades.)

These "**SP**" and "**UP**" grades were new at the Graduate level effective Winter Qtr., 2007, and new at the Undergraduate level effective Spring Qtr., 2007.

The Undergraduate "**SP**" and "**UP**" grades and Graduate level "**I**" grade do not become punitive until one year later. VA will not pay benefits for these grades until they lapse to "**F**" in the GPA at the end of that year, so may create an overpayment with VA.

The "**X**" grade was new Fall Qtr., 2005. The "**X**" grade is assigned for students who remained registered for a class but never attended the class per the instructor's records. The "**X**" grade counts as an "**F**" in the GPA. VA will not pay any benefits for "**X**" grades because VA will not pay for nonpursuit.

"**UW**" grades are given when students simply stop attending class(es) without doing the proper withdrawal paperwork. VA will not pay benefits for "**UW**" grades (even though they figure in your GPA as an "**F**") because VA will not pay for nonpursuit. If a "**UW**" grade will reduce your VA pay rate, additional paper work (mailed to you by our office), is required when students want to receive benefits for the portion of the "**UW**" class they did attend.

Depending on the number of applicable credit hours carried, students may sometimes create an overpayment with VA as a result of "**NP**", "**X**", "**SP**", "**UP**", and "**NG**", "**UW**", and Graduate "**I**" grades.

Since "F" and **Undergraduate "I"** grades are punitive, VA will pay benefits for them. It's usually better to request an "I" grade for an **Undergraduate** class, rather than get an "NP", "NG", "SP", or "UP" if these grades will reduce your VA pay rate **AND** you plan to complete the outstanding work before the end of the following quarter.

NOTE: Students must notify us promptly of any grade changes (recent or distant past) once they are processed onto the school's database. An accumulation of 16+ cr. hrs. of "I, F, IP, SP, UP, UW, X, or "Y" grades on your UC transcript will result in an interruption of VA benefits due to "Unsatisfactory Progress" status. For questions about the status of your "Unsatisfactory Progress" totals contact our office. You may contact the One-Stop Center to order a transcript.

*This policy change for "IP" grades began Fall Qtr., 2003, and lasted through Spring Qtr., 2007.

Find Out Your Grades

UC students can now visit the UC web site (www.onestop.uc.edu/) to view their grades for the past four quarters. The current Fall Quarter (08A) grades will be available on 12/19/08.

ALERT!!!

TO OHIO NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER!

It has been brought to our attention that the Ohio National Guard Scholarship program will **no longer be paying** the "Info Tech & Inst Equip Fee". The reason given for this is the National Guard Scholarship program considers this to be a lab fee, and the scholarship will only pay General Fees and Instructional Fees.

If you have any questions regarding this change, you may contact Toni Davis (Grants Administrator) at the Ohio National Guard Scholarship Office at 1-888-400-6484, or (614) 336-7032, or DSN 346-7032.

Keep in mind; students are responsible for paying this fee. Be sure to pay this fee in the beginning of the quarter to avoid a late fee.

NOTE: We are open normal office hours throughout the break period except for designated holidays.

Spring Quarter Advance Pay

Students who are not receiving VA benefits during February, 2009, are not In-service, are not in an "Online/Independent Study" or "Flex" class degree program, and plan to carry at least six applicable standard credit hours Spring Quarter are eligible for advance pay for that quarter. Those who are interested and eligible should apply with our office before February 19, 2009. Remember these funds may not fully cover tuition expenses and may not arrive before bill payments are due. Make alternative plans to cover your tuition to avoid being charged a late fee on your UC bill.

Students returning to UC after not being certified for VA benefits for a 1+ quarters and do not want advance pay should contact our office in mid-February--early March 2009 to restart benefits for Spring Qtr.

Returning students must be officially admitted to their UC degree program and registered for classes that are required for this current degree for receipt of VA benefits at UC. After you've reapplied to UC, contact our office. We'll determine what paperwork is needed for certification of VA benefits and send it to you.

VA AWARD LETTERS & FINANCIAL AID

Hold on to those VA "Award" letters that you'll receive near the middle of fall term. They indicate your pay rate and remaining entitlement. Furthermore, you may need to provide a copy to the Office of Financial Aid. or to establish eligibility under the "Ohio G.I. Promise" law.

Our office does not receive these letters, so if you lose them, you must contact VA for another one or make a trip to the VA office located at 36 E. 7th Street, Suite 210, (Mon.-Fri., 8:30-4:00) for a screen-print of your status. Phone ahead (513) 684-3877 before you go to this office, however, to make sure someone will be available. Another option, now available to Chpt. #30, #1606, and REAP students, is do a screen-print from their VA WAVE site. This site now displays the student's last two pay periods and the amount of remaining months and days of VA benefits.

Also, watch the "Benefit Status Information" end date on your VA "Award Letter"! This is the date VA will pay you through for the current enrollment. If the date is not "6/13/09", and you're registered for ½+ pay rate, call our office to see if the VA made an error. Don't wait until the last minute to look into this matter since you may be without benefits until VA makes corrections.

MISC. INFORMATION:

Minority Scholarship

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is accepting nominations for The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) grant for Fall, 2009. The application deadline is 1/12/09. If you want more information go to: <http://www.gmsp.org> or phone 1-877-690-4677. (This website also links to other minority scholarships.)

Various Other Scholarships

Also, check out <http://www.militaryscholar.com> for various other scholarship programs.

Scholarships for Military Children

This scholarship program is funded through the generosity of manufacturers and suppliers for the products sold at military commissaries.

Go to <http://www.militaryscholar.org/> for eligibility criteria and other details about the program and an application. The deadline is Feb. 18, 2009 for this 2009-10 scholarship fund.

UC Policy for Activated Students

A student who is involuntarily called to active duty status in one of the US military services divisions during a school term will be given a 100% refund of instructional fees, general fees, and nonresident surcharge. Upon receipt of orders to report, the student should contact their college office in order to initiate the withdrawal process. A student receiving Veterans Educational benefits should also notify the Veterans Certification Office and the Office of the Registrar, in order for those offices to complete required documents relating to VA benefits, fee adjustments, etc. (This policy does not apply to annual training, voluntary activation, or students activated during break periods.)

If notification of active duty occurs late in the academic term such that the student and instructor(s) agree that a grade(s) can be assigned, or that a "P" (Pass) is appropriate, the student may elect to remain enrolled and receive the grade(s) and credit for the course(s). In such a case, no refund is necessary or appropriate.

A student who enlists voluntarily in one of the divisions of the military service and who withdraws to do so will receive a refund according to the regular refund policy in effect at the time of withdrawal.

What You Should Do If Activated

If you are involuntarily activated (other than annual training) during a quarter contact your college office. Explain what has happened and ask what paperwork is required from you in order to remain matriculated in your degree program upon return. Also, notify your instructors, if possible, **if** you plan to drop some/all of your classes. To withdraw obtain the name and fax number of your college representative that processes withdrawals for your college. If there's time, ask them to await a faxed copy of your orders before submitting the I withdrawal form. As soon as you are issued a copy of your initial orders (the one telling you when to first report to your unit) fax a copy of them to your college office. (If the withdrawal form has a copy of your orders attached to it, it ensures proper processing by the Registrar's Office.) (Make sure the orders are readable and include your name and SS#.) Once the Registrar receives these two items from your college they will delete your classes from the school's database and initiate the refund process. Also, notify our office and forward a copy of the orders to our office via mail, in-person, or call us for other alternatives. Our office will report your withdrawal to the VA and indicate the reason for the withdrawal and attach a copy of your orders to our VA report.

BE SURE TO DROP YOUR CLASSES FOR THE FOLLOWING QUARTER IF YOU'VE ALREADY REGISTERED FOR IT.
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The VA will allow you to keep any money you are entitled to for the quarter up to the date of withdrawal or date of activation (whichever comes first). We recommend you do not "verify" enrollment with VA until VA notifies you the school's withdrawal report has been processed. This would eliminate any VA overpayment.

Any VA pay you receive for the period following the withdrawal/activation date you will owe back to the VA. VA will send you a letter of the exact amount of any debt. If you receive VA checks after you have withdrawn deposit them and await the VA overpayment letter. Once you know the exact amount of the overpayment you may write VA a personal check (include your SS# on the check) to resolve the debt.

Currently, the law allows for Chpt.#1606 and Chpt. #30 recipients to have their entitlement restored for the part of the quarter they attended (even though VA allows them to keep their VA pay for this period).

Contact our office at least two months prior to restarting UC classes to obtain the required paperwork to get your VA benefits in place.

Legal Advice for Activated Reserve/Guard

The American Bar Association offers information to those Reserve/Guard members mobilized to active duty. The following web site has information regarding steps to take to prepare & protect Reserve/Guard members' families, property and jobs during active duty.
<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/helpservicists/home.html>.

Them Bones Veteran Community

This is a non-profit organization for veterans and active duty personnel in the Greater Cin. area that would like assistance coping with service-related stresses and traumas in a private setting. They are currently offering a workshop on the effects of deployment for veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan since 1990. The cost is a voluntary donation.

To find out more about this organization you may contact them at: 2420 Drex Ave., Cin., OH 45212; (513)366-4426 or visit their web site: www.thembonesveteran.org.

Benefits About to End?

Recipients of Chpt #30 whose eligibility for these VA benefits will expire during the break period (12/13/08-1/4/09), or who have approximately 12 months of Chapter #30 benefits remaining, should contact our office about the possibility of extending them. (VA will not extend benefits past your 10yr. "Delimiting Date" and bonus money above the base rate can't be extended.)

If your VA Chapter benefits that end on or before 12/13/08, please contact our office so that we may remove you from our printouts.

New Post-9/11 VA Law

This new Veterans Education Assistance Act goes into effect 8/1/09. Under the new law the VA will pay tuition, a monthly housing stipend and \$1,000/year (maximum) for books and supplies.

There are limits regarding these benefits and specific eligibility qualifications and it does not include apprenticeship and on-the-job training, correspondence courses, flight training or other similar programs.

Basic eligibility under this new law requires 90+ days of active duty served after 9/10/01. The monthly housing stipend is based on military housing benefit rates and the school's zip code. Students that are still In-service, or students enrolled in Distance-Learning (on-line) programs, and students enrolled at a half-time (or less) pay rate, are not eligible for this housing stipend.

At this time VA has not yet worked out the details on how to implement this new benefit nor established reporting regulations for the schools. We are still telling students to plan on paying their own tuition for Fall Qtr., 2009, even if they qualify under this new law, because we don't know what the pay arrangements between VA and the schools will be. (It may be that the student must initially pay the tuition and then be awarded a credit once VA makes their payment to the school. Also, VA may not cover any of the associated fees, etc.)

Keep checking for updates at www.gibill.va.gov. We'll, also, inform you of updates via our newsletters.

<p>HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!</p>
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