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# **UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND**

## **VETERAN'S AFFAIRS BENEFITS HANDBOOK**



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Descriptions of VA policies and procedures within represent our best understanding of VA policy. Students are encouraged to double check this information, either at the VA Education Benefits Website or with a VA service representative.

In order to receive Veteran’s Benefits on a continuing basis, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress as defined by the Office of Financial Aid. For more information on the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy, visit <http://www.up.edu/finaid/handbook> or stop by the Office of Financial Aid in Waldschmidt Hall to request a printed copy of the policy.

## OVERVIEW OF VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFIT PROGRAMS

Below is a summary of the different VA programs commonly seen at the University of Portland. There may be programs not listed below that will still be accepted, if our institution is eligible to participate. This summary reflects our best understanding of the programs at the time of publication. **This does not supersede any direction or description from the VA. It is highly recommended that students check with the VA to verify that this information is still correct.**

It is up to the student to track the length of benefit remaining; the VA does not provide this information to the University. Generally speaking, 36 months will cover 8 semesters (4 years) at UP. Each AY semester is approximately 4 months. Summer course lengths vary, but are usually shorter. **It is the student's responsibility to monitor the length of time remaining of their benefit.** Students should receive a letter from the VA each semester confirming their certification which states their length of benefit remaining.

For all programs, any scholarship or grant from the University of Portland may be reevaluated upon confirmation of a VA benefit. Please contact the Office of Financial Aid to see how this may impact you.

For all programs, the University can only certify courses required for a student's degree to the VA. If a student is taking a class that is not a degree requirement, it will not count towards their enrollment level for the VA.

### CHAPTER 33 – POST-9/11 VA BENEFIT

The VA will pay the University of Portland directly for the tuition benefit. Students may also qualify for a housing allowance and/or books & supplies stipend which is sent directly to the student.

Students will be covered up to a certain percentage of their tuition. This percentage is also capped by the VA's Maximum Tuition & Fees Payable to Private Colleges. For the 16-17 academic year that maximum is \$21,970.46. Meaning that for students with 80% coverage under chapter 33, the VA will pay 80% of their tuition and fees up to \$17,576.36 (80% of the above) for the academic year. This may mean a larger balance in the spring semester. (For VA purposes only the academic year is Fall/Spring/Summer. For all other purposes at UP it is Summer/Fall/Spring.)

If students are taking courses not certifiable to the VA, they will be responsible for covering any related charges out of pocket.

Veterans may transfer their eligibility under Chapter 33 to a dependent listed in the DEERS database (maintained by the Department of Defense). Information on how to transfer benefits is available at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911\\_transfer.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911_transfer.asp). Once benefits have been transferred, the student will then have to apply for benefits (form 1990E, available via [eBenefits](#)) in order to receive a Certificate of Eligibility.

If a student has 100% coverage under Chapter 33, they may be able to enroll in the Yellow Ribbon program. (See information on the application process in the next section.)

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### **CHAPTER 33 w/YELLOW RIBBON – POST-9/11 VA BENEFIT w/YELLOW RIBBON**

The VA will pay the tuition benefit directly to the University of Portland. Once regular Chapter 33 is exhausted, the remainder of tuition and fees will be paid on a matching basis between UP and the VA. Students may also receive a housing (BAH) and/or book stipend from the VA which are sent directly to the student.

For the 16-17 academic year, the VA's Maximum Tuition & Fees Payable to Private Colleges is \$21,970.46. For undergraduates, certifiable tuition and fees above this limit are covered jointly between the University of Portland and the VA up to an additional \$27,500 for a total of \$49,470.46 for the 2016-2017 academic year. For graduate students, an additional \$11,000 is covered for a total of \$32,970.46.

This annual amount should cover most students for fall and spring. If a student is considering using Yellow Ribbon for summer courses, they should contact the VA Certifying Official to discuss their remaining eligibility. (For VA purposes ONLY the academic year is Fall/Spring/Summer. For all other purposes at UP it is Summer/Fall/Spring.) UP is unable to retroactively certify Yellow Ribbon benefits for previous academic years.

If students are taking courses not certifiable to the VA, they will be responsible for covering any related charges out of pocket.

Students can lose their Yellow Ribbon coverage if they fail to maintain SAP, take a leave of absence Fall or Spring semester, withdraw from classes during a Fall or Spring semester, notify the Office of Financial Aid that they no longer wish to use VA education benefits, notify a campus office that they will no longer be attending the University of Portland or complete the degree they are pursuing. Students who lose Yellow Ribbon through the means above will have to go through the application process to have their YR coverage reinstated (see page 6).

Veterans may transfer their eligibility under Chapter 33 to a dependent listed in the DEERS database (maintained by the Department of Defense). Information on how to transfer benefits is available at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911\\_transfer.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911_transfer.asp). Once benefits have been transferred, the student will then have to apply for benefits (form 1990E, available via [eBenefits](#)) in order to receive a Certificate of Eligibility.

### **CHAPTER 31 – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VOCREHAB)**

If a student is receiving Chapter 31 benefits, the University of Portland will work with their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) to determine coverage.

### **CHAPTER 30 – MONTGOMERY VA EDUCATION BENEFIT FOR ACTIVE DUTY**

### **CHAPTER 35 – DEPENDENT'S EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE (DEA)**

### **1606 – MONTGOMERY VA EDUCATION BENEFIT – SELECTED RESERVE**

Monthly stipends are sent directly to the student. The current rate information can be found at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits\\_resources/rate\\_tables.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits_resources/rate_tables.asp).

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## APPLYING FOR YELLOW RIBBON BENEFIT

Only students who have 100% tuition coverage under Chapter 33 (post 9/11 VA education benefits) may qualify for the Yellow Ribbon Program. The University of Portland does not offer the Yellow Ribbon program to students pursuing a second bachelor's degree. Active duty servicemembers and their spouses are ineligible for Yellow Ribbon, however dependents of active duty servicemembers are still eligible.

The University of Portland has 50 Yellow Ribbon spots for undergraduates and 10 spots for graduates. Per VA regulations, these spots must be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis within the application process determined by the schools.

Once you have been admitted, you can apply for a Yellow Ribbon spot using the form linked at <https://www1.up.edu/finaid/other-aid/veterans.html>. Admitted students who are not yet confirmed will be informed if there is a spot available. This spot will be held for 14 days during which time a student must confirm their enrollment with a deposit via admissions. Students can request an extension of their hold by sending an e-mail to [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu). We require this e-mail come from the student's e-mail account. If the student fails to deposit or request an extension before their hold lapses, they will have waived their spot and will have to submit a new application. Spots will only be held for a total of 35 days (two 14 day holds, one 7 day hold), after which time a student will have to deposit first and then inquire about availability.

Current students and admitted students who have already deposited will be informed whether or not they have a spot. They will be automatically enrolled in the program if a spot is available.

In either of the above situations, if a spot is not available students will be placed on a waitlist for the next available spot. If the spot comes available, students will be notified via e-mail. Current students or admitted students who have already deposited will be automatically enrolled in the Yellow Ribbon program. Admitted students who have not yet deposited will have thirty days from when the e-mail is sent to deposit or they will waive their enrollment and the spot will go to the next person on the wait list.

Students who are not yet admitted will not have spots held for them, but are free to ask if there are spots available.

## THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Each semester, the University of Portland is required to submit to the VA the credit load, tuition and fees for all students on benefit. This is known as certification. Each semester, once invoices are run, students must send an e-mail to the Certifying Official as outlined below. (Students on Chapter 31/VocRehab, see note at the end of this page.)

**If a student does NOT want to be certified for the coming semester, or will not be eligible for the coming semester**, they should send an e-mail to [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu) from their stating that they do not want to use VA benefit the coming semester.

**If a student does want to be certified and their schedule is unlikely to change very much**, they should send an e-mail to [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu) stating that they want to be certified. It is understood that students may change their schedule through add/drop. E-mails must be received by the tuition bill deadline to avoid a late fee.

**If a student wants to be certified, but expects to change their schedule greatly**, they should skip the e-mail until they are more ready. They will still be able to view their financial aid award in self-serve while this process is pending. They will also get reminder e-mails from the Office of Financial Aid until this process is completed. E-mails must be received by the tuition bill deadline to avoid a late fee, send the e-mail by the deadline even if you are still anticipating changes.

**We will only accept e-mails from up.edu accounts** for certification requests.

E-mails will be reviewed within a week. Students will receive e-mails from the VA when they are certified.

If a student needs to be certified prior to receiving their invoice, or if they want to change their decision after e-mailing, they should contact the Veterans Certifying Official.

If you log in to self-serve you may see a financial aid requirement listed as “VA Certification” during this process. This requirement refers to the requirement to send the above e-mail. The status of the requirement in self-serve reflects where in the process you are per the table below.

Statuses of VA Certification and What They Mean	
Required	Student has not yet done the process outlined above.
Satisfied	The student has accepted their benefit, but has not yet been certified.
Waived	The student has declined to use their benefit for the coming semester.
Processed	The student’s certification has been submitted to the VA.

Once a student has been certified, the VA will begin the process of sending the University of Portland and/or the student benefit checks. Please see the section on invoices (next page) for more information.

For chapter 31 (VocRehab) only: we will assume you wish to be certified when we receive paperwork from your VRC.

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## VA CERTIFICATION, FINANCIAL AID AWARDS & INVOICES

The University of Portland handles VA benefits as a third party payment. As such, they will show up on a student's account as a third party payment. These payments, and any yellow ribbon match, are not posted until payment is received. So long as a student has been certified, coverage should proceed per VA policy.

Students are not required to prepay covered tuition. The University is aware that it may take time for the VA money to arrive. The student's responsibility is to make sure that they complete the certification process and that they promptly reply to any and all communication from the Veteran's Certifying Official. You will receive reminder e-mails about your balance while we await funding, and may temporarily have a hold placed on your account. These are automated processes and will be cleared when the funding is received

## VA FUNDING & STUDY ABROAD

For students with Chapter 33 (Post-9/11) benefits (including Yellow Ribbon), VA funding for study abroad is only available for students whose major requires study abroad.

Study abroad programs must be hosted by an institution eligible to receive VA benefits. University of Portland programs meet this requirement. IES programs do not. This means that French majors will not be eligible to use their VA benefits if they choose to do the IES Nantes program.

University of Portland programs often charge an omnibus fee that includes housing and books. The University has to deduct this amount when reporting tuition and fees to the VA. Please e-mail [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu) if you want to know the covered portion of the omnibus charge.

If a student with Yellow Ribbon is ineligible to use their VA education benefit to study abroad, but chooses to study abroad through a UP approved program, their Yellow Ribbon spot will be held for them.

If a student would like to study abroad at their own expense, their institutional aid may be restored for the semester they study abroad during Fall or Spring. Summer programs are also available. While institutional aid is not available for summer programs, they are usually less expensive.

More information about the VA policies for studies abroad under Chapter 33 is available at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/post\\_911\\_study\\_abroad\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/post_911_study_abroad_fact_sheet.pdf).

Students with other VA education benefits should contact the University's certifying official if they are interested in using their benefits to study abroad. Coverage may or may not be available under these programs.



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## HOUSING & BOOKS STIPEND

### CHAPTER 33

Housing and book rate tables are available at [http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits\\_resources/rate\\_tables.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits_resources/rate_tables.asp). Checks are sent at the end of the month (i.e. September's check will be issued around September 31). Chapter 33 book stipends pay out per credit, so if a student receives more than half of their stipend in the Fall, they should expect to receive less in Spring.

The University is unable to advise about delays or discrepancies in these stipends or serve as an intermediary between students and the VA in these matters.

### CHAPTER 31

Students attending under the Chapter 31- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program are allowed to purchase required books and supplies at the University's Bookstore. The VA authorizes all purchases and a course syllabus or documentation from the course instructor/head of the department is normally needed to determine what items are required and when.

Chapter 31 students may acquire a voucher to purchase books and supplies through the Office of Student Accounts on the Thursday before the beginning of each term. They will present this voucher to the bookstore to purchase approved books and supplies. The VA also has a list of additional authorized supplies considered acceptable for purchase from the bookstore once each term.

## TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to the tutoring resources available on campus, the VA will pay for regular 1:1 tutoring for students who meet certain criteria.

In order to qualify for VA tutorial assistance students need to be in danger of failing the course. This can be documented by a failing grade on an assignment, mid-semester grades or a signed statement from the Professor. If a student is in a situation where they will be able to pass comfortably, but wants a higher grade, they will need to make use of the resources available to all students.

If you think you qualify for the tutorial assistance benefit, please contact the Veteran's Certifying Official. The Certifying Official will work with the Shepard Academic Resource Center and the student to find a suitable tutor for the class in which they are struggling. VA Tutorial Assistance is not an option for subjects which the Shepard Academic Resource Center regularly staffs tutors.

The Shepard Academic Resource Center is located in Buckley Center, Room 101, and is available to all students. The SARC provides assistance with specific subjects as well as overall study skills, Accessible Education Services, First Year Programs and Programs for Special Populations, such as undeclared and first generation students.

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## REPEATING COURSES

The University is only allowed to certify repeated courses for failed courses or courses where the grade is insufficient to advance towards the degree. For example, the University cannot certify a student to retake most courses in which they received a D since a D is considered passing. However, a Nursing student with a D in a Nursing course can be certified to retake that course since a C is needed to advance in their major.

Students can only be certified to retake a class once.

Students are welcome to retake any classes in accordance with University policy; however they will be responsible for any charges associated with that class. In the event that the class is the difference between full time and part time status for an undergraduate, chapter 33 students will have to pay the difference between full time tuition and the part-time per-credit tuition for the certifiable courses.

## WITHDRAWING FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

### *CHAPTER 33:*

Withdrawals must be reported to the VA along with what tuition and fees would have been if certified without the dropped class(es) at the beginning of the semester. Students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. For undergraduates remaining above full time, the difference will be any course fees or professional tuition associated with the dropped course. If a student drops below full time, they may be responsible for the difference between a full-time course load and the part time tuition.

The VA no longer requires us to report when non-attendance in a single class results in an F. However, a student who stops going to all classes and receives all F grades will have a last date of attendance determined per Financial Aid policy. We will report a withdrawal to the VA effective the determined date.

### *CHAPTERS 30, 35, 1606*

Student's monthly stipend is based on enrollment level (full time,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, half time,  $\frac{1}{4}$  time, less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  time). So long as students remain within their level, there should be no change to their benefit. If enrollment level changes, students may be responsible for all or part of the difference. Failure to complete a course, including the final exam, is considered a withdrawal by the VA.

## THE FINAL SEMESTER

During a student's final semester, the VA allows an exception to their rule that only classes required for the degree may be certified. If a student needs less than a full time course load to graduate, they may take additional courses to qualify as full time to maintain full housing benefit. The term that the VA uses for this is rounding out.

Students can only do this once per school, so if a student is planning on using VA benefits towards a second degree at the University of Portland they may wish to determine whether or not waiting to round out is better.

The VA's policy is at odds with the Department of Education's policy, so other financial aid may be impacted. The University is only allowed to award DOE financial aid based on the credits needed to complete a degree, so the award letter from the Office of Financial Aid will reflect that number of credits. If fewer than 12 credits are needed to graduate, a student will receive a prorated Pell Grant (if they are Pell eligible), regardless of total enrollment. Additionally, Federal Direct Loans are only available if the remaining credits needed are a half-time enrollment or greater.

For undergraduates, awards may be changed in the following way regardless of enrollment and VA benefits:

# of credits needed to graduate	Pell Grant	Federal Direct Loans
1 – 5	25% of usual or less	Not available
6 – 8	50% of usual or less	Available
9 – 11	75% of usual or less	Available

Institutional aid may or may not change based on University policy.

## FILING A FAFSA

The Office of Financial Aid recommends that all students file a FAFSA every year, even though it is not required to receive VA benefits. There are multiple reasons to do so.

First and foremost is that students may qualify for additional grant money, specifically the Pell Grant. Students can claim a Pell Grant in addition to VA benefits and this could mean an additional \$5000.

Filing a FAFSA also prepares a student should they no longer qualify for VA benefits. Should this happen, having a FAFSA already filed means a quicker turnaround time for getting a non-VA financial aid award letter and processing federal loans.

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## HEALTH INSURANCE

So long as a student's health care coverage meets the requirements to waive insurance through the University of Portland, they are able to do so. A link to the insurance waiver can be found at <http://up.edu/studentaccounts/>. VA health coverage may not be listed as an option, but students can choose "other" if this is how they are covered. Questions about the health insurance available through the University of Portland should be directed to student accounts ([stu-acct@up.edu](mailto:stu-acct@up.edu)).

If a student is unable to waive the health insurance and they have Chapter 33 benefits, the University can report the insurance costs as a required fee. This means that students with Yellow Ribbon will have the insurance covered.

Students on Chapter 35 who qualify for CHAMP VA health insurance may need an enrollment verification. The Registrar's Office handles these verifications. You may need to specify that CHAMP VA is health insurance when contacting them so you are not referred back to Veteran's Services in the Office of Financial Aid.

## UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND HEALTH CENTER SERVICES

The Health Center provides a number of services to students, including primary care services, counseling services, and disability services, all of which may be helpful for veterans.

Counseling Services provides mental health counseling, learning assistance, and substance abuse prevention services. Our practitioners are licensed psychologists, with experience helping people with a wide range of concerns.

For veterans, many of the above services may be helpful and relevant. For those veterans taking classes here at University of Portland, seeking counseling services to deal with the stress, family issues, academic concerns, social or adjustment issues, or depression and/or anxiety they are experiencing can be quite helpful. For veterans who have seen combat and have returned, seeking counseling services can be vital in assisting them with a positive and healthy reentry into civilian life. Family adjustments, employment issues, and returning to school are major life changes, and counseling services can guide and assist them in those changes. Mental health counseling provides a safe and confidential place in which to process their diverse experiences while deployed. The Health Center welcomes all veterans, and honors their service with the best possible service to them.

## VETERAN'S LIFE ON CAMPUS

There is a Student Veterans on Campus club that meets monthly during the school year to socialize, laugh and support one another. The club also works to help incoming student veterans feel welcomed and included by the current student veterans. The club would like to invite all veterans, regardless of your military experience. The club president is Chris Loogman and he looks forward to connecting with you at [loogman17@up.edu](mailto:loogman17@up.edu). Our office is also willing to

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[www.up.edu/finaid](http://www.up.edu/finaid)



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facilitate connections for prospective and current veteran students. People looking to make such connections should e-mail [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu) with questions. This e-mail is checked, among others, by a current veteran student.

## RESOURCES

### UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND RESOURCES

Veteran's Certifying Official (Daniel Herman)	<a href="mailto:veterans@up.edu">veterans@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7311 Waldschmidt Hall, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
Office of Financial Aid	<a href="mailto:finaid@up.edu">finaid@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7311 Waldschmidt Hall, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
Office of Student Accounts	<a href="mailto:stu-acct@up.edu">stu-acct@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7347 Waldschmidt Hall, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
Counseling & Health Center	<a href="mailto:health@up.edu">health@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7134 Orrico Hall
Residence Life	<a href="mailto:reslife@up.edu">reslife@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7205 Buckley Center, 101
Campus Ministry	<a href="mailto:ministry@up.edu">ministry@up.edu</a>	(503) 943-7131 Chapel of Christ the Teacher

### VA RESOURCES

Portland VA Regional Office	100 SW Main St FL 2 (1 <sup>st</sup> & Main, downtown Portland)	(800) 827-1000
VA Community Resource & Referral Center	308 SW 1st Ave (1 <sup>st</sup> & Oak, downtown Portland)	(503) 808-1256
Portland VA Medical Center	3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd. (on the #8 Tri-Met bus route)	(503) 220-8262
Veteran's Crisis Line		1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)

### OTHER VA EDUCATION BENEFITS

VA Educational-Vocational Counseling Services	<a href="http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/edu_voc_counseling.asp">http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/edu_voc_counseling.asp</a>
Reimbursement for national, licensing & certification tests	<a href="http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp">http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp</a>

# VA CHECKLIST

(For the University of Portland only. There may be other steps required with the VA.)

## GETTING STARTED

- Submit a copy of your Certificate of Eligibility (COE), preferably via e-mail to [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu). We will not certify without a copy of your COE. The VA doesn't send us a copy directly.
- If you qualify for 100% coverage through Chapter 33/Post-9/11 VA education benefit, apply for Yellow Ribbon (instructions on page 6).
- Read this handbook thoroughly (not just this page). Students are responsible to know the information listed within.

## REGISTERING FOR CLASSES

- If you are retaking a course, review the section on repeating courses (p. 10) and check to see if you need to revise your schedule to maximize your coverage.
- If you are taking courses not required for your degree, keep in mind your enrollment level with the VA will not include this class. If you are receiving chapter 33 and are an undergraduate during the Fall or Spring semester, make sure you still qualify for full time without it (except for your final semester, see page 11).

## CERTIFICATION

- When invoices are run (usually around July 1 for Fall, mid-November for Spring and April 1 for Summer), e-mail [veterans@up.edu](mailto:veterans@up.edu) to let us know if you intend to use your benefit the coming semester. If you are still finalizing your schedule, please wait until you have done so.

## DURING THE SEMESTER, STAYING ON PACE

- If you are struggling with a class, visit the Learning Resource Center. If you are in danger of failing, consider using your tutorial assistance benefit (p.9) to obtain 1:1 tutoring.
- If you are considering withdrawing from a course, consider the impact on your benefit, especially if you are dropping from full-time to part-time. Read p. 10 for more information.
- Even if you have no chance of passing a class, failure to sit the final exam and/or submit the final project must be reported as a withdrawal to the VA. Keep this in mind when making your decision.