

Things to Remember & Veteran Standards

Federal law and Department of Veterans Affairs regulations are specific and rigid regarding eligibility to receive veteran education benefits. To be eligible, a veteran/dependent must be pursuing an “educational objective”. An “educational objective” is defined by VA regulations as one that leads to a standard college degree (Associate or Associate of Applied Science degree) or certificate. Students are not permitted to receive educational assistance from VA for “recreational” purposes.

In order to assure compliance with VA regulations, Helena College adheres to the following conditions for certifying eligibility for veterans’ educational benefits:

1. Each veteran/dependent must be fully accepted for admission to the College.
2. Each veteran/dependent must designate a program of study that will lead to an Associate degree or certificate listed in the Helena College catalog.
3. The VA Certifying Official will certify only those courses that are included in the student’s program of study. Certification of elective courses will be limited to the number of electives permitted in the designated program. Electives, for VA purposes, may be satisfied by courses for which the student received prior college credit and credit for previous military or civilian training or experience. Veterans/dependents should consult with their academic advisor before elective courses are selected. VA will not pay for developmental classes offered online. They must be taken in a classroom.
4. Once the veteran/dependent starts receiving benefits, satisfactory attendance, conduct, and progress, as set by the college, must be maintained. If the veteran/dependent does not meet the standards set by the college, the VA Certifying Official must notify VA. VA will stop benefits if the college reports unsatisfactory attendance, conduct or progress toward a degree.
5. If a veteran/dependent has attended college prior to enrollment at Helena College, official copies of all academic transcripts must be submitted to the Registrar Office to be evaluated for prior credits.
6. A veteran/dependent who wishes to change their degree program must change it officially with their academic advisor.
7. VA will not pay for any repeat class if the veteran/dependent did not receive an earned “F” grade, or if the grade was not minimally satisfactory. Incomplete courses cannot be recertified unless the “I” has been changed to an “F”.

8. VA will not pay for any class that is taken as an audit course. VA also will not pay for any continuing education class that does not count towards the veteran/dependent is declared degree program.
9. When considering a veteran/dependent student's status as full-time or part-time to determine housing benefits, the VA takes into account the length of the course. Taking short courses (such as blocks) will impact the veteran/dependent's housing allowance.
10. Any time a veteran/dependent drops a course or withdraws from school, an overpayment may be declared back to the beginning of the semester unless mitigating circumstances are presented to the VA. Any veteran/dependent who feels he/she has mitigating circumstances should notify the VA Certifying Official at the time of the drop or withdrawal so this information can be included in the Notice of Change sent to the VA.
11. For veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the VA will only pay the in-state tuition and fee amount. A veteran/dependent could be charged in-state tuition if they qualify after completing the Choice Act Acknowledgement.

Any time a veteran/dependent has any questions about certifications they should contact the VA Certifying Official.

If a veteran/dependent has questions regarding eligibility or the amount of VA educational benefits, or the status of benefit payments (particularly once enrollment has been certified) they can reach a counselor at the Veterans' Toll-Free number 1-888-442-4551.

By submitting the Notification on Intent each semester, you are hereby certifying that you have read and fully understand the above information and accept responsibility for fulfilling all requirements.