Education Service

October Office Hours

School Certifying Officials

October 2021

The Impact of Education's New Interpretation of the 48–Month Rule on Veteran Readiness and Employment Participants

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Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) Service

48- Month Rule Overview

- Effective April 1, 2021, Education Service (EDU) stopped counting entitlement used in Chapter 31, also known as Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E), toward the possible 48 months of entitlement available under two or more VA education programs

- VR&E will continue to count entitlement used in other VA education programs towards the possible 48-months of entitlement under Chapter 31

- EDU will automatically apply this new interpretation of the law (38 U.S.C. 3695) to all Veterans who are within their EDU delimiting date, as applicable

- In consideration of the new interpretation, it is generally best for a claimant to use his or her VR&E benefits prior to using VA education benefits, such as the Post 9/11 GI Bill®

- For claimants who used VA education benefits first and who meet specific criteria as outlined in 38 CFR 21.282(c), a retroactive induction into VR&E may be provided

Retroactive Induction - Process

- A retroactive induction is defined as a period previously completed under another VA education program, or other system, that the claimant requests to have classified under Chapter 31

- Once VR&E approves a retroactive induction, the School Certifying Official can expect:

  1. An authorization in Tungsten for a period previously completed under Chapter 33 only if the facility is approved for the Yellow Ribbon program:
     - The facility will only be reimbursed for the portion of the Yellow Ribbon program that the facility contributed
     - The facility will be responsible for reimbursing the claimant for any tuition/fees he or she contributed over the Yellow Ribbon cap

  2. An authorization in Tungsten for a previous enrollment period(s) where the claimant self-paid:
     - The facility will be responsible for certifying the previous enrollment period(s) in VA-Once

  3. A request for assistance to obtain past tuition/fees bills and receipts for books/supplies, if applicable
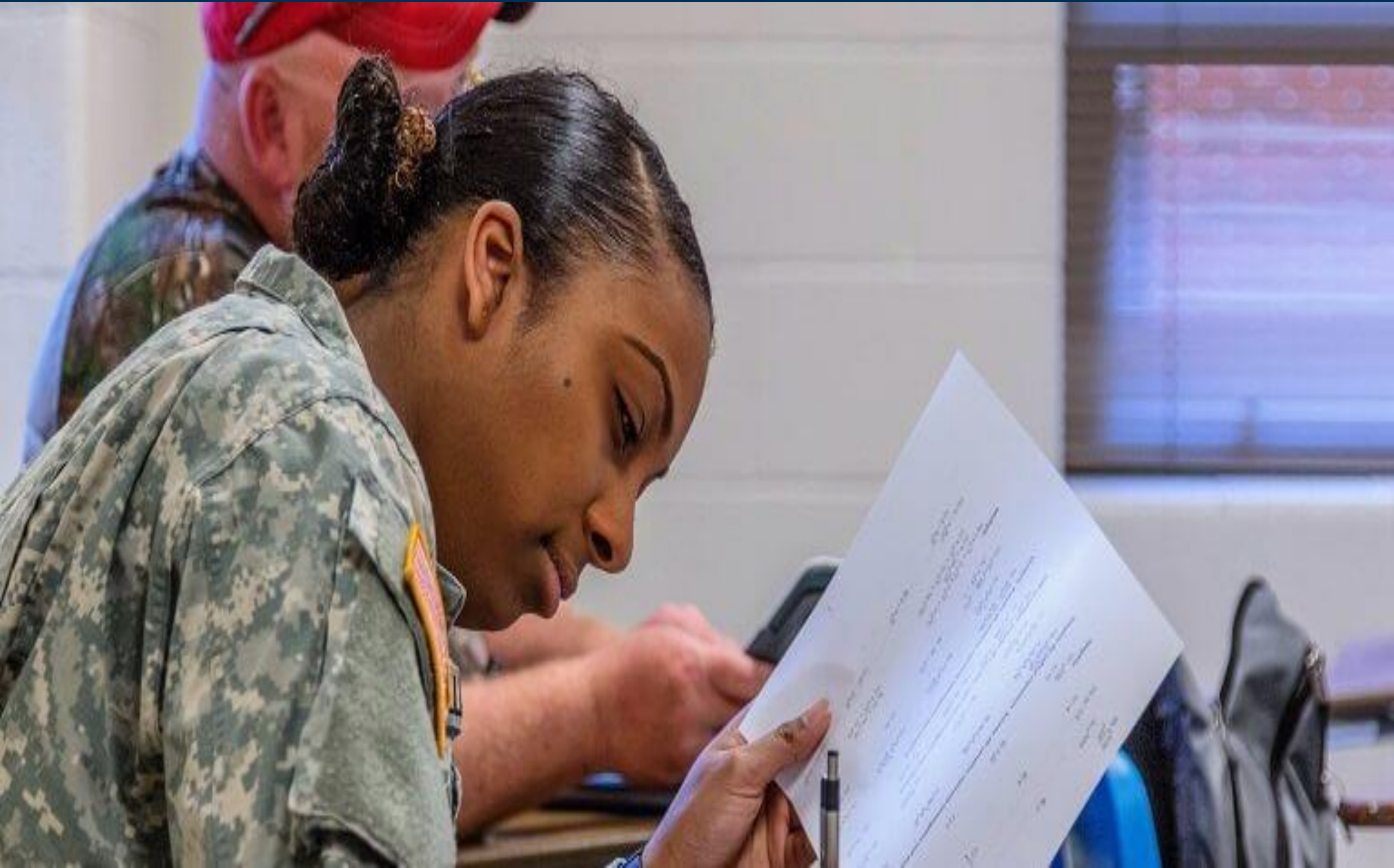
Resources

- [VR&E School Certifying Official Handbook](#)

- [Veteran Readiness and Employment Manual (M28C)](#)

- [Veteran Readiness and Employment Website](#)

Isakson & Roe Updates
Section 1102 & 1103

Victoria Evans
Chief
National Training Teams - Schools

Special COVID-19 Rules End Soon:

Starting **December 22, 2021**, students will no longer be able to receive their MHA at the resident (in person) rate for classes taken online. This is because special COVID-19 legislation that permits students to receive MHA at the resident (in person) rate, while taking approved courses converted to online training due to COVID-19, will end on December 21, 2021.

When enrolling for courses in 2022 or any subsequent term, students will need to enroll in approved resident (in person) classes to continue receiving their MHA at the resident rate. Otherwise, students will receive the online rate (half the national average)

Special COVID-19 Rules End Soon:

Additionally, many GI Bill® programs are not normally approved for online training; they are only approved for resident (in person) training

These programs are only currently approved for GI Bill® benefits® for online training by virtue of the special COVID-19 legislation set to **expire on December 21, 2021**

Special COVID-19 Rules End Soon:

If the program is one that is normally **only** approved for resident training and **only** approved for online training by virtue to the COVID-19 legislation, students will need to return to resident (in person) training after December 21, 2021, if students want to continue receiving GI Bill® benefits

Special COVID-19 Rules End Soon:

If students continue training online after December 21, 2021:

- GI Bill® benefits, such as a monthly housing allowance, will stop

- Students may end up owing a tuition debt to your school (VA will charge the school a prorated tuition and fee debt which the school may, in turn, pass on to the student)

Impact on Certifying

- Continue to certify using the COVID rules (resident due to COVID) even for bridge terms

- However, unless the law changes, if the school is not **normally** approved for online training, then the student needs to **return to resident training after Dec 21** if they want to get getting GI Bill® benefits – benefits will stop after Dec 21 for online training
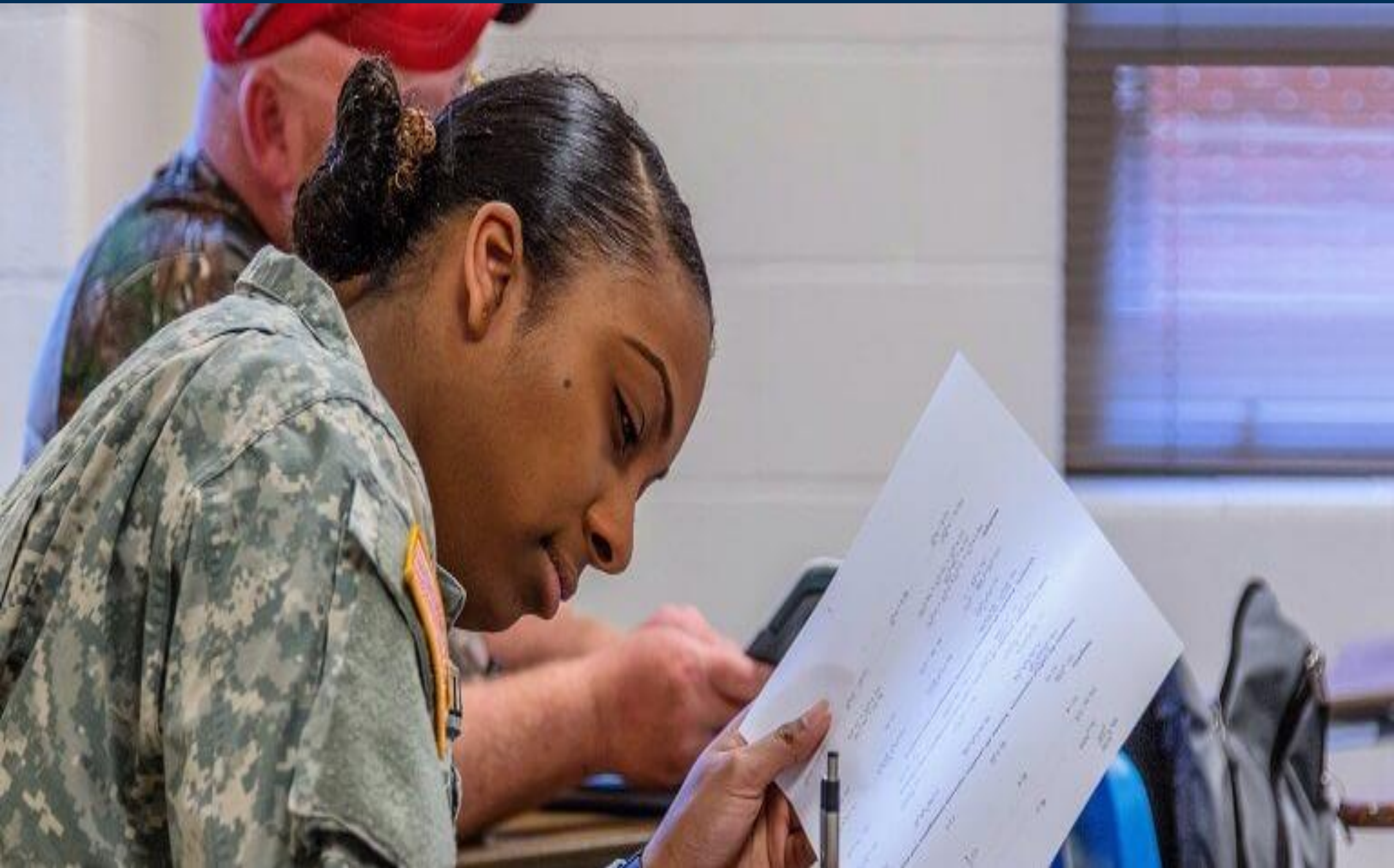
Impact on Certifying

- If you certified a student as resident due to Covid, but the student has come back as a resident or is coming back on or before December 22, 2021, then ensure that you recertify the student as resident to ensure that there is an accurate enrollment certification

- VA will begin processing adjustments to awards as early as mid November 2021

Ask VA Demo

Tori NewCater
Instructional Designer
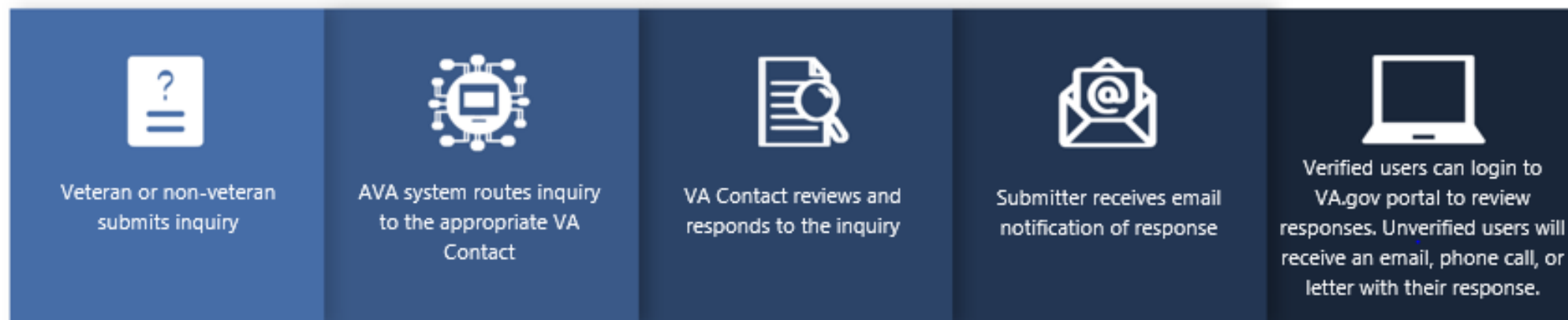MCT

Ask VA (AVA) is the new online VA system allowing customers to submit questions, concerns, recommendations, and compliments. AVA provides the ability for customers to:

- Interact with all VA branches
- Receive timely, verified, and accurate responses for VA related questions

Why use ASK VA (AVA):

- Your questions, recommendations, and suggestions are quickly routed to the correct VA contacts to provide timely responses
- Using your VA.gov login safeguards your personal information
- Easily track your conversations and inquiries using your VA.gov login
- Frequent users will need a VA.gov login for the best experience

| Veteran or non-veteran submits inquiry | AVA system routes inquiry to the appropriate VA Contact | VA Contact reviews and responds to the inquiry | Submitter receives email notification of response | Verified users can login to VA.gov portal to review responses. Unverified users will receive an email, phone call, or letter with their response. |

Key Functionality

Speed to submission: Streamlined inquiry submission process with an enhanced user experience

Dashboarding: Creating a LOA 2+ VA.gov account centralizes previously submitted inquiries, allows for the exchange of PII information through secure messaging and helps pre-populate fields during inquiry submission

Routing: Redesigned backend routing engine resulting in increased accuracy to ensure your inquiry lands in the right VA Administration

Managing multiple questions: Inquiries with multiple questions/topics can be split and managed via multiple administration simultaneously

Standard vs. Non-Standard Remarks

Marit Solem
Training Specialist
National Training Teams - Schools

VA-ONCE Remarks Overview

When an enrollment is submitted in VA-ONCE, there is an option to **Modify Remarks List** to add a remark to the enrollment certification

VBA Standard Remarks Vs Non-Standard Remarks

- **VBA Standard Remarks** are predetermined choices that can be selected from a drop-down list. If "Other" is selected from the drop-down, the user can then enter a non-standard remark.

- **Non-Standard Remarks** are "School Standard Remarks" and "Other" Remarks that are entered as free text.

Important! The use of non-standard remarks prevent automation and delay processing.
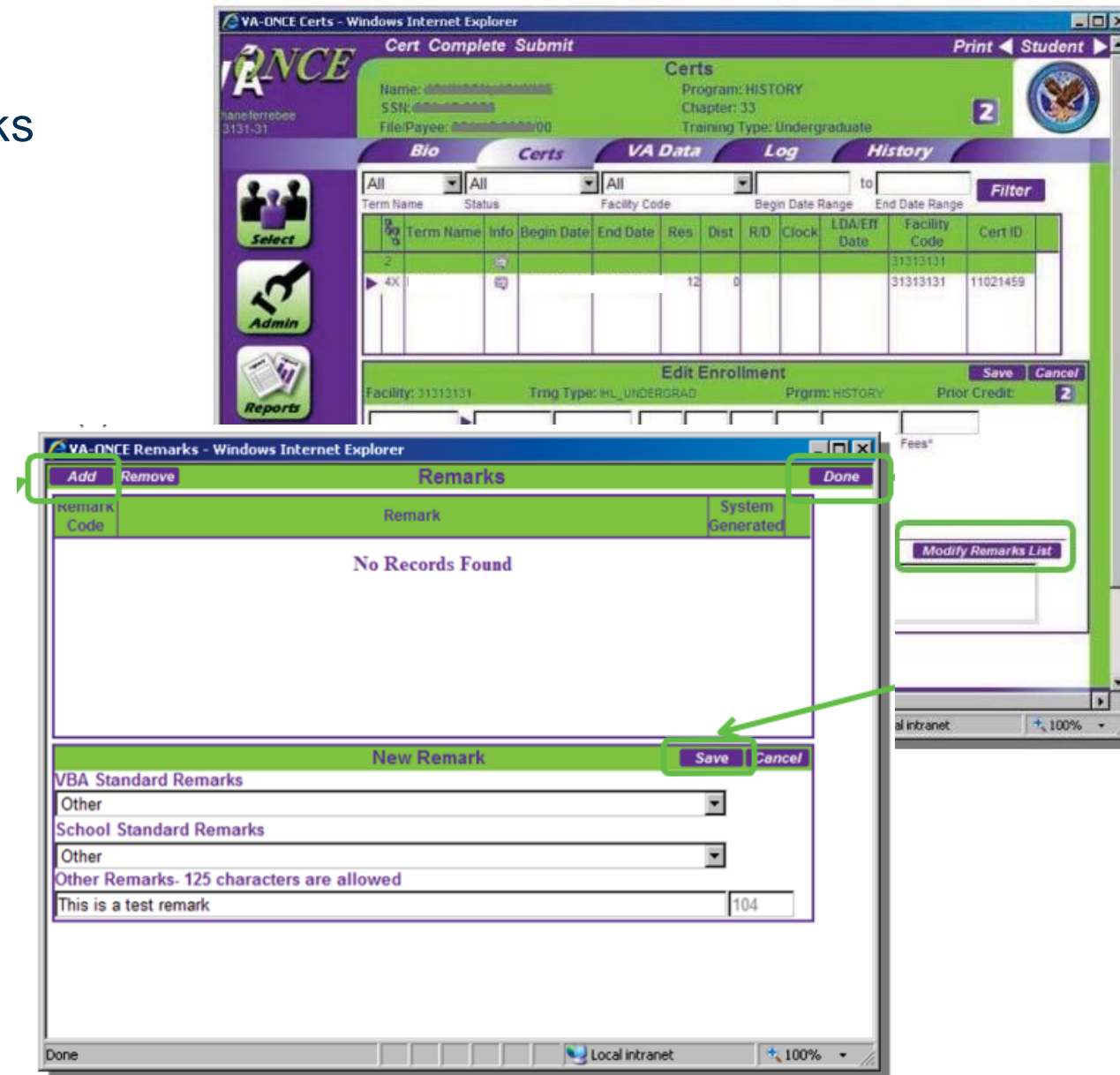
The Use of Non-Standard Remarks

In September, non-standard remarks stopped automation of 6% of all Post-9/11 GI Bill® enrollment claims, totaling more than **18,000 enrollments** that may have been otherwise automated. Review the table below for the most common scenarios in which a remark is added and it is not required:

Scenario	Is a remark needed?	Why or why not?
A change in tuition and fees	No	This change is automatically captured
School break/disruption **less than** 7 days (break, holiday, emergency event)	No	Only breaks of 7 days or longer require notification to VA
School break/disruption **7 or more days** during a standard term	No	The start and end date for breaks of 7 days or more must be reported to VA for **non-standard terms only.**
Adjustment for punitive grades	No	If "Punitive Grades Assigned" is selected as the reason for change, no additional remarks are needed

Find more information on remarks in the **SCO Handbook** and **VA-ONCE Quick Reference Guide**
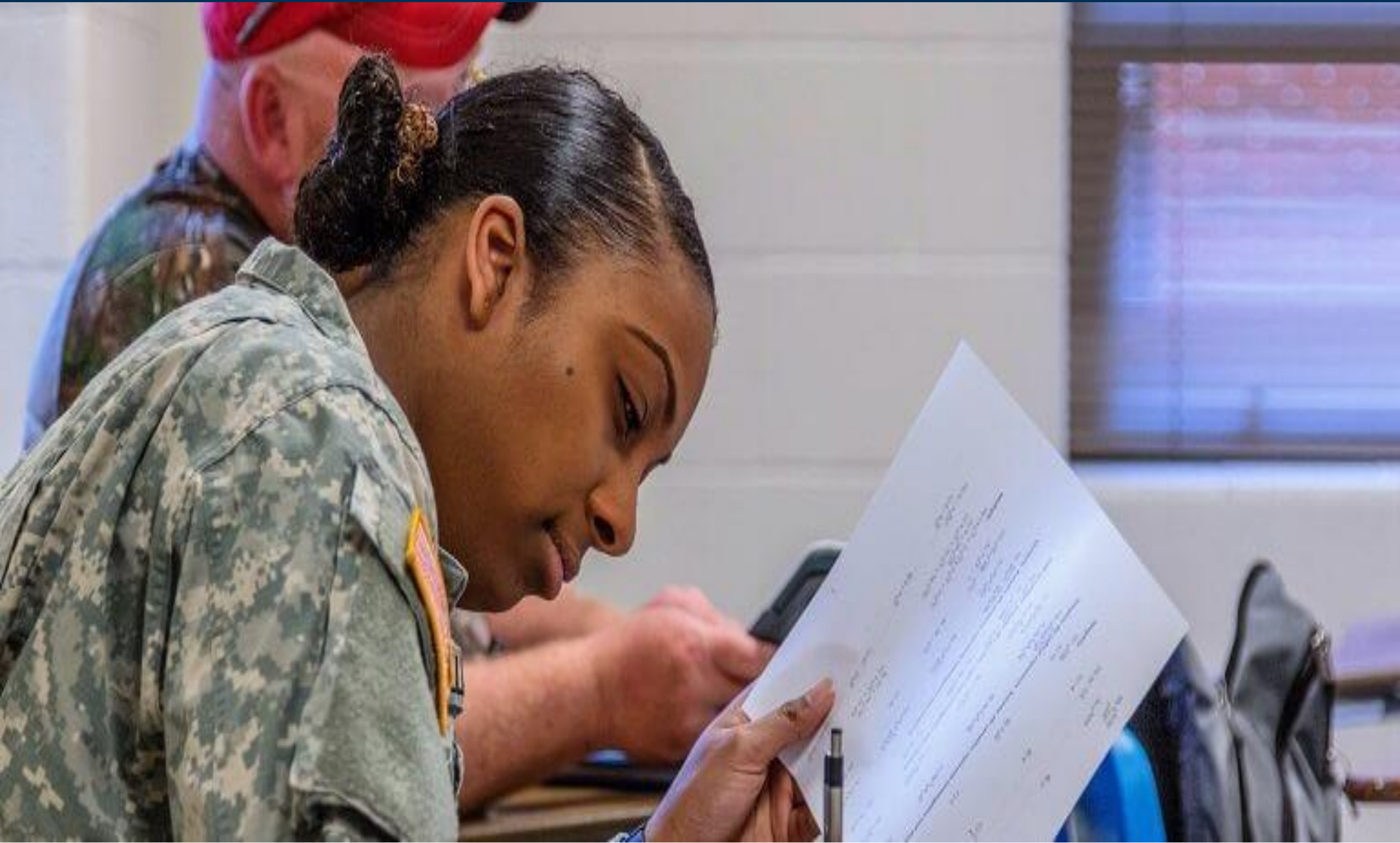
FY' 22 SCO Annual Training Reminders

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Training Specialist
National Training Team - Schools

<u>New</u> <u>Training</u> <u>Cycle!</u>

- The new training cycle runs from October 1 thru August 31 of the following year
  - Existing SCOs have 11 months to meet their annual training requirement

- September 1-30:
  - Training Window Closes for Existing SCOs
  - New SCO training is continuous throughout the year

Training Compliance
- Compliance will be determined by the number of modules completed

Centralized Certifications
- Only designated SCOs are required to complete the annual training (<u>22-8794 (va.gov)</u>)

SCOs listed as points of contact are not required to complete the training because they are not authorized to submit enrollment certifications to VA

Help with Training Portal
https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/scotraininginstructions.pdf

Training modality to complete annual training requirement:

- Asynchronous Online training located on the <u>SCO training portal</u>
  - Mandatory training topics specific to facility type
  - PowerPoint Presentations from virtual training events

- Synchronous SCO Approved training events (virtual or in-person instructor led) presented by or co-presented with a VA employee at:
  - Online Training Events
  - National or Regional Conferences
  - Local Workshops
  - One-On-One Training with the <u>ELR of jurisdiction</u>

New SCOs

- Must complete the training prior to being authorized to certify enrollments to VA

- Upon training completion, must submit training certificates with VA Form 22-8794 to the ELR of jurisdiction

Facility Type	Number of Training Modules Required
Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs)	10
Non-College Degree (NCD) Programs	10
High Schools and Residency Programs	1
OJT/Apprenticeship Programs	1
Vocational Flight	1

<u>Existing SCOs</u>

- Must complete one (1) mandatory self-paced online training module specific to their facility type
- Must complete three (3) elective modules using the training modality of their choice

<u>Note</u>: The three (3) electives are not required if only one (1) training module is needed to meet compliance

Facility Type	Number of Training Modules Required
Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs)	4
Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) with Flight Courses	4
Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) with NCDs	4
Non-College Degree (NCD) Programs	4
Vocational Flight	4
*High Schools and Residency Programs	1
*OJT/Apprenticeship Programs	1

FY22 SCO Annual Training Requirements

Here are important training dates for School Certifying Officials (SCOs)

Annual Training Window Opened. Updated training requirements for all new SCOs and continuing education requirements for existing SCOs are effective

60-Day Training Alert! Notifications and reminders of the approaching August 31st continuing education deadline will be posted on the GI Bill® website and sent to SCOs via Gov Delivery notice

15-Day Training Alert! Notifications and reminders of the approaching August 31st continuing education deadline will be posted on the GI Bill® website and sent to SCOs via Gov Delivery notice

Existing SCOs - No training in progress New SCOs – Training is continuous throughout the year

October 1, 2021

July 1, 2022

August 15, 2022

Sept 1-30, 2022

June 1, 2022

August 1, 2022

August 31, 2022

90-Day Training Alert! 90-Day Notifications and reminders of the approaching August 31st continuing education deadline will be posted on the GI Bill® website and sent to SCOs via Gov Delivery notice

30-Day Training Alert! Notifications and reminders of the approaching August 31st continuing education deadline will be posted on the GI Bill® website and sent to SCOs via Gov Delivery notice

Annual Training Window Closes! Continuing education requirements for existing SCOs completed

Please remember, if you don't complete your annual training requirements, VA has the authority to remove your access from VA-ONCE and the SAA has the authority to disapprove your school's programs

Non-Compliance

- When covered institutions fail to complete the required training by the end of the training cycle, a notification via Gov.Delivery will be sent of the delinquency informing the institution of the impending loss of their ability to certify enrollments to VA

- If covered institution remains non-compliant after the end of the training cycle, the ELR will remove their ability to certify to VA and refer the institution to the SAA for review and determination on suspension or withdrawal actions in accordance with Colmery Act section 305

- It will be a function of the National Training Team – Schools to generate training compliance reports at the 90, 60, and 30-day milestones, and at the end of the training cycle to determine compliant and non-compliant institutions

Enrollment Verification Resources and Reminders

NCD SCOs: Remind students to verify their enrollment information for the month of September if they have not already done so, and/or please update their enrollment if needed!

@VAVetBenefits

@GIBillEducation

VeteransBenefits@Messages.VA.gov

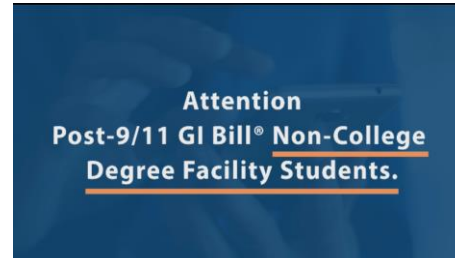## Monthly Enrollment Verification Communication Toolkit

For NCD Facilities

August 2021

NCD SCO Enrollment Verification Toolkit Available Now!

Enrollment Verification Webpage
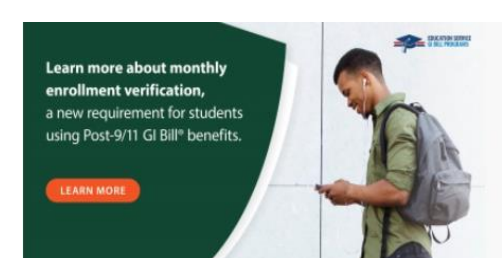
How to Opt Into Text Message Verification Video

How to Verify Your Monthly Enrollment Via Text Video

How to Verify Enrollment Infographic

Frequently Asked Questions

Enrollment Verification VAntage Point Blog

ChooseVA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Reminder: Do **NOT** send any emails to the **Education Service Operations Integrity** Mailbox!

If you have questions or concerns regarding any of the following:

- Issues involving SCO Approved Credit & tracking your progress
- SCO Portal Access and its Use
- Inquiries on the Adobe Connect Registration & Access Process

You must **Only** submit them to the **Education Service Training** Mailbox at edutraining.vbaco@va.gov

Vital Note: All Webinars and Training Sessions are announced via GovDelivery

You must ensure you are registered there and update your info as needed

GovDelivery Support can be found Here

How To Self Certify!

1. Click on the URL Below or Copy and Paste it in your web browser
   https://vba-tpss.vbatraining.org/assess/trkSignIn?refid=XSCO
2. Enter your email address and eight (8) digit facility code and click Next
   Note: If you do not have a User Profile, click New User Account and follow the steps
   to set up your profile
3. Scroll down and click the Conference/Workshop/Virtual Training tab
4. Select the applicable training session from the list of topics that appears on the right side of the screen by clicking Begin
5. To enter Conference/Workshop/Virtual Training Title, click the dropdown arrow, select SCO Virtual Training Session and click Submit
6. Enter the start date and the end date
7. Enter your Facility Name, City and State (Main Campus) and click Submit
8. Certify your attendance by clicking Agree and then submit
9. Print your training certificate and keep for your records