

VA BENEFITS & COLLEGE POLICIES

Students receiving VA Educational Benefits must complete the application process with the ECC's VA Coordinator, Mary Weaver. In addition, a copy of your DD-214 or Notice of Basic Eligibility (NOBE), and an Application for Education Benefits must be submitted for enrollment certification. Students must visit with the College's Veteran Coordinator for further information.

The VA also requires the College to evaluate and report (if appropriate) transfer credit from all prior education. Therefore, official transcripts from all post-secondary schools/colleges/universities that a student has attended, whether or not VA Educational Benefits were used, are needed to process admissions and VA Enrollment Certification. A student will not be certified for VA Educational Benefits beyond the second semester if these transcripts are not secured.

Students must notify the Registrar's Office and the Veteran's Coordinator if they alter their registration in any way. This includes adding and/or dropping a class, terminating enrollment, changing program/major, registering for the next semester, or any other changes that would affect VA payment status. Students may not repeat courses that have been previously completed with a passing grade at this college or at any previously attended school/college/university. Students will be certified for those courses that apply to their degree.

ATTENDANCE

Students must attend all of the classes for which they have registered. Students who intentionally stop attending a course for 10 consecutive days without notifying the Veterans Coordinator or officially withdrawing will be subject to termination of veteran's benefits for that course(s) effective the last day of attendance. A payment that was made to a student may be required to be returned to the Veteran's Administration if a student ceases attending their classes prior to the end of the enrollment period. This regulation allows the Veterans Administration to have unearned assistance returned to them for the period of non-attendance.

Faculty members submit student attendance information on a weekly basis. This information is monitored by the College's Veteran Coordinator to ensure that funds are not being released to ineligible students. If students find that unforeseen circumstances are preventing them from attending their classes, they should confer with their instructors, advisor or a counselor immediately.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS STATEMENT

VA regulations require that students maintain satisfactory academic progress while pursuing their course of study in order to receive Veteran's Educational Benefits. Students will have their academic records reviewed each semester to determine if satisfactory academic progress is being made toward the completion of a degree, certificate or diploma.

Minimum Academic Progress Standards – A minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average for all coursework at ECC is required. In addition, a student must complete 67% of all credits ever attempted at Ellsworth Community College. "Complete" means earning a letter grade higher than an F. In addition to these cumulative standards (grade point average and % of credits completed), a student will be placed on immediate financial aid termination if he/she earns a semester grade point average of .50 or below.

Warning – A student who has received VA benefits is placed on warning when he/she fails to maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average or fails to complete 67% of all hours attempted. A student receiving benefits on warning continues to receive benefits.

Termination – If a student does not meet the minimum levels by the end of the warning semester, the student is considered to be making unsatisfactory progress and is placed on termination. Termination means a student is no longer eligible for benefits. A student may regain eligibility for benefits after he/she has brought the coursework up to minimum standards (2.0 cumulative GPA and a completion rate of at least 67% of all hours attempted) at his/her own expense.

NOTIFICATION

It is the responsibility of each student to track his/her own progress and academic standing. However, the College's Veteran Coordinator will make every effort to notify students of probationary/suspension standing in a timely manner at the end of each term.

REINSTATEMENT

A student may regain eligibility for Veteran's Educational Benefits assistance after he/she has brought coursework up to minimum standards.

Former students who re-enroll after an absence and do not meet minimum standards will be placed on Veteran's Educational Benefits probation and receive aid due to them during the probationary term.

ECC's VA Coordinator will notify the Veterans Administration of unsatisfactory progress if any of these requirements are not met.

VETERAN'S EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS APPEAL

A student may appeal the termination of his/her Veteran's Educational Benefits to the College's Veteran Coordinator if he/she feels there are extenuating circumstances (withdrawal due to serious illness, for example). The Appeals Committee will review all appeals and respond in writing.

LENGTH OF PROGRAM

Veterans must graduate within the approved length of the program in which they are enrolled. It is a student's responsibility to arrange class schedules based on the training time paid by the Veterans Administration. For example, a veteran pursuing a 64-credit AA degree enrolled for 13 credit hours per semester is expected to complete the program within five semesters or 2.5 years.

WITHDRAWAL FROM A COURSE

If veterans withdraw from a course during the semester, reduction of VA benefits will be determined by 1) the grade assigned, 2) the date of withdrawal, and 3) mitigating circumstances – defined as "circumstances which directly hinder an eligible veteran's pursuit of a course and which are judged to be out of the student's control." According to VA regulations, withdrawal due to unsatisfactory work may be considered "mitigating circumstances" if the student "can demonstrate good faith evidence that he/she applied for tutorial aid, consulted a VA counselor, or consulted a college advisor or counselor to remedy the unsatisfactory work before withdrawal."

If students withdraw from a course after the first week of class, receive a non-punitive grade for the course, and mitigating circumstances were not found, benefits for that course will be terminated,

effective the first date of enrollment. For questions regarding summer drops/withdrawals, contact the VA Coordinator.

If benefits are terminated for any of these reasons, VA counseling is required before benefits may be reinstated.