

On March 21st the President signed into law [S.3503](#), giving VA temporary authority to continue GI Bill© payments uninterrupted during an emergency.

The new law allows the VA to pay education benefits regardless of the fact that a program has been converted from resident training to online training, even if an online training hasn't been approved or is not approvable. Students will continue to receive housing allowance payments at the resident training until 12/21/20, or until the school resumes normal operations of resident training, for programs converted solely to online training.

Q1. My school changed my program from in-residence classes to online classes? Can I still get GI Bill© benefits for this?

Based on the recently passed legislation, if your school converts from an approved residence training course to online training for that course (distance learning) due to COVID-19, your benefits will not change. However, the law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020, to December 21, 2020. The new law applies to both current and new students enrolled in courses affected by COVID-19.

Note: Other types of changes to your enrollment status (for example, dropping a class results in a reduced rate of pursuit) may affect payments.

Q2. What happens to my housing allowance if my school changes from in-residence classes to online classes due to COVID-19? (Please also see Q.9 Housing Allowance and Eligibility)

Post-9/11 GI Bill© and Voc Rehab students whose schools convert to online programs from previously approved resident programs will not see reduced monthly housing payments. Current and new beneficiaries can receive the resident housing rate when in school March 1, 2020, to December 21, 2020. Prior to registering for classes, you can check with your academic advisor to be sure that at least one resident class was converted to Remote.

New Class Schedule Course Delivery Definitions

All fall term classes offered through the CAPA and Regional Campuses will be taught remote or online to ensure a safe and healthy learning and working environment for our students, faculty, and staff. You must register before the term begins to access your course(s) in Blackboard when the term begins. This access includes the course syllabus and content.

Remote: Courses will have at least a weekly synchronous component on a specific day and time. Courses are managed through Blackboard, with weekly live sessions with instructors using WebEx or Zoom along with coursework and posted course materials in Blackboard.

Online: Courses are completely asynchronous. Courses are taken through Blackboard with pre-recorded coursework and posted course materials. No live sessions with instructor.

Note: Other types of changes to your enrollment status (for example, dropping a class results in a reduced rate of pursuit) may affect payments.

Q3. If I am unable to attend school due to COVID-19, but my school is in session, will I still receive my education benefits?

VA can pay you through the last date of attendance, but not through the end of the term. This may create a prorated tuition & fees debt and a housing overpayment for you. If you do incur a debt you can request a waiver when you are notified of a debt. Learn more at [Submit a Waiver Request](#).

Q4. What happens if my school is closed temporarily?

If your school is temporarily closed, VA will continue to pay your benefits through the end of the term or 28 days, whichever is sooner.

Q5. What happens when my school's resident lab portion of a course is canceled or marked as incomplete due to COVID-19 and the school does not allow me to move to the next class in the degree program? (i.e. Organic Chemistry 1 lab completion needed to enroll in Org Chemistry 2 next semester)

Check with your school. VA has instructed schools to follow their "Incomplete" grade policy and apply that procedure, if applicable. When the school is eventually able to continue training, you will be allowed to complete the lab portion without any further reporting requirements to VA. However, if the discontinued class is a prerequisite to future classes, you cannot enroll in the next sequential required class until the prerequisite is complete. If your school doesn't have an "Incomplete" policy, the school should withdraw you from the class based on your last date of attendance. But if this action changes your rate of pursuit, your monthly housing allowance may be affected.

Q6. Will VA pay for my benefits if my school changes from a standard grade scale (A, B, C...) to a Pass/Fail or other grading system due to COVID-19 national emergency?

It depends on your school's grading policy, and you will need to check with your School Certifying Official. Rules about failing grades have not changed.

Q7. What happens if my OJT or Apprenticeship establishment changes to online, remains open but I can't work because I was furloughed, or it temporarily ceases trainee program training due to COVID-19?

If your training facility can change to an online format, you will continue to receive your regular monthly housing payment.

If your training facility remains open, but you must stop training (due to furlough, illness, etc.), VA can only pay education benefits through the last day of your training.

If the facility you work at temporarily ceases operations, VA can continue to pay trainees their monthly housing through the end of the program or 28 days, whichever is sooner.

Q8. I'm experiencing a financial hardship due to COVID-19 and owe a debt to VA. Is there any relief for me?

VA's Debt Management Center (DMC) encourages Veterans and family members affected by COVID-19 (Coronavirus) who have a VBA benefit debt and need temporary financial relief to contact the DMC at 1-800-827-0648 to request assistance.

Q9. Who is eligible for Housing Allowance and how are rates determined?

Post 9/11 Chapter 33 and Vocational Rehabilitation Chapter 31 students may qualify for Housing Allowance. These two benefits can have an overall rating of 100% or less. If rated less than 100%, then coverage is less, example: Post 9/11 benefits rated 70% provide 70% coverage of tuition, housing allowance, and book stipend. Voc Rehab students should check with their VA Counselor for rates.

In addition to the overall benefit rating, the VA determines eligibility for Housing Allowance by calculating the rate of pursuit. This is calculated by dividing the number of credits enrolled by the number of credits considered to be full time. A student with a rate of pursuit of 51% or greater can qualify for a housing allowance. 50% or less will not qualify for the housing allowance.

In addition, you must be enrolled in at least one residence or hybrid class to receive the full Housing Allowance. If the university begins offering only remote or online classes, please review Q1-2 above.

Once the training time is determined, the monthly housing allowance is paid at the nearest 10% level. If your training time is determined to be 58% as calculated above you will be paid 60% of the applicable housing allowance. If your training time is calculated to be 84% you will be paid 80% of the applicable housing allowance. Examples below:

Undergraduate

For undergraduate enrollments, 12 semester or quarter hours are generally required for full-time training. The school submits the term dates and credit hours of the enrollment to VA and we calculate the rate of pursuit.

For example, if 12 credits is considered full-time, a course load of 6 credits yields a rate of pursuit of 50% ($6 \div 12 = .50$), whereas a course load of 7 credits yields a rate of pursuit of 58% ($7 \div 12 = .58$). In this scenario, a Veteran would need to enroll for at least 7 credits (such as two 3-credit classes and a 1-credit lab) in order to receive the housing allowance benefits. If your overall VA benefit rating is 70% then you would receive 58% of your 70% housing benefit.

Some schools offer classes in terms that are shorter than a semester or quarter. This is especially true for online classes and summer enrollments, but some schools offer accelerated terms at brick-and-mortar campuses year round. In these cases, VA calculates weighted "equivalent credit hours" so that fewer credits are required for full-time (and more than half-time) training.

Graduate

Because graduate level programs vary in the amount of credits required for full-time training, the school provides the training time information to VA in addition to the term dates and credit hours of the enrollment.

Q10. I have more questions, who can I contact?

Please feel free to contact:

Diana Towles, Coordinator, Veteran Student Success at VetStudentSuccess@laverne.edu
Ann Jeffers, University Certifying Official, vareg@laverne.edu

Military Campuses: Jen Brace, Certifying Official, jbrace@laverne.edu