



## Veterans Services Frequently Asked Questions

- What is the difference between the VSO and the VA?

The Veterans Services Office (VSO) is not the VA.

The VSO is a liaison between the VA, the student and the school. The VSO helps students with completing the required paperwork, giving general (unofficial) advice, and works to keep students from making mistakes that might result in problems with the VA. In short we try to keep students in the know on VA policies and help with paperwork to get the resources from the VA.

For the VA and for the school we ensure that students' files are up to date and accurate. We work with the school to bring up concerns of our veterans and facilitate creating helpful policies and programs.

- What can I do to get the most out of the VA?

Learn as much as you can about your VA benefits! We highly recommend that you conduct research on the internet through VA websites, since much information on your VA program is available online. If you have questions you can ask us at the VSO or use the FAQ on the GIBill.gov website and submit the question. The VA is very fast in getting back to you with information regarding your question. Also spend some time studying the information on the Veterans Services webpages at: <http://veterans.highline.edu/>

### Class Schedule

- Why didn't I get priority registration?

Continuing students who meet the State law requirements will automatically be assigned priority registration. If that didn't happen, or you're currently enrolled but not a continuing student, please see Veterans Services staff.

Students who are honorably discharged Washington State residents, currently enrolled, and receiving either Post 9/11, VocRehab, or Montgomery Bill (Chapter 30) VA benefits are automatically eligible. We will consider all others on a case by case basis, including those who have never used VA educational benefits at Highline.

If you believe you may qualify, please provide the Veterans Services Office with a

copy of your DD214 (Member 4 version) and a copy of your Washington State driver's license. Students may email photocopies of both documents to Veterans@highline.edu, fax them to (206) 592-4842, or bring them to Veterans Services in person.

If you email or fax the documents, please let us know ahead of time so we'll be looking for them. Sensitive documents sent without advance notice will be shredded, for your protection.

- If I change my schedule do I have to submit a new ECRF?

Yes, The ECRF tells us what classes you want the VA to pay for, and how many credits we can certify to the VA. The VA uses this information to calculate how much BAH you qualify for. You can find the ECRF online at veterans .highline.edu/forms

- I was on a waitlist and then got in, what now?

When in doubt call, email, or come in. If your class was on your ECRF, let us know you got into the class and the VSO will re-evaluate the ECRF for the class. The reason you must contact us is that we cannot certify classes that students are on the wait list for.

- How will I be notified that my classes have been certified?

You will receive a confirmation email saying how many credits you have been certified for. If this is less than the amount you submitted for it might be because you are on a waitlist which we cannot certify until you are in the class or a class doesn't fit into your program and cannot be certified.

- How do I take a class that isn't in my program of study or is a substitute for another class?

Have your advisor email Brian Galloway at bgalloway@highline.edu informing him about the departure from the program of study and/or the substitute. The email will be saved in the student's VSO folder and the class will be certified.

- How does the VSO determine if a class fits into my program of study to certify the classes I am taking?

The VSO uses the Degree audit found on the Highline website at:  
<http://registration.highline.edu/degree.audit.php>

We use this tool to see if classes will fit into your declared program of study. If they do not, the class or classes will not be certified and an email will be generated and sent to the @students.highline.edu account telling the student what class will not be certified and how to remedy it.

- If I change programs at Highline College, do I need to tell the VA?

No, the VA doesn't require that anymore, but you need to turn in a Change of Program form to the Veterans Services Office. For example, if you change from an A.A.S. program here to an A.A. transfer degree, you must let us know. Please notify the Admissions staff know too so they can update you in the student records system. You may also need to contact Financial Aid, Work Force Development, or Women's Programs if you're using any of their services.

You will have to notify the VA directly only if you change schools; you can do that through the VONAPP website online.

## VA Payments

- When will I receive my BAH Stipend?

Chapter 33 (Post 9/11):

You will receive the BAH on the first of the month for the previous month. For example the March BAH payment will be received on May 1st. If the term ends in the middle of the month you will still have to wait until the beginning of the next month.

Chapter 31 (VocRehab): The same applies except for the first month's payment which will be given with the initial payment.

- How much is my BAH?

The VA will send the full BAH payment if you're a full-time student AND taking at least one class that meets in person or in a practicum/internship setting. The VA considers hybrid classes the same as online. The Seattle area full BAH is \$1,821.00. This increase will first show up on the August 2014 payment.

If you take all online/hybrid courses as a fulltime student, the VA will send you 50% of the national average BAH. That payment will be about \$750.00 per month, beginning in August 2014. If you're less than fulltime status, the VA will decrease your BAH accordingly.

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- How much of the BAH Stipend will I get if school is not in session for the whole month?

You will receive a prorated amount for the month which means it will be less than the full amount. How to calculate:

$$\frac{BAH}{30} \times \# \text{ of days school is in session (include weekends)} = \text{Prorated BAH Amount}$$

- How do I check the amount I will receive?

Go to your eBenefits account and look up recent payments a couple of days before the end of the month or call 1-888-442-4551 to speak to a VA representative.

- I didn't receive my BAH stipend! What now?

Did you submit an ECRF (Enrollment Certification Request Form)? Without an ECRF the Veterans Service Office cannot move forward with certifying your classes, which will result in non-payment of tuition and fees to the school, and no BAH will be sent. Submit your ECRF as soon as you have registered for classes.

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- The VA is supposed to pay my tuition & fees, but I still owe money to the College. Why?

There are three possible reasons:

If you're being charged non-resident tuition, you'll owe some portion of that to the College, even if you're 100% eligible under the Post 9/11GIBill. That's because the VA will only pay the resident tuition amount for the number of credits you're taking. For example, if you have 15 credits as a non-resident, the College might charge you \$1,566.80 in tuition & fees, but the VA would pay \$1,433.75 (the resident rate). That leaves a difference of \$133.05 you'd have to pay yourself.

Another reason might be that you're less than 100% eligible for the Post 9/11GIBill. The VA assigns percentages of eligibility levels based on the length of qualifying service. For example, if the VA determined that you're 80% eligible, then the VA

would send 80% of the amount we request, and you'd be responsible for the other 20%.

A third reason might be that you signed up for classes that don't appear to meet the VA's guidelines of what it will pay for. In cases like that, we can't ask the VA to pay for those courses, unless we get a written statement from your academic advisor that he/she approved those courses for your program of study. The VA will pay for:

- Required courses in your program of study;
- Prerequisites for classes that fit within your program of study;
- Approved electives and supporting courses that count towards your graduation requirements;
- Remedial courses, with proof of a verifiable need for the course. These must be in a classroom setting, not online or hybrid courses.

Written proof from your advisor can be either an email sent directly from the advisor to Veterans Services or a detailed quarter by quarter academic plan listing each course you're approved to take. You are responsible for asking your advisor to send that proof.

- I got a letter from the VA telling me I owe them money. Why?

Post 9/11 students: if you dropped one or more classes after the VA sent the first payment, we have to report to the VA that your actual costs have dropped. That means the first payment was too much, and the VA will expect the difference to be sent back. Sometimes the VA sends the collection letter to the College, but sometimes the letter is sent to the student instead.

If you get the letter, Highline College can issue you a check for the refund so that you can send that amount to the VA, and pay off the debt. If you're issued a refund check and choose not to send payment to the VA, they will still expect you to pay, and can take it out of your future entitlement the next time you ask for it. This could mean that money you're counting on for that next quarter is never sent, because the VA applied it to your current debt instead.

When the VA sends a debt letter to the student, they won't accept the refund directly from the College; it has to come from the student.

The debt letter might also be for an overpayment of your BAH, which Highline College obviously can't refund to the VA. You would be responsible for that.

Anytime you get a debt letter from the VA, bring a copy to the Veterans Services Office so we can determine if it's for a tuition overpayment.

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