



## State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

### Guidelines on Course Registration Policies for Military-Related Students at Virginia Public Higher Education Institutions

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia has found the following, through consultation with its Military Education Advisory Committee (MEAC):

- Active-duty military members have current responsibilities for national defense that affect the educational pursuit of the individual.
- Reservists and Virginia National Guard members are subject to short-notice military assignments affecting their ability to plan and pace their educational pursuits.
- In order to receive the full range of educational benefits, veterans must be enrolled full-time in courses applicable to their degree program and benefits are limited to just 36 months.
- Students in the above circumstances may be adversely affected by the incompatibility between their military service and/or education benefit restrictions and the course registration schedule or policy of the institution in which they are enrolled.
- Institutions should have policies and procedures in place that provide students with sufficient flexibility and accommodation to ensure that they are able to complete their educational plans in a timely manner and manage dual responsibilities as students and members of the military.

The 2012 General Assembly established Virginia Code § 23-9.2:3.7 C, which states:

The governing boards of each public institution of higher education shall, in accordance with guidelines developed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, implement policies that recognize the scheduling difficulties and obligations encountered by active duty members of the United States armed forces.

Accordingly, the guidelines promulgated herein require institutions to establish course registration policies that provide reasonable accommodation to students who are active duty military, reservists, veterans (as defined by Virginia Code § 23-7.4<sup>1</sup>), and members of the Virginia National Guard. Such policies may include strategies such as, but are not limited to, priority registration, priority wait-listing, and waiver of course enrollment caps.

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<sup>1</sup> "Veteran" means an individual who has served at least one day of service in the active military, naval or air service and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

## Elements of Institutional Policies

Each institution of public higher education shall implement a policy or policies addressing the scheduling difficulties and obligations encountered by military-related students, to be approved by its governing board. Such policies shall incorporate the following elements, as well as any other provisions deemed necessary to promote the welfare of military-related students and the effective management of the institution:

1. Must be effective and provide reasonable accommodations.
2. Must describe how the availability of accommodation will be communicated and made transparent to students who may benefit from the policy.
3. Must describe how responsible staff will be trained in the application of the policy.
4. Must have explicit timeframes and deadlines by which a student must act so as to benefit from the policy.
5. Must set reasonable conditions on how a student may demonstrate eligibility to benefit from the policy.
6. May have broad application to an established class of students and/or be narrowly based for case-by-case basis utilization. If an institution intends to use a case-by-case approach, it must provide for a clear communication of the availability of the process to students.
7. May extend to other circumstances not indicated above.
8. May include spouses and dependents of active-duty military students or veterans. Such spouses and dependents may be subject to additional eligibility requirements in order to demonstrate that scheduling difficulties are caused by military- or benefit-related circumstances.

## Implementation

- A. These guidelines become effective immediately upon approval by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).
- B. As provided in Virginia Code § 23-9.2:3.7 C, policies in accordance with these guidelines shall be passed by the governing boards of all public institutions of higher education. Institutional policies shall take effect with the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year or as soon thereafter as feasible.
- C. Each institution shall submit a copy of its policy or policies to SCHEV staff for review within 30 days after approval by its governing board. Upon request, SCHEV staff will review draft policies prior to institutional board approval.
- D. Each institution shall designate a staff member or office to serve as the responsible party in matters regarding requests for course registration accommodations by military-related students. Contact information for this function shall be made available to students, preferably through posting on an appropriate page on the institution's website.
- E. Institutions shall promptly notify SCHEV staff of any future amendments to the policy or policies governed by these guidelines
- F. SCHEV staff will perform periodic reviews of these guidelines and of institutional implementation with the assistance of the Military Education Advisory Committee

*Approved by Council, March 19, 2013.*