

**VaARNGR 621-1/VaANGR 213-1**

**Virginia National Guard  
State Tuition Assistance  
Program**

**Joint Force Headquarters – Virginia  
Building 316, Fort Pickett  
Blackstone, Virginia 23824-6316  
1 July 2008**

## **EDUCATION**

### **Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (VaNGSTAP)**

**History.** This publication is a revision of the current regulation, and adds new criterion for use of the State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP).

**Purpose.** This regulation implements policy and procedural guidance for the administration and awarding of Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Grants.

**Applicability.** This regulation applies to all eligible traditional and Title 32 Active Guard and Reserve service members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard.

**Contents** (listed by section and page number)

#### ***Section 1***

***General, page 2***

Objectives 1-2, *page 2*

Terms 1-3, *page 2*

Policy 1-4, *page 3*

Eligibility 1-5, *page 3*

Benefits 1-6, *page 4*

#### ***Section 2***

***Application Procedures and Responsibilities, page 6***

Service Member 2-1, *page 6*

Unit/Commanders 2-2, *page 6*

STAP Program Manager 2-3, *page 7*

State Education Services Officer (ESO) 2-4, *page 8*

Tuition Assistance Review Board (TARB) 2-5, *page 8*

Adjutant General of Virginia (TAG) 2-6, *page 8*

#### ***Section 3***

***Late Applications 3-1, page 9***

Appeals 3-2, *page 9*

Recoupment 3-3, *page 10*

## **Appendixes**

A. Grant Approval Letter, *page 10*

B. Schedule of Suspense Dates for Application Submission, *page 11*

## **Section 1**

### **General**

#### **1-1. References**

References used in this regulation-

- a. Code of Virginia Section 23-7.4 and 23-7.4:2 amended July 1, 2008
- b. AR 135-91, 01 Feb 05, Service Obligations, Methods of Fulfillment, Participation Requirements, and Enforcement Procedures
- c. ANGI 36-2001, 15 Jan 97, Management of Training and Operational Support within the Air National Guard
- d. AR 621-5, 11 Jul 06, Army Continuing Education System

#### **1-2. Objectives**

The objectives of the State Tuition Assistance Program are-

- a. To attract quality membership in the Virginia National Guard.
- b. To encourage retention of quality service members in the Virginia National Guard.
- c. To improve the education level of service members in the Virginia National Guard.
- d. To enhance the morale, performance and professionalism of Virginia National Guard members.

#### **1-3. Terms**

Terms of this program are defined as-

- a. Satisfactory participation/performance as defined by AR 135-91 and ANGI 36-2001

(1) Attending all scheduled drills unless excused by the unit commander or granted a leave of absence. Service members present at scheduled drills will not receive credit for attendance unless they are wearing the prescribed uniform. Virginia Guard members must also present a neat and soldierly appearance and perform assigned duties in a satisfactory manner as determined by the unit commander. Soldiers who do not receive credit for attending drill will be charged with an unexcused absence.

(2) Attending and satisfactorily completing the entire period of annual training unless excused by proper authority.

- b. School Term: That part of the school year equaling not less than 110 days.
- c. Quarter: A period of instruction in certain schools usually numbering four (including summer) annual periods of 10 to 12 weeks in length each (shorter in the summer).
- d. Semester: A period of instruction, normally 15-18 weeks in duration (shorter in the summer). Most

schools conduct three semesters- Fall, Spring, and Summer.

e. Distance Learning (DL): Courses taken by a student where as sessions do not regularly convene in a traditional school setting or lecture in a classroom. DL, as a means of instruction includes but is not limited to courses facilitated via video teleconference, Internet or self-study courses. In order to receive grants from the State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) for DL courses, one of the following conditions must be met:

(1) The institution/school must have a Virginia address or campus.

(2) The institution/school must maintain an operational campus, further defined by the school teaching resident course instruction within the state of Virginia.

f. Continuing Education Courses: Courses offered by schools that run continuously until the student reaches degree completion. Classes last anywhere from five to eight weeks and are completed one after the other usually without breaks as in traditional schools (i.e. Bluefield College and Averett College).

g. Unit Commander: The lowest level of Command with administrative authority and responsibility (i.e. Detachment, Company, Troop, Squadron, or Flight).

h. Army Continuing Education System (ACES): A federally funded tuition assistance program used by active duty army, reserve, and army national guard.

i. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education System (DANTES): A federally funded tuition assistance program used to fund non-traditional education (i.e. CLEP, GRE/LSAT reimbursement, certification exams).

#### **1-4. Policy**

Policy for administering this program is based on guidelines prescribed in the Code of Virginia, 23-7.4 and 23-7.4:2, last amended July 2008. Due to legislative constraints which may be imposed annually, guidelines are herein established for a fair, equitable and lawful administration of the program to the extent that funding is provided.

#### **1-5. Eligibility**

Virginia Guard members are eligible to receive Tuition Grants so long as the following conditions are met-

a. The service member must have met all eligibility requirements prior to the application deadline in order to receive State Tuition Assistance. Application deadlines are published each year in the Virginia STAP memorandum released in June prior to the beginning of the next State Fiscal Year.

b. Applicants must have a remaining service or contractual obligation of two years to the Virginia National Guard after completion of the academic period in which TA grants were received. Approval waivers are accepted for the following reasons:

(1) Enlisted members who participate in the Reenlistment Bonus Program who will execute the promissory statement at the end of Section I of the Va Form 621-1-R . Applicants must submit supporting reenlistment documentation with the state application in order to be considered for state TA grants.

(2) Notwithstanding the foregoing requirement that a member of the Virginia National Guard have minimum of two years remaining on their service obligation, at the discretion of the Adjutant General, if a

member is activated or deployed for federal military service or state active duty, an additional day may be added to the members eligibility for the grant for each day of active federal service or state active duty not to exceed 1 year. In order for state applications to be considered for approval under this paragraph, applicants must meet the following conditions:

(a) Satisfy all other eligibility requirements listed in section 1-5.

(b) Active member of the Virginia National Guard and maintain membership through completion of the academic period.

(c) Remaining service/contractual obligation plus the number of activated days for federal military service or state active duty must be greater than or equal to two years after completion of the academic period which State TA was paid

c. Applicants must be in satisfactory participant/performance status and maintain good standing throughout the academic period of the grant.

d. The service member can not be flagged for any reason. If flagged during the course of study for which tuition assistance has been granted, tuition assistance for that term will not be withdrawn but continued only until the end of the current term.

e. The service member must have attended or been properly excused from all unit training assemblies within the last six months. This will be confirmed by the unit commander's signature on the Va Form 621-1-R. Failure to submit this form with a commander's (or designee) signature will result in denial of tuition assistance grants until the form is received with the commander's (or designee's) signature.

f. To receive State Tuition Assistance, the service member must have satisfactorily completed initial basic training requirements or the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) for ROTC Cadets.

g. Applicants must be accepted, or enrolled in residence, in:

(1) Any accredited state institution of higher education in Virginia.

(2) Any private, accredited and non-profit institution of higher education in Virginia whose primary purpose is to provide collegiate or graduate studies exclusive of religious or theological education.

(3) Course(s) or program(s) offered by public vocation or technical schools listed on the Approved School Listing. For an updated listing of approved vocation or technical schools, contact the State TA Program Manager.

h. Schools may be added to the approved list at any time by the State Education Services Office after verification of eligibility through the Veterans Administration and approved by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia.

i. Service members attached to the Virginia National Guard while serving AGR Title 10 tours are not eligible for state TA grants.

#### **1-6. Benefits**

Specifics associated with STAP benefits include-

a. State Tuition Assistance Grants will not exceed in any event the total cost of tuition for the term, quarter or semester. Federal tuition assistance and benefits can be used in conjunction with State Tuition grants.

b. State TA grants can be used by Virginia Guard Members to achieve one degree program at each level of study, to include associate's degree, bachelor's degree and post graduate degree (masters, PHD or Law degree). Vocational type skills considered essential for the average worker are not limited by number of credits or degree completion requirements.

c. In the event that legislative funding prevents granting full tuition assistance to all Virginia National Guard members regardless of tuition costs, grants for private schools and other non state supported schools will not exceed the total cost of tuition of the highest tuition rate at a state supported school as determined by the State Education Services Officer (ESO).

d. The tuition assistance grant ceilings for each program year will be determined by the Adjutant General, subject to the level of funding provided by the General Assembly of Virginia and section 23.7-4:2 of the Code of Virginia.

e. Commanders will ensure their units are notified of grant ceilings available for participants for the upcoming year prior to the suspense date for the fall term application deadline (1 July).

f. Applicants are required to apply for all available forms of federal benefits and Veterans Affairs entitlements prior to applying for state assistance. These programs include but are not limited to Army Continuing Education System (ACES), Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education (DANTES) and Montgomery GI Bill, all of which are managed separately. AGR personnel must utilize federal tuition assistance through regular Army resources (<https://www.earmyu.com>). Any amount over the federal grant can be applied to state tuition assistance up to the maximum allowable amount for the semester, plus authorized text book limits. Textbook grants are subject to change and are offered so long as STAP funding is available.

g. Both federal and state tuition assistance grants cannot equal over 100% of tuition cost per semester.

h. State funding for various programs to include the State Tuition Assistance Program are subject to change each year; Therefore, priorities for applicants to be considered to receive state TA grants are as follows:

(1) Enlisted applicants who have previously received assistance through this program. Service members are currently seeking their first stated educational goal and are currently continuing educational plans to complete their associate's degree, bachelor's degree or certification only.

(2) Officers who have not completed their bachelor's degree and need to complete their bachelor's degree for promotion to Captain.

(3) Warrant Officers seeking their associates or bachelor's degrees.

(4) Any service member seeking an undergraduate college degree.

(5) Any service member seeking a graduate degree.

(6) Other education programs for any member of the Virginia National Guard as deemed appropriate by the State Education Services Officer.

i. Written authority to bill the Department of Military Affairs will be issued to the school of enrollment in the amount calculated from the tuition grant determined for each service member. Tuition amounts will be verified by the school after the student has registered and completed enough of the term, semester, or quarter to receive a grade for the course even if they withdraw from the course. To avoid billing errors, it is critical that the service member immediately notifies the state education office of any changes associated with courses attended throughout the academic period.

j. Invoices from the school will be processed for payment immediately upon receipt. Generally, institutions forward invoices to the state education office after the drop/add dates have expired for the semester. In circumstances where TA grants have been paid to the schools on behalf of a service member and it is later determined the service member did not achieve a passing grade (according to the individual school standards), the amount of the TA grant will be paid by the service member through the recoupment process (section 3-3).

k. Verified TA grants will be paid directly to the school in the applicant's name. Direct payment or reimbursement to the student is not authorized. The Education Services Office issues written authorization to the institutions which authorizes the institution to bill the Education Service Office for the amount of the student grant.

## **Section 2**

### **Application Procedures and Responsibilities**

#### **2-1. Applicant**

Eligible Guard members who apply for State Tuition Assistance grants are responsible for-

a. Submission of the application is the responsibility of the applicant. Applicants must ensure applications are received by the State Education Services Office prior to the published deadline. Failure to do so within the prescribed deadlines will result in a disapproved application.

b. Submit applications on Va Form 621 -1 -R for each term, quarter or semester for which tuition assistance is requested to their commander at least thirty days prior to the application deadline. The Va Form 621 -1 -R and any other required documentation must be submitted through the commander to the State Education Services Office.

c. Ensure that all appropriate portions of the application are completed correctly and signed by both the service member and the unit commander (or designee).

d. Submit grades to the State Education Services Office following the course or academic period completion. Failure to provide the State Education Services Office with a grade transcript will prevent further tuition assistance grants from being processed. Service members who receive a grade of Incomplete, Recycle, Continuing Satisfactorily or other grades for not completing the course must submit their final grade within 90 days from the end of the semester in which they received a State Tuition Assistance grant. In the event a final grade can not be obtained, the individual is required to have a letter submitted by the college/university addressed to the State Education Services Officer that indicates the individual is still participating satisfactorily. This letter must indicate the approximate date of course completion. Failure to comply with the above requirements will be cause for recoupment of

the State Tuition Assistance paid on the service member's behalf.

e. Maintain a cumulative grade point average which the school considers acceptable for continued enrollment in the school. Failure to maintain a minimum acceptable grade point average will prevent further participation in the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program.

f. Must agree to serve and/or continue to serve with the Virginia National Guard for a period of two years following any academic period for which State Tuition Assistance is paid. Applicants must agree to repay the commonwealth of Virginia on a prorated basis for any failure to serve the two-year service period for which state tuition is paid.

## **2-2. Unit Commanders**

Units commanders will-

a. Ensure all service members within their organization are aware of this program. Commanders will post scheduled suspense dates on the permanent bulletin board.

b. Designate at each level of command down to company, troop, battery, detachment, squadron or flight an Education Services Advisor to assist service members with educational programs.

c. Collect all applications for tuition assistance no later than the drill weekend prior to the application deadline.

d. Verify each applicant meets all eligibility requirements for enrollment into the state tuition assistance program in accordance with this regulation (section 1-5), AR 135-91 and ANGI 36-2001. Commanders acknowledge eligibility by signing Va Form 621-1-R for each applicant in their command.

e. Forward all tuition assistance applications (Va Form 621-1-R) prior to the published deadline on a DA Form 200 (Transmittal Letter) to the address below: Virginia National Guard, JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO (State Tuition Assistance), Building 316, Fort Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia 23824-6316.

f. Monitor all grant applicants during their participation in the State Tuition Assistance Program for compliance with requirements for satisfactory performance/ participation. If the service member fails to perform in a satisfactory manner or has an unexcused absence, the commander will forward to the STAP Program Manager, a letter removing the service member from the program. Any State Tuition Assistance Grants awarded will be continued for the existing term of study only and no further applications from the individual will be accepted until the service member is reinstated as a satisfactory participant.

g. Screen all requests for discharge and /or interstate transfers to determine whether the service member has received tuition assistance grants. Commanders must verify whether personnel requesting discharge have incurred a service obligation by participation in the Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Program by contacting the State ESO. The names of those requesting discharge who have an existing service obligation, will be forwarded to the State ESO for recoupment action.

h. Commanders and Retention personnel should remind service members requesting early separations that recoupment actions will be initiated by the Commonwealth of Virginia if they fail to complete their

obligatory period of service in the Virginia National Guard. Approval authority for waivers of this commitment due to hardship and certain valid mitigating circumstances rests with The Adjutant General of Virginia.

### **2-3. STAP Program Manager**

STAP Program Manager is responsible for the following-

- a. Receives and processes all applications for State Tuition Assistance prior to the deadline.
- b. Reviews all applications for accuracy and completeness prior to approval.
- c. Maintains a current list of approved schools and costs.
- d. Produces a recommended list of approvals and disapprovals to the Education Services Officer. For approved applications, the STAP PM will include the projected tuition assistance grant to be paid on behalf of each service member. STAP PM is responsible for collecting supporting documentation for all appeals.
- e. Submits approved state TA grant rosters to each institution of higher learning on behalf of eligible Guard members. Processes all payments to approved schools and maintains strict accountability of all funds expended and prepares a budget report quarterly to be reviewed for the Education Services officer and State Director of Fiscal Operations.
- f. Serves as a recorder for the proceedings during the State Tuition Assistance Review Board meeting and publishes the minutes of all meetings to the board members prior to the next scheduled board meeting.

### **2-4. State Education Services Officer (ESO)**

The ESO will-

- a. Approves all STAP applications and monitors the overall effectiveness of the program.
- b. Prepares all correspondence concerning the STAP and determines deadlines for each term, semester or quarter.
- c. Publishes proposed funding guidelines and maximum tuition amounts for each year after the legislature has approved funding.
- d. Serves as the primary liaison with the education institution financial aid directors to include the establishment of all Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Special Agreement Contracts (SACs).
- e. Responsible for initiating recoupment actions for service members who fail to comply with STAP regulatory requirements.
- f. Reviews and makes initial determination on all appeals/waiver requests for late applications and recoupment actions.

## **2-5. State Tuition Assistance Review Board**

At the discretion of the Adjutant General or the Chief of the Joint Staff, a State Tuition Assistance Review Board will convene in order to make recommendations to the TAG pertaining to the State Tuition Assistance Program. The members of the Board will be determined by the scope or issues that need to be discussed.

## **2-6. The Adjutant General of Virginia.**

The Adjutant General of Virginia-

- a. The Adjutant General is the final authority on all aspects of the program.
- b. Acts as the final appeal authority for two year service obligation waivers.

## **Section 3**

### **Late Applications and Appeals**

#### **3-1. Late Applications**

a. Late applications received after the deadline date will be returned without action to the unit unless the reason for the late application is beyond the applicant's control.

b. In order for applications to be considered for approval after the published deadline, units must submit in writing to the Education Services Officer extenuating circumstances for the late submission. The applicant will be notified in writing of the decision made by the state ESO. If the application is disapproved by the ESO, service members may submit an appeal to the Adjutant General for consideration; however, the applicant must do so within 10 days of receipt of the disapproval letter from the ESO. Any appeals to the TAG must be routed through the chain of command to the Education Services Office. Late applications that are approved will be processed immediately.

c. Applications received after the beginning of the academic term in which the assistance is requested will be returned disapproved. There are no exceptions to this policy.

#### **3-2. Recoupment.**

State Tuition Assistance grants paid to institutions on behalf of service members are subject to the recoupment program if the service member fails to achieve and maintain eligibility requirements listed in section 1-5 of this regulation.

a. Applicants must submit final grades within 30 days after completion of the course. Courses that fall into the below categories are also subject to the recoupment program-

- (1) Withdrawn classes
- (2) Incomplete classes
- (3) Failed classes

(4) State TA grants can be applied towards courses taken only one time. Repeated courses are not authorized for any reason. State TA grants paid for repeated courses will be recouped.

- (5) Failure to turn in grades

b. Once a recoupment action is revealed, an initial letter of notification will be forwarded to the service member by certified mail indicating the pro-rated amount and reason for the action. Once the initial notification letter is received, the service member has 30 days to respond to the state Education Services Office in order to reconcile the debt. A second notification letter will be mailed after the initial 30 days has expired in order to reconcile any remaining debt. **Failure to repay debt within 60 days will cause the recoupment action to be forwarded to the Treasurer of Virginia at the Department of Military Affairs for collection through 1) Comptroller's Debt Set-off, 2) a collection agency, an or/ 3) the Attorney General's Office.**

Recoupment payments should be forwarded to **The Treasurer of Virginia, Department of Military Affairs, Building 316 Fort Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia 23824.**

### **3-3. Appeals.**

Appeals process-

a. All State Tuition Assistance Program appeals and waivers to include late applications and recoupment actions must be submitted in writing through the chain of command to the state Education Services Officer for decision. Applicants may appeal any grant disapproval by the ESO within ten days of notification. Appeals will be submitted in writing THRU the Education Services Officer TO the Adjutant General of Virginia ATTN: Chairman, State Tuition Assistance Review Board with a copy furnished to the applicant's unit commander along with the original application.

b. Notification of appeal decisions made by the Adjutant General will be made directly to the applicant through the chain of command within ten days.

BY THE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR:

OFFICIAL:

ROBERT B. NEWMAN, JR.  
Major General, VaANG  
The Adjutant General

DARYL W. FRANCIS  
COL, GS, VaARNG  
Dir, Joint Staff Virginia Army  
and Air National Guard

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The proponent office of this regulation is JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO. Users are invited to send comments or suggestions to:  
TAG of VA, ATTN: JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO.

## APPENDIX A

### Departments of the Army and Air Force

Office of the Adjutant General of Virginia  
Virginia National Guard  
Building 316, Fort Pickett  
Blackstone, Virginia 23824  
DD-MMM-YY

Education Services Office

SUBJECT: Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Program

Service member's Address

Dear (Rank and Name):

This letter is to advise you that based upon your actual enrollment in (School Name), your application for tuition assistance from the Virginia National Guard has been approved for (Semester) YYYY.

You are required to present this letter to the institution of enrollment as evidence of your grant. You are further required to provide this office with a **grade** transcript at the close of (his academic period). Applications for future academic periods must be submitted separately and in accordance with all published suspense dates posted on your unit's permanent bulletin board.

The amount of your grant is the cost of tuition minus any federal benefits received as a National Guard service member (ACES and DANES). Montgomery GI Bill is not used to determine the amount of grant received. The amount will not exceed the maximum amount of tuition of the highest state supported school as posted on the unit's permanent bulletin board.

You must maintain the minimum acceptable academic standard for each class (i.e. repeat classes and classes in which a D or F has been awarded) as set forth by the school in order to receive the tuition assistance grant. Failure to achieve minimum acceptable academic standards as set forth by the school or university will result in the service member not being eligible for further tuition assistance grants and recoupment procedures will be initiated for the academic period during which the grant has been awarded.

We will issue written authorization to your school to bill us for the amount of your grant. When we receive the bill, we will make payment to the school in your name. The law allows no direct payment to the student.

If you have any questions, contact Ms. Vickie Kegley at (804) 298-6222. Direct written correspondence to the above address, ATTN: JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO.

JOHN B. DOE  
CPT, MP, VaARNG  
Education Services Officer

## APPENDIX B

Pending state funding availability each state fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup>-June 30), the following application deadlines apply: State Tuition Assistance Program Application Submission Deadlines

FOR:

Spring Semester  
(1 Jan – 15 May)  
NLT November 1st

Summer Semester  
(16 May – 15 Aug)  
NLT April 1st

Fall Semester  
(16 Aug – 31 Dec)  
NLT July 1<sup>st</sup>

Forward all completed applications to: Virginia National Guard,  
Attn: JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO  
Building 316, Fort Pickett  
Blackstone, Virginia 23824

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