

VETERANS SERVICES

The Office of Veteran and Military Affairs provides assistance to veterans, reservists, service persons, and eligible dependents. The office processes all certifications that must be filed with the Department of Veteran and Military Affairs before educational benefits can be received. Students must register with the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs each semester to begin receiving or to continue receiving benefits. In addition to helping students apply for benefits and complete VA certifications, the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs provides academic, personal, and financial referrals to students in VA programs. VA-sponsored work-study programs and tutoring are available to those who qualify. Students eligible for veterans benefits include VEAP veterans, reservists and veterans on the "New GI Bill," disabled veterans, dependents of persons who have total and permanent service-connected disabilities, and dependents of persons whose deaths were service-connected.

Information about services, application procedures, and compliance with VA requirements is available at the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, Houser Hall, Ste. 3000, or by contacting The University of Alabama, Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, Box 870251, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0251; 205-348-0983.

For students receiving VA education benefits, any complaint against the school should be routed through the VA GI Bill Feedback System by going to the following link: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/feedback.asp>. The VA will then follow up through the appropriate channels to investigate the complaint and resolve it satisfactorily.

Graduate Non-Standard Terms For Federal VA Certification Purposes

The VA instructs institutions to enter the training time (full, $\frac{3}{4}$, etc.) in the TT/FT box for the enrollment period based on the school's academic policy when submitting the federal VA certification for graduate level terms. The VA also depends on the institutional determination of what is considered full time in these cases. The VA has an undergraduate matrix for students that is used for non-standard terms. However, this matrix does not adequately apply to graduate students in a fair and equitable manner when graduate students take courses in non-standard terms due to the weight of semester hours being affected by the number of hours the institution considers full time for graduate level coursework as compared to the undergraduate equivalent (12 hrs for UG = FT vs. 9 hrs for GR = FT). Furthermore, the academic policy of UA does not dive deeper into the individual parts of term in order to apply the academic policy appropriately and in an equitable manner as compared to the undergraduate counterpart and due to the way the federal VA requires institutions to certify benefits to the VA.

To bring clarity and equity to this situation, the Office of Veteran & Military Affairs has established the following policy when certifying graduate students in non-standard terms that takes the academic policy of what the institution considers full time and allocates the policy's equivalent to the individual parts of the term when certifying benefits to the VA and is publishing this certification policy guidance to bring the institution into federal compliance by having this information published in UA's catalog. Otherwise, graduate students using benefits would be unfairly subjected to the lesser-weighted undergraduate hours.

Below is UA's determination for VA purposes of how the academic policy for full-time status would apply to VA students for determining rate of pursuit for VA purposes:

GRADUATE POLICY FOR FULL-TIME STATUS WITHIN ANY SEMESTER = 9 HRS

VA NON-STANDARD SUMMER SCHEDULE EXAMPLE:

MAY INTERIM: 3 HRS

SUM I: 3 HRS

SUM II: 3 HRS

TOTAL HOURS: 9 HRS

(This student would be full time for the semester, and each part of term would be full time for that individual part of term. Likewise, and to maintain equity, a student who is in 6 hours, with 3 hours in May Interim and 3 hours in Summer I, would be considered full time for only those parts of term while not being full time for the entire summer semester. As a result, when submitting graduate hours to the VA, the institution will use the equivalent of how the academic policy would apply to the individual parts of term if a student was full time for the entire term being certified in other similar cases. VA's Rate of Pursuit Calculator will also be used in help determining the proper Rate of Pursuit for graduate level non-standard terms.)