



STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA
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1. Who accredits the college/university?

A school **MUST** be accredited by an accreditor that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) before students can use federal student aid (like Pell Grants or student loans) or GI Bill benefits at the institution. Accreditation demonstrates that the college or university meets widely accepted basic standards of quality in education and training.

It is important to make sure that any school you are considering is accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by ED. Some schools advertise that they are accredited but do not indicate the source. Be aware that there are unrecognized accrediting agencies and that some schools may claim to be accredited by these organizations.

The quickest and easiest way to verify whether an accrediting agency is recognized by the ED is to search the department's list of recognized accreditors.

http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html) If an accreditor is not on this list, you should avoid it.

Please note that one accreditor—the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS)—is in serious danger of losing its recognition as an accreditor. If ACICS does lose its approval, federal student aid and GI Bill benefits cannot be used at ANY school accredited by this agency, and students who are enrolled at the institution will be forced to transfer.

2. What financial aid is available?

If you are planning to use your GI Bill benefits, you must confirm the school is eligible to accept these benefits. Unfortunately, when an institution closes, students using GI Bill benefits are unable to get the benefits already used reinstated and might have to look to other forms of financial aid to complete their degree program. In addition to federal aid such as Pell Grants and federal student loans, many institutions have institutional grants and financial aid available.

3. What is the institution's transfer of credit policy?

Each institution has its own policies and procedures related to the acceptance of credit earned at another institution. While some institutions will not accept any transfer credits, others will accept some or all of the credit. Policies may also vary depending on the type of accreditation held by the institution where the credit was earned. For example, some regionally accredited institutions may not accept credit earned at a nationally accredited institution. Talking to a number of schools and learning about their credit transfer policies will help inform your decision when it comes to choosing an institution.



4. Will the institution do a pre-audit of your transcripts prior to enrolling?

If the institution has a policy to award credit from other institutions, or for prior military training and/or other prior learning, you can ask if they will pre-audit your transcripts to help you see how many of your credits are likely transfer and whether the credits will fulfill degree requirements. Some schools will accept credit, but they may not count it toward degree requirements. This should be carefully considered in the process of choosing an institution. Remember, it may be more cost-effective to enroll at a school that accepts fewer credits if those credits count toward your degree rather than enroll at a school that accepts more credits but does not apply them toward your specific degree requirements. Ask questions and get clear, definitive answers.

5. What is the institution's residency requirement?

Most institutions have a minimum number of credits that must be completed at the school in order to earn a degree. When looking for an institution to transfer to, it is important to have a solid understanding of what will be expected from you to complete your degree.

Some online institutions or distance learning institutions also require a specific amount of time during which the student is physically at the institution. These typically add up to a week or two a semester. If you are looking at an online program, this is important information to have in order to plan accordingly.

6. What types of support services are available for military-connected students?

Institutions offer a variety of programs and services for their students. Depending on your specific needs and expectations, some of the following questions might be helpful to ask:

- Does the institution have a primary point of contact for military-connected students?
- Is there a veteran student organization on campus?
- What types of activities are available for military-connected students?
- Who is the person doing the certification of enrollment for GI Bill benefits?
- What types of tutoring are available?
- What are some ways you can get involved on campus?

7. Will I still be able to complete a degree or certificate in my current field of study?

Prior to choosing an institution, it is important to verify that the institution offers a program in your field of study.

It is also helpful to identify long-term career goals and what qualifications and levels of education are required to accomplish those goals. If you want to be an auto mechanic for a specific company, it is important to verify what training that company will consider when hiring. Harley Davidson, for example, will only hire those who have been trained through its own corporate training program.