



# **Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

## **POST SECONDARY ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING HANDBOOK**

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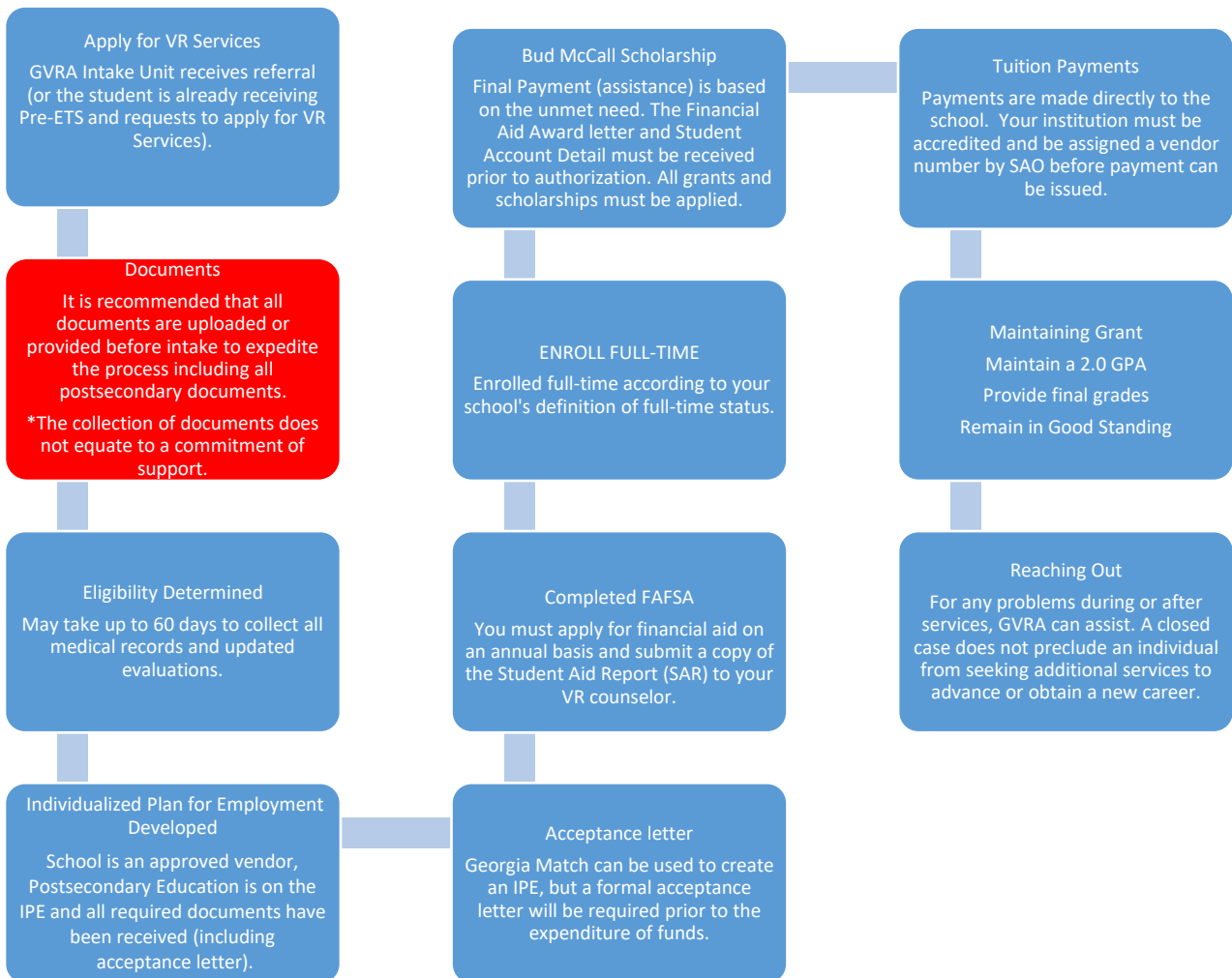
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Congratulations! We are excited you have chosen the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to assist you on your path to employment. You are likely reading this because you have expressed interest in an employment goal requiring academic training to meet the requirements for employment in the position. As such, the Student Handbook is designed to navigate you through the process GVRA uses to determine potential agency support with tuition, fees, room and board, and related expenses. In order to receive assistance and ensure that the process runs smoothly, you will need to partner closely with GVRA to ensure that all requirements are met. This handbook provides a quick guide that will assist us in meeting your vocational rehabilitation and post-secondary goals.

## **THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS**

The Vocational Rehabilitation process can be short or lengthy depending on the documents needed at each step. The chart below provides a high-level road map and all the documents you will need to expedite your experience.



## **TUITION AND FEES**

GVRA's post-secondary assistance can reach up to \$17,725 per year to cover tuition, fees, books, and maintenance (room and board) costs based on eligibility. GVRA is responsible only for the unmet need after all scholarships and grants have been applied. This may result in an amount less than \$17,725.

## **PROCESS**

All applicable comparable benefits for which you have been approved must be applied to the tuition and fees on your itemized student bill. Please see the examples in Appendix A showing potential need based on tuition costs and comparable benefits.

Comparable benefits for training may include but are not limited to grants and scholarships. You must inform your counselor within ten (10) days of: 1) any approval received for comparable benefits for post-secondary support and 2) your direct receipt of funds related to post-secondary education. GVRA may provide a preliminary estimate, but you must provide a final student account detail which includes all financial assistance before the amount of the final payment can be determined and payment authorized.

You may attend any accredited public or proprietary school that provides academic training toward your vocational goal and is an approved vendor. Verification that the school is an approved vendor must be made prior to VR commitment for payment, verbally or on an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). VR support for approved tuition and fees is determined by policy and fiscal guidelines. Any remaining costs after VR's contribution are your responsibility. If your student account balance is less than the established rate for tuition and fees, VR will only pay the remainder of that balance. You are not required to accept student loans, although you may choose to do so to cover any remaining costs.

Remember, all purchases/payments to support your academic training must be included on your current IPE or IPE Amendment and authorized before the start of classes. Otherwise, you will not receive VR financial support for that term.

GVRA is required to pay the school directly. If your school is not already an approved vendor, additional time may be required to complete the vendor approval process. Reimbursement based on the final account showing unmet need cannot be made until the vendor has been approved.

## **REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES** **OF COLLEGE STUDENTS**

### **EXPECTATIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS**

#### **COMPLETE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)**

You must apply for financial aid on an annual basis and submit a copy of the FAFSA Submission Summary (formerly known as SAR) to your VR counselor. The FAFSA application is available online at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov). Being early and accurate in your application is one of the most important steps in securing aid. If you cannot get financial aid because you owe money to a school or defaulted on student loans, then VR cannot assist with school costs until you are in good standing with the financial aid office by either repaying the loan, arranging a repayment plan, or obtaining a deferral. VR cannot pay your debt.

#### **ENROLL FULL-TIME**

You must be enrolled full-time according to your school's definition of full-time status. This usually means 12 credit hours for an undergraduate program and 9 credit hours for a graduate program. Any exception to this must be agreed upon by you and your counselor. Exceptions may include, a full course load is not needed to complete the course work, or the required courses in the program of study are not available due to scheduling.

A college student cannot take less than a full course load for more than two terms during the training program.

#### **MAINTAIN CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)**

An undergraduate must maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA to receive funding from VR. A graduate student must maintain the minimum cumulative GPA required for their program. If your school's minimum cumulative GPA requirement is higher than VR policy requirement, you must meet the school's standard. You will be allowed one probationary semester to raise your cumulative GPA. If you do not maintain the required

cumulative GPA, VR will not support your training until the cumulative GPA returns to the required level.

### **WITHDRAWING OR FAILING CLASSES**

If you must retake a class due to a poor grade or withdrawal after the add/drop date, it will be your responsibility to pay for retaking the class. If you think you may need to withdraw from a class, contact your counselor immediately to discuss your situation before withdrawing.

### **TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETING CLASSES**

VR sponsorship for a freshman pursuing an undergraduate degree (bachelor's degree) shall be limited to five years, and for each year thereafter shall be decreased by one year based on enrollment status (sophomore, junior, senior). Only credit hours that contribute to the degree-required credit hours, including general electives and major-specific, will be supported. For example, if you want to take a karate class but it doesn't count towards a general elective or your major, you will be responsible for the cost of that class. A degree program of study outlining the necessary courses for completing your major must be provided to your VR counselor so your course work completion can be tracked.

### **MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH VR COUNSELOR**

You must maintain regular contact with your VR counselor. If problems arise that impact your success in school, contact your counselor immediately to discuss. This includes consideration to change your major, switching schools, dropping or adding a class, withdrawing from a class, or anything else that impacts your progress and funding. Any changes must be agreed upon by your counselor and you and reflected on a signed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Amendment before they are implemented and supported by VR.

### **SUBMIT INFORMATION REQUIRED BY VR**

You must give your counselor a copy of the following information within the given timelines:

***At least thirty (30) days prior to the institution's due date for payment of tuition and fees or at least five (5) days after the information is made available by the school:***

- FAFSA Submission Summary (formerly known as SAR). This report will be given to you after you submit your application for FAFSA.
- Financial Aid Award Letter from the school's financial aid office.
- Student Account Detail from the school. (itemized student bill)

***Within five (5) days of the school posting to your school account:***

- Class schedule.
- Grades from the previous term.
- List of required textbooks and supplies (if applicable).

Your VR counselor may require these documents to be submitted by a specific date so there is time to amend your IPE before classes begin.

It is best to submit these documents to your VR counselor as early as possible. If you do not provide all the above information in the appropriate timelines before the start of the term, VR may not pay for that term, and you will be financially responsible. If the above information is not available within the timelines prior to the start of the term, notify your counselor immediately. VR will not pay late fees if you fail to submit necessary documents on time.

## **WORK WITH THE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE**

The disability services office at your school arranges accommodations for students who provide appropriate documentation of a disability. You are responsible for the coordination of these services.

To receive services through the disability services office, you generally must:

- Make an appointment with the disability services office.
- Provide disability services with documentation that your disability exists and that requested services are appropriate.



- Be prepared to discuss the accommodations that are necessary and appropriate. The staff will not know that you need support unless you ask. Services are individualized for each student.
- Follow all university/college policies and procedures when requesting services and accommodations.
- Contact instructors for the provision of specific accommodations.
- Keep in contact with the disability services office each semester.

## **WORK WITH UNIVERSITY CAREER SERVICES**

The career services office at your school can assist you with cover letters, resumes, networking opportunities with alumni, job fairs, and informational interviews. When you are nearing graduation, this office will provide additional assistance in helping you find a job in your field.

## **SUMMER SCHOOL**

Summer school may be financially supported by VR if you attend full time and after applicable financial aid is applied. If that does not cover all the tuition and fees, the additional expense is your responsibility.

## **HOUSING**

Students may receive housing assistance if housing is not a normal living expense for the student. Housing assistance may be provided while you are enrolled in classes, participating and making satisfactory academic progress in your post-secondary program.

VR will not pay relocation costs for students.

### ***On-Campus Colleges and Universities***

VR may pay for on-campus housing if housing is determined necessary. The amount VR will pay for both housing and meals must not exceed the maximum allowable monthly SSI rate. Any additional expense is your responsibility.

VR may assist with summer on-campus housing if housing is determined necessary and you are enrolled in summer classes related to your program of study or participating in a required internship.

### ***Off-Campus Colleges and Universities***

VR may pay for off-campus housing if housing is determined necessary. The amount VR will pay for both housing and meals must not exceed the maximum allowable monthly SSI rate. Any additional expense is your responsibility.

VR may assist with summer off-campus housing/rent if housing is determined necessary and you are enrolled in summer classes related to your program of study or participating in a required internship.

### **TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLIES**

If agreed to on the IPE, VR may only pay for textbooks and supplies that are required for your classes up to a limited amount. It may be necessary for VR to reimburse you for the purchases. If so, you must submit to your counselor all receipts, and each receipt must include your signature. Signed receipts must be submitted to your counselor as soon as you have made the purchases or by the date the counselor assigns, otherwise, you may not receive reimbursement.

### **OVERPAYMENTS AND REFUNDS**

If a student receives an overpayment during a term, it must immediately be refunded to VR or agree to have future payments adjusted to deduct the overpayment. Circumstances that may require a refund to VR include:

- The student receives financial assistance from a comparable benefit for tuition, fees, books/supplies and maintenance (housing and meals) that has already been paid for by VR.
- The student receives a refund because of dropping a class.
- The student did not utilize VR funds for the purpose they were intended.

If you refuse to refund VR, post-secondary financial support will be suspended, and/or your VR case may be closed for fraud/misuse of program funds.

## ANNUAL REVIEW

Your VR counselor will conduct an annual in-depth review of your academic participation and grade reports to determine if you are making adequate progress towards your established employment goal. If it is determined you are not progressing satisfactorily in your approved course of study, support for your training will be suspended, and your VR counselor will work with you to identify a more appropriate employment goal.

## APPENDIX A

### Example 1

Student Detail Example		GVRA Final Payment	
Athletic Fee	\$50.00	Tuition & Fees	\$9,788.00
General Univ Fee	\$1,370.00	Pell	(\$3,698.00)
Health Insurance	\$40.00	Grant	(\$500.00)
Bookstore Access	\$439.80	Scholarship	\$0.00
Tuition	\$8,328.00	Tuition and Fees Payment	\$3,698.00
All Access Meal Plan	\$1,884.00	Maintenance	\$5,909.00
New Facility I	\$4,025.00	RA Room Waiver	\$0.00
New Facility I Change	\$0.00		
Pell	(\$3,698.00)	Maintenance	\$4,715.00
Grant	(\$500.00)		
Room Waiver	\$0.00	Books	
Scholarship	\$0.00	Hornet Bookstore Access	\$439.80

\*\*\*In this example, the account balance (for tuition and fees) after financial aid was \$5,590, but \$3,698 was paid because that is the maximum allowable for tuition and fees. Likewise, the balance for room and board was \$5,909, but \$4,715 was paid because that is the maximum allowable for maintenance for a regular semester (\$943 per month). Maintenance amounts are calculated based on the number of months the term covers, so for Summer semester that is typically two months.

The total received for unmet need in this example is \$8,852.80 (\$3,698 for tuition and fees, \$4,715 for maintenance and \$439.80 for books).

In this case the remaining balance of \$1,892 for tuition/fees and \$1,194 for maintenance would be your responsibility.

## Example 2

Student Detail Example		GVRA Final Payment	
Athletic Fee	\$50.00	Tuition & Fees	\$9,788.00
General Univ Fee	\$1,370.00	Pell	(\$2,000.00)
Health Insurance	\$40.00	Grant	(\$500.00)
Bookstore Access	\$439.80	Scholarship	(\$4,164.00)
Tuition	\$8,328.00	Tuition and Fees Payment	\$3,124.00
All Access Meal Plan	\$1,884.00	Maintenance	\$5,909.00
New Facility I	\$4,025.00	RA Room Waiver	(\$4,075.00)
New Facility I Change	(\$2,275.00)		
Pell	(\$2,000.00)	Maintenance	\$1,834.00
Grant	(\$500.00)		
Room Waiver	(\$1,800.00)	Books	
Scholarship	(\$4,164.00)	Hornet Bookstore Access	\$439.80

\*\*\*In this example, the balance for tuition and fees after comparable benefits were applied was \$3,124, so that is the amount of support awarded. Likewise, the balance for maintenance after comparable benefits was \$1,834, so that is the amount of support awarded. The total support for unmet need for the semester is \$5,397.80 (\$3,124 for tuition and fees, \$1,834 for maintenance and \$439.80 for books).

### Example 3

Student Detail Example		GVRA Final Payment	
Athletic Fee	\$50.00	Tuition & Fees	\$9,788.00
General Univ Fee	\$1,370.00	Pell	(\$3,698.00)
Health Insurance	\$40.00	Grant	(\$500.00)
Bookstore Access	\$439.80	Scholarship	(\$4,164.00)
Tuition	\$8,328.00	Tuition and Fees Payment	\$1,426.00
All Access Meal Plan	\$1,884.00	Maintenance	\$5,909.00
New Facility I	\$4,025.00	RA Room Waiver	(\$5,909.00)
New Facility I Change	(\$2,275.00)		
Pell	(\$3,698.00)	Maintenance	\$0.00
Grant	(\$500.00)		
Room Waiver	(\$3,634.00)	Books	
Scholarship	(\$4,164.00)	Hornet Bookstore Access	\$439.80

\*\*\*In this example, the balance for tuition and fees after comparable benefits were applied is \$1,426, so that is the amount of support awarded. Likewise, the balance for maintenance after comparable benefit was \$0, so no support was awarded for maintenance. The total support for unmet need for the semester is \$1,865.80 (\$1,426 for tuition and fees plus \$439.80 for books).