



OP 91.131 MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENT BENEFITS AND RESOURCES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Operating Policy and Procedure (OP) is to identify the wide range of military-connected benefits and resources available to our students and to provide basic guidance on eligibility and the application process.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

I. Background

Military-connected students may be eligible for a wide range of federal, state, and institutional benefits and resources based on their own or their parent's or legal guardian's U.S. military service. Military-connected status and determination of eligibility can vary based on the respective benefits and/or resources. Rules, regulations, and policies often change at the Federal and State level resulting in changes to benefits and resources. As one of the most military friendly schools in the nation, the Center for America's Veterans at Mississippi State University monitors and relays updates to benefit recipients as soon as possible to ensure military-connected students are aware of and understand their benefits and resources. This policy is subject to change depending on changes in federal and state law.

II. Definitions

a. The G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Center for America's Veterans

The staff at the Center for America's Veterans, located on the Starkville campus of Mississippi State University, provides expertise and general information about military-connected benefits and resources. Although they are located on the Starkville campus, these services are available to all students regardless of campus location or delivery modality. The staff includes trained School Certifying Officials (SCO) responsible for certifying and managing the enrollment of eligible military-connected recipients. SCO responsibilities also include notifying the VA of any changes to a student's enrollment and informing the State Approving Agency of changes to the University's academic programs. The center also provides support and advocacy to military-connected students including benefit counseling, student success advising, and the availability of space and resources located at the G.V. Sonny Montgomery Center for America's Veterans at Nusz Hall at 250 Bailey Howell Drive, MS State, MS 39762. Staff can be reached at veterans@msstate.edu or calling 662-325-6719. Additional information regarding the Center for America's Veterans can be found on our website at www.veterans.msstate.edu.

b. Military-Connected Students

MSU strives to identify, support, and provide advocacy for our military-connected students.

Definitions and benefit eligibility of a military-connected student can vary, but in broad terms, Mississippi State University defines military-connected students as 1) any individual who is currently serving or has served in the U.S. Military or 2) any individual whose parents or legal guardian is serving or has served in the U.S. Military. To help assess the eligibility of a military-connected student, the MSU admission application includes self-reported military-connected status questions. Broadly speaking, military-connected students fall within three categories including a U.S. Military service member (actively serving), a U.S. Military Veteran (has served), or U.S. Military Dependent (children or spouses of U.S. Military service members or Veterans). U.S. Military Dependents can also include those individuals who were claimed as a dependent under a court ordered guardianship. Definitions of guardianship will vary based on the benefit or resource and agency.

c. U.S. Military Proof of Service and Characterization of Discharge

U.S. military service is defined by the act of serving in the United States Armed Forces, which includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard. Active service status can include all three components of the U.S. Military including Active Duty, National Guard, and the Reserves. Proof of current service is routinely determined by a letter from the chain of command or official orders. Proof of prior service is routinely determined by a DD214, NGB 22, or other Department of Defense official documents. Characterization of discharge is routinely identified in the DD214 or NGB 22. In general terms, when it comes to characterization of service, MSU defines military-connected students based on paragraph (2b) and does not apply or request proof or characterization of service status in this definition. However, certain benefits and resources at the federal, state, and institutional level and defined in the “benefits and resources” section below, may require a proof or characterization of service.

d. Department of Defense (DOD) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The Department of Defense Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (DOD MOU) between MSU and the Department of Defense ensures that service members are attending a quality educational program. The DOD MOU is required to be reviewed and signed every five years. The current agreement was signed in the Summer of 2024. To view the agreement and its language, please go to <https://www.dodmou.com/home/institutionlist>. In accordance with the MOU, MSU adheres to the Principles of Excellence guidelines and provides a formal process in which to submit complaints or feedback. For more information regarding the formal process, visit <https://www.va.gov/education/submit-school-feedback/introduction?next=loginModal>.

III. Resources and Benefits

Military-connected students may be eligible for the following military-connected benefits and resources. Please contact the Center for America’s Veterans to request assistance in determining eligibility and how to apply. The benefits and resources below are identified as being federal, state, or institutional.

1. Federal

a. The GI Bill Educational Benefit Program.

The GI Bill is a federal benefit program administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs that provides financial assistance to veterans, active military personnel, and their dependents in pursuit of undergraduate, graduate degrees, and vocational/technical training programs. The GI Bill has several versions (chapters) including the Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30), Veteran Readiness and Employment (Chapter 31), the Post-9/11 GI Bill and TEB (Chapter 33), Dependents' Educational Assistance Program and Fry Scholarship (Chapter 35), and Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606). MSU accepts and provides support for all GI Bill chapters. The Center for America's Veterans staff are well equipped and knowledgeable to assist individuals in determining eligibility and how to apply for the respective benefits. The staff's School Certifying Officials (SCO) are trained and qualified to enroll and certify students who are found to be eligible for all GI Bill chapters listed above. For more information about the GI Bill please visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>.

b. Yellow Ribbon Program

MSU is a Department of Veteran Affairs' Yellow Ribbon Program participant. For more information about the benefits associated with the Yellow Ribbon Program please visit <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/yellow-ribbon-program/>.

c. Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA)

The FTA program provides financial assistance for voluntary off-duty civilian education programs in support of service members' professional and personal self-development goals. Tuition Assistance is a Department of Defense (DOD) Program. Because tuition assistance programs vary by service and component, service members need to first check with an education counselor for the specifics involving tuition assistance and its application process. Staff at the Center for America's Veterans can assist service members in determining eligibility and steps in applying for tuition assistance. For more information about FTA, please visit https://www.veterans.msstate.edu/sites/www.veterans.msstate.edu/files/2024-11/Tuition%20Assistance%20Funding%20Amount%20by%20Military%20Fiscal%20Year%20and%20Branch_1.pdf.

d. Veterans Choice Act and Out of State Tuition Waiver

Military-connected students covered under certain GI Bill chapters, are eligible to attend MSU at the in-state tuition rate. To determine eligibility and to request a waiver, contact the Center for America's Veterans at veterans@msstate.edu or the MSU Office of Undergraduate Admissions at admit@msstate.edu.

e. Higher Education Opportunity Act and Out-of-State Tuition Waiver

In the case of a member of the armed forces who is on active duty for a period of more than 30 days and whose domicile or permanent duty station is in Mississippi, the member's tuition rate (or the spouse or dependent child of such a member) will not be greater than the rate charged for

Mississippi residents. To determine eligibility and to request a waiver, contact the Center for America's Veterans at veterans@msstate.edu or the MSU Office of Undergraduate Admissions at admit@msstate.edu.

2. State

a. The MS National Guard (MSNG) State Education Program (SEAP)

SEAP is a general scholarship for MSNG eligible service members who are attending accredited institutions of higher learning in the State of Mississippi. Basic eligibility includes serving in the MSNG, maintaining a 2.0 GPA, legally registered to vote in MS, officer grade of 04 or below, enrolled in accredited Mississippi institutions, and in good standing with the MSNG. Limited to undergraduate students only. Application deadlines apply. To find out more information on eligibility or for assistance in applying, contact the Center for America's Veterans or go to <https://www.veterans.msstate.edu/resources/forms>.

b. Residence Status of Military Personnel Assigned to Active Duty and Stationed in Mississippi and Members of the Mississippi National Guard.

Under State of Mississippi law, title 37, chapter 103, section 13, members of the United States Armed Forces on extended active duty and stationed within the State of Mississippi and members of the Mississippi National Guard may be classified as residents for the purpose of attendance at state-supported institutions of higher learning and community and/or junior colleges of the State of Mississippi. Resident status of such military personnel who are not legal residents of Mississippi, as defined in Section 37-103-13, shall terminate upon their reassignment for duty in the continental United States outside the State of Mississippi. This policy does not apply to certain cases related to Veterinary Medicine Students. Proof of service is required and routinely determined by official military orders or a letter from the service member's chain of command. To determine eligibility and to request a waiver, contact the Center for America's Veterans at veterans@msstate.edu or the MSU Office of Undergraduate Admissions at admit@msstate.edu.

c. Residence Status of Spouse or Child of Military Personnel Assigned to Active Duty

Residence status of a dependent of military personnel assigned to active duty in the State of Mississippi shall be that of the military member and will be assessed in-state tuition. The dependent of a member of the Armed Forces who dies or is killed will be assessed in-state tuition and fees (if the dependent becomes a resident within 180 days of the date of death). If a member of the Armed Forces of the U.S. is stationed outside Mississippi and the dependent establishes residence in Mississippi, the dependent will be assessed in-state tuition and fees (without regard to length of residency). Residence status of dependents as determined by MS law title 37, chapter 103, section 19, will remain the same if the student is continuously enrolled. A student's eligibility for in-state residency does not change based on any changes in the service member. This policy does not apply to certain cases related to Veterinarian Medicine Students. Proof of service is required and routinely determined by official military orders or a letter from the service member's chain of command. To determine eligibility and to request a waiver, contact the Center for America's Veterans at veterans@msstate.edu or the MSU Office of Undergraduate

Admissions at admit@msstate.edu.

d. Combining the Non-Resident Tuition Scholarship with Military-Connected Non-Resident Tuition Waivers

MSU's Non-Resident Tuition Scholarship may not be combined with any programs that waive the non-resident charges, such as: Academic Common Market; Veteran, Service-Member, Dependent or Spouse Non-Resident Tuition Waiver; etc.

3. Institution

a. Out of State Tuition Waiver

As authorized in MS law Title 37, chapter 103, section 25 and approved by January 2015 IHL Board of Trustees meeting, MSU waives out-of-state tuition for all individuals covered by section 702 of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. Additionally, MSU provides a full waiver of out-of-state tuition for present and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces who are engaged in or were honorably discharged from service, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, current spouses, and dependent children of military personnel without regard to the active duty location, and survivors of members of the U.S. Armed Forces who died while on active duty that are not covered by the Choice Act. Proof of service and characterization is required. Late requests for waivers will not be honored beyond one semester. This policy does not apply to certain cases related to Veterinarian Medicine Students. To determine eligibility and to request a waiver, contact the Center for America's Veterans at veterans@msstate.edu or the MSU Office of Undergraduate Admissions at admit@msstate.edu.

b. Center for America's Veterans Scholarship Program

The Center for America's Veterans Scholarships are provided by alumni and friends of Mississippi State University. These scholarships are to assist student veterans, service-members, and dependents enrolled at Mississippi State University with any un-met financial needs while attending school. Merit and financial-based scholarship eligibility and criteria vary, based on available funding. Information about military-connected scholarships can be found at www.veterans.msstate.edu. To be considered for Center for America's Veterans scholarships, students must sign in to their MyState portal, click on the scholarship tab, and complete the general scholarship application along with the supplemental questions pertaining to military dependents/service members. Once the application is submitted, students will automatically be placed in the application pool for consideration based on eligibility. The scholarship priority deadline is March 1st, but scholarship applications submitted after the deadline can be considered and awarded based on available funding. For information about the Center for America's Veterans scholarships and other scholarships visit <https://www.veterans.msstate.edu/resources/scholarships>.

c. Army and Air Force ROTC Programs

The University provides leadership, growth, and military career opportunities through both the Air Force and Army ROTC programs. For Army ROTC information go to <https://www.armyrotc.msstate.edu/>. For Air Force ROTC information visit

<https://www.afrotc.msstate.edu/>.

d. Military-Connected Student Resources

Military-connected students, regardless of characterization status, are eligible to use the resources and amenities provided by the Center for America's Veterans including support and advocacy from our staff and services and facilities available at the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Center for America's Veterans at Nusz Hall.

IV. Other Military-Connected Policies

a. AOP 12.32 Refund and Course Credit for Student Members of the Military Called to Active Duty or Deployed

REVIEW

This OP will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require an earlier review.

REVIEWED BY:

/s/ Regina Hyatt
Vice President, Student Affairs

06/19/2025
Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness

06/20/2025
Date

/s/ Joan Lucas
General Counsel

07/23/2025
Date

APPROVED BY:

/s/ Mark E. Keenum
President

07/28/2025
Date