

Voluntary Education Program Content Guide

Updated April 2024

The following established style guidelines reflect the long-standing practices of developers and editors of content for Voluntary Education. They are consistent with the rules and guidance outlined in The Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Content Tips

- Pay attention to the overall organization and flow of an article. Information and ideas should be logically organized, and there should be some sense of continuity or flow from one idea to the next.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Write in gender-neutral terms, except if appropriate (for example, gender-specific services/groups).
- Use language that represents all services.
- Write in relationship-neutral terms, such as “partner” or “couple.”
- Flesh out and clarify statements and ideas.
- Ensure that subheads reflect the content of the following text.
- Focus on the positive side of content as much as possible.
- Keep the wide audience range in mind.
- “Less is more” — be concise.
- Use bulleted formatting for clarity when appropriate.
- Use direct links whenever possible. Voluntary Education articles should use primary sources or link to primary sources whenever possible.
- Refer to or represent all services for each example, photo or link.
- Keep excess wording and information to a minimum.

Things to Avoid

- Do not refer to Voluntary Education students in relationship to K-12 and College Education students.
- Do not refer only to service members with spouses and children — include single service members when possible.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Do not tell people how they feel.

- Do not tell people what they should/need to/must/ought/can't/won't do.
- Do not tell people what they always/never do.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
ACE	American Council on Education
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
JST	Joint Services Transcript
MGIB-AD	Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty
MGIB-SR	Montgomery GI Bill® Selected Reserve
OJT	on-the-job training and apprenticeship
OCONUS	outside the continental United States
TA	tuition assistance
USG	United States government
VR&E	Veteran Readiness and Employment

Preferred Terms

Acceptable
military life (instead of military lifestyle)
Defense Department Memorandum of Understanding, or DOD MOU (instead of military tuition assistance MOU or military TA MOU)
military tuition assistance (instead of service member TA)
proprietary schools (instead of for-profit schools)
third-party education assessment (instead of military installation voluntary education review)
Defense Department contingency tri-service education contracts (instead of Army or Air Force overseas education contracts)

Acceptable
Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (instead of servicemembers college)
some or many (instead of most or all)
can or may or might (instead of will or are)
often or generally (instead of always)
tend to (instead of usually)
partner, spouse (instead of husband, wife)

Definitions

Term	Definition
academic	Relating to education, educational studies, an educational institution or the educational system.
academic skills	Competencies in English, reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and computer skills that are essential to successful job performance and new learning. Also referred to as functional or basic skills.
American Council on Education	The major coordinating body for all of the nation’s higher education institutions that seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on key higher education issues and publishes the ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Learning Experiences in the Armed Services. Also known as ACE.
annual tuition assistance ceiling	The maximum dollar amount authorized for each service member for tuition assistance per fiscal year. Each service member participating in off-duty voluntary education programs will be entitled to the full amount authorized each fiscal year in accordance with Defense Department policy. Also known as annual TA ceiling.
area of responsibility	The geographical area associated with a combatant command within which a geographic combatant commander has authority to plan and conduct operations.

Term	Definition
Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System	A document sent directly from the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System center to the educational institution to articulate a soldier’s military experience and training, as well as the American Council on Education-recommended college credit for this training and experience. The Joint Services Transcript consolidates data from the legacy Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System. Also known as Army/ACE Registry Transcript System.
Army National Guard and Army Reserve	National Guard or reserve members of the selected reserve who are ordered to active duty or full-time National Guard duty for a period of 180 consecutive days or more for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing or training the reserve component units or duties prescribed in section 12310 of reference (f). All Army National Guard and Army Reserve members must be assigned against an authorized mobilization position in the unit they support. (This includes Navy full-time support, Marine Corps Active Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve personnel administrators.)
contingency areas, sites or locations	Temporary OCONUS deployment sites.
degree requirements	A document provided by the educational institution that outlines required courses and conditions to complete an educational program. The document presents the general education, major-related and elective course requirements, degree competencies (such as foreign language or computer literacy) and other requirements (including examination, thesis, dissertation, practicum, grade point average, credits by course level or academic residency) for the specified program of study. This document becomes the basis for the evaluated educational plan.
Defense Department installation	For the purposes of this instruction, any active-duty military, reserve or National Guard owned, leased or operated base, reservation, post, site, camp, building or other facility to which DOD personnel are assigned for duty.
deployable	Status of qualified personnel prepared to strategically relocate to contingency locations.
distance learning programs	Degree programs with courses delivered by non-classroom learning methods, such as paper-based independent study courses, computer- or internet-based instruction, online or satellite courses, electronic-based

Term	Definition
	instruction or some hybrid form of two or more classroom delivery methods.
downrange	Deployed areas overseas that are within a war zone.
education advisor	A professionally qualified subject matter expert or program manager in the Education Services Series 1740 or possessing equivalent qualifications at the education center. The following position titles may also be used for an education advisor: education services specialist, education services officer or ESO, voluntary education director, Navy college office director, and education and training section chief.
education center	A Defense Department installation facility, including office space, classrooms, laboratories or other features, staffed with professionally qualified personnel to conduct voluntary education programs. This may be located at an active-duty military installation, reserve and National Guard facility such as a state readiness center, armory or unit, or recruiting center, such as leased space inside a shopping mall or office building. For Navy, this is termed the Navy College Office.
educational institution	A college, university or other institution of higher education. For the purposes of this instruction, it refers to the parent/home/main campus and any sub-campuses included in the signed memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with the Defense Department.
educational institution agent	A lawful agent of the educational institution limited to persons who have written authorization to act on behalf of the educational institutions.
educational institution representative	An employee of the educational institution.
eligible adult family member	The adult family member, over the age of 18, of an active-duty, reserve or National Guard service member or Defense Department civilian with a valid DOD identification card.
enduring locations	Permanent OCONUS locations.
evaluated educational plan	An individualized official academic document provided by the educational institution that (1) articulates all degree requirements for degree completion or, in the case of a non-degree program, all educational

Term	Definition
	<p>requirements for completion of the program; (2) identifies all courses required for graduation in the individual’s intended academic discipline and level of postsecondary study and (3) includes an evaluation of all successfully completed prior coursework, evaluated credit for military training and experience, and other credit sources applied to the institutional degree requirements. At a minimum, the evaluated educational plan will identify required courses and, where appropriate, College Level Examination Program, DANES Subject Standardized Tests Program or DSST, and potential American Council on Education recommended college credits for training and experiences. For participating Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Degree Network System institutions, the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Degree Network System student agreement serves as this evaluated educational plan. For some educational institutions this may be termed a degree audit.</p>
Fry Scholarships	<p>The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship is an educational benefit provided to children and dependents of veterans who died in the line of duty or were members of the selected reserve who died from a service-connected disability on or after Sept. 11, 2001.</p>
Individual Ready Reserve	<p>A manpower pool consisting principally of individuals who have had training, have previously served in the active component or in the selected reserve, and have some period of their military service obligation or other contractual obligation remaining. Some individuals volunteer to remain in the Individual Ready Reserve beyond their military service or contractual obligation and participate in programs providing a variety of professional assignments and opportunities for earning retirement points and military benefits. Also known as IRR.</p>
in-theater	<p>The geographical area for which a commander of a geographic combatant command has been assigned responsibility.</p>
Joint Services Transcript	<p>An official education transcript tool for documenting the recommended American Council on Education college credits for a variety of professional military education courses, training courses and occupational experience of members across the services. The Joint Services Transcript consolidates data from legacy documents such as the Army/ACE Registry Transcript System, the Sailor-Marine ACE Registry Transcript System, the Community College of the Air Force transcript and the Coast Guard Institute transcript. Also known as JST.</p>

Term	Definition
lead agent	An individual service, combatant command or joint staff directorate assigned to develop, coordinate, review and maintain day-to-day procedures and operational tasks.
marketing	Promoting, distributing or advertising education degree program information in an attempt to recruit new students.
Montgomery GI Bill® (includes Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty and Montgomery GI Bill® Selected Reserve)	<p>A top-up benefit that enables active-duty service members and certain reservists to receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs those tuition costs that exceed or are not authorized in the amount of tuition assistance provided to service members by their service.</p> <p>Entitlement is charged differently depending on which GI Bill® program a service member uses.</p> <p>The Montgomery GI Bill® entitlement is charged based on the dollar amount of benefits the Department of Veterans Affairs pays to the individual. The service member will be charged one month of entitlement for each payment received that is equal to the full-time monthly rate for the Montgomery GI Bill®. Also known as MGIB-AD and MGIB-SR.</p>
needs assessment	A process used to determine the staffing requirements, course offerings, size of facilities, funding or other standards for delivery of educational programs.
non-United States government sponsored citizens	U.S. citizens not affiliated with the Defense Department. Individuals may be with other U.S. government departments or U.S. companies. Also known as non-USG sponsored citizens.
off-base courses	Traditional face-to-face, distance learning or hybrid courses provided by any school not part of the Defense Department joint services contracts.
off duty	Time when the service member is not scheduled to perform official duties.
on-the-job training and apprenticeship	Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits can be applied to members participating in on-the-job and apprenticeship training programs, where members enter a training contract and gain experience working with an employer. At the end of the apprenticeship, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides a job certificate or journeyman status and issues monthly GI Bill® payments. Also known as OJT.

Term	Definition
outside the continental United States	Hawaii, Alaska and all international locations. Also known as OCONUS.
overseas areas	Areas OCONUS, including contingency locations that are temporary overseas deployment sites and enduring or permanent overseas locations.
overseas contingency operations	Temporary functionalities set up at nonenduring overseas deployment sites.
Post-9/11 GI Bill®	A top-up benefit for service members and veterans who have served at least 90 days of active-duty service after Sept. 10, 2001, and received an honorable discharge. The Post-9/11 entitlement is charged based on the enrolled amount of time and the individual’s rate of pursuit during the period of entitlement. If a service member is attending classes part-time or at the half-time level, the charge is one half the month of Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits for each month enrolled and receiving GI Bill® benefits.
postsecondary education programs	Continuing adult or postsecondary educational programs of study available through accredited educational institutions to include coursework and programs that contribute or lead to high school completion or equivalency diploma, skills development, professional licensure and certification as well as academic coursework that leads to a duly accredited degree.
ready reserve	Composed of military members of the reserve and National Guard, organized in units, as individuals or both, and liable for involuntary order to active duty in time of war or national emergency pursuant to sections 12310 and 12301 of Reference (f) and section 712 of Reference (p) in the case of members of the Coast Guard Reserve. The ready reserve consists of the selected reserve, the Individual Ready Reserve and the Inactive National Guard.
Rogers STEM Scholarship	The Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math Scholarship is a top-up benefit that allows some eligible veterans and dependents in high-demand fields to extend their Post-9/11 GI Bill® or Fry Scholarship benefits. Veterans and Fry Scholars who have or will soon exhaust their benefits and are currently enrolled in a STEM degree program or are seeking a teaching certification are eligible to receive the scholarship.

Term	Definition
Sailor-Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript System	A document sent directly from the Sailor-Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript System operations center to the educational institution to articulate a sailor’s or Marine’s military experience and training and the ACE-recommended college credit for this training and experience. The Joint Service Transcript consolidates data from the legacy Sailor-Marine ACE Registry Transcript System.
selected reserve	Those units and individuals within the ready reserve designated by their respective service as essential to wartime missions and who must therefore maintain a higher priority over all other reserves. The selected reserve includes reserve unit members (including members in the training pipeline and drilling reservists in units), individual mobilization augmentees and Active Guard Reserve members.
semester-hour tuition assistance cap	The maximum dollar amount authorized for tuition assistance per semester-hour (or equivalent) credit. A service will pay no more than the established Defense Department cap per semester-unit (or equivalent) for tuition. Also known as semester-hour TA cap.
Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges	A consortium of over 1800 colleges and universities created in 1972 that seeks to enhance the educational opportunities to service members who may have difficulty in completing college programs due to frequent military moves.
Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance	Education assistance program for children and spouses of veterans or service members who have died, are captured or missing, or have disabilities. Assistance is provided to help pay for school or job training. Also known as DEA program or Chapter 35.
third-party education assessment	A third-party evaluation of voluntary education programs covered by the Defense Department Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding.
top-up	An option, under the Montgomery GI Bill® and the Post-9/11 GI Bill®, which enables active-duty service members and certain reservists to receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs those tuition costs that exceed or are not authorized in the amount of tuition assistance provided to service members by their service. Entitlement is charged differently depending on which GI Bill® program a service member uses. The Montgomery GI Bill® entitlement is charged based on the dollar amount of benefits the Department of Veterans Affairs pays to the

Term	Definition
	<p>individual. The service member will be charged one month of entitlement for each payment received that is equal to the full-time monthly rate for the Montgomery GI Bill®.</p> <p>The Post-9/11 entitlement is charged based on the enrolled amount of time and the individual’s rate of pursuit during the period of entitlement. If a service member is attending classes part-time or at the half-time level, the charge is one half the month of Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits for each month enrolled and receiving GI Bill® benefits.</p>
tuition assistance	<p>Funds provided by the military services or U.S. Coast Guard to pay a percentage of the charges of an educational institution for the tuition of an active-duty, reserve or National Guard member of the military services, or Coast Guard member enrolled in approved courses of study during off-duty time. Also known as TA.</p>
United States government sponsored citizens	<p>U.S. citizens hired as appropriated or nonappropriated federal Defense Department employees. Also known as USG sponsored citizens.</p>
Veteran Readiness and Employment	<p>An employment readiness and training benefit for veterans with service-connected disabilities that limit their ability to work or prevent them from working. In some cases, family members may also qualify for certain benefits. (Veteran Readiness and Employment was formerly Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.) Also known as VR&E or Chapter 31.</p>
Voluntary Education Programs	<p>Continuing, adult or postsecondary education programs of study that service members elect to participate in during their off-duty time and that are available to other members of the military community.</p>
Yellow Ribbon Program	<p>The Yellow Ribbon Program is a top-up benefit established to help pay for higher out-of-state, private school or graduate school tuition that the Post-9/11 GI Bill® doesn’t cover. Currently, only qualifying veterans at the maximum benefit rate for the Post-9/11 GI Bill® are eligible.</p> <p>Beginning Aug. 1, 2022, active-duty service members who qualify at the maximum benefit level for the Post-9/11 GI Bill® or the spouse using the transferred benefits of an active-duty service member who qualifies at the maximum benefit level for the Post-9/11 GI Bill® will be eligible to receive Yellow Ribbon Program benefits.</p>

Official Resources

Defense Department policy

- [Department of Defense Directive 1322.08E, “Voluntary Education Programs for Military Personnel,” Jan. 3, 2005, certified current as of April 23, 2007](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1322.19 CE-01, “Voluntary Education Programs in Overseas Areas,” April 23, 2020](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1322.25, “Voluntary Education Programs,” April 2, 2020](#)

Military OneSource websites

- [Service Providers & Leaders page on Voluntary Education](#)
- [Service Providers & Leaders page on Voluntary Education Websites](#)
- [Military OneSource article: 5 Steps to Prepare for Higher Education](#)
- [Military OneSource benefit: Tuition Assistance Top-Up Program](#)
- [Military OneSource resource: Postsecondary Education Complaint System](#)
- [Military OneSource MilLife Guide: Preparing for Higher Education](#)