

Yellow Ribbon Program FAQs

1. *Why is there a flat amount instead of a percentage in block 7 of the Yellow Ribbon Agreement? My school wants to contribute 50% for Yellow Ribbon Program. How do I determine how much to place in block 7 of the agreement?*

The final regulations were written taking into account comments from numerous schools that requested to be able to choose a flat dollar amount for budgeting purposes. To determine how much to place in block 7, compare your school's tuition with the maximum in-state undergraduate public tuition. Then compare your school's fees with the maximum in-state undergraduate fees. Go to:

http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Tuition_and_fees.htm to determine what your state's maximum tuition and fees are. These are 2008-2009 maximum tuition and fee rates.

To make the comparison, multiply the number of credits a student would take in a term at your school by the per credit amount from the website and compare that amount to what your actual tuition would be for the same number of credits. You could use a typical student, a student with a maximum course load, or any other criteria you choose in making the estimate. Then perform the same calculations for fees. Look at what your fees per term are for a student. You could use a typical student, or a student in the most expensive program, or any other criteria you choose to get the figure you will use for your estimate for fees. Compare the estimate against the maximum fees that can be paid for a term. If the highest maximum tuition is lower than your school's, then the difference would be considered unmet tuition charges. If the highest maximum fees per term are lower than your school's fees, the difference would be considered unmet fee charges. If there are unmet charges for either tuition or fees in a term, those unmet charges are taken into consideration for the Yellow Ribbon Program. From the estimated unmet charges per term, you would estimate the annual unmet charges by multiplying the unmet charges times the number of terms. Choose the maximum annual amount that you would want to contribute per student toward the unmet charges for the entire academic year (August 1st to July 31st) and report it in block 7.

2. *How can I determine the flat amount when I do not know how much 09-10 tuition and fees will be? Can I amend my agreement when the 09-10 rates come out?*

All Yellow Ribbon Program agreement forms must be received by June 15, 2009 in order to establish a school's participation in the program for academic year 2009-2010.

Agreements will not be accepted after this date. Additionally, agreements cannot be amended once signed and approved by VA. Some schools may have prior knowledge of anticipated state tuition increases. If not, please choose the flat amount that best fits your choice for contribution considering the 2008-2009 highest maximum tuition and fees as well as your school's planned budget.

3. *I want to be sure that my Yellow Ribbon recipients will not have out of pocket expenses. I want to be sure that my contribution and VA's match cover all unmet charges.*

Please refer to FAQ # 1 to learn about calculating the amount of unmet charges that may apply to your school. Once you have determined the unmet charges, you may enter an amount on line 7 of the agreement that will cover all unmet charges that may apply. Even if the amount you report is higher than the potential unmet charges for your school, VA will always match the amount you are willing to contribute, provided that the combined total of your contribution and VA's match does not exceed the full amount of the student's unmet charges.

Example: If you enter \$20,000 on the form, and the unmet charges for every term were \$1,000.00, your contribution would be \$500.00 and VA would match this, regardless of the fact that your agreement shows \$20,000.

4. *Where do I send the Yellow Ribbon Agreement?*

All Yellow Ribbon Agreement forms should be mailed to the following address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Education Service (22)
810 Vermont Ave. NW
(Yellow Ribbon Program)
Washington, DC 20420

The mailing address is also provided on the Yellow Ribbon Agreement cover letter.

5. *Will VA extend the deadline for receipt of the Yellow Ribbon Program Agreements? I was advised I could hold the agreement and wait for FAQs to be developed.*

Yes, VA is extending the deadline for receipt of Yellow Ribbon Agreements until June 15, 2009. VA must receive all agreement forms **no later than June 15, 2009**, in order to begin processing claims the beginning of July. Agreements received after this date will not be accepted. If your agreement is not accepted, VA will notify you by letter. Additionally, students enrolled at your school will not be eligible to receive Yellow Ribbon Program payments.

6. *My school's tuition and fees are lower than the posted in-state undergraduate maximum tuition and fees. Should I place \$0 in block 7 of the Agreement? Are we not eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

You should not place \$0 in block 7 of the Yellow Ribbon Program; this is an indication

that you are not willing to contribute any funds toward a student's unmet charges. You are eligible to be a Yellow Ribbon Program participating school if you agree to contribute funds toward a student's unmet charges, and list them in block 7 of the agreement.

You should be sure that no student's tuition or fees would be higher than the maximum public in-state undergraduate tuition and fees. Carefully consider graduate students and/or out-of-state students that may have tuition **or** fees that exceed the posted in-state undergraduate maximum tuition and fees. If you are certain you do not have students who could have tuition or fees that exceed the posted in-state undergraduate maximum tuition and fees, you do not have to participate in the program and you do not have to send in an agreement.

Please refer to FAQ # 1 for information about calculating unmet tuition and fee charges.

7. Is there a maximum amount VA will match each academic year?

No, VA does not limit the dollar amount it will match; however, the amount cannot exceed 50% of the student's unmet charges.

8. Does VA limit the number of credits reported, and does VA relate the highest maximum undergraduate tuition and fees to the VA standard of 12 credits for full time?

No, VA does not limit the number of credits reported, and tuition and fee maximum amounts are calculated on a per-credit basis. For example, if a student is enrolled for 20 credit hours at your school, you would determine the highest maximum tuition eligible for payment under the Post-9/11 GI Bill by multiplying 20 credits by the maximum per credit hour tuition charge shown on the website for your state.

9. Will the student receive Yellow Ribbon Program funds for summer also?

Yes, if the school still has Yellow Ribbon Program funds available for the per student maximum contribution for summer term. For example: A school is willing to contribute \$1000.00 per student annually. For fall term, the school contributed \$250.00, and for spring term, the school contributed \$500.00. There is a balance of \$250.00 available for summer term. The Yellow Ribbon Program Agreement is for a full academic year, which VA defines as August 1st to July 31st.

10. What if my school charges a tuition amount for a full year? How would I report this? Should I take the full tuition charge and divide by the number of quarter hours taken to be able to give you the per term charge?

The law requires that you report the portion of tuition and fees attributable to the quarter.

11. *Is there a difference in the calculations for determining the highest maximum in-state undergraduate rate for public and private schools?*

No, calculations are the same for both public and private schools.

12. *Is there a difference in the calculations for determining the highest maximum in-state undergraduate rate for graduate students?*

No, calculations are the same.

13. *Can I include a health insurance fee and program specific fees when reporting fees for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

Yes, if such fees are considered mandatory. All fees that are mandatory for a student's pursuit of a program of education may be included.

14. *Can I limit the number of hours a student receiving Yellow Ribbon Program contributions may take each semester?*

No, you cannot limit the number of hours in order to limit contributions for these students. The student would have to meet the academic rules of your institution - for example, request for special permission for credits taken in excess of 18 credit hours. You can, however, limit your annual contribution amount.

15. *Can I establish a deadline each year for students to submit applications for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

Yes. You are required to offer the Yellow Ribbon Program to your students on a "first come, first served" basis. However, you may establish policy detailing how this will be implemented, which may include an application deadline. The policy should be clearly documented and communicated to your students. Please note that students who participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program during one academic year must be offered Yellow Ribbon Program benefits throughout their education at the school as long as the following apply:

- The school continues to participate in the program,
- The student remains in good academic standing, and
- The student has remaining entitlement.

The amount you choose to contribute to a student may change when you sign a new agreement for a new academic year.

16. *I do not know my facility code.*

Your facility code is a VA facility code assigned when your programs were approved by the State Approving Agency. The VA School Certifying Official at your institution will know the facility code. You may also email yellow.ribbon@va.gov or contact your Education Liaison Representative to obtain the facility code if still needed.

17. *What if I want to allow all my students to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program? Should I write “all” or “unlimited” in block 6 of the Agreement?*

No. Please enter 99999 in block 6 of the agreement form to allow all eligible students to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

18. *How does VA interpret the terms “Direct Grant” and “Scholarship” in Question 5 of the Agreement?*

The law requires you to tell us how you will provide the contribution. VA does not have specific interpretations or definitions of these terms. However, Yellow Ribbon Program contributions cannot be loans, Federal aid funds, or funds received by third parties that are not under the unrestricted control of the IHL. The term "unrestricted funds" refers to funding that is available to the IHL without any conditions on its use (i.e., designated for use by a specific individual or a specific group of individuals).

However, funds received from a third party that are restricted for use in the Yellow Ribbon Program may be counted towards the IHL's contributions to a Yellow Ribbon Participant.

19. *Can I choose to indicate the number of students and the dollar amount for each line on block 7 of the Agreement?*

Yes, schools have the flexibility to indicate the number of students for each line of block 7, and the flexibility to specify contributions based on student status (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) and college or professional school.

In line 7a, you may designate the maximum contribution amount for any eligible student.

Line 7b allows the flexibility to specify the maximum amount for students pursuing different levels of education. For example, you may designate \$250 for undergraduates, \$500 for graduate students, and \$0 for doctoral students. You may indicate the maximum number of students at each level to the right of each line.

Line 7c allows the flexibility to specify the maximum amount for students pursuing training in different colleges/professional schools. For example, you may designate \$1000 for students in your school of engineering, and \$2000 for students in your school of nursing. You may indicate the maximum number of students at each level to the right of each line.

You may also choose a combination of both 7b and 7c; however, if you will be specifying maximum contributions using both of these lines, please complete separate agreements for each combination. For example, if you will contribute \$250 per undergraduate student in the school of engineering, and \$500 for each undergraduate student in the school of business, please report these figures on separate Yellow Ribbon Program agreement forms.

20. *Can I choose to award Yellow Ribbon for specific degree programs? Can I choose day undergraduate program students and not evening undergraduate students? Can I choose to exclude out-of-state undergraduate students? Can I exclude part-time students?*

No. The subcategory must be chosen by 7b Undergraduate, Graduate or Doctoral and/or 7c by college or professional school.

21. *Can I give contributions only to the undergraduate students from my College of Business but not the graduate students? How do I report this?*

Yes. In block 7c, you can differentiate undergraduate from graduate students. If you will be differentiating students of different levels within the same school (ex. School of business or school of engineering), please complete a separate agreement form for each combination. Please see FAQ # 19 for additional information.

22. *Do my students in the College of Law fall into the category in 7b Doctoral students?*

Yes, they can, or if you are choosing 7c, they can be listed there instead.

23. *How will the “first come, first served” policy work if we are allowing a specific number of students for 7b or 7c of the Agreement?*

You can determine “first come, first served” based on the number of students in each category. If you choose to make contributions to 200 students and allot 25 of those spaces for students from the School of Law and 150 for students from the College of Education, you would set up an internal school policy to assure that the first 25 students

applying for Yellow Ribbon from the School of Law and the first 150 applying from the College of Education are accepted into the Yellow Ribbon Program.

24. *My institution offers an MBA program in two formats with two different tuition amounts. Can we state two different amounts on the Yellow Ribbon Program Agreement?*

No, you cannot differentiate contributions by degree. You can report by college or professional school and would need to state the maximum amount for the professional school that would cover both MBA programs.

25. *How should I set up the “first come, first served” policy?*

VA is allowing the policy to be established and written by the schools. During routine Compliance Survey Visits, we will review your policy and ensure you are offering the Yellow Ribbon Program to your students in accordance with your established policy.

26. *Do I have to keep contributing the same amount for Yellow Ribbon Program for all subsequent years of a student’s education?*

No, the law indicates that if you continue to be participating Yellow Ribbon Program School, you must allow participating students to continue receiving Yellow Ribbon Program benefits. However, you may choose to contribute a different amount when you complete your new agreement for a new academic year. If you choose not to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program for subsequent years, you will not be responsible for Yellow Ribbon Program contributions for those students.

27. *Do students have to be at the 100% level of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to receive Yellow Ribbon Program benefits?*

Yes, veterans and dependents under the Transfer of Entitlement provision eligible at the 100% benefit level are eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

28. *How will VA notify students that they are eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

If a student submits an application to VA and they are eligible at the 100% benefit level, their Certificate of Eligibility (COE) will advise them that they are potentially eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program. VA will notify the student of the amount of Yellow Ribbon Program benefits we will pay.

29. *How long is the Agreement binding for? What does VA consider to be the academic year?*

The Agreement is binding for the academic year. VA considers the academic year to be August 1st to July 31st.

30. *Who is allowed to sign the agreement for my school?*

The agreement must be signed by any person who is authorized to enter into a legal, financial agreement for the school with VA.

31. *Do I notify a student he or she is has been accepted into the Yellow Ribbon Program at my school?*

Yes, you should notify the student he or she has been accepted to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

32. *How will students be certified for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

Eligible students will be notified that they are eligible on their Certificate of Eligibility (COE), which will also instruct them to bring the form to the School Certifying Official (SCO) at the school they will be attending. The SCO will certify on the 22-1999 (Enrollment Certification) that the student has been accepted to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

33. *How will the School Certifying Official (SCO) determine the schools' contribution to enter on the 22-1999 (Enrollment Certification)?*

The School Certifying Official will report tuition charges and fee charges separately on the enrollment form. The SCO will report the full tuition amount on the enrollment certification and will enter the full fee charges on the enrollment - the SCO will not change it to a per credit hour amount. The SCO will have to determine what the unmet charges are so that he or she will know how much the school can contribute. The SCO will enter the maximum amount the school is choosing to contribute on the enrollment form. VA will compute the unmet charges and compare to the maximum amount listed by the SCO. VA will match the amount listed up to 50% of the unmet charges.

For example, a student is taking 6 credit hours and the total tuition charge is \$4,200.00 and fees are \$600.00. You determine after checking the website maximum tuition and fees that the maximum per credit hour for your state is \$400.00 and the maximum fees

are \$500.00. This student is eligible for a basic tuition payment of \$2400 (\$400.00 maximum per credit X 6 credit hours) and fees of \$500.00. This results in an unmet tuition charge of \$1,800.00 (\$4,200.00 minus \$2,400.00) and an unmet fee charge of \$100.00 (\$600.00 minus \$500.00). The total unmet charges applicable to the Yellow Ribbon Program are \$1,900.00.

The school has chosen a maximum annual amount per student of \$3,000.00. The SCO submits an enrollment certification indicating that the student is eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program, and enters \$950 for the school's contribution under the Yellow Ribbon Program. VA will match the \$950.00. The balance available under the Yellow Ribbon Program for that student is \$2,050.00 (\$3,000 annual amount per student minus \$950.00 contributed by the school).

Please be aware that we always consider the per credit hour charge, even if the school charges a flat amount for 12-18 credits. You should always use the number of credits in which the student is actually enrolled and multiply it by the per credit maximum in-state undergraduate rate to determine the portion available by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the unmet charges for the Yellow Ribbon Program. Use this same method regardless of the number of credit hours the student is pursuing.

34. Can we determine how much of our maximum annual amount (from line 7) we want to contribute for each term?

Yes, the VA School Certifying Official will enter the amount the school wants to contribute for the specific term, quarter or semester on VA form 22-1999 (enrollment certification). You must make a contribution for each quarter, term or semester in which a student is enrolled, provided you have not exceeded the maximum annual contribution per student.

35. What fees cannot be included for the Yellow Ribbon Program?

Any fees that are not mandatory, such as room and board, study abroad (unless the study abroad course is a requirement for the degree program), and penalty fees (such as late registration return check fee and parking fines) cannot be included. These fees are not payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, including the Yellow Ribbon Program, and should not be certified.

36. How do I determine the maximum public in-state undergraduate tuition per credit hour if my school is based on quarter hours?

There is no difference in the computation for maximum in-state tuition per credit hour for semester or quarter hours.

37. Do students eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program have to be full-time? How do I compute the unmet charges for a student who is part-time?

No, there is not a requirement to be full-time. You would compute the unmet charges the same way for part-time students. See FAQ # 33 for assistance.

38. What if I have a student taking all online courses? What state would I use to determine his or her maximum public in-state undergraduate tuition and fees amount? What if I have a student taking both online courses and in-classroom courses?

For a student pursuing all online courses, the SCO would send in the enrollment certification for the online campus. The maximum undergraduate tuition and fees will be determined based on the location of the campus where the student is enrolled. If the student were taking both on-line and classroom courses at two different facilities, the SCOs would each send enrollment certifications. VA would determine the maximum undergraduate tuition and fee rates based on the location of each school. If the schools are located in different states, the rates for each state will be used to determine the Yellow Ribbon Program payments. The Yellow Ribbon Program contributions would be computed separately based on each state's maximum public in-state undergraduate tuition and fees. The payments will be sent to the two separate schools.

39. The Yellow Ribbon Program participating schools will be posted on the website June 1, 2009. Can we begin recruiting and publicizing prior to that date?

You can begin recruiting and publicizing students when you have received your signed Yellow Ribbon Program agreement form back from VA.

40. If a student leaves my institution and comes back after a semester, do I have to hold the Yellow Ribbon Program spot?

Once a student is approved for the Yellow Ribbon Program at your school, you must allow him/her to remain in the program as long as he/she is enrolled at your school. If your school policy dictates that after leaving for a semester, a student is no longer enrolled (i.e., he/she must re-apply for admission), you do not have to allow him/her to continue to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

41. Do I have to continue making Yellow Ribbon Program contributions if a student is not in good academic standing?

No, you do not.

42. *I am the SCO for 5 locations. Am I responsible for the Yellow Ribbon Program enrollment certifications for all my locations?*

Yes.

43. *How were the maximum undergraduate in-state tuition and fee amounts for my state determined?*

VA enlisted the support of the State Approving Agencies (SAAs), which approve educational programs for VA benefits. The SAAs researched tuition and fee rates in their respective states to determine the maximum tuition and fees, and reported these amounts to VA.

44. *If a student transfers out of my school and returns, then must I continue to provide contributions for the Yellow Ribbon Program?*

No, you would not if the student was no longer enrolled. See FAQ # 40.

45. *Who would notify the students if I choose to not participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program for subsequent academic years?*

VA will remove Yellow Ribbon affiliation on the website, but the school would have to notify the students.

46. *Is Room and Board included in unmet charges?*

No, charges for room and board are not payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, including the Yellow Ribbon provision. These charges should not be included in fees and would not be considered unmet charges.

47. *I have questions about how financial aid programs relate to the school's Yellow Ribbon contribution amount.*

Regulations require that schools not use federal funds for Yellow Ribbon, and that all contributions consist of funds within the school's control. Other questions about financial aid, Title IV funds, or any issues pertaining to whether you can decrease the amount of or withhold merit scholarships, etc. should be referred to school's Financial Aid Office. VA benefits, including benefits under the Yellow Ribbon Program, are entitlement and are not considered need-based.

48. We define full-time as 12-18 credit credits hours and have the same flat rate tuition for all. If a student reduces from 15 to 12 credits and there is no change to the tuition charge, will I have to report the change on a VA form 22-1999b?

Yes, the basic tuition payment and the Yellow Ribbon Program contribution amounts will change, as they are based on a tuition charge per credit hour.

49. My school President/finance office wants to know how payments will be made and how we can identify which student each payment is for.

The letter posted at http://www.gibill.va.gov/School_Info/yellow_ribbon/index.htm explains payment processing for the Post 9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon Program payments. This letter was also mailed to schools on April 24, 2009.

50. When will School Certifying Officials receive further training?

SCO will receive training at School Conferences and through their Education Liaison Representatives. A PowerPoint presentation will be developed to provide training on the version of VA-ONCE that includes the Post 9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon Program when available.

51. When can I begin to certify students for the Post 9/11 GI Bill?

VA anticipates beginning to process enrollment certifications in the beginning of July. Schools will be notified as to when VA will begin processing enrollment. More importantly, enrollment certifications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill received prior to this notification will not be recognized by VA's system. These enrollments will need to be resubmitted once the school is notified that VA has begun to process enrollment certifications in order for students to receive benefits.

Please note that under the Post-9/11 GI Bill you must certify a student's actual tuition and fees charges. As such, you should not certify students who are pre-registered if you do not have the exact charges for fees associated with their actual enrollment.

52. If a student transfers into my school and was given Yellow Ribbon contributions at their previous school, do I have to allow the student Yellow Ribbon Program contributions?

No, the student would have to apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program at your school.

53. *If a student's fees are lower than the maximum in-state undergraduate fee rate, can I use the amount of fees listed toward the unmet portion of tuition charges?*

No, you cannot. For example, the highest maximum in-state tuition for your state is \$300.00 per credit hour; the maximum fees per term are \$2000.00. Your private school has a cost per credit hour of \$700.00 and fees per term of \$200.00.

A student is enrolled in your school for 12 credit hours and is charged \$8,400 in tuition and \$200.00 for fees. The unmet charges for tuition are \$4800.00 (\$8,400 minus \$300.00 maximum per credit hours X 12 credit hours or \$3,600). There would be no unmet charges for fees. The fees of \$200.00 are less than the \$2,000 maximum fees per term and would, therefore, be paid in full by the student's Post-9/11 GI Bill. You cannot use the \$2000.00 in maximum fees as shown on the website to offset your unmet tuition charges. The unmet charges would be \$4800.00, and if you were contributing at least \$2400.00 annually for each student, you could contribute \$2400.00 for this term and VA would contribute \$2400.00 for this term.

54. *Does the "maximum fees per term" listed on the tuition and fee table on the website coincide with my school's quarters or semesters?*

Yes, when VA uses the expression "maximum fees per term" on the 08-09 maximum tuition and fee table, it also means maximum fees per semester or per quarter.