

Friday, March 30, 2012

DoD Completes Extension of Tuition Assistance Policy Requirement

The Department of Defense completed a 90-day extension today for implementation of a policy requiring schools to have a signed DoD Tuition Assistance Program Memorandum of Understanding in order to participate in the Tuition Assistance program.

The 90-day extension, from December 30, 2011, to March 30, 2012, allowed the Defense Department to work with stakeholders to address issues associated with the Memorandum.

The Memorandum is intended to ensure that service members have the widest variety of choices for their continued education. It codifies important educational protections for service members and government oversight in the form of an agreement between the educational institutions and the Department.

Beginning in November 2011, the American Council on Education, along with other key stakeholders, wrote letters to Secretary Leon E. Panetta requesting an extension on the Memorandum deadline in order to address concerns they had regarding key elements of the Memorandum. Additionally, in December 2011, 53 Congressional members wrote to the Secretary of Defense also requesting an extension of the Memorandum.

“I am pleased that over the past 90 days we have been able to collaborate with our partners including the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, American Council on Education, National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services and numerous Veteran Service Organizations and Military Service Organizations,” Robert L. Gordon III, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) said. “As a result, we have a stronger, clearer Memorandum.”

Some of the key guidelines that the revised Memorandum covers include the following:

- Prior to enrollment the schools will disclose all policies regarding admissions, transfer of credit, residency requirements, as well as the program costs to including tuition, fees and other charges to the service member.
- Prior to enrollment, schools will provide service members access to an institutional financial aid advisor who will provide a clear and complete explanation of available financial aid to include Title IV, and appropriate loan counseling before offering, recommending, or signing up a student for a school loan.
- Schools will have in place a policy that bans aggressive marketing and inducements and refrain from aggressively marketing to military students or use inducements to encourage military students to enroll in their school.

The Department is now coordinating the revised Memorandum within the Pentagon. Once coordination is completed, schools will have ample opportunity to review and sign the Memorandum prior to the

policy going into effect. The revised Memorandum and the policy implementation date will be announced on the DoD's Memorandum of Understanding web page, <http://www.dodmou.com>.

The Defense Department anticipates the new policy will go into effect during the summer of 2012. Until that time, academic institutions participating in the Tuition Assistance Program will continue to receive tuition assistance, regardless of whether they have signed the original Memorandum with the Department by the original due date of March 30, 2012 or not. Once the new policy goes into effect in summer of 2012, only those schools that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department (either the original Memorandum or the new, revised Memorandum) will be able to receive tuition assistance.

Institutions that have signed or are in the process of signing the original Memorandum will not have to re-sign nor make changes to the document.

"Even though more than 2,070 institutions of higher learning have already signed the Memorandum, it is the Department's intent to ensure our Service members have the widest variety of choices for their continued education," Gordon said.

#