



**DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS - VIRGINIA
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RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23237-1103**

NGVA-ZA

15 September 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (VANGSTAP)

1. References:

- a. Code of Virginia, Section 23.1 1-610, Members of the National Guard, grants
- b. Virginia Debt Collection Act, Code of Virginia, Sections 2.2-4800 – 2.2-4809
- c. Virginia Department of Accounts Commonwealth Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 20500, Topic 20505, Accounts Receivable
- d. AR 135-91 (Service Obligations, Method of Fulfillment, Participation Requirements, and Enforcement Procedures)
- e. ANGI 36-2001 (Management of Training and Operational Support within the Air National Guard)

2. Purpose. This Command Policy implements policy and procedural guidance for the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Grant (STAG).

3. Applicability. This Command Policy applies to all eligible Traditional and Title 32 and Title 10 Active Guard and Reserve SMs of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard.

4. Objectives.

- a. To attract and retain quality SMs in the Virginia National Guard.
- b. To improve the education level of SMs in the Virginia National Guard.
- c. To enhance the morale, performance, and professionalism of SMs in the Virginia National Guard.

5. Terms.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

a. Distance Learning (DL): Courses which do not convene in person at an educational facility. DL as a means of instruction, not limited to courses facilitated via Internet, video teleconference, or self-study.

b. Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA): A Federally funded tuition assistance program that is used by all military branches.

c. Satisfactory participation/performance, as defined by AR 135-91 and ANGI 36-201:

(1) Attending and satisfactorily completing all scheduled IDT periods, unless excused by the SM's unit commander.

(2) Attending and satisfactorily completing the entire period of annual training, unless excused by the SM's unit commander.

(3) Maintaining a neat military appearance and performing assigned duties in a satisfactory manner, as determined by the SM's unit commander.

d. School: A not-for-profit institution for higher education accredited by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, to include vocational/technical institutes, community colleges, universities, etc.

e. Semester: A segment of the academic calendar of a school, usually 15-18 weeks in duration (shorter in the summer). Most schools conduct three semesters – fall, spring, and summer.

f. State Tuition Assistance Advisory Council (STAAC): Chaired by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA); members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard from the G1/A1, R&R, and State Education Office.

g. STAG: A conditional grant awarded to an eligible Virginia National Guard SM to reimburse a portion of tuition cost for the awarded semester. An awarded STAG may be recouped should the SM fail to fulfill their continued service obligation and other requirements, such as satisfactory participation/performance.

h. Unit Commander: The lowest level of command with administrative authority and responsibility (e.g., Company, Flight).

6. Policy. Policy for administering the VANGSTAP is based on statutory language in the Code of Virginia, 23.1-610. VANGSTAP rules and requirements are herein

established for a fair, equitable, and lawful administration of the program within the funding and other statutory constraints.

7. Eligibility.

a. A Virginia National Guard SM is eligible to receive a STAG if they:

(1) Have completed Basic Combat Training, Basic Military Training, or ROTC Advanced Camp.

(2) Will have no less than two years remaining on their Virginia National Guard contract following completion of the semester for which the STAG was awarded.

(3) Are a satisfactory participant in the Virginia National Guard throughout the semester for which the STAG was awarded.

(4) Are not administratively flagged for any reason.

(5) Newly enlisted out of state recruits attending residential courses at a Virginia school are eligible for a STAG. Eligible recruits must be fully assessed into the Virginia National Guard at the time of application. Recruits must understand that in-state tuition rates are not guaranteed; each school applies its own policies regarding in-state tuition rates.

(6) Are enrolled at an accredited not-for-profit school with a physical location in Virginia, including SMs enrolled in a DL program/courses offered by that school. Special courses within a Virginia school's curriculum, such as study abroad or those occurring outside of Virginia, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the State Education Office.

(a) SMs currently awarded a STAG for an out-of-state DL program may continue receiving the STAG through June 30, 2026.

(b) Courses offered by public vocation or technical schools listed on the Approved School Listing. For an updated listing of approved vocation or technical schools, contact the Education Services Office.

(c) In accordance with the Constitution of Virginia, Article I., Section 16, theological degrees are ineligible for STAG award (e.g., seminary school).

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

b. Approval waivers for SMs with less than two years remaining on their service obligation must be submitted to the Education Services Office and include a memo from the SM's unit commander providing the reason for which the SM is unable to re-enlist and acknowledging a continued service obligation.

c. Are meeting the following satisfactory academic progress requirements:

(1) Remain in good standing within the school's academic standards.

(2) Maintain no less than a 2.0 cumulative grade point average for undergraduate level courses. Maintain no less than a 3.0 cumulative grade point average for graduate level courses.

(3) Obtain a passing grade in each course within the semester for which the STAG was awarded (e.g., course grade is not listed as failed, incomplete, or withdrawn).

d. Schools may be added to the approved list at any time by the VANGSTAP Program Manager (PM).

8. Benefits.

a. The VANGSTAP cap for each program year will be determined by the Adjutant General, subject to the level of funding provided by the General Assembly of Virginia and Section 23.1-610 of the Code of Virginia.

b. The STAG amount awarded to SMs will not exceed the established VANGSTAP cap per semester or the total cost of tuition.

c. STAG may be used to complete one degree at each level of study, regardless of whether the first degree was obtained using STAG. This includes an associate degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree (master's, doctorate), and licensure/certification as determined by the State Education Office. Vocational courses are not limited by number of credits or degree completion requirements (e.g., welding certification) but the STAG amount will be determined by the State Education Office.

d. SMs are encouraged to apply for all available forms of federal benefits and Veterans Affairs entitlements prior to applying for state assistance. These programs include FTA and the GI Bill. STAG can be used to pay tuition costs not covered by Federal benefits up to the lesser of either the VANGSTAP cap or the remaining tuition cost balance.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

e. STAG funding priorities are as follows:

(1) Enlisted SMs who have previously received assistance through this program, who do not have a degree, and who are currently enrolled in a program to complete their associate degree, bachelor's degree, or certification only.

(2) New enlisted VANGSTAP SMs within their initial or first term contract seeking an undergraduate degree.

(3) VANGSTAP SMs who have not completed their bachelor's degree in order to meet commissioning requirements.

(4) All SMs seeking or continuing an undergraduate degree.

(5) SMs seeking a graduate (master's, doctorate) degree.

(6) Other education programs for any SM of the Virginia National Guard as deemed appropriate by the VANGSTAP PM.

f. Written notification of VANGSTAP participation will be issued to the school upon recipient request in support of in-state tuition rates.

g. Verified STAG will be paid directly to the SM. It is incumbent upon the SM to pay any liabilities incurred for their educational expenses. The Virginia National Guard is not liable for any educational debts.

h. Courses with a final grade listed as failed, incomplete, or withdrawn will not be reimbursed. The repeat of a previously passed course will not be reimbursed. The repeat of a previously failed course is eligible for STAG reimbursement. Special courses which run longer than a semester will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the State Education Office.

9. VANGSTAP Process and Responsibilities.

a. SM Responsibilities:

(1) SMs must submit a STAG application via the VANGSTAP website prior to each semester deadline at <https://statetuition.vangweb.com>.

(2) SMs must submit an initial tuition bill/estimate.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

(3) SMs must submit final grades and a bursar statement/tuition bill for each semester via the VANGSTP website within 30 days after semester completion. Failure to submit required documents can result in delay of reimbursement or the potential for no reimbursement.

(4) SMs must meet the following satisfactory academic progress requirements:

(a) Remain in good standing within the school's academic standards.

(b) Maintain no less than a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 for undergraduate level courses. Maintain no less than a 3.0 cumulative grade point average for graduate level courses.

(5) As part of this conditional grant, all SMs must agree to a continued service obligation with the Virginia National Guard for a period of two years following the end of the last semester for which a STAG is received, including ROTC and Simultaneous Membership Program participants. This obligation cannot be waived by transfer to the United States Armed Forces or to the National Guard of another state, even if that transfer is approved by the Virginia National Guard. SMs must agree to repay the Commonwealth of Virginia, on a prorated basis, for any failure to fulfill the two-year continued service obligation to the Virginia National Guard for which a STAG was received. This applies to any separation from service in the Virginia National Guard, whether voluntary or involuntary.

b. Unit Commander Responsibilities:

(1) Ensure all SMs within their organization are aware of this program and application deadlines. Commanders will post scheduled suspense dates on their permanent bulletin board.

(2) Every lowest level of command (e.g., Company, Flight) will appoint an Education Services Advisor to assist SMs with educational programs.

(3) Commanders and retention personnel should remind SMs requesting early separations that recoupment actions will be initiated by the Commonwealth of Virginia if they fail to complete their obligatory period of service in the Virginia National Guard. The approval authority for waivers of the continued service obligation is the Attorney General of Virginia.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

(4) Will submit a letter in writing to the VANGSTAP Office indicating the SM's valid reasoning for not being able to re-enlist and acknowledging the service obligation for using a STAG.

c. VANGSTAP PM Responsibilities:

(1) Receive and process all STAG applications.

(2) Review all applications for accuracy and completeness prior to approval.

(3) Maintain a current list of approved schools and costs.

(4) Produce a recommended list of approved and disapproved STAG recipients. For approved SMs, the VANGSTAP PM will include the projected STAG amount to be paid on behalf of each SM.

(5) Serves as the primary liaison with the schools.

(6) Submits written notification of VANGSTAP participation to the school of enrollment upon SM's request in support of in-state tuition rates.

(7) Process all reimbursements to approved STAG recipients and maintain strict accountability of all funds expended. Prepare a quarterly budget report to be reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer.

(8) Maintains documentation, in accordance with state standards, on each SM who receives a STAG.

d. Recoupment Manager Responsibilities:

(1) Notify SMs and commanders in writing of debt obligation.

(2) Submit debt information to the Virginia Accounting and Finance Department for processing.

(3) Review all appeals for recoupment actions and provide recommendations through the DMA to the Office of the Attorney General.

e. STAAC Responsibilities:

(1) Manage overall VANGSTAP.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

(2) Prepare all correspondence concerning VANGSTAP and determine application deadlines.

(3) Publish approved funding guidelines and maximum STAG amounts for each year after the legislature has approved funding and after the Adjutant General has approved individual assistance amounts.

f. DMA Fiscal Office Responsibilities:

(1) Coordinate all funding actions and provides the VANGSTAP PM with annual appropriations limits.

(2) Provide oversight and audit of the VANGSTAP and funds.

(3) Collect delinquent debts in accordance with state procedures, to include, but not limited to tax set-offs, letters to debtors, court judgments, and referrals to the Office of the Attorney General.

(4) Disburse funds to eligible recipients.

g. The Adjutant General of Virginia Responsibilities:

(1) Serve as the final authority on the modification of the VANGSTAP for the Virginia National Guard.

(2) Approve changes in grant amounts as recommended by the STAAC.

(3) Publish a signed policy to address any changes pertaining to the VANGSTAP.

10. Recoupment.

a. STAGs paid to recipients are subject to the recoupment program if the SM fails to meet service obligations and requirements listed in this policy.

b. Once a recoupment action is established, an initial letter of notification will be forwarded to the SM indicating the amount due and reason for the action. Once the initial notification is received, the SM has 30 days to respond to the VANGSTAP PM in order to reconcile the debt. A second notification letter will be mailed after the initial 30 days has expired in order to reconcile any remaining debt. Failure to repay debts within 60 days, or failure to set up a repayment program, will cause the recoupment action to be forwarded to the Fiscal Office at the DMA for collection.

c. SMs may be authorized up to 36 months to satisfy the total debt amount. The repayment options are a one-time payment in full using a personal check, bank check, or money order; or monthly payments of at least \$100 based on the following rates:

- (1) Total debt amount of \$1,000 or less will be paid within 12 months.
- (2) Total debt amounts of \$1,001 to \$2,400 will be paid within 24 months.
- (3) Total debt amount in excess of \$2,400 will be paid in 36 months.

11. Appeals.

a. Appeals Process for a Denied Application.

(1) Appeal requests may be submitted up to 15 days from the date of denial. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the State Education Office.

(2) Application denials based upon statutory language are not eligible for appeal.

b. Appeals Process for Recoupments.

(1) Only the personnel in the Office of the Attorney General are permitted to grant authorization for an exception to policy (ETP), for relief from all or a portion of the recoupment amount. ETPs have been granted for situations such as a death in the family forcing the individual to withdraw from school, a serious illness or injury to the SM or immediate family member, medically documented post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, etc. Each ETP is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and approval is not guaranteed.

(2) SMs requesting an ETP must submit the following documents to: Department of Military Affairs, ATTN: VAFA-Education, P.O. Box 600, Blackstone, Virginia 23284.

(a) A formally written, typed letter or memorandum with a subject line including the SM's name and semester being recouped (e.g., Exception to Policy Request for SGT Smith – Fall 2022). SM should clearly explain the background, timeline, any attempts to correct or address the extenuating circumstances, and any record of communication with the State Education Office.

NGVA-ZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy 22-023 Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistant Program (VANGSTAP)

(b) A memorandum from the SM's unit commander addressing the SM's character, performance, confirmation of the extenuating circumstances, and the unit commander's recommendation.

(c) Pending a decision on a requested ETP, the SM is still considered liable for the debt and is ineligible for further STAGs. If the Office of the Attorney General approves debt relief for the SM, future applications for STAG will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Recoupment payment checks should be made payable to the Treasurer of Virginia and mailed to Department of Military Affairs, ATTN: VAFA-Education, P.O. Box 600, Blackstone, Virginia 23824.

12. Point of contact for this policy is Don L. Unmussig at (434) 298-6385 or donald.l.unmussig.nfg@army.mil.



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The Adjutant General