

Department of the Air Force (DAF) Civilian Tuition Assistance Program (CTAP) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

(Current as of 1 June 2023)

Q1. Who is eligible to request Tuition Assistance (TA) under the [CTAP](#)?

A1. Department of the Air Force full-time appropriated fund employees in career and career conditional positions may be eligible for Civilian Tuition Assistance (CIV TA).

Nonappropriated fund (NAF) employees assigned to Child and Youth Programs (CYP), and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) positions may be eligible for CIV TA and apply in AFVEC.

DAF PALACE Acquire (PAQ) employees are eligible for PAQ Tuition Assistance (PAQ TA).

DAF employees assigned to Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP)-coded positions and COPPER CAP (COP) employees are eligible for Acquisition Tuition Assistance (ACQ TA). However, employees assigned to APDP-coded positions seeking degrees at the doctorate level would apply under CIV TA.

- NAF Employees assigned to Lodging positions will apply for NAF TA in [myFSS](#). For additional information, contact the Force Support CFT via email afpc.nafcareers@us.af.mil.
- For additional information on [PAQ/COP programs](#), the [PAQ TA Process](#), and APDP, reach out to your Career Field Team (CFT) point of contact
- For additional information on Acquisition Civilian TA (ACQ TA), visit the Acquisition Civilian Portal: <https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/content/edoptuition>. Students who do not meet the three-year eligibility requirement may be eligible for CIV TA and should contact their respective CFT as needed
- ANG civilian employees are NOT eligible for CIV TA and should contact their ANG Force Development POC for information on ANG TA
- AFR civilian employees are NOT eligible for CIV TA and should contact their AFR Force Development POC for information on AFR TA

The following appointment types are eligible for Tuition Assistance:

- Career Executive Assignment - Conditional
- Career Executive Assignment - Career
- Competitive - Career
- Competitive - Career-Conditional
- Excepted - Career
- Excepted - Conditional
- SES- Career

The following appointment types are not eligible for Tuition Assistance:

- Excepted Appointment - NTE
- Excepted Indefinite
- Provisional Appointment - NTE
- SES-Limited Term Appointment - NTE

- SES-Non-Career-Indefinite
- Temporary Appointment - NTE
- Term Appointment - NTE
- Overseas Limited Appointment
- Retention in Status Quo
- Veterans Readjustment Appointment

Q2. How do I verify my employment status?

A2. An employee’s eligibility status can be verified by reviewing their SF50 in block 24 for a “1” or “2” and block 32 for “F.” Full-time employees work 80 hours per pay period.

A NAF employee’s eligibility status is verified by reviewing AF Form 2545. The Block 7A date must be greater than 1 year from Block 12, and the Block 11B employment category must indicate Regular Full-Time.

APF and NAF Employees in Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status for the duration of a course are not eligible to receive CIV TA.

Q3. Who do I contact if I have Civilian TA questions and how do I know to which CFT I am assigned?

A3. DAF Civilians eligible for TA contact their assigned CFT by using the Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC) “Messages” link. The career field to which you are assigned can be found on your AFVEC profile page under Career Program, in the DCPDS/myBiz Civilian Career Report - Career Program Information, and on the MyVector profile page.

NAF civilians eligible for TA should submit questions regarding TA through [myFSS](#).

Note: Base Education Offices do not maintain AFVEC accounts, approve goals, or issue funding for DAF Civilian employees.

Q4. Where can I find my FY tuition assistance fiscal year cap/balance?

A4. When you log in to AFVEC, the Dashboard shows the fiscal year funding remaining. This total includes FY TA amounts for approved and unapproved funding requests. AFVEC will not allow you to complete a funding request if you do not have sufficient funds remaining to cover the “Government Cost.” However, the system will allow you to add two courses to a term if you only have enough FY funds remaining for one course. If so, only enter the number of courses that can be funded. For instance, if the funding request says \$0 government cost and \$0 student cost, delete that course.

Q5. Can I request a waiver on the fiscal year cap?

A5. No. The annual funding cap applies to courses that begin 1 Oct – 30 Sep. If you run out of funding, you must wait and register for a term that begins on or after 1 October of the next fiscal year. TA funds that go unused by 30 September cannot be rolled over and used for courses with start dates on or after 1 October of the following fiscal year.

Q6. My status changed from Air Force Reserve to DAF Civilian Employee this fiscal year. Will I receive \$9000 in TA?

A6. No. Under the CTAP, students who are DAF Civilian employees and serve in AF Reserve status in the same FY are entitled to a maximum of \$4500 in TA. The annual funding cap applies to courses that begin 1 Oct – 30 Sep.

Q7. My status changed from active duty Air Force to DAF Civilian Employee this fiscal year. Will I receive \$9000 in TA?

A7. Maybe. Under the CTAP, students who are DAF Civilian employees and serve in active duty AF status in the same FY are entitled to an additional \$4500 in TA after entering civilian service. If there is an incomplete MIL TA goal and the employee has not graduated, the CFT will mark the military goal "Obsolete." The employee can then create a new goal for the same degree and degree level or pursue a new degree at the same level.

Q8. If I receive TA from other sources, may I request funding under the DAF CTAP?

A8. Per [DAFI 36-2670, Total Force Development](#), TA is not provided, in whole or in part, for courses for which the employee is receiving other federal or state tuition subsidies such as Veterans Administration educational benefits, or scholarships that would result in a duplication of benefits. However, TA can be used in conjunction with federal student loans and grants.

DAF Civilian tuition assistance programs may be used with VA tuition benefits if there is no duplication of payment for the same course. VA payments may be delayed due to enrollment certification processes and TA payments are made after the institution submits the invoice in the Academic Institution (AI) Portal. It is up to the employee to ensure that there is no duplication of payment, and if so, that funds are returned to the appropriate government agency. For example, if a VA payment is made to the school after the DAF has paid for the course and the overage results in a refund to the employee, the employee will need to repay the duplicated funds. VA payments are made based on the number of credit hours enrolled and TA payments are made for a specific course. The institution's VA rep may not be in contact with the TA invoicing rep so it up to the employee to notify the VA rep as well as the TA invoicing POC.

Q9. Is TA taxable income?

A9. Yes, employer-provided education assistance may be considered taxable income. For more information refer to <https://www.irs.gov>.

Q10. How much may I request in TA funding?

A10. TA is available for two (2) courses per semester, quarter, or term and there are separate dollar limits for semester hours and quarter hours. The exact amount for each is 75% per hour and the amount after the calculation cannot exceed \$250 per semester hour or \$166 per quarter hour. **CIV TA cannot be used for institutional fees or fees associated with a course. The student is responsible for all remaining costs.** The limit is \$4,500 per fiscal year. Schools that offer flat rate tuition must add an hourly rate option in the AI Portal. TA is funded at 100% for credit-by-exam testing fees at an on-base and/or fully funded testing center.

CIV TA Example 1:

3 Semester Hour (SH) course with a tuition rate of \$200 per SH

$\$200 \times .75 = \150.00 (Total under maximum TA)

3 X \$150 = \$450 (TA Allowed)

CIV TA Example 2:

3 Semester Hour (SH) course with a tuition rate of \$335 per SH

$\$335 \times .75 = \251.25 (Total over maximum TA)

3 X \$250 = \$750 (Max TA allowed)

Q11. May I request TA for certifications or training?

A11. No. TA is intended for off-duty voluntary education. TA does not pay professional certification fees, charges related to accrediting work or life experiences, or the following examination fees: Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), Graduate Records Examination (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), Standard Achievement Test (SAT) or Admissions College Test (ACT). Contact your unit Civilian Training Manager for training opportunities. Information on the various [Force Development](#) opportunities can be found on myPers.

Q12. What type of course(s) are appropriate to request TA funding?

A12. Tuition Assistance is to be used for course(s) that contribute to occupational and institutional competencies, special interest needs, and readiness by supporting the current and future needs of the Air Force. The degree selected does not have to be related to the assigned career field; therefore, civilian employees may pursue a degree major of their choice.

Q13. At what level may course(s) be submitted for TA funding?

A13. TA funding may only be submitted for courses leading to degrees at the associate, bachelor's, master's (includes Juris Doctorate), or doctorate degree level. However, TA will not be approved for courses at a level lower or equal to a degree already attained. For example, if a TA request is submitted for a course at the associate degree level and the individual already has a bachelor's degree, the TA funding request will not be approved. TA may not be used for college certificate programs.

Q14. I have a Juris Doctorate, am I authorized to apply for CIV TA to pursue my PhD?

A14. Per [DAFI 36-2670, Total Force Development](#), a Juris Doctorate is considered a master's degree. To be consistent with policy, you have the option to create a PhD goal. If your JD is not updated in AFVEC, submit the degree conferral transcript through AFVEC messaging for manual update or follow the instructions in Q26 for update in DCPDS.

Q15. Can I enroll in concurrent terms?

A15. No, TA is not funded for overlapping terms or semesters. For example, an employee cannot have a TA request for a course(s) with the class dates of 1 Jan – 31 March and another for a course with the class dates of 15 March – 15 May. Course(s) for the first term must end before starting second term course(s).

Q16. What if I register and pay for a course prior to receiving a TA funding request approval for that course?

A16. Prior approval of a TA funding request must be received by the academic institution. If the DAF Civilian proceeds to take a course without approval, the DAF Civilian is fully responsible for the tuition. Payment made by the DAF Civilian for the tuition to the academic institution will not be reimbursed after the fact. The funding application window is no earlier than 45 days and no later than 7 days before the class start date.

Q17. Why is there a DCPDS error on my account blocking goal and funding requests?

A17. AFVEC refreshes and imports data from DCPDS daily to determine your eligibility for funding.

1. You will not be able to request funding when DCPDS is down or unavailable for maintenance. In this instance, all records are affected. Ask co-workers if they receive the same error message. If so, it is a system-wide issue for all students.
2. When this error occurs for one student, they should clear their Google Chrome cookies, close the Google Chrome window, and retry logging in to <https://afvec.us.af.mil/afvec>.
3. If this does not work, select the question mark icon at the top right of the AFVEC screen, select "Add Ticket" link and scroll to the bottom of the page. Under the "Technical issues" section select "Submit Ticket."

4. This error also affects employees who are ineligible for TA because they are not full-time career/career conditional employees and DAF employees that have transitioned to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

Q18. How do I know which version of the Virtual Benefits Training to complete?

A18.

1. If you are a DAF APF or NAF civilian employee eligible for [CIV TA](#): complete the CIV TA VBT only.
2. All other employees complete training depending on the type of TA eligible for and requesting:
 - a. DAF PAQ employee pursuing a degree at the master's level and not in an Acquisition-coded position (must be eligible for **PAQ TA** and the AFVEC "**PAQ Intern Masters Goal**" goal): complete the AFVEC PAQ TA VBT only.
 - b. DAF PAQ employee pursuing a degree at the master's level and in an Acquisition-coded position (must be eligible for Acquisition TA and the AFVEC "**PAQ - MA/MS/MBA - Master's Degree related to an acquisition career field**" goal): complete the ACQ TA VBT only.
 - c. DAF PAQ employee who has outplaced and is pursuing a doctorate degree: complete the CIV TA VBT. Requests fall under the CIV TA rate of 75% with limits and an annual cap of \$4500.
 - d. DAF Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) civilian employee who does not meet the three-year Acquisition-coded position requirement: complete the CIV TA VBT only.
 - e. DAF civilian employee who meets the three-year Acquisition-coded position requirement but is pursuing a doctorate degree: complete the CIV TA VBT. NOTE: Employees assigned to APDP-coded positions seeking a doctorate degree are eligible for the CIV TA rate of 75% with an annual cap of \$4500.
 - f. DAF Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) civilian employee who does meet the three-year [Acquisition-coded position requirement](#): complete the ACQ TA VBT only.

Q19. Why can't I create a goal?

A19.

1. The AFVEC profile screen must be filled out completely.
2. The AFVEC "Supervisor" screen must be filled out completely.
3. You must complete the applicable Acquisition TA, Civilian TA, or PALACE Acquire TA Virtual Benefits Training.
4. The institution you selected is not approved for TA or they have not updated the degree in the AI Portal. Click the AFVEC "Institutions" link on the left menu to search for the school to review the "Eligible Funding Programs" (ACQ TA, CIV TA, PAQ TA). The institution is responsible for updating the Campus, Course Catalog, and Contact information in this screen. They must be willing to accept payment via Government Purchase Card (GPC).
5. You cannot create a goal if your degree level is blank. If you do not hold a degree, create an AFVEC message and request a high school degree level update. Include your graduation day, month, and year in the message.

If you do hold a degree, attach the official or unofficial degree conferral transcript. It is not necessary to update multiple degrees at the same level or submit transcripts for incomplete degrees. The information is used by the system to determine the goal degree level you may use TA for.

Q20. What is an official degree plan?

A20. All eligible DAF employees applying for ACQ TA, CIV TA, or PAQ TA must have an official degree plan uploaded to the AFVEC goal. If a CFT requires additional internal documents such as course planning sheets or other program requirements, the employee will be notified via AFVEC messaging. Official degree plans must contain the student’s name, student school ID number, degree level, degree title, the total number of credits required/completed, and the specific courses required. Unsigned degree plans, catalog degree descriptions, and course/term planning sheets are not acceptable. An exception may be made for the few institutions who do not provide an official degree plan before the first course is completed. In this case, attach the catalog degree description when creating the goal. You must create an AFVEC message and attach an official degree plan before requesting TA funding for the third course.

Q21. What if specific elective courses aren’t listed on my degree plan?

A21. Electives do not have to be specifically listed if the institution has indicated parameters (level, number group, department, any course, etc.).

Q22. What steps should I take to ensure my TA request is considered for funding?

A22. Take the following steps:

1. Contact the school and verify they accept TA and will accept payment via GPC.
2. Before requesting funding, review the “Institutions” link on the left menu to search for the school to review the “Eligible Funding Programs” (ACQ TA, CIV TA, PAQ TA). Make sure the school is not on probation. The institution is responsible for updating the Campus, Course Catalog, and Contact information tabs and the student must contact the institution if updates are required. If a contact is not listed in AFVEC, the VA representative or registrar may be able to assist.
3. Create an education Goal and at the same time attach an official degree plan or degree audit (provided by the academic institution) in AFVEC. The degree plan issued to the student must list total credits and courses required to satisfy degree requirements and the completion status of each course. **If the degree plan is not attached, the CFT will return the goal request to the employee.**
4. Once the Goal has been approved by the CFT, the “Apply for Funding” button will become active, and you can submit a course or CLEP/DSST exam funding request. The course must be listed on the official degree plan or meet the elective criteria specified on the degree plan.
5. Employees and supervisors update the Outlook Home tab’s Junk E-mail Options by adding “admin@afaems.us.af.mil” to the Safe Senders tab.
6. Select the AFVEC “Goals” link and apply for funding in a timely manner. The student application window is no earlier than 45 days and no later than 7 days before the class start date. However, it is up to the institution to add the terms, courses, and tuition rates to the system.
7. Employee should verbally communicate with the supervisor before and after creating a TA funding request and verify the supervisor received the approval email with the link that must be pasted to Chrome or Edge. Emails may appear in the supervisor’s Outlook Junk folder.

Q23. Do I have to sign a Continued Service Agreement (CSA) to receive TA?

A23. There is no CSA requirement for CIV TA. Other TA programs such as PAQ TA may require a CSA.

Q24. How will I be notified if my TA funding request is approved or disapproved?

A24. You can check the status by logging in to AFVEC and clicking “Funding Requests” on the left menu. Click the arrow to the right of the Student Cost to expand the funding request information. Additionally, students receive an auto-generated email notification that can be viewed in the AFVEC “Messages” link.

Q25. Does my TA funding request need to be approved by my supervisor each time I request funding?

A25. If the TA funding request is for coursework, an automated email will be sent to the supervisor with a unique web link that must be pasted to an internet browser to approve the request. If the TA funding request is for CLEP/DSST supervisor concurrence is not required. Funding requests created by the CFT on behalf of an employee are considered approved, and only require the employee's signature in AFVEC.

Q26. Do I need to send my approved TA funding request approval to my academic institution?

A26. It will automatically display in the AI Portal for academic institutions to retrieve. However, some academic institutions may require the student send their TA approvals. The AUTHORITY FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE – EDUCATION SERVICES PROGRAM – CIVILIAN, can be downloaded in AFVEC by clicking on “Funding Requests” and selecting the “Print PDF” link under the course(s).

Q27. What if there are changes to the TA funding request once submitted?

A27. If the class has not started, the student can delete the request and re-enter the correct information during the 7-45-day application window. Otherwise, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the appropriate CFT of changes (i.e., attendance of a different course, withdrawals, and changes in course tuition cost, etc.) as soon as they occur by using the AFVEC Messages link. Class end dates can be edited by the CFT. The class start date and tuition rate / credit cost cannot be edited.

Q28. Upon course completion, what am I responsible for as the student?

A28. The student must review the AFVEC “Funding Request” link and verify that the grade has been posted. Click the arrow to the right of the Student Cost to expand the funding request information. If the institution **does not** post the grade within 30 days following the course end date, send a letter grade report from the student account or an unofficial transcript to the appropriate CFT by using the AFVEC “Messages” link. Submitting grades for manual update before this period ends may create unnecessary workload. Print the entire letter grade report web page (no cropped images) as a PDF with background graphics. The information provided by the institution must include the student's name, course information, and term.

Q29. What if my school does not post my grade before the Funding Request suspense date?

A29. Employees are obligated to reimburse tuition if grades are not reported by the Funding Request suspense date. It is important to research a school's grade reporting policies before applying. Some schools withhold grades until the completion of projects or programs. Keep in mind that DAF policies apply. If an unacceptable grade or unreported grade is changed to an acceptable grade after the suspense date, reimbursed funds will not be returned to the employee.

Q30. What if I fail a funded CLEP/DSST exam(s) or results are unreported?

A30. If the DAF Civilian fails the approved CLEP/DSST exam or results are unreported, the DAF Civilian will not be authorized CLEP or DSST approval in the future for the same exam. Notify the CFT of any test cancellations so the funding request can be deleted. If results aren't posted within 30 days of testing, send copy of the test report to the appropriate CFT by using the AFVEC “Messages” link.

Q31. What if I fail the course(s) or withdraw?

A31. After the school has submitted the TA invoice in the AI Portal, the student will be required to reimburse the AF for the TA amount that was paid. Auto generated email reminders will be sent in the AFVEC “Messages” link found in the left menu. After the Funding Request is marked “Certified”, the employee can select the Reimbursements link and set up a repayment plan. If the request has not been marked “Certified” within 30 days of course completion, download the approved TA form by selecting “Print PDF” and forward it to the school's TA invoicing POC listed in the AFVEC Institutions link and

request that the course(s) be invoiced in the AI Portal. If you feel the reimbursement message is an error, contact your CFT as soon as possible.

If you know that a partial or full refund is pending due to a withdrawal, contact the CFT and communicate with the institution to verify the refund is submitted in the AI Portal. The reimbursement cannot be processed until the refund posts to your AFVEC account under “Funding Requests”. Click the arrow to the right of the Student Cost to expand the funding request information.

In exceptional circumstances, reimbursement may be waived based on acceptable justification (i.e., hospitalization of employee/family member, unforeseen emergency). If you feel a waiver is justifiable, contact your CFT and do not select an AFVEC “Reimbursement” repayment plan until you receive a waiver decision. The CFT will have to manually add a funding request for the second course attempt. Request approval from your supervisor and forward the supervisor’s approval email to the CFT. The email must include the quarter/semester hour tuition rate and all course information. If TA is paid to the institution twice for a course, a third attempt will not be authorized. This includes partial TA payments for withdrawals.

Q32. How do I update my goal completion and degree level?

A32. Once the degree is completed, submit a PDF copy of the transcript with the degree conferral date through AFVEC Student Messages. Diplomas are not accepted.

For AFVEC purposes, any credits completed without using TA funds for the duration of the current goal are considered transfer credits. AFVEC will calculate the remaining credits required for your degree each time a TA-funded course grade is updated. The CFT will update the transfer credit total so that it shows 0 credits remaining and mark the goal complete.

The CFT will then update the Education Level for the student.

Q33. What actions should I take if I receive a letter grade that I do not understand?

A33. Review the institution catalog for grade definitions. This information is also located on official transcripts. Below are grades that are available for use in AFVEC.

P - Passing

O - Audit course with no credit awarded (TA is not authorized)

S - Satisfactory

U - Unsatisfactory

N - Non-passing / Non-completion / Not reported

I - Incomplete

W - Withdrawal

X - An incomplete grade approved due to extenuating circumstances where incomplete assignments may or may not be submitted.

Y - An incomplete grade approved due to extenuating circumstances where incomplete assignments may or may not be submitted.

NOTE: Withdrawals and drops are different. A student receives verification from the institution that a course registration has been **dropped / canceled** without monetary penalty before the class start date. The course does not appear on the student’s transcript. Once a course begins, tuition and fee refund rates are assessed based on the institution’s **withdrawal** cutoff dates.

Q34. What actions should I take if my AFVEC education record includes incorrect information?

A34. The information that is automatically populated is pulled from the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS). To correct this information, the DAF Civilian should contact their supervisor and/or the local civilian personnel office for procedures to correct DCPDS errors. Either students or respective CFTs can update information that is not automatically populated. For degree update instructions, visit the [myFSS Civilian Self Service Education Record Update](#) page.

Q35. How will administrative changes to the CTAP affect me as a student?

A35. DAF Civilians will be required to take a more proactive approach to submitting an education goal and TA requests via the Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC). TA requests must be submitted in a timely manner and the DAF Civilian must work closely with their academic institution counselor to ensure the courses they take are identified in their approved AFVEC education goal.

Q36. How will administrative changes to the CTAP affect me as a supervisor?

A36. Supervisors will continue to be an integral part of the CTAP. Supervisor awareness provides an opportunity for leaders to become more involved in the professional development of DAF Civilians and enhances mentorship.

Q37. What if my institution's [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) is cancelled before I complete my degree?

A37. MOUs are cancelled for various reasons. If the school is no longer approved for TA, contact your CFT for an evaluation of your remaining credits. If the school has been placed on probation, a waiver may be needed.