# PART C, CHAPTER 10.2: POSTSECONDARY: COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRAINING

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| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope** | **Effective Date** |
| Part C, Chapter 10.2 | 34 CFR [§361.48(b)(6)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361#p-361.48(b)(6)) and TWC Rule [§856.45](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=856&rl=45) | All TWC-VR staff | 9/3/2024 |

## PURPOSE

In accordance with the authority (Federal and State) listed above, this policy is issued by the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Division (TWC-VR). Adherence to these rules and regulations issued under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), supports Texans with disabilities in gaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Specifically, the purpose of this policy and these procedures is to ensure adherence to the provision of education and training services purchased or arranged by TWC-VR at colleges or universities.

## DEFINITIONS

Informed Choice: The means by which a customer chooses their rehabilitation path, from options based on their needs and circumstances and the VR program's rules, as it relates to choosing education and training services and the providers of those services.

## POLICY

### General Overview

Education and Training at a College or University offers a wide range of educational and training opportunities to students seeking to further their academic and vocational goals. These institutions include public college and universities, community and technical colleges, and private universities, each offering diverse programs and pathways tailored to meet the needs of students at various stages of their educational journey. These colleges and universities also often conduct research and offer opportunities for student engagement in academic and extracurricular activities.

The majority of colleges and universities in Texas are accredited institutions that offer programs leading to various credentials, including degrees, certificates, and vocational qualifications, that are recognized and respected by employers, professional organizations, and other institutions of higher education.

### Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains (MSG)

Education and training services may result in MSGs (e.g., transcript, training progress) and a recognized credential (e.g., bachelor’s degree, vocational license). All credentials and MSGs achieved during participation in TWC-VR services must be entered in the Education History page in RHW.

### Additional Policy Considerations

* Comparable Services and Benefits: TWC-VR must not expend funds on education and training services unless the VR counselor and the customer have made maximum efforts to secure comparable services and benefits from other sources to pay for services.
* Customer Participation in the Cost of Services: A customer's eligibility for TWC-VR services does not depend on the customer's income or liquid assets; however, if the customer's net income or liquid assets exceed the Basic Living Requirements (BLR), the customer must participate in the cost of services unless an exception is granted.
* Recipients of Social Security Disability Benefits: Recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), due to the customer’s disability, are exempt from the requirement to participate in the cost of TWC-VR services regardless of income.
* Exceptions to Policy: When necessary to meet the VR needs of a customer, TWC-VR staff members may request exceptions to policies and procedures through their chain of management up to the Deputy Division Director of Field Services Delivery, or designee. However, exceptions to policies and procedures based on Federal and State laws, statutes, and rules or regulations are not allowable.

## PROCEDURES

### Assessment for Training at a College or University

Customers must meet the minimum standards for acceptance to a college or university that is provided and purchased by TWC-VR; the college or university must be identified as the provider for the service in the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or IPE amendment.

Before completing the IPE, the VR Counselor assesses the customer's potential to benefit from and successfully complete academic training. The assessment includes a review of the customer's—

* Previous academic achievements (grades, degrees, and certificates);
* Existing or new cognitive evaluations;
* Need for, or history of, remedial classes;
* Independent living skills;
* Ability to manage the related time demands;
* Need for assistive technology or accommodations in a training environment; and
* Need for non-VR supports for participation.

Private or Out-of-State Colleges or Universities: Training must be provided through public colleges and universities in Texas unless—

* A specific curriculum related to the customer's course of study is not available at a Texas public institution;
* Academic training elsewhere is determined to be more economical, after all costs are considered; or
* Academic training elsewhere provides specialized services needed by the customer to address disability-related concerns that are not available at a Texas public institution.

Evaluating Previous Training Performance: If the customer's history includes a record of marginal or poor performance in previous training, before committing to a full training program in the customer's IPE, the VR Counselor should consider obtaining additional diagnostic evaluations or other types of assessments, if comparable documentation is not available, to develop a remedial plan and determine whether the customer is likely to be successful (with supports).

Examples of poor training performance include—

* Excessive and/or repetitive class withdrawals or drops;
* Poor attendance; and
* Failing grades.

### IPE Requirements

In addition to the general requirements for developing an IPE, an IPE that includes training services must also include—

* An employment goal that is directly associated with the sponsored training;
* The specific definition of satisfactory progress, such as minimum grades requirements and attendance;
* The credit hours required for each semester or grading period;
* Statements of specific customer and VR responsibilities; and
* A statement about the requirement to apply available Federal financial aid (e.g., the Pell Grant and other funding that does not require repayment) to the cost of training before TWC-VR funds are authorized.

The IPE must be written for the entire length of the agreed-upon training at the college or university and can be amended throughout the life of the case.

When completing the IPE, the VR Counselor must not include specific rates of tuition and fees. Rather, the VR Counselor should refer to the rates as "will pay amounts per policy."

### Admission and Registration

The customer must complete all admission and registration procedures required by the college or university. Ideally, the customer learns to complete these requirements on their own, but until they are able, the VR Counselor works with the customer on self-advocacy, independence, and any other related issues that arise. The level of coaching regarding the completion of the admission and registration procedures should be individualized, based on the customer's unique needs and circumstances.

### Required Time Frames for Completion at a College or University

Customers are expected to complete TWC-VR purchased training within a reasonable time and in accordance with their college or university degree plan.

* Academic Time Frames: TWC-VR funds used for academic training should not exceed the following time frames:
  + An associate degree (generally 60 credit hours) must be completed within three years.
  + A bachelor's degree (generally 120 credit hours) must be completed within six years (including credit hours from a junior college or community college).
  + A master's degree must be completed within three years. (This does not include time to complete bachelor's degree before beginning the master's degree program.)

Time frames for doctoral degree level training vary. Documentation must show that the customer is participating at a full-time status.

* Prorated Time Frames: When a customer has spent time in a college or university before TWC-VR funds were used to purchase the training, the VR Counselor must consider the credit hours already earned that apply to the current degree plan. The required time frames for completion are then based on the institution degree plan, which must be based on full-time enrollment, unless the full-time enrollment requirement is justified in a case note and approved.

The VR Counselor documents the justification for the prorated time frame in a case note and includes the agreed-upon time frame in the customer's IPE or IPE amendment.

### Maximum Payment for College or University

TWC-VR may pay for training when the customer is enrolled in a public, private, or out-of-state institution. To determine the institution’s classification, refer to [College for all Texans—Degree Programs](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/). The VR Counselor must verify the institution is one of the following:

* Two-Year Community College;
* Four-Year College or University;
* Technical College;
* State College; or
* Health-Related Institution.

TWC-VR reviews rates for College and Universities annually, each July.

* Public Training Institutions: TWC-VR pays the entire amount for in-state tuition and required fees at public training institutions in Texas for eligible customers after the Pell Grant, needs-based financial aid, and any required customer financial participation costs are applied.

TWC-VR pays the Texas resident tuition rate.

* Private or Out-of-State Training Institutions: When a customer chooses to attend a private or out-of-state college, even though a comparable public training institution is available in Texas, the VR Counselor—
  + Documents in a detailed case note why the customer chose a private or out-of-state institution instead of a public institution; and
  + Follows payment procedures to determine the maximum amount that TWC-VR may pay to the private or out-of-state institution.

To calculate the amount that TWC-VR may pay toward the cost of the customer's tuition and required fees at a private or out-of-state college, university, and training institution, the VR Counselor uses the following procedure:

* 1. Multiplies the number of credit hours the customer is taking per semester or grading period by the maximum payment amount listed for the type of training institution;
  2. Calculates the amount of tuition and required fees and deducts the Pell Grant amount and the amount of needs-based financial aid that does not require repayment;
  3. From this amount, if the customer is over the basic living requirement (BLR), deducts BLR;
  4. If the amount in number two is less than the maximum that TWC-VR may pay in number one, issues the service authorization (SA) for the amount determined in number two; and
  5. If the amount in number two is more than the maximum that TWC-VR may pay in number one, issues the SA for the maximum amount determined in number one.
  6. If the amount in number two is zero, TWC-VR does not issue an SA.

TWC-VR staff must provide to the customer in writing the amount that TWC-VR will pay and the amount that is still owed to the institution. The *Tuition Payment Calculation Worksheet for Private or Out-of-State Training (VR3405)* may be used to calculate the amount that TWC-VR may pay toward the cost of the customer's tuition and required fees.

* Private or Out-of-State Training Institutions Rates: TWC-VR staff verify that the private or out-of-state training institution is an established college or university, technical or State college or public health institution by finding its classification on the [College for all Texans—Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website.

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the average annual college costs of tuition and fees in Texas.

* Two-Year College: TWC-VR pays—
  + The maximum rate of $136 per semester hour, which includes the amount of tuition and fees at a two-year private or out-of-state college;
  + The maximum of $4,080 per year for certificate training at a two-year college that is not on a semester hour schedule.
* Four-Year College or University: TWC-VR pays—
  + The maximum amount of $394 per semester hour, which includes the amount of tuition and fees at a four-year private or out-of-state university;
  + The maximum of $11,820 per year for certificate training at a four-year college or university that is not on a semester hour schedule.
* State College: TWC-VR pays—
  + The maximum rate of $122 per semester hour, which includes the amount of tuition and fees at a state college;
  + The maximum of $3,660 per year for certificate training at a state college that is not on a semester hour schedule.
* Technical College: TWC-VR pays—
  + The maximum rate of $240 per semester hour, which includes the amount of tuition and fees at a technical college;
  + The maximum of $7,200 per year for certificate training at a technical college that is not on a semester hour schedule.
* Health-Related Institutions: TWC-VR pays—
  + The maximum amount of $466 per semester hour, which includes the amount of tuition and fees at a private or out-of-state health-related institution;
  + The maximum amount of $13,980 per year for certificate training at a private or out-of-state health-related institution that is not on a semester hour schedule.

The maximum amount for certificate programs through a college or university (two-year college, four-year college or university, State college, technical college, and health-related institutions) is based on established tuition and fee rates for enrollment in 15 credit hours for both the fall and spring semesters.

### Dual Credit Courses

Dual credit offers secondary students at select high schools the opportunity to participate in postsecondary coursework while enrolled in high school. These students can earn up to 60 college credit hours. The list of approved high schools can be found on the [Texas Education Agency (TEA)](https://tea.texas.gov/ECHS/) website.

Comparable services and benefits must be considered before dual credit coursework is purchased by TWC-VR, including benefits that may be available through the school.

Because secondary students are concurrently in postsecondary training, it is allowable for these students to carry less than a full-time course load.

### Graduate and other Post-University Training

When a customer attends graduate and/or other post-university training, TWC-VR staff verify the institution’s classification on the [College for all Texans—Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website. Staff must verify private or out-of-state institutions by finding the school’s classification through the school’s website.

Public Texas training institutions are exempt from the maximum rate limitation. TWC-VR may pay for the entirety of tuition and required fees at public Texas institutions for eligible customers.

The maximum amounts TWC-VR pays to a private or out-of-state graduate or other post-university training institution are determined based on the type of institution the customer is attending.

### Developmental Courses at a College or University

If a customer requires developmental courses (sometimes called remedial courses) to strengthen academic skills, the VR Counselor must consider best value purchasing and other comparable benefits to provide this training, including—

* Adult basic education programs;
* Special training;
* Tutorial programs; and/or
* Developmental courses provided at no cost.

If comparable services and benefits are unavailable or impractical, VR Counselors can pay for developmental courses for a maximum of two semesters or grading periods.

### Study Abroad

If study abroad is required at an in-state public college or university and there is not an option to take virtual or on-campus classes, TWC-VR pays for the entire amount of tuition and required fees.

If study abroad is required at a private or out-of-state college or university and there is not an option to take virtual or on-campus classes, TWC-VR pays up the maximum amounts as stated in policy.

TWC-VR must approve the eligible study abroad location, which can be based on cost-effectiveness, best value, and value added to the customer’s training program.

### Distance Learning Courses

Customers taking online, correspondence, or distance-learning courses from a college, university, or proprietary institution must meet the same requirements established for classroom courses at that institution.

## APPROVALS & CONSULTATIONS

TWC-VR staff must follow the following approvals and consultations:

* *VR Supervisor approval is required when there is justification for exceptions to the limitations for tuitions and fees.*
* *VR Supervisor approval is required when there is justification for exceptions to exceed the Texas resident tuition rate.*
* *VR Supervisor approval is required when there is justification for exceptions to the requirements for study abroad.*
* *VR Supervisor approval is required when TWC-VR funds will be used for academic training that exceeds the time frames allotted for the specific degree type. The approval should be requested as soon as it is apparent that the time frames will be exceeded.*
* *VR Manager approval is required for a customer who is attending training or related support services out of state.*

**REVIEW**

The Policy Planning and Statewide Initiatives Team, or designee, is responsible for reviewing this policy and these procedures and will update the Document History log if necessary.

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| **Date** | **Type** | **Change Description** |
| 9/3/2024 | New | VRSM Policy and Procedure Rewrite |