

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

(Current as of 1 January 2022)

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 are eligible, excluding DAF PALACE Acquire (PAQ) Interns, COPPER CAP (COP) Interns, and employees assigned to Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) coded positions. However, employees assigned to APDP coded positions seeking coursework at the Doctorate level, are eligible for Civilian Tuition Assistance (CIV TA). For additional information on PAQ/COP programs and APDP, reach out to your Career Field Team (CFT) point of contact.

- For additional information on Acquisition Civilian TA, go to the Acquisition Civilian Portal: <https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/content/edoptuition>
 - Students that do not meet the three-year eligibility requirement are eligible for CIV TA and should contact their respective CFT, as needed
 - ANG employees are NOT eligible for CTAP and should contact their ANG Force Development POC for information on ANG TA

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. Employees in Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status for the duration of a course are not eligible to receive 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 Acquisition TA, Civilian TA, and PAQ 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.

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".

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. For information on Acquisition, APDP, and PAQ / COP funding caps, reach out to your CFT point of contact.

Q7. If I receive TA from other sources, may I request funding under the DAF CTAP?

A7. Per AFMAN 36-606, *Civilian Career Field Management and 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. However, TA can be used in conjunction with federal student loans and grants.

Q8. Is TA taxable income?

A8. Yes, employer-provided education assistance may be considered taxable income. For more information refer to <https://www.irs.gov>.

Q9. How much may I request in TA funding?

A9. TA is available for two (2) courses per semester/quarter and has separate dollar limits for semester hours and quarter hours. **Terms may not overlap.** The max TA per semester hour is \$250 and \$166 per quarter hour. The exact amount for each is 75% per hour as long as the 75% does not exceed \$250 per semester hour or \$166 per quarter hour. **CIV TA cannot be used for separate fees associated with a course or other institutional fees. 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 Academic Institution (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
 $200 \times .75 = \$150.00$ (Under maximum TA)
 $3 \times \$150 = \450 (TA Allowed)

CIV TA Example 2:

3 Semester Hour (SH) course with a tuition rate of \$335 per SH
 $335 \times .75 = \$251.25$ (Over maximum TA)
 $3 \times \$250 = \750 (Max TA allowed)

Q10. Why is there a DCPDS error on my account blocking goal and funding requests?

A10. 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 those ineligible for TA because they are not full-time career/career conditional employees.

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).

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

A14. 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.

Q15. Why can't I create a goal?

A15.

1. Your AFVEC profile must be completely filled out.
2. The AFVEC "Supervisor" screen must be completely filled out.
3. You must complete the Virtual Benefits training. Select the CTAP training option.
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 degree, attach the official or unofficial degree conferral transcript. It is not necessary to update multiple degrees at the same level. The information is used by the system to determine the goal degree level you may use TA for.

Q16. What is an official degree plan?

A16. All eligible DAF employees applying for Acquisition 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 AFAEMS messaging. Official degree plans must contain the student 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.

Q17. What if specific elective courses aren't listed on my degree plan?

A17. Electives don't have to be specifically listed as long as the institution has indicated parameters (level, number group, department, any course, etc.).

Q18. What steps should I take to ensure my TA request is considered for funding?

A18.

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 provide assistance.
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.

Q19. How will I be notified if my TA funding request is approved or disapproved?

A19. 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.

Q20. Does my TA funding request need to go through my supervisor each time I request funding?

A20. 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 Google Chrome to approve the request. If the TA funding request is for CLEP/DSST supervisor concurrence is not required.

Q21. Do I need to send my approved TA funding request approval to my academic institution?

A21. 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 AF Force Form 1227, 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).

Q22. What if there are any changes to the TA funding request once submitted?

A22. 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.) by using the AFVEC Messages link. Class end dates can be edited by the CFT, but class start dates cannot be edited.

Q23. Upon course completion, what am I responsible for as the student?

A23. 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. 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 name, course information, and term.

Q24. What if I fail the course(s) or withdraw?

A24. 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. 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.

Q25. What if I fail a funded CLEP/DSST exam(s) or results are unreported?

A25. 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.

Q26. How do I update my goal completion and degree level?

A26. AFVEC will calculate the remaining credits required for your degree each time a TA-funded course grade is updated. Once the degree is completed, submit a transcript with the degree conferral date through AFVEC messaging. The CFT will update the transfer credit total so that it shows 0 credits remaining and mark the goal complete. For AFVEC purposes, any credits completed without using TA funds are considered transfer credits. The CFT will then update the degree level for the student.

Q27. I have a Juris Doctorate, am I authorized to apply for CIV TA to pursue my PhD?

A27. Per AFI 36-606, *Civilian Career Field Management and 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.

Q28. What actions should I take if my AFVEC education record includes incorrect information?

A28. 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 myPers Education Record Update Self Service page (copy and paste to browser).

https://mypers.af.mil/app/answers/detail/a_id/19331/p/2/c/348

Q29. How will administrative changes to the CTAP affect me as a student?

A29. 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.

Q30. How will administrative changes to the CTAP affect me as a supervisor?

A30. 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.

Q31. Can I change my degree / school?

A31. A student may change degrees and school with CFT approval. If no classes have been completed using TA funds for the degree level, the student can delete the goal and create a new one. The student must understand that if TA has been used for the degree level, the CFT will deduct from the new goal the number of non-transferable credits that were completed using TA under the original goal. The student is responsible for funding that number of non-transferable TA credits under the new goal.

Example:

Student Smith has an approved BS goal at school A that requires 120 SH. Student Smith completed 75 SH towards the original BS degree using TA and then is approved to change to a BA goal. The BA goal has a requirement of 120 SH, but school B did not accept any transfer credits from school A. Student Smith can only receive TA for 45 credits towards the new BA goal. Funding of the remaining credits is the student's responsibility.

Q32. What if my institution's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is cancelled before I complete my degree.

A32. 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.

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

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

P - Passing

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

S - Satisfactory

U - Unsatisfactory

N - Non-passing / Non-completion

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.