

# Air Force Tuition Assistance Program

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## **Purpose:**

The Air Force Military Tuition Assistance (TA) program is an important quality of life program that provides tuition for college courses taken by active duty personnel during off-duty hours. TA is capped at \$250 per semester hour (or \$166 per quarter hour) and is restricted to a maximum of \$4500 per fiscal year. The program is one of the most frequent reasons given for enlisting and re-enlisting in the Air Force.

## **General Rules and Restrictions:**

Air Force Military Tuition Assistance is authorized for active duty Airmen pursuing an educational goal. An education plan must be on file with the base education office. Tuition Assistance is authorized for college goals below the doctorate level. TA is not authorized for courses leading to a lateral or lower-level degree than already possessed. For additional information please contact your base Education Office.

## **Notes:**

TA will be provided for a CCAF degree regardless of current education level.

Airmen apply for Tuition Assistance on-line via AFVEC during the school's registration period. Airmen may also call their base education office and discuss other options for applying when on TDY.

Airmen are expected to discuss their schedule with their supervisor to ensure that participation has his/her support.

After completing a tuition assistance form and registering for class, Airmen may still drop/change courses without penalty as long as the course has not started. If Airmen drop a course after the course has started, they may be liable for a portion or full amount of the cost of tuition, unless they qualify for waiver of tuition assistance reimbursement. In all instances, Airmen must notify the education office and the school of the changes.

If Airmen receive a grade of Incomplete from a school, they must clear the Incomplete or reimburse the government for the full amount of tuition assistance.

## **FY 2021 Military Tuition Assistance Policy Change**

### **Fiscal Year 2021 Military Tuition Assistance Policy Changes**

#### **(ACTIVE DUTY ONLY)**

#### **Questions and Answers**

#### **1. Why has the AF Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) funding budget been reduced for FY21?**

A. The AF MilTA funding **was not** reduced for FY21. The funding allocated is on par with the funding in FY20. What has been reduced is the Airmen's' fiscal year usage cap. A revised \$3,750 fiscal year cap was implemented to ensure the USAF and USSF stay within our programmed budget. For most,

this change equates to one less class per year. The MilTA policy will continue to allow members to receive up to \$250 per semester hour and \$166.66 per quarter hour, and members may request a waiver to the \$3,750 limit due to unique circumstances (see details below). These modifications ensure members continue to have the opportunity to pursue voluntary, post-secondary education degrees while ensuring the long-term sustainment of the MilTA program.

**2. Why was the cap reduced?**

A. Airmen are using MilTA at higher rates—but our MilTA budget cannot keep pace with growing demand. The cap reduction was part of two deliberate management control decisions. First, ensure the program remains fully available and fiscally sustainable while meeting increases in participation rates, the number of courses taken, and course costs. Second, suspend the MilTA program once all funds have been exhausted. Limiting the cap to \$3,750 allows the program to remain available well into the later parts of FY21 and gives more Air and Space Professionals opportunities to use the benefit. This change was necessary as the demand for FY20 MilTA was almost \$20M above the budgeted funds for FY20.

**3. Who is impacted by this change?**

A. Only Airmen who planned to use more than \$3,750 in MilTA **within a single fiscal year** will be impacted. With 330K active component Airmen, we anticipate this change affects fewer than 4% of our force (based on historical data). These affected Airmen may need more time to complete their degree requirements because the cap impact would reduce the amount of classes they planned to take. Typically, this will equate to one less class per year (5 classes a year vs 6 classes). Additionally, individuals who apply at the end of the fiscal year could be impacted as well if MilTA funds are depleted.

**4. What can I use if I run out of MilTA funds this year?**

A. As a reminder, Airmen who want to complete more courses over the \$3,750 cap can use the following as part of their overall education benefits to supplement their education expenses: [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#), the [Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support's \(DANTES\) subject standardized tests \(DSST\)](#) and [college-level examination program \(CLEP\)](#), as well as other sources such as scholarships and grants.

**4. How many Department of the Air Force personnel participated in MilTA in FY20?**

A. A total of 80,275 members took 246,065 courses for an average of three (3) courses per member.

**5. How much is the AF budget on MilTA compared to other Services?**

A. The Air Force budgets more money each year—overall and per person—than any other Service.

Item	DAF	USA	USN	USMC
<b>FY21 Programmed Budget</b>	\$163.4M	\$157.9M	\$88.5M	\$33M
<b>FY20 Authorized Active Component End Strength (per FY20 NDAA)</b>	332,800	480,000	340,500	186,200
<b>FY20 Participation Rate</b>	24.1%	16.9%	10.8%	11.1%
<b>FY20 Budget Per Capita</b>	\$543	\$353	\$212	\$240

**6. How does the USAF/USSF MilTA cap compare to other Services?**

The USAF and USSF are right in the middle. The USMC allows up to \$4500 per year (~6 classes per year)—but they have more restrictions on who is eligible to use MilTA. The Army allows up to \$4000

per year (~5 classes per year). Navy's cap is set to \$3000 (~4 classes per year) and Coast Guard service members are limited to \$2250 (~3 classes per year).

**7. How will I be notified if there are no annual funds left? Is it immediate?**

A. It is immediate and there will be a message located on the [Air Force Virtual Education Center](#). Additionally, it will be communicated to the local education and training offices for dissemination.

**8. How many credits can I take at a time?**

A. There is no change to the amount of credits that can be taken at one time. The number of credit hours a student can take depends on various factors such as course type and length as well as cost per credit hour. In order to maximize the number of courses per year that members can take within their \$3,750 annual funding cap, Air and Space Professionals are encouraged to research and compare cost per credit hour at several colleges that offer their desired degree program. The [Department of Defense TA DECIDE](#) is a dynamic information and comparison tool designed to aid members in making informed choices on schools and education programs. Contact your local education and training office and your college counselor to explore additional funding opportunities.

**9. How do I apply for MiITA with this new policy?**

A. The application process is unchanged; members apply at the [Air Force Virtual Education Center](#).

**10. When is the soonest I can apply for MiITA?**

A. Members can apply 45 days to seven (7) days prior to the course start date.

**11. Will the MiITA policy eventually revert back to allow the previous \$4,500 annual cap?**

A. We will continuously evaluate and adjust MiITA, as needed.

**12. How will I still graduate as planned; I need 18 credits?**

A. Please contact your local education and training office and college counselor to explore all additional funding opportunities. If you have unique circumstances, there is an exception to policy process for military students. See the question below regarding exceptions to policy.

**13. What happens if my school has a later start date and there is no money left because I am forced to apply near the end of the fiscal year?**

A. Students can apply 45 days to seven (7) days prior to the course start date so we encourage members to plan ahead and apply as early as possible.

**14. What reasons or situations would qualify for an Exception to Policy (ETP) waiver?**

A. Waivers to this policy will be considered for unique circumstances. For example, members whose degree program requires a lab class exceeding the \$3,750 limit by one semester hour or two quarter hours, may apply for a waiver. Unique circumstances that may qualify members for a waiver include degree program time limits, commissioning program timelines, deployment or reassignment to a location without internet access, and required sequencing of courses. However, with waivers, members cannot exceed \$4,500 per fiscal year, which is the Department of Defense military tuition assistance limit. Consult [Air Force Guidance Memorandum 2020-02 to Air Force Instruction 36-2670 Total Force Development](#) for details and contact your local education and training office and college counselor for additional guidance or assistance.

**15. How do I submit an ETP?**

A. Members should first review the most recent MiITA policies in [Air Force Guidance Memorandum 2020-02 to Air Force Instruction 36-2670 Total Force Development](#). If their situation meets the

exceptions, they can route waiver requests through their unit commander and local education and training office to AFPC/DP2SST for approval.

**16. I joined the military to take advantage of the education benefit, but it seems our benefits are being taken away.**

A. The benefit hasn't been taken away, but modifications were needed to keep this program viable and accessible to our force. Members can still receive MilTA up to \$3,750 each fiscal year and unlimited free college credit testing through DANTES' college-level examination program and subject standardized tests. In addition, the Air Force Credentialing Opportunities On-Line Program provides members up to a \$4,500 (lifetime cap) to earn civilian credentials. Additionally, the Post 9/11 GI Bill and Montgomery GI Bill provide can be utilized not only post-Service but also while on active duty to supplement MilTA funding.