

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
Updated March 2024

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Below are recommendations for advancing international education priorities:

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

- NAFSA urges VBA to reassess [its December 2019 guidance](#) on the use of veterans educational benefits for study abroad. This 2019 guidance unnecessarily restricts international education opportunities for veterans and their dependents with more restrictions than are applied to the general student population using Title IV federal financial aid. Student veterans should not have more barriers to study abroad than other students do.

UPDATES:

- *On April 20, 2021, NAFSA and Student Veterans of America [sent a letter](#) to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough on this issue. On June 24, 2021, NAFSA received a response from Thomas J. Murphy, Acting Undersecretary for Benefits.*
- *On September 14, 2022, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a package of bills related to U.S. veterans' benefits and care. One of the bills, H.R. 7939, includes a provision (Section 9) that will permit student veterans to use their education benefits for more types of study abroad programming than what is currently allowed by Veterans Affairs guidance detailed below. NAFSA partnered with Student Veterans of America (SVA) in advocating for such a legislative fix. On December 1, 2022 NAFSA joins ACE and 10 other higher education and veterans program associations in a [letter to the chairs and ranking members](#) of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees in support of swift passage of the Student Veteran Emergency Relief Act (H.R. 7939). The bill includes a provision that would allow student veterans to use their GI bill benefits for more types of study abroad programs than permitted by the Department of Veterans Affairs Guidance than is currently permitted by VBA guidance.*
- *On January 5, 2023, the President Biden signed into law the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022, including provisions formerly in the Student Veterans Emergency Relief Act (H.R. 7939). The next step is for the VBA to issue [updated guidance](#).*
- *On June 1, 2023, representatives of the VBA participated in a session at the NAFSA 2023 Annual Conference and Expo, where they provided updated information about guidance stemming from the new Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022.*

- *In January 2024, VBA included updated guidance on Section 9 of the Veterans Auto & Education Improvement Act of 2022 (PL-117-333) as part of its School Certifying Official [handbook](#). The guidance establishes an actionable pathway for additional types of education abroad programs currently unapproved by the VA to be temporarily approved for student participation while the foreign institution pursues VA approval. NAFSA continues to engage with VBA representatives to examine the guidance and its implementation.*