

NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD

STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE

Office of the Adjutant General

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This regulation supersedes and replaces NEARNGR 621-10/NEANGR 213-10 Dated 27 June 2019

NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Key Updates

This regulation has undergone a complete revision; it supersedes NEARNG Regulation 621-10 and NEANG Regulation 213-10. Much of the information within remains the same, but is in a different format. Additionally, many concepts and principles of the State Tuition Assistance program are now better developed and clarified. Prior and new users alike should pay close attention to all portions of the document. The following is a list of highlights.

- STA now covers 100% for a diploma, certificate, associate degree or baccalaureate degree program (pg. 1)
- STA now covers 50% for a graduate or professional degree program (pg. 1)
- New application deadlines have been established (pg. 4)

Table of Contents

General Information	1
Statute Authority	1
Statutory Rules and Limits	1
Nebraska National Guard Rules and Limits.....	2
Nebraska National Guard Requirements for Approval into the Program.....	4
State Tuition Assistance for Applicants with Scholarships.....	5
Reserve Officer Training Corps.....	5
GI Bill	5
Satisfactory Performance.....	6
Exhaustion of Federal Tuition Assistance.....	6
Ten Years of Eligibility	6
State Tuition Assistance as a Supplement to Federal Tuition Assistance	6
Recoupment.....	6
Annexes	
Annex A - State Tuition Assistance Management Guidelines	8
Annex B - State Tuition Assistance Program Internal Control Evaluation Checklist.....	10

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NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE

1. GENERAL: The following policy provides guidance for the administration of the Nebraska National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program.

2. STATUTE AUTHORITY: Nebraska Revised Statutes 85-505 through 85-508 provide authority for the Tuition Assistance Program.

3. STATUTORY RULES AND LIMITS: The rules and limitations placed on the Nebraska National Guard (NENG) State Tuition Assistance (STA) program via appropriate State statutes include:

a. The Adjutant General (TAG) shall retain the responsibility and authority to establish limitations and controls as deemed necessary to ensure maximum fiscal efficiency and productivity of the STA program. Expenditures for the STA program will not exceed the appropriated State funds available for a given State Fiscal Year. The TAG may appoint an individual (the Tuition Approval Authority (TAA) to manage the STA program.

b. Any qualified member of the NENG who enrolls in any state-supported university, college, or community college or any independent, not-for-profit, regionally accredited college or university in this state shall be entitled to a credit of one hundred percent of the resident tuition charges of such school. Except that any member, who attends an independent, not-for-profit, regionally accredited college or university in this state shall receive a credit in an amount no higher than the base in-state tuition rate for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

(1) STA will pay 100% of a Service member's school tuition rate or 100% of the base tuition rate for the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, whichever is lower for a diploma, certificate, associate degree, or baccalaureate degree program.

(2) STA will pay 50% of a service member's resident tuition charges of such school for a graduate or professional degree program or 50% of the base tuition rate for the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, whichever is lower.

c. Such entitlement shall be for a period of ten years from the date of the member's initial membership so long as the member maintains satisfactory performance (see paragraph 9) with the Nebraska National Guard and pursues a course of study in such institution in a manner which satisfies the normal requirements of the institution. If a member is unable to complete the course of study within the ten-year period due to deployment on federal or state active-duty status for not less than one hundred twenty days, the Adjutant General may extend the entitlement period for such member for a period equal to the period of such person's active-duty status, not to exceed a maximum of five years.

d. Priority will go to those individuals who have previously received STA while being a NENG member. (see para 4d)

e. The tuition assistance program shall not be available to:

(1) More than one thousand two hundred members during any state fiscal year.

(2) Any member who has not exhausted any available federal tuition assistance (see paragraph 10) benefits.

f. Any member of the Nebraska National Guard receiving state tuition assistance under this program may obtain only one baccalaureate degree, but service members can use STA to obtain a graduate or professional degree

g. Only credit-bearing courses, which meet program requirements, get approval for tuition assistance. Members shall not receive tuition assistance for any noncredit courses.

h. If a member of the NENG voluntarily withdraws from a course paid for with tuition assistance, the member shall be liable for all costs relating to such withdrawal, including, but not limited to, all of the costs billed by the educational institution to the NENG.

i. Any member of the NENG who receives tuition assistance shall agree in writing to serve in the NENG for three years after the completion of the courses paid for with tuition assistance. Any member who receives tuition assistance may have to reimburse the State of Nebraska if any such member leaves the NENG during such three-year period.

j. It shall be the responsibility of the individual member of the NENG to obtain a certificate from such member's commanding officer attesting as to the satisfactory guard performance of such member and to present the same to the educational institution in order to obtain tuition credit. Such certification is required at the time of enrollment for each semester or academic term for tuition requests.

(1) Such certification shall include a signed agreement by the individual to serve in the NENG for a minimum of three years in accordance with the provisions outlined in paragraph 3i.

(2) The STA Manager will provide the certification with the final list of approved Service members and courses after each schools' drop/add date for each term.

4. NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD RULES AND LIMITS:

a. All NENG rules and limits are subject to change based on funding availability and at TAG's discretion.

b. The NENG will not authorize STA payments for classes which applicants fail, drop, withdraw, or receive incomplete grades.

c. Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) is Tuition assistance available through the Army Continuing Education System (GoArmyEd) or the Air Force Virtual Education Center.

d. The NENG will approve applicants on a first come, first served basis within the following prioritized categories:

(1) Prior users who are fully qualified and are not able to use any FTA.

(2) Prior users who are fully qualified and currently using FTA.

(3) New users who are fully qualified and are not able to use any FTA.

(4) New users who are fully qualified and currently using FTA.

(5) Late applicants. All late applicants must have an approved exception to policy prior to applying. Service members should submit a memorandum requesting the exception through their chain of command to the NEARNG G1 for approval (Education Service Officer will have signature authority).

e. The NENG will not pay for any course more than one time for any applicant.

f. State Tuition Assistance may fund the NENG member through the completion of their degree or any combination of Semester Hours, Quarter Hours, and Clock Hours equaling an equivalent of 139 Semester Hours using the conversion chart found at https://sa.goarmyed.com/saprod/sh_conversion.pdf.

g. Newly enlisted members of the NENG may use STA for any term/session that begins after the date of enlistment.

h. Applicants will use the process and guidelines found at <http://ne.ng.mil/Resource/Pages/TA-Register.aspx> in order to complete their applications.

i. Service members receiving STA are required to serve in the Nebraska National Guard in an active drilling status for three years after the completion of the last course for which STA is used. This three-year commitment must be in an active drilling or Active Guard Reserve (AGR) status. Inactive Ready Reserve and Inactive National Guard time will not count as part of the three years.

(1) The Nebraska National Guard will attempt to notify all personnel who appear as though they will not fulfill their three-year commitment prior to their departure from the Nebraska National Guard.

(2) The Nebraska National Guard may attempt to recoup any payments made to service members who do not complete their three-year obligation. The recoupment will be prorated for the percentage of their three-year commitment, which they completed.

(3) Service members may refute the recoupment action in accordance with paragraph 13 of this regulation.

5. NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL INTO

THE PROGRAM: The Nebraska National Guard (NENG) will assess each Nebraska Army National Guard applicant for the following eligibility requirements upon receipt of the application and at the application deadline. The Nebraska Air National Guard will assess their applicants only after the submission deadline. Applicants who do not meet all eligibility requirements on the application deadline for the term for which they are requesting assistance will not receive state tuition assistance (STA).

a. Applicants must not already possess a baccalaureate degree, if they are requesting STA for anything less than a Master's Degree. STA will not pay for a second baccalaureate degree.

b. Applicant enrollment at an institution of higher learning IAW Nebraska Revised Statute 85-505 is required.

c. Applicants must be within their first ten years of service with the NENG or submit for an exception based on criteria in paragraph 3c of this regulation. See paragraph 3 for additional information.

d. Applicants must have satisfactory performance, based on his or her branch of service requirements as discussed in paragraph 9 of this regulation, at the STA submission deadline for the term of their requested courses.

e. Applicants will validate acceptance of all terms and conditions as part of the application submission process. This will include an agreement to serve in the Nebraska National Guard for three years after the completion of the last course for which STA is used.

f. Applicants must not have an existing debt to the State of Nebraska based on a requirement to reimburse the STA program.

g. Applicants must submit their request within the submission window, which is no earlier than 60 days prior to the class start date and no later than 5 days prior to the class start date (same as FTA).

h. Applicants from the Army component must have a valid GoArmyEd account.

i. Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) applicants from the Air component must have a valid Air Force Virtual Education Center account.

- j. Applicants must have exhausted, or must not be eligible for, FTA.

6. STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE APPLICANTS WITH SCHOLARSHIPS: Members of the NENG who are receiving scholarships are eligible for STA so long as STA and the scholarship are not providing a duplication of funds to the school.

7. RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS (ROTC):

- a. Members of the NENG that have contracted with the ROTC program are eligible for STA so long as they are not receiving a scholarship for tuition. Cadets receiving room and board scholarships are eligible for STA. All other rules of eligibility apply to Cadets as they would any other applicants.

- b. The Education and Incentives Office will coordinate with the Officer Strength Manager for the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion to update Army ROTC participation and scholarship information in the State Tuition Assistance system.

- c. Cadets receiving STA are required to serve in the Nebraska National Guard for three years after the completion of the last course for which STA is used. Failure to remain in the Nebraska National Guard for the three-year period may result in recoupment in accordance with paragraph 4i of this regulation.

8. GI Bill

- a. The GI Bill is not considered a form of FTA or scholarship and will not affect priority for STA.

- b. Members of the NENG who are eligible for, or receiving GI Bill benefits, are eligible for STA so long as STA is not providing a duplication of funds to the school.

- c. FTA is not exhausted if the Service member chooses to use either the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), chapter 1606 or 1607 instead of FTA.

- d. Service members may use MGIB 1606 or 1607 while receiving STA, but only after having exhausted FTA.

- e. Service members cannot use MGIB 1606 or 1607 and FTA for the same course. Soldiers may use FTA and MGIB 1606 or 1607 benefits during the same semester, but may not use those benefits for the same course.

9. SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE: The term “satisfactory performance” is a qualifying factor for eligibility to use the STA program; the definition is as follows.

- a. Applicants from the Army component must not have an existing flag to suspend favorable personnel actions per criteria stated in AR 600-8-2.

b. Applicants from the Air component must:

- (1) Have a current, passing physical fitness test.
- (2) Have no current or pending unfavorable administrative actions such as involuntary separation, letter of reprimand, suspended or revoked security clearance or involuntary demotion.
- (3) Have attained sufficient retirement points, or pro-rated retirement points, to have a good year on his or her Retention/Retirement (R/R) date.
- (4) Not be the subject of a Command Directed Investigation (CDI).
- (5) Have no other enlistment, reenlistment or extension disqualifying factors IAW ANGI36- 2002, Table 1.3.

10. EXHAUSTION OF FEDERAL TUITION ASSISTANCE: Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) is exhausted if a service member reaches either the fiscal cap or credit hour cap (16 semester hours) for their available benefits. Though a service member may have additional FTA funds available, FTA is exhausted if the service member is using all possible funds for the courses in which they are currently registered.

11. TEN YEARS OF ELIGIBILITY: Service members are eligible for STA for ten years from their initial enlistment into the NENG. Breaks in service in the NENG or total years in service do not affect the ten years of eligibility. Exceptions may include deployments in accordance with paragraph 3c of this regulation.

12. STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE AS A SUPPLEMENT TO FEDERAL TUITION ASSISTANCE: Service members may use STA to pay for courses or portions of courses, which are not covered by FTA, during the same term they are receiving FTA benefits.

13. RECOUPMENT: The following guidelines govern the recoupment of funds distributed via STA when appropriate:

a. NENG members may have a repayment obligation to the State of Nebraska whenever a tuition payment is made on behalf of that member and:

(1) The NENG member, dropped, withdrew or otherwise did not successfully complete funded classes.

(2) The NENG member was retaking a course for which tuition assistance paid for once before.

(3) The NENG member fails to fulfill the three-year service obligation after the completion of the courses for which they received tuition assistance.

(4) Service members who withdraw from courses due to military service or medical reasons must first attempt to work with their school in order to waive payments for the term. Students will inform the

STA manager of the outcome of their request from the school. If schools will not waive the tuition costs, the service member must submit a request to the STA manager to waive recoupment.

(a) When requesting a waiver for recoupment for military service related or medical reasons, service members will provide evidence of their school's response to their requests to waive tuition fees.

(b) Waiver requests will also include documentation verifying the inability to continue school.

b. The STA Manager will not approve requests for tuition assistance for any NENG member with an open recoupment obligation (i.e., existing debt).

c. When a recoupment action is appropriate, the State Tuition Assistance Office will send the NENG member a formal notification of recoupment, via certified mail - return receipt requested, explaining the reason, amount and methods for repayment. This notification will inform the member of their ineligibility to use the program until repayment is complete. The STA Manager will also provide a copy of this notification to the service member's commander in order to facilitate future eligibility certification.

d. The NENG member may refute the validity of the recoupment action.

(1) The NENG Member must submit a written response explaining the circumstances, and detailing the reasons they are disputing the recoupment within 30 calendar days of receipt of the initial notification of recoupment informing them of their indebtedness.

(2) The TAG, or TAA, if appointed, will make the final determination of the validity of the request and determine the NENG member's level of indebtedness within 10 working days.

e. If the member fails to contact the State Tuition Assistance Office within a 30 calendar day period from receipt of the notification, the member will be deemed as having waived their right to refute the recoupment action and applicable collections actions will be initiated.

f. The State Tuition Assistance Office must receive payment in full within 90 calendar days of when the NENG member received the notification of recoupment, unless the NENG member successfully refutes the recoupment action. Failure to receive the requested recoupment amount within 90 days may result in the Nebraska National Guard, in consultation with the Nebraska Attorney General's Office, determination of the appropriate action(s) to recover on the delinquent funds, and take all other actions IAW State law.

g. An employee of the Nebraska National Guard State Support Services Office shall receive repayment of an obligation by a NENG member. That employee shall duly record the funds received and annotate the payment and status on the recoupment list. When the member no longer has a recoupment obligation and is eligible for the program all systems of record will reflect accordingly unless other prohibiting factors exist.

ANNEX A

STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE REQUEST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

(This portion may change based on computer system capabilities)

1. STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (STAMP): The STAMP is the primary computer program used to manage and track state tuition assistance. However, the application process will remain on the Nebraska.gov system.

2. ACTIONS UPON APPLICATION:

a. After applicants submit their application, the Nebraska.gov computer system will automatically send a verification email. At this same time, the STA Manager receives an email to input the student's information into the STAMP.

b. Applicants must submit their request within the submission window, which is no earlier than 60 days prior to the class start date and no later than 5 days prior to the class start date. Late applicants must send a request for an exception to policy (ETP) through their chain of command to the NEARNG G1 for approval (Education Service Officer will have signature authority).

3. ACTIONS AFTER RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS:

a. The STA Manager will receive the application information from the Nebraska.gov site and then upload that information into the STAMP.

b. The STAMP will conduct an automated review of Army component applicants' eligibility by accessing Army systems, which record the qualification data. The NEANG is not able to complete this same review.

c. The STA Manager then reviews the requests to validate the eligibility criteria is correct (e.g., ensures there are no erroneous flags). After review, the STA Manager categorizes the request as pending approval.

d. The STA Manager will email Army component applicants who do not meet the eligibility requirements between the time of application and prior to the request submission deadline to advise them that they will remain ineligible for STA unless they come into good standing. The STA Manager will direct Army component applicants who do not meet the eligibility requirements to contact their chain of command and ensure they fix whatever issue is causing their ineligibility prior to the submission deadline. Note: The Air component does not take part in the process to notify personnel of satisfactory performance prior to the submission deadline.

e. If an OML is necessary, the first workday following the application deadline the STA Manager coordinates with the Army Education and Incentives Office (EIO) and the Air Personnel Officer to

complete a review of the submission requests of those applicants who met the deadline. The review ensures all relevant data (e.g., ROTC scholarship data) is present and taken into account to finalize the order of merit list (OML) and determine who is eligible to receive STA. If any information is absent, the STA Manager will contact the individual(s) responsible for adding the information. The STA Manager categorizes the solidified OML requests as Final Approved or Denied and send final notifications to applicants. The STA Manager will send a list of approved students and their corresponding courses to their school's billing personnel.

f. Students are given until the closing of the drop/add period of their school to validate their courses. Students who fail to meet the validation deadline receive five additional days to comply. Failure to comply with the requirement after the additional five days results in the loss of STA. The STA Manager will then attempt to provide funding for the next applicant on the OML.

g. After the drop/add period of each school, the STA Manager provides the schools with updated lists of students and their corresponding courses for which STA will provide payment. When the STA Manager sends the list of approved students to the educational institution he/she will also include a letter validating that all the service members who are receiving STA and attending the educational institution are in good standing with the Nebraska National Guard and have agreed to serve three years. The Assistant Adjutant Generals for the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, or their designees, will sign the letters. These letters will serve as the Commander's Certificates of Satisfactory Performance as required per Nebraska Revised Statute 85-506.

(1) During this process, the STA Manager will maintain good communication with schools and provide them with changes to the list of approved personnel.

(2) The STA Manager will work with schools at the end of the term to ensure the NENG all organizations are tracking the appropriate approvals.

h. At the end of the term, schools will send a bill to the Nebraska National Guard (NENG), which shows the total dollar amount of the tuition credits granted for the academic term. The STA Manager will then coordinate payment of all bills. The STA Manager will manage the recoupment process should an occasion exist where recoupment is necessary.

4. INTERNAL CONTROLS: The STA Manager will oversee and implement internal controls in accordance with Annex B of this regulation throughout this process.

ANNEX B

State Tuition Assistance Program Internal Control Evaluation Checklist

1. Function: The function covered by this checklist is for the administration of the Nebraska National Guard State Tuition Assistance (STA) Program.

2. Purpose: The purpose of this checklist is to assist The Adjutant General, G1, and A1 in evaluating the key internal controls listed below. It does not cover all controls.

3. Instructions: Answers include the actual testing of key internal controls (for example, document analysis, direct observation, random sampling, and simulation). Answers that indicate deficiencies require an explanation and corrective action identified in supporting documentation.

4. Test questions:

a. Does the GoArmyEd Advisor assess each Army component applicant for eligibility for federal tuition assistance prior to the STA Manager pre-approving or approving applications?

b. Does the STA Manager work with the Army and Air component personnel offices to validate eligibility status and satisfactory performance before approving funds?

c. Does the STA Manager validate course completion status and grades prior to submitting payments to schools?

d. Are applicants with existing debts denied the use of STA until their debts are resolved?

e. Are applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria at the submission deadline(s) denied STA?

f. Do applicants receive the applicable reminders/notifications (e.g., course validation) through the automated or manual systems?

g. Does each student receiving STA have a signed Statement of Understanding and Commanders Validation memo?

h. Does each student receiving STA have their requests submitted on time (or have a waiver on file) and validation of courses complete by the due date(s)?

i. Does the Recruiting and Retention Battalion Officer Strength Manager input Reserve Officer Training Corps information into the computer system in a timely manner?

j. Does the STA Manager conduct a quarterly (by term) audit of student grades by comparing at least 10% of school- provided grade reports to student-provided grade reports? Are discrepancies investigated and appropriate action taken?