



COLLEGE FOR SOLDIERS

GUIDE TO RAPID GRADUATION

A FIELD MANUAL FOR GRADUATING FROM
COLLEGE QUICKLY WHILE DEPLOYED
AT THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.





CFS GUIDE TO RAPID COLLEGE GRADUATION

Introduction

Process

Gather

Submit

Evaluation

Select

Accumulate (Steps 1-6)

Graduate

Addendums

Recommended Colleges For Deployed Troops

What is Open Courseware (OCW)?

What is a Credit Bank?

Placement Testing

Prior Learning Assessment

What are Proctors & How To Use Them

Regional Accreditation

IT Certification

INTRODUCTION

Getting a college education shouldn't be as problematic as it has become, especially for soldiers serving their country. This guide will take you step-by-step through the process of gaining enough college credit to earn a regionally accredited college degree - a degree that will be accepted everywhere in the United States and abroad.

We can't really say how long the process will take. Some of you may have a lot of college work already completed, while others may be just getting started. Either way, this guide will shorten your time to graduation significantly - in some cases this guide will shorten that time by years. This method is not cheating or bypassing your education, it is just a simplified way of graduating by using new internet technologies, open courseware, cutting-edge college programs and assistance from College For Soldiers. This guide will work well for soldiers State-side as well as retired veterans or non-military civilians. This is a good program for anyone seeking a college education regardless of your military or veteran status.

Some technology will be involved even though this method was designed to "get a college degree without electricity." We couldn't get technology completely out of the equation, but your text books are on paper and can be read without the use of electricity, pencils will work without electricity, so this is still your best option if you are stationed at a location with spotty electrical or web services.

PROCESS

The CFS process is proven, accessible and can be used by the military or civilians alike. Take it step-by-step and your graduation will come quickly. Depending on how much previous work you have completed, it could be months or just a year or so. Either way it is less expensive and faster than sitting in a class and you can get started before your GI benefits kick in. The timing would be perfect to start graduate school!

GATHER

You may already have substantial college credit earned. If you have ever taken any college courses, gather those transcripts. The same goes for any CLEP tests or DANTES test you have taken. Some colleges will grant college credit for IT certifications, FAA certifications, health care certifications, etc. Compile every credit, certificate and test result you can find. Think on it a week, talk to your friends, co-workers and family to see if you have missed anything, they may pop-up with some ideas. "Yeah, remember you took that biohazard course at the local community college," your Mom might remember. Don't overlook anything, especially if you are in the military. You are always learning, always training. There is a lot of knowledge stuffed in your head. Gather proof of it and move forward.

SUBMIT

Each of our recommended colleges for soldiers are different. Each have different credit acceptance policies, a wide variety of degree programs. You may want a liberal arts degree or you may want a technical degree in engineering or healthcare. It is important to find where you stand with each school. You may be 5 credits away from graduation at one school and 40 from another. You may want to double major. Go through the admissions process at each school, transfer your college credit to these schools, along with your test results and certifications. If you have any questions about how to handle certain things or have any questions, contact the specific school. They all have great customer service.

EVALUATION

Once you get your pile of paperwork submitted to each school, they will evaluate your credits, test results and certifications. The college will take all of your data and your preferred degree program and see how much of your education fits into the degree program. We have found all three schools to be fair in their evaluations. The evaluation might take a week or two before you get anything back.

SELECT

When you do get your evaluation report back, it will list the classes, tests and certificates they have accepted, what college credit they qualify for and how many credits you are away from a college degree. Here is where the elbow grease will come in. You may find yourself 45 credit hours away from a BS in Nursing from Excelsior College, but only 9 away from a BA in Health Studies from Charter Oak State College. Only you can decide what path to take. You may want a quick degree from one college and then work on a second from another. Or you may want to get the degree with the least work remaining and then plow through to a Masters program.

Maybe costs will be a factor and all you need to peruse your career is a accredited bachelors degree? Figure out what your goals are and move foreword with your education plan.

ACCUMULATE

Once you have selected the school you want to go to, call up the admissions director and pay your tuition and get started. Now you are ready to start accumulating college credit. The OCW (Open Courseware) section of CollegeForSoldiers.com has some valuable links to help you through preparing for these tests.

Here is where start to go fast.

STEP 1 - CLEP Tests

Once you have your credit evaluation, exam the credits you need to take. Are they all humanities or mathematics? Maybe a combination of the two? Maybe you need some history? Talk with your college counselor and ask them for help in determining which CLEP tests you need to take to start filling in the holes. Some distance learning students have been known to take all 34 of the CLEP tests within a few weeks and racked up serious amounts of college credit. The point of this guide is to show you ways to obtain a real, regionally accredited college degree and this is one of the best methods to reduce the length of the time it takes. CLEP tests are your friend. Take as many as you need. If you need a study guide, use the request form on the front page of CollegeForSoldiers.com - remember this is for deployed US troops only.

STEP 2 - DANTES

If CLEP hasn't filled in all the credit you need to graduate, the next step is to take DANTES tests. These are widely available to military personnel all over the world. There are a total of 37 tests that cover upper and lower level college credit. Chances are there is something available that can help push you forward to your graduation.

STEP 3 - OTHER PLACEMENT TESTS

Some, but not all of the colleges we recommend also accept AP and GRE scores for college credit. Check with your individual schools for these options.

STEP 4 - SPECIFIC PLACEMENT TESTS

You have gone through all of the above tests. You have college credit piled higher than you ever believed you could accomplish in such a short time, but you still need one film studies class to move onto a Masters program. Here is where the ECE (Excelsior College Exams) and the TECEP (Thomas Edison College Examination Program) exams come in handy. These placement exams are focused on one single college course. TECEP offers a placement test in Introduction to the History of Film (FIL-160-TE) and Excelsior College offers the business Human Resource Management (BUSX-410) for a couple of examples.

STEP 5 - PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

This is the process where you document college level self-education and receive college credit for it where no exam exists to evaluate such skills. You, for example, may have taught yourself how to use Adobe Illustrator CS4 and have become rather good at using the application. You may be able to get some advertising or commercial art credits along with software training credits.

Each college has a set of guidelines concerning how to identify self-learned college level credit and you must take that college's class in how to build a PLA portfolio. Within this class (and you get college credit for it too) you will learn what is allowed for college credit and what isn't, how to prove your skill in said area and how to prepare the documentation (portfolio).

STEP 6 - DISTANCE LEARNING CLASSES

If the CLEP, DANTES, AP, GRE, TECEP, ECE and PLA don't get you across the finish line, the last step is to take these classes online. All of our recommended colleges have vast resources to help you find and take the classes you need for your degree at a distance. Once enrolled and you have completed steps 1-5, your college counselor will be able to help you with this. We also recommend a book by John Bear, PhD. Bears' Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning is a terrific help when trying to track down these distance learning classes. Degree.net is another great online guide to finding online courses for distance learners.

GRADUATE

Put on your gown, put your cap on your head and when the time is right move your tassel from right to left... and leave it there!

Congratulations on graduating from college. We hope this guide helped in some small way.

ADDENDUMS

RECOMMENDED COLLEGES FOR DEPLOYED TROOPS

When we set out to find the best colleges for troops, in terms of flexibility, course credit options and most importantly, regionally accredited, there are three great choices and all are affordable. Each college listed below gives credit via portfolio assessment, CLEP, DANTES and other college placement tests, no residency requirements and are great for distance/online college education.

We can fully recommend either of these colleges for use by the troops. They each are different and have slightly different requirements but all offer real BA/BS degrees and some offer Masters level degrees.

THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE

Established in 1972, Thomas Edison State College is one of New Jersey's 12 senior public institutions of higher education and one of the oldest schools in the country designed specifically for adults. The College provides flexible, high-quality, collegiate learning opportunities for self-directed adults and offers degree and certificate programs in more than 100 areas of study.

They have degree programs for Associate, Bachelor and Master level degrees.

Thomas Edison has been accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

TESC also has great support on military bases, check [THIS LINK](#) for details.

Thomas Edison State College
101 W. State St.
Trenton, NJ 08608-1176

1 (888) 442-8372
E-mail: info@tesc.edu
WEB: <http://tesc.edu>

EXCELSIOR COLLEGE OF NEWYORK

Excelsior College of New York helps busy working adults earn the degrees they need with flexible distance education programs.

The College, formerly Regents College, was founded in 1971 on the fundamental philosophy that what you know is more important than where or how you learned it. They recognize that adult learners can attain college-level knowledge in many ways. The name, which means "Ever Upward," depicts how, with over 130,000 graduates, they propel students just like you toward their goals.

Excelsior offers programs from the Associate level all the way to Master's degrees - with majors in Nursing, Arts and Humanities, Business, and Technology.

They also have extensive military programs and award over 50,000 college credits every year to military personnel.

Excelsior College is regionally accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Excelsior College
7 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-5159

EMAIL: admissions@excelsior.edu
WEB: <http://excelsior.edu>

Toll Free: 888-647-2388
International Students: 518-464-8500

CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE

Charter Oak State College was established in 1973 by the Connecticut Legislature to provide an alternative way for adults to earn associate and bachelor's (baccalaureate) degrees. The College is accredited by the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The college offers Associate's and Bachelor's degrees in around 50 concentrations / areas of study with great assistance and programs for our troops.

Charter Oak State College
55 Paul J. Manafort Drive
New Britain, CT 06053-2150

(860) 832-3800
Mon - Thur, 8:30AM - 8:00PM EST
Fri, 8:30AM - 5:00PM EST

EMAIL: info@charteroak.edu
WEB: <http://charteroak.edu>

WHAT IS OPEN COURSEWARE (OCW)?

OpenCourseWare, or OCW, is a term applied to course materials created by universities and shared freely with the world via the internet. The OCW movement began at MIT with the launch of MIT OpenCourseWare in October 2002. Since then, a number of universities have created OCW projects, some of which have been funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation one of which being Yale University.

According to the website of the OCW Consortium, an OCW project:

- * is a free and open digital publication of high quality educational materials, organized as courses.
- * is available for use and adaptation under an open license.
- * does not typically provide certification or access to instructors.

These world class colleges and universities have gone to tremendous effort to make this available to everyone. We encourage all distance learning students to make the most of these free materials.

UC Berkeley - Berkeley Webcast
Stanford University - Stanford Engineering Everywhere
University of Notre Dame - Notre Dame OCW
Yale University - Open Yale Courses
Tufts University - Tufts OCW
Massachusetts Institute of Technology - MIT Open Courseware
University of California at Irvine - UC Irvine OCW
Carnegie Mellon University - Carnegie Mellon Open Learning Initiative
Apple's iTunes U - Mobile Learning with an iPhone or iPod Touch

For links to all of the above, visit...

<http://collegeforsoldiers.com/what-is-open-courseware-ocw/>

You can find more US accredited Open Courseware resources from the OpenCourseWare Consortium at...

<http://ocw.uci.edu/>

One last good source for college course videos is Academic Earth at this link...

<http://academicearth.org/>

WHAT IS A CREDIT BANK?

If you are like most people, you have college credit in multiple colleges. You may have taken a class here and a class there. You may have taken a variety of health care and IT certification courses and tests. You might also have a bunch of CLEP and DANTES tests that you have taken. When you try to gather all of these together for work or school, it can be a challenge. This is where credit banking comes in.

A credit bank is sponsored by a university and allows you to build a unified transcript of all your college credit, placement tests, certifications and other education and work related history. This makes it easier when applying for college or proving past academic learning for your employer.

All of our recommended colleges for deployed soldiers have credit banking options. Contact the individual schools for details.

PLACEMENT TESTING

There are many ways to earn college level credit and one method is through placement testing. If you have been stationed in Germany and picked up German on your own, you may be able to earn college credit for German through placement testing. All of our recommended colleges for deployed troops offer the ability to earn college credit via placement testing. Below is a list of college placement tests widely accepted by most colleges.

TECEP - Thomas Edison State College has their own series of placement tests (Thomas Edison College Examination Program - TECEP) that are accepted at many colleges. With over 60 tests available on subjects ranging from Introduction to the History of Film to C Programming. Most tests are worth 3 college credit hours and can be taken at a distance with a testing proctor. TESC also has testing centers already set-up on many military bases. For more information on TECEP, click [THIS LINK](#).

DANTES - Developed by the US Department of Defense, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support tests (DSST) are credit-by-examination tests designed to allow a student to demonstrate proficiency in an area of study normally taught at a college or university. Tests are available in 37 college subject areas. DSST's are available for both upper and lower level credit.

Prometric Services administers Internet-based versions of DSSTs under contract with the Defense Department (for military personnel) or on a fee basis (for civilians). For more on DANTES information, click [THIS LINK](#).

CLEP - The College Board's College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a series of 34 examinations that test an individual's college level knowledge gained through course work, independent study, cultural pursuits, travel, special interests, military service schools, and professional development. [1] CLEP also offers international and home-schooled students the opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in subject areas and bypass undergraduate coursework. The test is offered by the College Board. Approximately 2,900 colleges and universities will grant college credits for each test. Both U.S. and international schools grant CLEP credit. Most of the tests are 90 minutes long and currently cost \$70 each [2] or are free to U.S. military service members and veterans. [3] There is an additional fee of \$10 for the optional essay portion of some of the exams. Each test usually corresponds to a one or two semester introductory course on the topic, though the Spanish, French, and German Language exams can be used to earn up to 12 credits.

CLEP exams are offered at testing centers on over 1,500 college and university campuses, as well as military installations. Most centers charge an administrative or registration fee per student or per test. Fees usually range from \$15-20, though they vary among test centers.

CLEP tests are primarily multiple-choice exams (though some include fill-in or ordering

questions, and one English Composition exam has an essay section) which are scored on a scale from 20 to 80. The majority of schools grant credit for a score of 50 or higher, but passing scores are determined by the individual schools and may vary. The schools are responsible for awarding the amount of credits you would receive for each test. The scores in the table below are endorsed by the American Council on Education as recommended credit-granting scores for each of the exams. On foreign language tests, the score will determine the amount of credit granted. For example, one university may grant 8 credits for a score of 50, 12 credits for a score of 62 and 18 credits for a score of 73.

Read more about CLEP options for military personnel by clicking [THIS LINK](#).

ECE - Excelsior College Examinations (or ECE) are a series of tests offered by Excelsior College in New York. Many colleges and universities will grant college credits for each test, although they are not as widely accepted as CLEP and DSST. The exam administration period is 3 hours and the tests currently cost between \$235 and \$335, although military personnel may take them free of charge on many installations. Each exam usually corresponds to a one or two semester introductory or secondary course on the topic, and many provide upper-division credit. Most ECE exams are considered equivalent to 3 credits in the semester system.

ECE exams are offered through Excelsior College and are administered at Pearson VUE test centers, as well as most military installations. For more information on ECE, click on [THIS LINK](#).

DLPT - Defense Language Institute's Defense Language Proficiency Tests are offered by The Defense Language Institute (DLI) - a United States Department of Defense (DoD) educational and research institution, which provides linguistic and cultural instruction to the Department of Defense, other Federal Agencies and numerous and varied other customers. The Defense Language Institute is responsible for the Defense Language Program, and the bulk of the Defense Language Institute's activities involve educating DoD members in assigned languages. Other functions include planning, curriculum development, and research in second-language acquisition.

The Defense Language Proficiency Test (or DLPT) is a battery of foreign language tests produced by the Defense Language Institute and used by the United States Department of Defense (DoD). They are intended to assess the general language proficiency of native English speakers in a specific foreign language, in the skills of reading and listening. An oral proficiency interview, or OPI, is administered to Defense Language Institute students to establish the graduate's proficiency in speaking following training there.

The tests are meant to measure how well a person can function in real-life situations in a foreign language according to well-defined linguistic tasks and assessment criteria. Originally paper tests, they are increasingly delivered by computer.

The tests are used to assess the skill level of civilian and military DoD language analysts. Military language analysts are tested once a year in the skills of reading and listening. This yearly testing determines the level of Foreign Language Proficiency Pay that a language analyst receives. DLPT scores may also figure into the readiness rating of a military linguist unit.

Scoring for the current (2007) series of tests, called DLPT5, are, like their predecessors, based on the guidelines of the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), with the test results stated as levels 0+ through 3 or up to 4 for some languages.

For more information on the Defense Language Institute, use the link below...
<http://www.dliflc.edu/>

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Prior Learning Assessment is the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through work experience, unrecognized training, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies. The term does not refer to a commercial program or agency, but to any type of activity with informal educational potential, usually for adult learners. All of the institutions we recommend for deployed troops have a PLA program and award credit. Credits earned through the PLA process may be applied toward the completion of a degree.

For more on prior learning assessment, see these links to the college's specific program.

WHAT ARE PROCTORS & HOW TO USE THEM

A proctor is an individual who agrees to receive the tests from the student's instructor, administer them in an academically approved environment and return them to the instructor. The proctor must verify that the student completed the test according to the specific directions of the instructor. Proctors are widely used in distance learning and all colleges and universities have testing proctors. Most military bases have proctors and they can be used for academic testing for distance learning.

If you are in Baghdad or aboard a ship and taking a class from a school in the United States, at some point you will need to take a test. You will need to find a testing proctor close to you, either at your base or at a local university. Sometimes a Chaplain, senior officer or Senior

NCO who hold a degree that is equal to or higher than the degree that you are studying for can be a proctor. Once you find a proctor and they are approved by your school, the school will send your test and instructions to the proctor. The proctor will administer the test to you and once your test is completed, they will send the completed test back to your instructor.

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

Regional accreditation is a term used in the United States to refer to the process by which one of several accrediting bodies, each serving one of six defined geographic areas of the country, accredits schools, colleges, and universities. Each regional accreditor encompasses the vast majority of public and nonprofit private educational institutions in the region it serves.

Regionally accredited schools are predominantly academically oriented, non-profit institutions. Nationally accredited schools are predominantly for-profit and offer vocational, career or technical programs. Every college has the right to set standards and refuse to accept transfer credits. However, if a student has gone to a nationally accredited school it may be particularly difficult to transfer credits (or even credit for a degree earned) if he or she then applies to a regionally accredited college. Some regionally accredited colleges have general policies against accepting any credits from nationally accredited schools, others are reluctant to because they feel that these schools' academic standards are lower than their own or they are unfamiliar with the particular school. The student who is planning to transfer credits from a nationally accredited school to a regionally accredited school should ensure that the regionally accredited school will accept the credits before they enroll in the nationally accredited school.

All colleges that are recommended by CollegeForSoldiers.com are regionally accredited schools. We further recommend that you only seek college education at schools that are regionally accredited as most businesses only recognize degrees from regionally accredited colleges and universities.

The following is a list of the accrediting institutions in the United States

- * Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools - Educational institutions in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands, as well as schools for American children in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

- * New England Association of Schools and Colleges - Educational institutions in the six New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont).

- * North Central Association of Colleges and Schools - Educational institutions in Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota,

Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

* Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities - Postsecondary institutions (colleges and universities) in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

* Western Association of Schools and Colleges - Educational institutions in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Micronesia, Palau, and Northern Marianas Islands.

* Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - Educational institutions in Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee and Texas.

IT CERTIFICATION

A Professional certification in the Computer technology field is a designation earned by a person to assure that he/she is qualified to perform a job or task.

Certifications, generally, need to be renewed periodically, or may be valid for a specific period of time (e.g. the life-time of the product upon which the individual is certified). As a part of a complete renewal of an individual's certification, it is common for the individual to show evidence of continual learning — often termed continuing education — or earning continuing education units (CEU).

Certification is often used in the professions of software engineering and information technology.

The most successful certification programs are oriented toward specific technologies, and are managed by the vendors of these technologies. These certification programs are tailored to the institutions that would employ people who use these technologies.

CollegeForSoldiers.com offers free certification study guides for deployed troops. Click on the Home Page button and use the form to request the book you need.

College credit can sometimes be obtained from your completed IT Certification tests. Consult your academic adviser for details.

ABOUT CollegeForSoldiers.Com

College For Soldiers (CFS) is an off-shoot of BooksForSoldiers.com (BFS). BFS started out as a short term project - the founder, Storm Bear Williams, wrongly thought the troops would start coming home from Iraq within six to eight weeks. Now in its seventh year, BFS shipped over \$2.9 million in books and other care package items to deployed troops in 2008 alone.

At the first of 2008, the BFS Board of Directors gave approval to go forward with a program to help soldiers with their college educations while deployed overseas. CollegeForSoldiers.com is the result of that effort.

If you would like to help continue the operation of CFS and BFS, please visit our donation page...

BooksForSoldiers.com/donate

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