



**SECRETARY OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON**

**06 JUN 2018**

**MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION**

**SUBJECT:** Army Directive 2018-08 (The Army Credentialing Assistance Program)

**1. References:**

- a. Title 10, United States Code, section 2015 (Program to assist members in obtaining professional credentials).
- b. Army Directive 2015-12 (Implementation Guidance for Credentialing Program and Career Skills Program), 11 March 2015 (partially superseded).
- c. Army Regulation (AR) 40-501 (Standards of Medical Fitness), 14 June 2017.
- d. AR 600-8-2 (Suspension of Favorable Personnel Actions (Flag)), 11 May 2016.
- e. AR 600-81 (Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program), 17 May 2016.
- f. AR 621-1 (Training of Military Personnel at Civilian Institutions), 28 August 2007.
- g. AR 621-5 (Army Continuing Education System), 11 July 2006, Including Rapid Action Revision Issued 6 September 2009.

**2. Purpose.** This directive establishes the Army's Credentialing Assistance (CA) Program. An effective CA Program directly contributes to improving Total Army readiness, supporting Soldiers' professional development, retaining quality Soldiers, and preparing Soldiers for meaningful employment upon transition from military service.

**3. Policy**

- a. For the purpose of this directive, a credential is an occupational license or certification obtained through successful completion of a systematic review process used by an organization to assess and confirm that a credential seeker is competent and qualified to work in a designated field.
- b. The Army provides CA to all active duty Soldiers and members of the Selected Reserve (SELRES), subject to annual funding availability.

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- c. CA is available for voluntary, off-duty training and education programs and supports the Soldier Life Cycle as defined in AR 600-81 (reference 1e).
  - d. During their career and if certain requirements are met, Soldiers are eligible to pursue three distinct credentialing options. Each option could have multiple tiers or sequences indicating increased technical expertise. Soldiers are eligible to pursue all sequential levels as part of a single option.
  - e. The credentialing options are:
    - (1) Branch, Military Occupational Specialty, or Additional Skill Identifier Option. Soldiers may use CA for credentials that are directly related to their branch, military occupational specialty (MOS), and/or additional skill identifier (ASI). The Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) website designates these credentials as "most" in the "related as" field.
    - (2) Academic Option. Soldiers may use CA for a credential that directly relates to an earned academic degree or academic certificate, with a limit of one credential for each degree or certificate. Credentials in this option do not need to be related to the Soldier's MOS, ASI, or assigned duties.
    - (3) Vocation-Related Option
      - (a) Soldiers may use CA for credentials aligned to a civilian career field. Supporting credentials may be stackable, sequential, or progressive within the career field, enabling the Soldier to gain and increase technical expertise in the declared civilian career field or industry.
      - (b) Credentials in this option do not need to be directly related to the Soldier's MOS, ASI, or assigned duties. Credentials must have a nexus with military training or service. All credentials listed on Army COOL meet this criterion.
  - f. Before being approved for CA, a Soldier must meet with an Education Counselor to establish a credentialing plan and have an approved individual development plan on file in Army Career Tracker. The credentialing plan will include the list of approved supporting credentials and the required education, training, work or professional experience, and examinations.
- 4. Soldier Eligibility. Soldier eligibility criteria for CA will be aligned with tuition assistance (TA) policy to the maximum extent feasible, as outlined in this directive. For a Soldier to be eligible for CA, the Soldier must meet the following tier requirements:

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a. Soldiers may begin work on the first credential pathway upon achieving their MOS qualification. Soldiers establish tier 1 CA eligibility as follows:

- (1) Enlisted Soldiers who have graduated Advanced Individual Training.
- (2) Warrant officers who have graduated Warrant Officer Basic Course.
- (3) Officers who have graduated Basic Officer Leaders Course.

b. Soldiers establish tier 2 CA eligibility as follows:

(1) Enlisted Soldiers who have successfully completed Advanced Leaders Course.

- (2) Warrant officers who have graduated Warrant Officer Advanced Course.
- (3) Officers who have graduated Captain Career Course or equivalent.

c. Regardless of which CA tier they are eligible for, all Soldiers must meet the following baseline eligibility requirements to receive CA benefits:

- (1) Soldiers must not be under suspension of favorable personnel actions in accordance with AR 600-8-2 (reference 1d).
- (2) Soldiers must not currently be a contracted Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship cadet or Green-to-Gold ROTC program cadet.
- (3) Soldiers must have sufficient time in service remaining to complete all courses for which the Soldier is requesting CA.
- (4) Soldiers must not be attending school under provisions of AR 621-1 (reference 1f) (such as fully funded schooling, Degree Completion, or Cooperative Degree Programs) during the period for which CA is requested.

d. SELRES Soldiers must have designation of Satisfactory Participant.

5. Eligible Programs. Credentialing programs will be considered eligible if they meet the criteria established in reference 1a. A list of eligible credentials will be maintained on Army COOL.

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6. Rates and Rate Restrictions for Credentialing Assistance

- a. CA is authorized for the payment of credentialing expenses for classroom, hands-on, online/blended training (and associated materials), manuals, study guides and materials, text books, processing fees, test fees, and related fees for continuing education requirements and recertification of credentials.
- b. CA is not authorized for credentials associated with doctor's degrees as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Examples of doctor's degrees include, but are not limited to, Doctor of Jurisprudence or Juris Doctor (J.D.), Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).
- c. CA will not be authorized for any course for which a Soldier receives reimbursement in whole or in part from any other Federal source, including veterans' education benefits and Service-funded programs (ROTC scholarship, education-related incentive or bonus, and advanced civil schooling) when the CA payment duplicates the reimbursement.
- d. CA is subject to the same funding ceiling as TA. A Soldier may use both TA and CA; however, the combined use by any Soldier will not exceed the fiscal year TA limit.
- e. Soldiers may not use CA to repeat successfully completed preparatory portions of a credential, other than for those areas required for renewal of the credential.
- f. Soldiers will be subject to reimbursing the Army for credentialing assistance if they fail or withdraw from a course of instruction, or fail to sit for an exam in the timeframe required to earn the credential, and do not have an approved military withdrawal. Soldiers will be considered to be ineligible for future CA until such time as all associated credentialing expenses are reimbursed or the Soldier successfully completes the credentialing program using other funding.
- g. CA is available to commissioned officers. Officers may use CA for training only if the officer agrees to serve a Military Service Obligation (MSO) in accordance with current TA requirements.
  - (1) Officers who are selected for separation by Officer Separation Boards or are twice non-selected for promotion will have their MSO waived.
  - (2) Officers using CA for testing or recertification of a credential will not incur a service obligation. Testing or recertification funding cap for officers in their last year of service is \$2,000, provided the officers have not completed their second credential pathway as identified in paragraph 4b.

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7. Institutionally Delivered Credentials. Army training institutions and career management field proponents are authorized to pay for institutionally delivered credentials. Payment of institutionally delivered credentials does not count toward the Soldier's fiscal year TA/CA limit.
8. Conflict Resolution. When the content of this directive conflicts with the voluntary, self-directed credentialing provisions in Army Directive 2015-12 (reference 1b), the provisions of this directive are controlling and the conflicting portions of Army Directive 2015-12 are superseded.
9. Proponency. The proponent for CA policy is the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1. The proponent has the authority to approve exceptions or waivers that are consistent with controlling law and regulations, and will incorporate the provisions of this directive into the next update of AR 621-5 (reference 1g).
10. Effective Date. This policy is effective within 90 days of signature and is rescinded upon publication of the revised AR 621-5.



Mark T. Esper

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