CHAPTER 2.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

SUBCHAPTER I. QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

PARAGRAPH PAGE

2.01 Scope 2-1

2.02 Selection of Cases 2-1

2.03 Deficiencies Noted on Quality Assurance Review 2-2

SUBCHAPTER II. NATIONAL ACCURACY RATE

2.04 Scope 2-2

2.05 Sample Selection 2-2

2.06 Review Areas 2-2

2.07 Period of Review 2-3

2.08 Analysis and Recommendations 2-4

2.09 Action on Recommendations 2-4

SUBCHAPTER III. HOW QUALITY ASSURANCE RELATES TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

2.10 Scope 2-4

2.11 Reasons for Each Review 2-4

2.12 Comparison of Review Findings 2-4

FIGURE

2.1 Quality Assurance Checklist 2-5

SUBCHAPTER IV. EDUCATION SERVICES UNIT QUALITY ASSURANCE

NOTE: This subchapter is not currently available.

CHAPTER 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE

SUBCHAPTER I. QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

2.01 SCOPE

QA (Quality Assurance) is a quality measurement program used by the Education Service to assess the quality of education actions by education claims processing activities at the four RPOs (Regional Processing Offices). The Education Service will conduct QA reviews of education work periodically for each RPO. Data from QA reviews will be used to compute Education National Accuracy Rates and evaluate individual station quality levels.

a. QA views quality from the customer's perspective: Did we properly develop the claim; did we make the correct eligibility determination; did we pay the claimant the correct amount from the correct date; did we make the proper decision concerning the number of months for which training could be authorized; did we process the claim in a timely manner; and did we tell the claimant clearly and concisely what we did and why we did it? Three unscored administrative questions are also asked concerning award/action document filing, date of claim, and end product procedures.

b. The success rate from QA reviews will reflect the ratio of scored review areas successfully completed to the total review areas applicable for the specific issues under review. For example, if a total of 45 questions were answered "YES" and 5 questions were answered "NO" the success rate would be 90 percent (45 divided by 50).

2.02 SELECTION OF CASES

a. Sample Size. The Field Operations Staff (223A), Education Service, will randomly select no more than 100 issues processed by a RPO for each period reviewed.

b. Selection of Cases. The Field Operations Staff will request approximately twenty-five issues for each education program (i.e., 25 Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty issues, 25 Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserves issues, 25 Veterans' Education Assistance Program issues, and 25 Dependents Education Assistance issues). The issues selected will be divided as evenly as possible between the months being reviewed. Although replacement cases will not be routinely requested, replacement cases may be selected using the same random selection method. Listings will be retained as part of each station's annual QA review file, subject to retention under Records Control Schedule, VB-1, part I, item 13-068.000.

c. Procedures for Temporary Folder Transfer.

(1) EDU (education), chapter 30, and DEA (Dependents Educational Assistance) folders requested for QA review shall not be reviewed for accuracy prior to transfer. However, the station shall ensure that all drop file mail is in the education, chapter 30, or DEA folder before the folder is temporarily transferred.

(2) Complete action on folders being processed in the education authorization activity and give them to the folder transfer clerk so they may be forwarded within 10 workdays.

(3) As the failure to send requested cases may result in bias, all cases must be sent unless excused (unavailable because of permanent or temporary transfer, or otherwise excused from the review by the Field Operations Staff). If a folder is lost, circularization procedures will be initiated and temporary folder with all available mail—including prescribed writeouts and BDN (Benefits Delivery Network) screens—will be sent for review.

(4) When a personal hearing is scheduled or some other exceptional circumstances applies which causes the supervisor of the education authorization activity to question whether temporary transfer to Central Office should be avoided or delayed on a case which has been requested for review, the regional office should contact the Field Operations Staff for instructions. Prompt review of such cases can be arranged.

(5) Because of a continuing problem with boxes breaking open while being shipped, care should be taken to carefully pack and ship folders in appropriate cartons that are in good condition and that are approved for the shipment of folders. Two inch pressure sensitive tape strengthened with fibers appears to work best. Cartons should be packed firmly. The best cartons to use are the archive cartons, but even these must be firmly packed and taped on the bottom as well as on the top.

2.03 DEFICIENCIES NOTED ON QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

a. When a deficiency is noted during a QA review, the Field Operations Staff will complete a quality review checklist. (See Figure 2.1. VA Form 20-6567a-22 will no longer be used.) Folders with deficiencies will be identified for referral to education authorization activity management. The checklists will be placed inside the folders.

b. When the folder is returned to the field station, take all corrective action necessary. Remove the Central Office checklists from the folders after regional office action and maintain them as a part of the education authorization activity's records.

c. A member of the Field Operations Staff will coordinate the quality assurance review and will prepare a summary letter for the station identifying those education folders that should be referred to education authorization activity management because of deficiencies or comments. The Operations Staff member will include his or her name and phone number in the letter. Questions about the review may be referred to that Staff member either by phone or by electronic mail.

SUBCHAPTER II. NATIONAL ACCURACY RATE

2.04 SCOPE

Accuracy rates will be determined by the Field Operations Staff (223A) for education issues completed by education claims processing activities.

2.05 SAMPLE SELECTION

a. Identification of the Sample. The cases reviewed by the Field Operations Staff for QA review will comprise the sample from which the National Accuracy Rates will be derived.

b. Sample Size. The sample size will not exceed 1,600 issues each fiscal year.

2.06 REVIEW AREAS

a. Payment Accuracy. Question three in the Customer Service Issues section of the QA checklist ("Were the payment determinations correct?") will be used to determine payment accuracy.

(1) The payment accuracy rate (inverse of the error rate) will be computed by dividing the number of "No" answers question 3 receives by the number of times the question was answered. For example, if the question is answered "No" five times for 100 cases reviewed the payment error rate would be 5 percent. The number of payment errors will be divided by the number of issues reviewed during the fiscal year to determine the national payment accuracy rate.

(2) The payment error rate will be considered too high if the error rate exceeds 5 percent. The Education Service will report the payment error rate and any trends that are identified to the RPOs. The payment error rates will be reported for each quarter and the cumulative payment error rates will be reported as the fiscal year progresses.

(3) The payment question includes the issue of prevention of overpayments when a notice of reduction in training or termination of training causes an unscheduled reduction in or termination of payments. The questions will be answered "YES" if the timeliness standards shown in M22-4, part IV, paragraph 11.09a are met and the check intercept procedures shown in paragraphs 11.24 and 11.25 of the same part have been followed. The timeliness standards will be considered to

have been met for all cases for which the notice of reduction or termination was processed within two days from the date it is received in the RPO.

b. Service Accuracy. There are four questions (questions 1, 2, 4, and 5) in the Customer Services Issues section of the checklist that will be used to determine the service accuracy rate. If there is a "NO" answer to any of these questions, a service error will be identified for that issue. Multiple "NO" answers for the same issue will be counted as one service error. For example, if the questions concerning development and eligibility are both answered "NO" for the same issue under review only one service error will be counted.

(1) Development. Question 1 ("Was proper development done?") will be answered "YES" if all the required development was done and a proper control was established for a response. The question will also be answered "YES" if a proper decision is made about not developing the case.

(2) Eligibility. Question 2 ("Were the eligibility determinations correct?") will always be reviewed as part of the QA process. The question concerns more than the issue of basic eligibility for the benefit being received, e.g. character of discharge, contributions to the program (if applicable), qualifying disability (if applicable), etc. It also includes such issues as extended delimiting dates, requests for VA counseling, change of program requests, and the processing of tutorial assistance claims.

(3) Entitlement. Question 4 ("Was the entitlement determination correct?") concerns the amount of entitlement granted on the original claim for an education benefit and the amount of entitlement granted when a student changes from one education benefit program to another (e.g., from chapter 32 to chapter 30). It also includes the issues of entitlement restoration for Persian Gulf Veterans; extending entitlement to the end of the term for chapter 30 students; and entitlement free training for chapter 35 students.

(4) Notification. Question 5 ("Were the claimant and/or other interested parties properly notified about the decision?") will be answered "YES" if the letter properly informs the claimant of the action that was taken even if the action taken was incorrect. The question will be answered "YES" if a Target and/or quick release letter was sent and it was the appropriate letter.

c. Average Days to Complete. The previous timeliness standard was based on the percentages of original and supplemental claims processed with 30 days. There was a timeliness standard for original claims and a separate timeliness standard for supplemental claims. The new standard is based on the average number of days it takes to process all education claims rather than fixed standards for original and supplemental claims. This is an aggregate standard for all education end products that will not be applied to individual end products. The QA review will monitor the average days to complete as an unscored service accuracy issue. The average number of days it took to process the issues under review will be reported to each RPO on both a quarterly and a cumulative basis.

d. Responsibility. The Field Operations Staff will be responsible for identifying deficiencies that will be used to calculate the National Accuracy Rates.

e. Administrative Questions. The answers to the Administrative Questions will not be used to determine the National Accuracy Rate.

2.07 PERIOD OF REVIEW

The National Accuracy Rate review and associated reports will cover issues which were reviewed, during the particular fiscal year covered by the reported accuracy rate. All RPO will be reviewed once every quarter of the fiscal year.

2.08 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

National accuracy rates will be thoroughly analyzed to identify system wide problems and trends. Recommendations to correct problems and improve negative trends will be developed and forwarded to the Director of the Education Service for review.

2.09 ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Controls will be established to provide for periodic follow-up on recommendations to ensure that all appropriate action has been taken to bring them to resolution.

SUBCHAPTER III: HOW QUALITY ASSURANCE RELATES TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

2.10 SCOPE

The QA review is an outcome based review. The outcomes being measured are those described in paragraph 2.01a of this chapter. The RPOs will be conduct Quality Improvement (QI) rather than QA review. The QI review is a process oriented review. The procedures for conducting that review are discussed in chapter 3 of this manual. The purpose of this subchapter is to discuss the relationship between the two reviews.

2.11 REASONS FOR EACH REVIEW

a. The QA reviews are conducted for two reasons. The first is to provide each RPO with an external quarterly evaluation of the rate of its success in meeting the needs of its customers. The second is to provide those organizations which are responsible for oversight of the programs administered by the Education Service with information about payment and service accuracy rates.

b. The QI review looks at the procedural aspects of claims processing as well as the outcomes. Each RPO should use QI as a basic tool to identify the procedures that do not provide the best service to their customers; to decide what changes they need to make in those procedures; to implement those changes; and to test the effectiveness of the changes that have been made. This will be a continuous process.

2.12 COMPARISON OF THE REVIEW FINDINGS

a. Both the QA and QI reviews should identify any error trends that they find. The QA findings will focus on the final outcome and the QI findings will focus on processing problems.

b. For the QA review any questions that receive a "NO" answer for less than 5% of the issues reviewed will not be considered an error trend. A payment error rate that is above 5% will be considered too high. Any of the other questions that receives a "NO" answer for more than 10% of the issues reviewed will be considered an error trend, regardless of the details of any individual case. If any of these question receive a "NO" answer for 5% to 9% of the issues reviewed, then the individual errors will be reviewed to see if a common cause can be identified, e.g., failure to maintain controls on development, or ignoring due process requirements for reduction and termination letters.

c. For the QI review, each question has a set of sub questions to help describe what the processing error was. As RPOs use the QI process, they will be able to define error trends. Because of the number of questions involved in the QI review, a strict percentage definition of an error trend may not be practical.

Education Service
Authorization Quality Assurance Checklist

I. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Station XXX B. Review Date XX/XX C. Reviewer XXX
D. C# XXX-XX-XXXX E. End Product XXX F. QCRE Date XX-XX-XX

II. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES *(NOT SCORED)*

	Yes	*No*
1. Was the action/award document of record?	Y	
2. Was the date of claim input correctly?	Y	
3. Was the correct end product properly claimed?	Y	

III. CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES

A. ACCURACY *(SCORED)*

	Yes	*No*
1. Was proper development done?	Y	
2. Were the eligibility determinations correct?	Y	
3. Were the payment determinations correct?	Y	
4. Was the entitlement determination correct?	Y	
5. Were the claimant and/or other interested parties properly notified about the decision?	Y	

SCORE: **100%**

A. TIMELINESS *(NOT SCORED)* Days to Complete: 1

IV. PAYMENT

Amount Paid: $0.00 Amount Due: $0.00 Mispayment: $0.00

V. COMMENTS

Figure 2.1. Quality Assurance Checklist

SUBCHAPTER IV: EDUCATION SERVICES UNIT QUALITY ASSURANCE

NOTE: This subchapter is not currently available.