DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration

Standard Operating Procedure
Pension and Fiduciary Service
Fiduciary National Training Curriculum
Fiscal Year 2016

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Introduction

This standard operating procedure (SOP) is intended to facilitate the understanding, implementation, and recording of the Pension and Fiduciary (P&F) Service Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Fiduciary National Training Curriculum (NTC). All fiduciary hubs must ensure that the procedures in this SOP are implemented upon receipt.

Target Audience

The P&F Service NTC consists of required annual training for Legal Instrument Examiners (LIEs), Field Examiners (FEs) and Fiduciary Service Representatives (FSRs), herein referred to as employees. This SOP will guide training managers in ensuring all employees receive quality training according to P&F Service guidelines. Assigned casework should continually reinforce skills as they are taught during training.

Note: Employees identified as trainees are no longer the target audience for the purpose of NTC requirements. They must be entered into a trainee TMS Class as listed on page 3, but they will not be subject to the 80-hour NTC requirement. They will only need to complete their position-specific centralized training and any newly-assigned P&F Service mandatory items. See Exhibit 1 for additional instructions regarding employees in a trainee status.

Training Definitions

- Training: In accordance with title 5 of the United States Code, § 4101, training is the process of providing for and making available to an employee, and placing or enrolling the employee in, a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system, or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative or other fields, which will improve individual and organizational performance. Training assists in achieving the agency's mission and performance goals.

- Developmental Training: Training designed to prepare employees to perform future jobs and/or to move with the organization as it develops, changes, and grows.

- Technical Training: Training to gain or improve specific skills related to a job, function, or task. It is also the process of transferring knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to accomplish specific activities or tasks.

- Curriculum: A course of study designed for a particular purpose.

- National Training Curriculum (NTC): The total minimum required training (80 hours) mandated by P&F Service in a fiscal year to include mandatory and station-selected training.

- Mandatory Training Curriculum (MTC): Courses on specific topics identified by P&F Service based on national quality trends and emerging issues.

- Station-Selected Training Curriculum (SSTC): Courses on specific topics designed to address developmental or technical needs, as determined by each hub.

- Talent Management System (TMS): The recognized system for all VA training records.

- VBA Learning Catalog: An online training catalog that is organized specifically to support the way VBA structures and manages its training programs. Searchable functions identify mandated items and target audiences. Items are also searchable by job position, level of experience, TMS item number, curriculum, etc. For guidance on how to utilize the catalog, see the Navigating the VBA Learning Catalog Job Aid.

FY 2016 Training Requirements for Members of Specified Audiences

All employees identified in the target audience for this SOP must complete a minimum of 80 hours of training in FY16 and satisfy curriculum requirements. To satisfy the 80-hour requirement for a particular class of employees, the hubs will conduct the training prescribed in the appropriate Fiduciary National Training Curriculum, as listed below:

> **Mandatory Training Curriculum** - P&F Service will identify 15 or more hours of mandatory training for employees throughout FY16, which will be listed in the VBA Learning Catalog. These items will address changes in fiduciary program regulations, policies and procedures, as well as error trends identified by the National quality assurance program, VBA Training Letters, and court decisions. These items will be automatically added to curricula during the FY as they are identified. The curricula are automatically assigned based upon TMS Class assignment, as seen on page 3. P&F Service will ensure that TMS items are centrally added to the curricula when published, and the items will appear on employee learning plans. All training mandated by P&F Service is designed to ensure consistency across the hubs.
>
> Any hours over the P&F Service MTC requirement for employees may be applied toward the SSTC requirement. For example, if 20 hours are identified from the P&F Service MTC during the reporting period, 5 hours may be reported as station-selected training hours.
>
> **Station-Selected Training Curriculum** - Each hub is required to assign 65 hours of training to address local developmental and technical training needs. Any course can be selected from the VBA Learning Catalog, from any service line, audience, curriculum, or category.

Station-Selected courses can also be selected from the VALU or Skillsoft Course Catalogs. See Exhibit 2 for instructions on identifying these courses. Hubs should notify P&F Service of the TMS ID for all courses completed from the Skillsoft Course Catalog to ensure proper credit is assigned for NTC purposes.

Cross-Training

Hubs are strongly encouraged to assign station-selected training to employees that provide cross-training outside of an employee's primary position. For example, experienced LIEs who are compliant with their mandatory training requirements and current with their workload may benefit from completing the Field Examiner Journey-Level Self-Study course.

Assigning FY 2016 National Training Curricula

P&F Service will automatically assign the MTC in TMS to fiduciary employees through class assignments. Training managers should add employees to a class in order for the job-specific curricula to be automatically assigned.

- P&F Service MTC items will automatically appear on the employees' learning plans upon class assignment. New items will appear on employees' learning plans as they are released throughout the fiscal year.

- The TMS Class IDs for the MTC for each fiduciary position are listed in the table below. Training managers should add employees to the classes in TMS based upon job position. Please refer to the TMS Job Aid for instructions on adding employees to classes.

Position	TMS Class	Curriculum Centrally Assigned
Trainee FE	VBA-299	VBA-617
Trainee LIE	VBA-300	VBA-618
Trainee FSR	VBA-301	VBA-619
FE	VBA-302	VBA-620
LIE	VBA-303	VBA-621
FSR	VBA-304	VBA-622

- Hubs are responsible for assigning station-selected training items. Training managers or TMS administrators will place each item or curriculum on the employees' learning plans. Upon successful completion of any online content (evaluation, comprehension assessment, etc.), employees will receive credit for that item.

- The Technical Training and Evaluation Staff will monitor, analyze, and complete reporting requirements for evaluations and comprehension assessments in TMS to ensure compliance within the NTC standards. Note that TMS evaluations and assessments are requirements of the training item and apply to all employees, and that training credit may be withdrawn if the TMS evaluation and/or comprehension assessment is not completed. Training managers will be alerted before training credit is withdrawn.

Credit for Training

In order for training to be credited, it must satisfy all of the following criteria:

- The lessons in the Fiduciary NTC must be taught according to the approved lesson plans located in the VBA Learning Catalog. For example, if the lesson plan states that the lesson is “instructor-led,” then it must be instructor-led. Similarly, if there is a practical exercise in the lesson plan, it must be used in the class.

- Technical training must include instruction provided to students and a post-training evaluation of the content.

- Training must be recorded in TMS and include proof of attendance for instructor-led items. The hubs must retain sign-in sheets used to document employee participation in instructor-led training for a three-year period beginning on the date of the training. However, the hubs need not attach lesson plans to document employee participation in instructor-led training.

Locally Created Training

Locally created training materials cannot be used toward NTC requirements until approved by P&F Service. Fiduciary hubs must submit all materials to be used (i.e., the lesson plan, student handout, PowerPoint presentation, practical exercises and answer keys) to the P&F Service Fiduciary mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/F&FE for approval. In addition, hubs must provide point of contact information for a subject matter expert (SME) to aid with the review process. Applicable policies and procedures must be referenced within the training content to support the package.

Prior to submitting locally created training to P&F Service, fiduciary hubs should review the VBA Learning Catalog, TMS and other training sites to ensure the training content is not similar or a duplication of existing training.

Upon approval, P&F Service will notify the hub, create aTMS item number and upload the content to the VBA Learning Catalog for any training used for a national audience.

NTC Refresher Training for TMS Comprehension Assessment

Comprehension assessments attached to TMS item content will allow three attempts of successful completion. After three attempts, the following actions must be taken when an employee does not pass the comprehension assessment in TMS associated with a training item:

1. The immediate supervisor or instructor will discuss the issue with the employee to determine the root cause for not passing and provide appropriate refresher training.

2. After refresher training has been provided by the supervisor, the supervisor will provide verification to the training manager. The training manager will request that the assessment be "unlocked" for another attempt by contacting the VBA Curriculum Support Team at VBACurriculumSupport@Camber.com. The training manager will request one unlock per employee in each request.

3. The VBA Curriculum Support Team will assign the Refresher Training TMS Item number.

4. The employee will immediately complete the evaluation attached to the Refresher Training TMS Item number. The evaluation questions will identify remediation procedures and help to identify problem areas in the training, which may require revisions.

5. The employee will attempt to successfully complete the comprehension assessment in TMS on the original training.

Note: This process continues until the employee successfully completes the comprehension assessment. The Refresher Training TMS item number will not include a time allowance for credit.

Credit Awarded to Instructors

Instructors may be granted credit for instructional learning hours, applied toward the station-selected training requirement. The Instructor Training Courses (ITCs) are strongly recommended for an employee to be considered an authorized instructor. The ITCs can be found in the VBA Learning Catalog under Audience >Other>Instructors (ITC).

A maximum of 20 total hours of an instructor's classroom and preparation time may be counted as station-selected training for a fiscal year. Please use TMS item VA 3837343 to record the training learning hours.

Make-up Training

Employees are required to complete all mandatory items; therefore, each hub must develop its own process for providing make-up training sessions. Procedures for make-up training sessions include the following requirements:

- Instructors will follow the same lesson plan.

- Instructors will provide the same materials and handouts. This includes completing online exercises and/or evaluations.

- If possible, the same instructor will provide the training, either in person or by a video recording.

- If a videotaped session is provided as a make-up session, fiduciary hubs will make an SME available as a point of contact during the training should questions arise.

- Make-up sessions are to be completed as soon as possible, but should be provided within eight weeks of the original training session.

- Instructors will use a sign-in sheet to record attendance, including the name of an instructor who facilitated the make-up session.

Reporting Requirement

All fiduciary hubs are required to submit quarterly fiduciary personnel reports to P&F Service at VAVBAWAS/CO/F&FE to demonstrate reasonable progress toward the yearly training requirement. These reports are due no later than the third workday after the end of each quarter. The format for these reports will be based on TMS User IDs, position, experience level, and the number of months an employee is available to complete the NTC. For instructions on compiling the reports, refer to the TM Job Aids on the TM Resources page of the Training Manager Resource Center Website.

Report Due Dates for FY 2016

- 1st quarter – January 6, 2016
- 2nd quarter – April 5, 2016
- 3rd quarter – July 6, 2016
- 4th quarter – October 5, 2016

Prorating FY 2016 NTC Training Requirements

Fiduciary hubs may prorate P&F Service FY16 NTC training requirements for employees on extended periods of excused absence from their station.

Prorating training availability time will be allowed in the following circumstances:

- Employees becoming eligible for NTC training after the first month of the FY.

- Consecutive active duty or active duty for training absence for 30 consecutive days or more.

- Cumulative active duty or active duty for training absence for 30 days or more.

- Consecutive leave for 30 days or more including leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

- Cumulative sick leave or FMLA of 30 days or more; single days of sick leave not excused by a physician's approval will not count as time applied for prorated learning hours.

When hubs prorate training requirements, they will maintain in the employee's training file documentation approving the reduced training for the current fiscal year.

Satisfactory documentation of approval for prorated training consists of a memorandum from the employee's immediate supervisor with the name of the employee, period of time and amount of days that have been approved as extended periods of leave. The documentation will be presented to P&F Service through the Director's office of the hub or regional office (RO) to ensure compliance with NTC requirements. The RO Director will certify the proper documentation is of record and all prorated training requirements are in compliance. See Exhibit 3 for an example of documentation for extended excused absence.

Calculation of prorated items:

Any prorating of training requirements based on absences will first be applied to station-selected items.

Calculated examples:

Employee's first year as an LIE trainee ends on January 1, 2016. The remaining months of FY16, (January 2016 through September 2016) must be in compliance with the NTC for non-trainee employees. The training manager calculates 9 out of the 12 months for the year as noted below:

- 9/12 = 0.75
- 80 X 0.75 = 60 training hours must be completed in FY16
- Priority must be given to completing all MTC hours (15 or more hours)
- 60 – 15 = 45 training hours must be devoted to SSTC hours

Note: For instructions on prorating employees for the NTC quarterly reports, refer to the TM Job Aids on the TM Resources page of the Training Manager Resource Center Website.

Exhibit 1: Trainee Mandatory Training Items

FE Trainees: Trainee-level FEs are required to complete centralized training, as well as any newly-assigned mandatory items. Training Managers should ensure that new employees are enrolled in the next available centralized training upon hire. They should also add all trainee FEs to class VBA-299, as listed on page 3. This will allow P&F Service to automatically assign any new mandatory items.

P&F Service will take the following actions in TMS for FE Centralized Training graduates:

1. Assign a centralized training End-of-Program Evaluation (this will award credit upon completion)
2. Assign FY16 mandated training items throughout the fiscal year
3. Add graduates to the appropriate primary NTC class for their position upon completing their centralized training.

The FE Centralized Training is conducted at least once per quarter by P&F Service. The following tentative schedule is offered in FY16, but is subject to change:

- October 19, 2015, through October 30, 2015,
- January 25, 2016 through February 5, 2016,
- April 4, 2016, through April 15, 2016, and
- July 11, 2016, through July 22, 2016.

LIE and FSR Trainees: Trainee-level LIEs and FSRs are required to complete any newly-assigned mandatory items. Training Managers should add LIEs to class VBA-300 and FSRs to class VBA-301, as listed on page 3. Newly-assigned P&F Service mandatory items will be assigned to trainee LIEs and FSRs in TMS.

Note: The LIE TPSS courseware is not mandated for trainee LIEs.

Exhibit 2: Navigating the VA Learning University (VALU) Website

VA Learning University (VALU) courses can be identified in the Training Catalog on the VALU website at: [VALU Course Catalog](). Skillsoft courses can be identified on the 24x7 Learning tab of the VALU website.

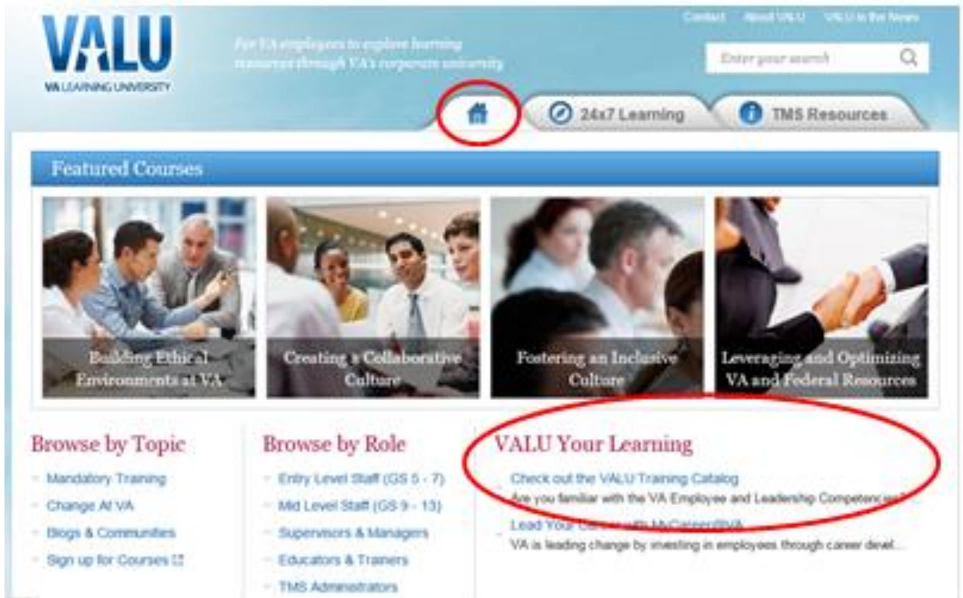

Exhibit 3: *Ex.* Documentation for Extended Excused Absence

Extended Leave
Memo.doc