



Academic Credit for Prior Learning

WHAT IS PRIOR LEARNING?

Prior learning means knowledge and skills gained through any of the following:

- Work and life experience
- Military training and experience
- Formal and informal education
- Training from in-state, out-of-state, or foreign institutions



ASSESSING AND AWARDING CREDIT

Colleges and universities use a variety of assessment methods to determine 1) what prospective students know and can do, and 2) whether students' prior learning is equivalent to what they would have learned if they had completed a specific college course.

Assessment methods include:

- Standardized tests.
- Course challenge examinations.
- Portfolio assessment.
- Crosswalks between work-based learning and college courses.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS AND TO THE STATE

In most cases, it will cost less for students to get credit for prior learning than it would to take a college course. Students who get credit for prior learning may be able to skip lower-level courses.

Implementing effective policies to assess and award academic credit for prior learning may:

- Increase educational attainment in Washington.
- Improve access by helping make college more affordable, reducing cost and time to degree.
- Inspire confidence in future learning potential by recognizing the skills and knowledge adults have acquired through military and other training and education.
- Launch students more quickly into their chosen career pathways, fulfilling their own needs while meeting the needs of communities and employers.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
amim@wsac.wa.gov | 360.753.7800

2018 ACPL NOTABLE FINDINGS

Significant progress has been made in several areas since 2011, when legislation was created to increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning and the number and type of credits earned, ensuring that credit is awarded only for college course-level competencies. That progress has included establishing an ongoing workgroup, developing and sharing policies and practices, and monitoring progress in an annual legislative report.

In the 2018 ACPL Report Update, notable findings include:

- A three-year comparison shows a trend of 20.7 percent increase of total ACPL credits across 42 institutions reporting (see chart below).
- Statewide credit amounts have increased in the areas of College Level Exam Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized tests (DSST), and Occupational Crosswalks.
- The approximate number of students receiving academic credits for prior learning increased over two years in the assessment areas of CLEP, Occupational Crosswalks (military and other), and Individual Industry Certifications.

ACPL RESOURCES

Resources related to ACPL can be found on WSAC's website:

Academic Credit for Prior Learning wsac.wa.gov/ACPL

- This page houses ACPL workgroup meeting notes, workshop information, annual legislative reports, the ACPL handbook, and other general information about prior learning assessments. The ACPL handbook, updated in 2018, provides sample policies and examples of crosswalks and other assessment models.

Adult Reengagement Initiative wsac.wa.gov/adult-reengagement

- As a policy tool related to adult learners' progress, ACPL fits in the WSAC Adult Reengagement Framework's completion component. This web page includes statistics, reports, resources, and 2018 Summit information.

TOTAL ACPL CREDITS HAVE INCREASED SINCE 2015-16

