



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
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PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

The Legislature created the **Academic Credit for Prior Learning Workgroup**, convened by the Washington Student Achievement Council. The goals of the workgroup are as follows:

- Increase the number of students who receive prior learning credit.
- Increase the number of students who have prior learning credit that counts toward their major or credential.
- Increase the number and type of prior learning credits accepted by public colleges.
- Ensure public colleges only award credit for high-quality, college-level competencies.
- Develop transparent policies and practices to award prior learning credit.
- Improve prior learning assessment practices at public colleges.
- Create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise.
- Share exemplary policies and practices among public colleges.
- Develop articulation agreements for common programs and pathways.
- Develop outcome measures to track progress and goals.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Academic Credit for Prior Learning Workgroup recommends the following actions to improve consistency, transparency, and recognition of prior learning:

1. Expand use of data

- Increase consistency in implementation of coding.
- Establish an automated data-collection process.
- Analyze data to inform policies and practices.

2. Improve awareness and access

- Ensure that students are advised of the several ways that they may have their prior learning assessed for award of academic credit.
- Ensure that students with prior military training are advised of specific veteran support services and policies.
- Provide ongoing training to faculty, advisors, and staff to ensure consistent advising, appropriate assessment methods, and consistent awards of academic credit for prior learning.

3. Streamline processes

- Develop consistent statewide policy on acceptance of American Council on Education (ACE) guide recommendations for award of academic credit for prior military training.
- Expand development of crosswalks between industry certificates and trainings and college courses by Centers of Excellence, and increase adoption of crosswalks by institutions.
- Develop competency-based modules to fill gaps between existing industry training and college courses, and to fill gaps between military training and college courses.

4. Align policies

- Strengthen collaboration among education groups to ensure alignment of policies and practices, particularly in transfer.
- Ensure broad representation of stakeholders in Washington's Academic Credit for Prior Learning Workgroup.