



2022 Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) Report Update

ACPL: Advancing Success for Washington Adult Learners

Supporting adult learners as they complete their postsecondary certificates and degrees is essential to meeting our state's educational attainment goals and the employment needs of students and Washington employers.¹ Awarding academic credit for prior learning is important to support this population of students, and helps Washington make strides toward its statewide educational attainment goal that at least 70 percent of Washington adults (ages 25-44) attain a postsecondary credential.

Students come to college with skills and knowledge acquired through work, military, and other experiences. Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) is awarded, consistent with institutional credit awarding policies, when a student's prior learning is assessed and found to be the equivalent of specific college course outcomes.² Awarding academic credit for prior learning:

- Honors students' knowledge and skills.
- Recognizes the connections between work and college.
- Accelerates students' progress toward career pathways.³

National research in 2020 indicated that ACPL-receiving students complete their credentials at a higher rate than students who do not receive ACPL. This correlation with attainment remains true across different student demographics, indicating that ACPL can serve as an important tool in addressing persistent educational equity gaps by race, ethnicity, income level, and other demographics.³

In Washington, significant support for ACPL policy and practice has been developed since 2011, when legislation was enacted 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. Progress in ACPL has included establishing an ongoing statewide workgroup, developing and sharing policies and practices, and providing this annual legislative report which monitors ACPL data trends and workgroup actions.

While Washington institutions are still managing the impact of the multi-year pandemic and economic crisis on higher education students and employees. But recent research indicates that the pandemic afforded an opportunity to innovate, with ACPL leaders using ACPL as a mechanism to accelerate degree completion, particularly for adult and working populations.⁴ The workgroup invested in improving the supportive infrastructure for effective ACPL in institutions and looks forward to more collaborative action to increase ACPL opportunities for students in 2023.

¹ Washington Student Achievement Council, [2017 Strategic Action Plan](#).

² The Washington State Legislature defines prior learning in RCW 28B.77.230, as "...knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions. This is consistent with the definition of the Intercollege Relations Commission Handbook, p. 14 <https://www.wa-council.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-Final-Revised-ICRC-Handbook-12.20.pdf>

³ The PLA Boost (2020) <https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PLA-Boost-Report-CAEL-WICHE-Revised-Dec-2020.pdf>

⁴ Lessons on Recovery: The Value and Potential of Higher Education in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis (2020) https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020.08.20.Lessons.on_Recovery.Report.pdf

2021-2022 ACPL Findings

For the sixth consecutive year, all 34 community and technical colleges, 6 public baccalaureate institutions, and 10 Independent Colleges of Washington member institutions submitted data for this report. This is the third year that data reporting for community and technical colleges (CTCs) was provided by State Board for Community and Technical Colleges rather than by each individual community college.⁴

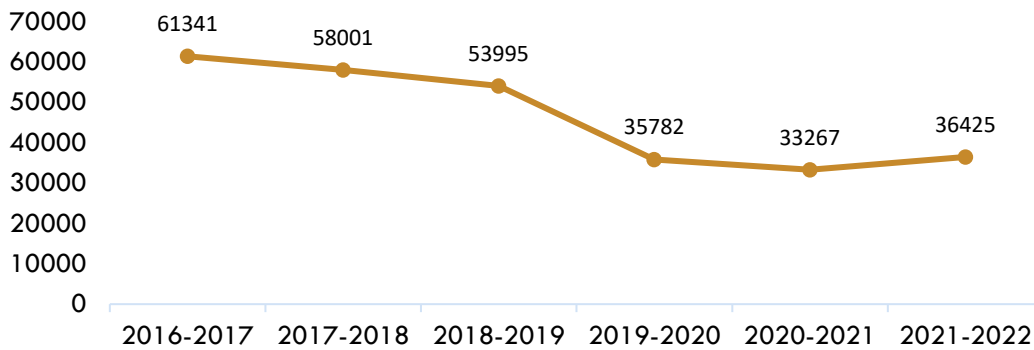
Prior Learning Credits and Students Receiving ACPL

During the 2021-2022 academic year, Washington public and independent four-year institutions and community and technical colleges awarded **36,425 ACPL credits** that applied toward certificates or degrees. Approximately **1,891 students** earned credits for prior learning.⁵

Changes in Total ACPL Credits Awarded Over Time

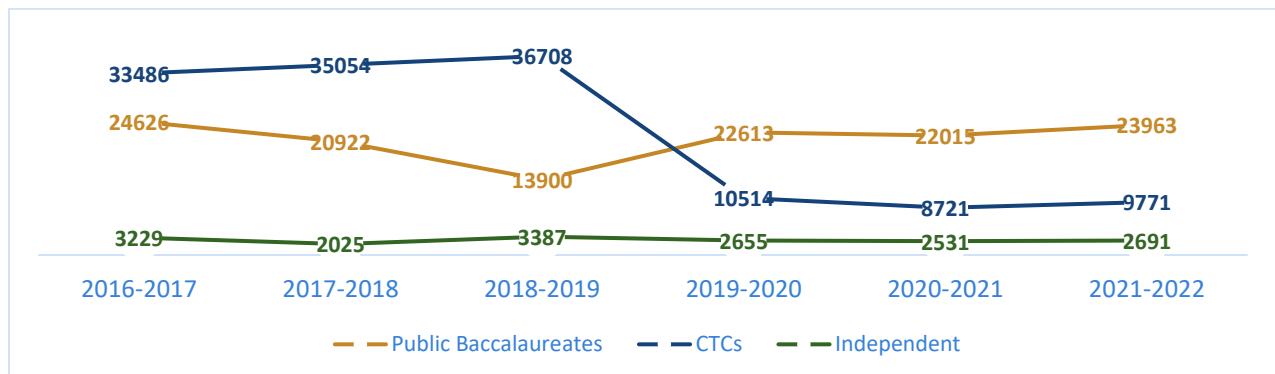
The overall number of ACPL credits increased 10% in 2021-2022 compared to the previous year (Figure 1). Examining ACPL credits by sector shows a slight increase in each (Figure 2): CTCs 12%, public baccalaureates 9%, and independent baccalaureates 6%.

Figure 1: Comparison of ACPL Credits in all institutions since 2016-2017



Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022).

Figure 2: ACPL Credits by Educational Sector, 2016-17 to 2021-2022



Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from 49 institutions (Fall in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021)

⁴ The year that SBCTC began reporting ACPL for CTCs coincides with a significant drop in ACPL reported credits. The reason for the change is unknown by SBCTC but might be related to coding changes or reporting differences rather than an actual change of ACPL credits.

⁵ Students receiving ACPL are unduplicated totals as reported by the institutions.

Comparison by Categories of Prior Learning Assessment

A detailed look at the categories of prior learning assessment over a four-year period provides a more nuanced comparison of both the number of students receiving ACPL and the number of credits received per category of prior learning (Figure 3).

- **In a reverse of recent trends, the number of students receiving ACPL increased or stayed level in all categories compared to the previous year.** The biggest increases in students receiving ACPL in 2021-2022 were in the areas of Portfolio Review (+61 individuals, or 52%), CLEP (+35 individuals or 32%) and Credit by Exam or course challenges (+22 individuals, or 5%).
- **Similarly, ACPL credits in most categories of prior learning increased in 2021-2022.** Compared to the prior year, portfolio review credits increased the most (+1,443 credits, or 257%), followed by ACE (+878 credits, or 9%), Occupational Crosswalks (+640 credits, or 24%) and Individual Industry Certifications (+404 credits, or 3%)

Summary of 2021-2022 ACPL Data Findings

- Overall, Washington has seen an increase in the number of students receiving ACPL and the number of credits this year compared to the last two years.
- All three sectors show increases in ACPL credits this year compared to last year.
- Most categories of assessment show increases or stable numbers compared to last year in both number of students and number of credits.

These increases are somewhat surprising considering that students and institutions are still recovering from the impacts of the recent public health and economic crisis on higher education students and institutions. In the CTC sector, which has the largest overall enrollment in this report, ACPL credits increased in spite of significant enrollment headcount decreases compared to the prior year (16,789 fewer students or - 6%) (Appendix A). Military-related credits are an important part of the ACPL increase in 2021-2022, yet surprisingly the CTCs report 1,676 fewer veterans and active military students, or a 20% drop from the previous year.

In the baccalaureate sectors, which represent a smaller enrollment proportion of all institutions included in this report, the 2021-2022 annual credits are the highest since 2016-2017. While public baccalaureate sector partners reported a decline in enrollment compared to the prior year, they also point to institutions' increased ACPL awareness, policy adjustments, and coding as possible factors in the higher credit levels.

Initial ACPL findings for this year have been shared with the ACPL Workgroup, and individual institutions are invited to examine their multi-year ACPL data to examine trends and consider factors. Further exploration by the workgroup of changes in policy and practice at the institutional level will also continue to shed light on these trends.

Figure 3: ACPL Credits by Categories, 2016-17 to 2021-2022

Category	Assessment Examples	Total Students				Quarter Credits			
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-2022	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Credit by Testing	DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)	11	11	3	4	91	126	27	24
	College Level Exam Program (CLEP)	371	230	111	146	4,178	2,289	1,460	1,336
Prior Experiential Learning	Portfolio Review (college-level credits)	405	176	117	178	2,932	1,418	920	2,363
Extra-Institutional Learning	American Council of Education (ACE) (military training and education)	771	492	477	473	13,075	10,179	9,956	10,834
	Occupational Crosswalks (Military MOS, other)	832	176	131	132	15,770	2,637	2,669	3,309
	Individual Industry Cert (e.g. NCLEX-RN)	1,311	473	472	483	14,642	14,228	14,363	14,767
Course Challenges	Credit by Exam	471	637	463	485	3,308	4,907	3,873	3,793
Totals: (unduplicated students, credits)		4,099	2,174	1,761	1,891	53,995	35,782	33,267	36,425

ACPL Updates

Effective practices, policies, and updated information on ACPL have been shared via online meetings, the updated ACPL tool kit, and workgroup meetings.

ACPL Workgroup

This past year the ACPL Workgroup partnered with South Seattle College colleagues to develop strategic and technical supports for both institutions and ACPL leaders on the state level. Through a South Seattle College grant from National Sciences Foundation, consultants were contracted from the national organization Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to facilitate the development of an institutional ACPL toolkit and a logic model to support for state-level strategic planning. These two products were developed through a series of workgroup meetings that explored advancing ACPL in Washington through the high-level strategies of communication, crosswalks, data collection and analysis, equity considerations, and more. South Seattle College,

CAEL, and WSAC also presented on the ACPL Workgroup's process and products in the national CAEL conference in November 2022.

- The ACPL toolkit is posted in both a searchable document and as interactive material on WSAC's ACPL webpage and will be promoted as a resource in 2023. Examples and materials from innovative ACPL approaches - such as South Seattle College's Multiple Occupation Engineering and Technology Degree - are now highlighted, together with other state and national examples as an on-going resource to institutions.
- The logic model was developed primarily by CAEL as a strategic tool based on national best practices, rather than as a culmination of Washington leaders' strategic planning, and it will inform the Workgroup's planning in 2023 and beyond.

The Workgroup has also expressed interest in pursuing state-level disaggregated data on how ACPL credits have supported students' credential completion compared to students without ACPL. As a preliminary step, this year SBCTC was able to examine some disaggregated demographic data about students receiving ACPL from 2019-2020 to 2021-2022, with some initial observations:

- Students aged 25-44 received the majority of ACPL credits
- The proportion of male-identifying students has decreased over the last three years
- Veteran status students have decreased as a proportion of all ACPL-receiving students
- Part-time students have steadily decreased as a proportion of ACPL-receiving students
- Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African American and multi-racial identifying students have increased in this last year compared to previous years, but students in other race/ethnicity categories have declined

ACPL Resources

- ACPL webpage: On the WSAC website, this page houses ACPL's new institutional tool kit, workgroup meeting materials, workshop information, annual legislative reports, legislative links, and institutional policy links for ACPL and military credit.
- Updated policy links: Appendix D includes policy links for ACPL and military credit from higher education institutions.

Next Steps

WSAC has shared findings from 2022 ACPL data with the Workgroup and sector leaders, and the Workgroup will further consider annual data collection as part of its 2023 agenda. WSAC will offer individual institutions their multi-year ACPL data to consider as they evaluate policy and practice in the coming year.

In 2023, the Workgroup will promote better awareness of ACPL and promote the new institutional tool kit. It will continue its efforts to better understand who receives ACPL, where there may be racial/ethnic or other equity gaps in ACPL, and how ACPL correlates with higher student attainment levels. Finally, the Workgroup will plan for an expansion of remote learning opportunities and resources that can support institutions' development of ACPL policy and practice. WSAC will continue to serve as a resource to institutions, sectors, and the ACPL workgroup in collaboration for student success.

Appendix A

Headcount and Enrolled Veterans and Active Military Members at Public Institutions

Community and Technical Colleges

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Head count of all students	379,480	373,437	369,709	362,862	337,618	278,663	261,874
Veterans and Active Military Students	14,062	13,652	13,258	12,490	11,133	8,219	6,543
Percent of full head count	3.7%	3.6%	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	2.9%	2.5%

Source: [State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Data Dashboard](#) accessed December 2022

Public Baccalaureate Institutions

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Head count of all students	137,091	138,880	140,260	142,158	142,105	Unavailable	
Veterans and Active Military Students	3,491	4,145	4,668	4,017	3,893	Unavailable	
Percent of full head count	2.5%	3.0%	3.3%	2.8%	2.7%	Unavailable	

Sources: ERDC State Public Four-Year Dashboard provided by Council of Presidents

For SBCTC data, the following categories are included in the Veterans and Active Military Students category: Chapter 30 MGIB (Montgomery GI Bill), Chapter 31 VR&E (Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program), Chapter 32 VEAP (Veterans Educational Assistance Program), Chapter 33 Post 9/11 Veterans, Chapter 1606 MGIB Selected Reserve, Chapter 1607 REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program), All other veterans receiving benefits not listed above, Active Duty (including national guard/reserves) currently using military tuition assistance, Active duty military students using military benefits, All other veterans not receiving benefits, including those who decline using their benefits.

For public baccalaureate institutional data, the following categories are included for academic years 2015-16 through 2016-17 veteran before Global War on Terrorism, veteran global war on terrorism and veteran period of service unknown. For academic years 2017-18 to present the following categories are included active duty military and veteran defined as a person who served in

the active military, naval or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.⁶

⁶ In prior ACPL reports data was reported by each public, baccalaureate institution to the Council of Presidents. The categories reported included Veterans and Active Military Students category: Chapter 30 MGIB (Montgomery GI Bill), Chapter 31 VR&E (Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program), Chapter 32 VEAP (Veterans Educational Assistance Program), Chapter 33 Post 9/11 Veterans, Chapter 1606 MGIB Selected Reserve, Chapter 1607 REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program), All other veterans receiving benefits not listed above, Active Duty (including national guard/reserves) currently using military tuition assistance, Active duty military students using military benefits, All other veterans not receiving benefits, including those who decline using their benefits.

Appendix B

Summary of Progress on ACPL Workgroup Goals

	Summary	Progress
Goal 1	Increase number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning.	Ongoing.
Goal 2	Increase number and type of credits awarded.	Ongoing.
Goal 3	Develop transparent policies and practices.	Sample policies included in the ACPL handbook. All institutions submit links to ACPL and military credit policies annually.
Goal 4	Improve prior learning assessment practices.	Training and sharing of practices through ACPL workgroup meetings and workshops.
Goal 5	Create tools to develop faculty and staff expertise and to share exemplary policies and practices.	ACPL handbook updates, listserv, spring 2020 training, and online resources available on the WSAC web page.
Goal 6	Develop articulation agreements when patterns of credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways.	Select crosswalks available in handbook.
Goal 7	Develop outcome measures to track progress on the goals outlined in this section.	Progress on Goals 1-6 will continue to be monitored through annual ACPL report updates. ACPL Workgroup in 2017 determined that there were too many variables to create statewide numeric outcome goals.*

*For example, institutions with a higher percentage of student veterans might be expected to award higher levels of ACPL. Also, as economic changes occur, institutions may enroll more or fewer older students with previous on-the-job training and experience, which might equate to ACPL credit awarded through assessments of portfolios.

Appendix C

2022 Prior Learning and Military Policy Links Submitted by Institutions

Community and Technical Colleges

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Bates Technical College	https://batestech.edu/transferring-to-bates/	https://www.batestech.edu/student-resources/veterans-center/
Bellevue College	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/transfer/awarding-non-traditional-credit/	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/veterans/academic-credit-for-military-training-and-coursework/
Bellingham Technical College	https://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/AcademicCreditforPriorLearning.html	http://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/Veterans/indexVeterans.aspx
Big Bend Community College	https://www.bigbend.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Academic-Credit-for-Prior-Learning-policy.pdf	https://www.bigbend.edu/wp-content/uploads/admissions/Credit-for-Military-Service.pdf
Cascadia College	http://www.cascadia.edu/programs/pla.aspx	http://www.cascadia.edu/enrollment/transfercredit.aspx
Centralia College	https://www.centralia.edu/about/policies/student.aspx	https://www.centralia.edu/about/policies/student.aspx
Clark College	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/nontraditional_programs.php	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/military.php
Clover Park Technical College	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/credit-for-non-traditional-learning	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/veterans-transfer-credit
Columbia Basin College	http://www.columbiabasin.edu/ACPL	https://www.columbiabasin.edu/index.aspx?page=1475
Edmonds Community College	https://www.edmonds.edu/credentials/additional-ways-to-earn-credit.html	https://www.edcc.edu/credentials/additional-ways-to-earn-credit.html
Everett Community College	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit#Military_credit

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Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Grays Harbor College	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning
Green River College	https://www.greenriver.edu/students/academics/alternative-options-for-earning-credit/	https://www.greenriver.edu/media/content-assets/documents/student-affairs/JST-transcript-evaluation-procedures.pdf
Highline College	https://www.highline.edu/academic-support/prior-learning-assessment/	http://catalog.highline.edu/content.php?catoid=21&navoid=1490&hl=veterans&returnto=search#veterans-credit
Lake Washington Institute of Technology	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/prior-learning/	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/veterans-services/military-training/
Lower Columbia College	https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/catalog-19-20/academic-policies-and-records/index.php	https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/catalog-19-20/academic-policies-and-records/index.php
North Seattle College	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/credit-prior-learning	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/military-credit
Olympic College	https://www.olympic.edu/programs-classes/transfer-oc/transfer-credits-and-award-credit	https://www.olympic.edu/services/military-and-veteran-programs
Peninsula College	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment
Pierce College (Ft Steila & Puyallup)	https://www.pierce.ctc.edu/acpl	https://www.pierce.ctc.edu/acpl
Renton Technical College	https://www.rtc.edu/clep-score-equivalencies	https://www.rtc.edu/veteran-services
Seattle Central College	https://seattlecentral.edu/credit-for-prior-learning	https://seattlecentral.edu/credit-for-prior-learning
Shoreline Community College	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/documents/5164PriorLearningAssessPolicy.pdf	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/documents/5164PriorLearningAssessPolicy.pdf

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Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Skagit Valley College	https://catalog.skagit.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=1621	https://www.skagit.edu/veterans-outreach/
South Puget Sound Community College	https://spsc.edu/start/transfer	https://spsc.edu/start/transfer
South Seattle College	https://southseattle.edu/programs/professional-technical-career-training/credit-prior-learning	https://southseattle.edu/programs/professional-technical-career-training/credit-prior-learning
Spokane Community College	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment
Spokane Falls Community College	http://catalog.spokane.edu/PriorLearning.aspx?page=PV1	http://catalog.spokane.edu/PriorLearning.aspx?page=PV5
Tacoma Community College	https://www.tacomacc.edu/about/policies/prior-learning-assessment	https://www.tacomacc.edu/about/policies/prior-learning-assessment
Walla Walla Community College	www.wbcc.edu/acpl	https://www.wbcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/academic-credit-military-training-policy.pdf
Wenatchee Valley College	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/military-education-experience.html
Whatcom Community College	http://whatcom.edu/academics/learning-options/credit-for-prior-learning	https://www.whatcom.edu/home/showdocument?id=3915
Yakima Valley College	https://www.yvcc.edu/admissions/get-credit-for-what-you-know/	https://yvcc.instructure.com/courses/1142101

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Private Baccalaureates

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Gonzaga University	https://www.gonzaga.edu/undergraduate-admission/apply/how-to-apply/transfer-students/transfer-credit-policies	https://www.gonzaga.edu/undergraduate-admission/apply/how-to-app
Heritage University	https://heritage.edu/admissions/freshmen-admissions/	https://www.heritage.edu/admissions/veterans-admissions/military
Pacific Lutheran University	https://www.plu.edu/catalog-2022-2023/undergraduate-program/	https://www.plu.edu/catalog-2022-2023/undergraduate-program/
Saint Martin's University	https://www.stmartin.edu/admissions-financial-aid/undergraduate/applying-saint-martins/transfer-students-undergrad	https://www.stmartin.edu/admissions-financial-aid/undergraduate/
Seattle Pacific University	https://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20223/academic-policies-procedures/limitations-on-credit	https://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20223/academic-policies-pr
Seattle University	https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-service-center/registrar-policies/CLEP---DANTES-75-17.pdf	https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-service-center/registrar/
University of Puget Sound	https://www.pugetsound.edu/sites/default/files/2022-08/AD22BULLETIN_SPLIT_POLICY.pdf	https://www.pugetsound.edu/sites/default/files/2022-08/AD22BULLE
Walla Walla University	https://wallawalla.smartcatalogiq.com/2022-2023/2022-2023-Undergraduate-Bulletin/Academic-Information-and-Policies	https://wallawalla.smartcatalogiq.com/2022-2023/2022-2023-Underg
Whitman College	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit
Whitworth University	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/academics/school-of-continuing-studies/transfer-information/credit-for-prior-learning/	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/academics/school-of-continuing-studies/

Public Baccalaureates

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Central Washington University	https://www.cwu.edu/resources-reports/cwup-5-90-040-academic-and-general-regulations#Prior%20LEarning%20Assessment	https://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/content.php?catoid=64&navoid=4112
Eastern Washington University	https://catalog.ewu.edu/transfer-students/	https://catalog.ewu.edu/transfer-students/
The Evergreen State College	https://www.evergreen.edu/admissions/prior-learning-assessment-credit-exam	https://www.evergreen.edu/admissions/prior-learning-assessment-credit-exam
University of Washington	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/policies/#prior-learning-assessment	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/policies/#military-c
Washington State University	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/credit-by-exam/	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/military-credit/
Western Washington University	https://admissions.wvu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies	https://admissions.wvu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has nine members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Five are citizen members, including one current student.