2023 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. It helps Washington make strides toward its statewide educational attainment goal: 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 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]

Significant support for ACPL policy and practice has developed in Washington since 2011. 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 the economic crisis on higher education students and employees, recent research indicates 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 building knowledge capacity to

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[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.pdfv.

[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.

support infrastructure for effective ACPL in institutions and looks forward to more collaborative action to increase ACPL opportunities for students in 2024.

2022-23 ACPL Findings

For this report year, all 34 community and technical colleges, six public baccalaureate institutions, and eight member institutions of Independent Colleges of Washington submitted data. This is the fourth year data reporting for community and technical colleges (CTCs) was provided by State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) rather than by each individual community college.[4]

Prior Learning Credits and Students Receiving ACPL

During the 2022-23 academic year, Washington public and independent four-year institutions, and community and technical colleges awarded 47,507 ACPL credits that applied toward certificates or degrees. Approximately 2,391 students earned credits for prior learning.[5]

Changes in Total ACPL Credits Awarded Over Time

The overall number of ACPL credits increased 13% in 2022-23 compared to the previous year (Figure 1). Examining ACPL credits by sector shows the following increases (Figure 2):

- CTCs: +49%.
- Independent baccalaureates: +20%
- Public baccalaureates: -11%

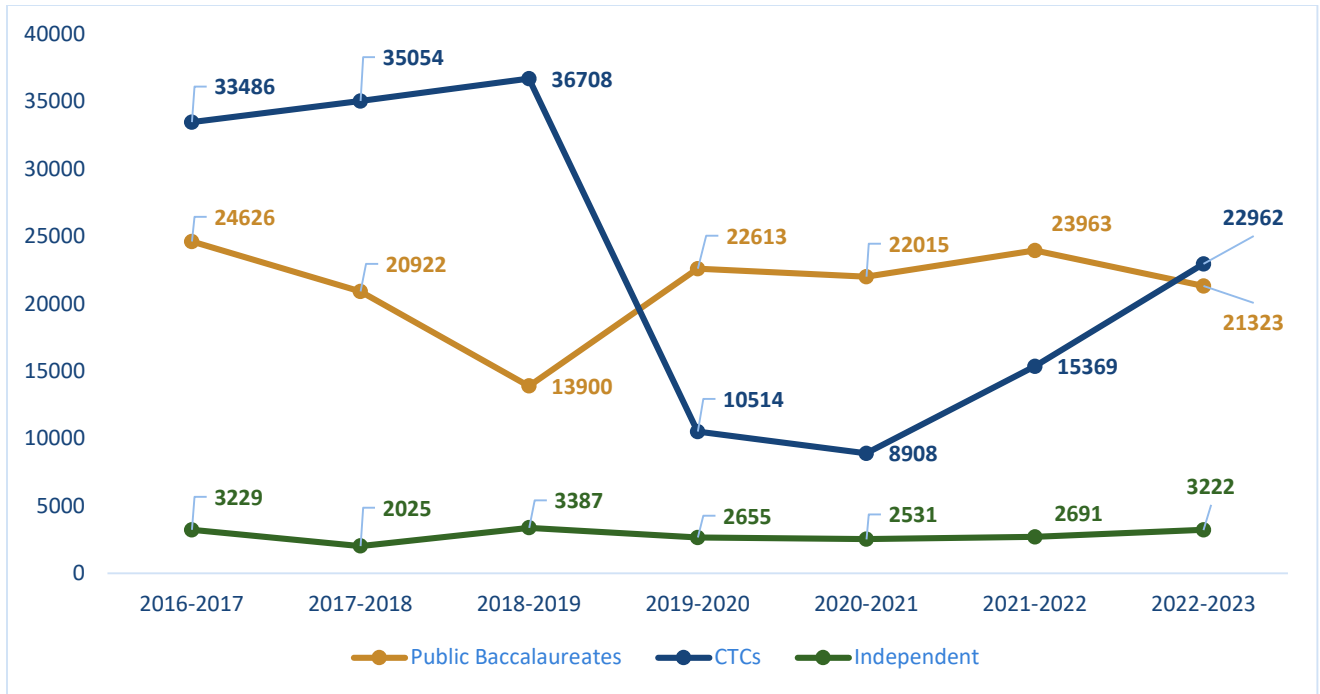*Figure 1: Comparison of ACPL Credits in all institutions since 2016-17*
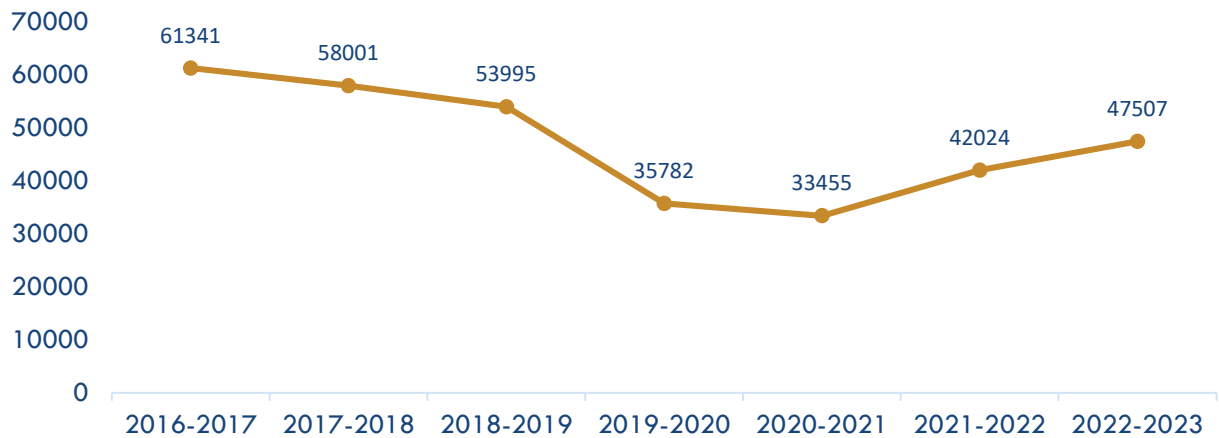
Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021,2022 and 2023).

Note: Revision to total ACPL Credits in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to add CTC data for the Joint Services Transcript not captured in previous reports.

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[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.

Figure 2: ACPL Credits by Educational Sector, 2016-17 to 2021-22

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from 49 institutions (fall in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023).

Note: Revision to total ACPL Credits in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to add CTC data for the Joint Services Transcript not captured in previous reports.

Comparison by Categories of Prior Learning Assessment

A detailed look at the categories of prior learning assessment over a five-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).

- **The number of students receiving ACPL increased in half the categories compared to the previous year.** The biggest increases in students receiving ACPL in 2022-23 were in the areas of Joint Services Transcript (+378 individuals, or 149%), Credit by Exam or course challenges (+39 individuals or 8%), and CLEP (+21 individuals, or 14%). The biggest decreases in students receiving ACPL in 2022-23 were in the areas of Individual Industry Certs (-46 individuals, or -10%), ACE (-29 individuals, or -6%), and Portfolio Review (-10 individuals, or -6%).

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- **Similarly, ACPL credits in half the categories of prior learning increased in 2022-23.** Compared to the prior year, Joint Services Transcript credits increased the most (+7,233 credits, or 129%), followed by Credits by Exam (+730 credits, or 19%), ACE (+324 credits, or 3%), and DANTES (+72 credits, or 300%).

Summary of 2022-23 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. Specifically, there was an increase in students receiving ACPL in the area of Joint Services Transcript.

- CTCs and independent baccalaureates show increases in ACPL credits this year compared to last year.

- At least half the 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, saw a headcount increase (11,177 additional students or 4%), and saw ACPL credits increased (Appendix A). Military-related credits are an important part of the ACPL increase in 2022-23, yet surprisingly the CTCs report 778 fewer veterans and active military students, or a 12% drop from the previous year.

In the baccalaureate sectors, which represent a smaller enrollment proportion of all institutions included in this report, the 2022-23 annual credits are the highest since 2016-17 for the private baccalaureate sector and annual credits have remained consistent for public baccalaureates since 2019-20.

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 2022-23

Category	Assessment Examples	Total Students					Quarter Credits				
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Credit by Testing	DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)	11	11	3	4	7	91	126	27	24	96
	College Level Exam Program (CLEP)	371	230	111	146	167	4,178	2,289	1,460	1, 336	1,366
Prior Experiential Learning	Portfolio Review (college-level credits)	405	176	117	178	168	2,932	1,418	920	2,363	1,429
Extra-Institutional Learning	American Council of Education (ACE) (military training and education)	771	492	477	473	444	13,075	10,179	9,956	10,834	11,158
	Occupational Crosswalks	832	176	131	132	123	15,770	2,637	2,669	3.309	3,266
	Joint Services Transcript *			21	254	632			187	5,598	12,831
	Individual Industry Cert (e.g. NCLEX-RN)	1,311	473	472	483	437	14,642	14,228	14,363	14,767	12,838

Category	Assessment Examples	Total Students					Quarter Credits				
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Course Challenges	Credit by Exam	471	637	463	485	524	3,308	4,907	3,873	3,793	4,523
Totals: (unduplicated students, credits)		4,099	2,174	1,777	2,131	2,391	53,995	35,782	33,267	36,425	47,507

*Note: Revision to total ACPL Credits in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to add CTC data for the Joint Services Transcript not captured in previous reports.

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 identified priority areas of learning which included strategies to support institutional buy-in, understanding the available ACPL data, learning from other states, and tools to support in the assessment of credits for prior learning. These priority areas lead to the following learning opportunities:

- Credit Predictor Pro demonstration presentation:
  - CAEL's recommended tool to help streamline, monitor, and group credit for prior learning.
  - Pierce College District pilot.
- Credits2Careers demonstration presentation:
  - Tool primarily focused on awarding credit for military experience, on-the-job industry credentials, professional licensure, and other prior learning.
- Best practices from other states:
  - Oklahoma's Show What You Know.
  - Virginia's Credits2Careers.
  - Delaware's CPL Framework.
- Connection to Learning and Employment Records:
  - Skills-based hiring focused on removing barriers to employer engagement by focusing on competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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. The SBCTC was able to examine some disaggregated demographic data about students receiving ACPL from 2019-23, noting the following observations:

- Consistently, students aged 25-44 received the majority of ACPL credits.
- The proportion of male-identifying students increased in 2022-23.
- Veteran status students have increased as a proportion of all ACPL-receiving students in 2022-23 when compared to the previous year.
- For the first time in four years, part-time students have increased the proportion of ACPL-receiving students.
- Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, and multi-racial identifying students have steadily increased compared to previous years, but students in the American Indian category 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

Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has shared findings from 2023 ACPL data with the Workgroup and sector leaders, and the Workgroup will further consider annual data collection as part of its 2024 agenda. WSAC will offer individual institutions their multi-year ACPL data to consider as they evaluate policy and practice in the coming year.

In 2024, the Workgroup will promote better awareness of ACPL and will seek opportunities to share knowledge across sectors and campuses. 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	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Head count of all students	379,480	373,437	369,709	362,862	337,618	278,663	261,874	273,051
Veterans and Active Military Students	14,062	13,652	13,258	12,490	11,133	8,219	6,543	5,765
Percent of full head count	3.7%	3.6%	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	2.9%	2.5%	2.1%

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Data Dashboard accessed May 2024.

Public Baccalaureate Institutions

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Head count of all students	137,091	138,880	140,260	142,158	142,105	109,834	106,031	Unavailable
Veterans and Active Military Students	3,491	4,145	4,668	4,017	3,893	2,660	2,485	Unavailable
Percent of full head count	2.5%	3.0%	3.3%	2.8%	2.7%	2.4%	2.3%	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

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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]

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[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.

Washington Student Achievement Council

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

2023 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/admissions-aid/process/transfer/	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/admissions-aid/process/transfer/military-credits/
Bellingham Technical College	https://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/AcademicCreditforPriorLearning.html	https://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/Veterans.html#Assess
Big Bend Community College	https://www.bigbend.edu/student-center/prior-learning/	https://www.bigbend.edu/i-am/veteran/
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

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.centralia.edu/about/policies/student.aspx	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
Skagit Valley College	https://catalog.skagit.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=1621	https://www.skagit.edu/veterans-outreach/

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
South Puget Sound Community College	https://spscc.edu/start/transfer	https://spscc.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.wwcc.edu/acpl	https://www.wwcc.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

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/catalogs/current/undergraduate/degree-requirements/academic-policies
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.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/OTR/pages/34506791/Certification+and+Credit+for+Military+Training
Seattle University	https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-service-center/registrar/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://www.wallawalla.edu/academics/student-academic-services/academic-records/veteran-benefit-info
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.wwu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies	https://admissions.wwu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies

Washington Student Achievement Council

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 each represent one 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.