

## Transfer Students - Frequently Asked Questions 2014

### JTC Overview

The Joint Transfer Council (JTC)<sup>1</sup> is a standing committee with representatives from public and independent academic degree-granting institutions and state agencies. JTC was formed in 2003 to address statewide transfer issues and recommend policy strategies for transfer, including Major Related Program agreements and other statewide communication strategies related to transfer and transfer issues.

JTC has formal communication with and works on behalf of institutions represented by the membership in collaboration with the Executive Committee of the Intercollege Relations Commission and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). JTC continues to work to develop ways to inform students, in clear language, about the transfer process and the information they need to continue their educational careers.

A work group consisting of students and cross-sector representatives worked through 2008 and 2009 to develop a transfer student rights and responsibilities document outlining both student and institutional rights and responsibilities.

This document mirrors concepts delineated in WASC's *1986 Policy on Intercollege Transfer and Articulation among Washington Public Colleges and Universities (Umbrella Policy)*. The Transfer Rights and Responsibilities document was approved by JTC in December 2008 and by the educational leadership of the public and private baccalaureates and community and technical colleges in 2009.

The group next turned its attention to creating simple statements using a Frequently Asked Questions format to help clarify the transfer process for students. The group developed the initial set of questions and answers in 2009. These statements are based on current policy and practice and are available for download by colleges, universities, and students on the WSAC Transfer website at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/transfers>.

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<sup>1</sup> Established in 2003 and known as the Joint Access Oversight Group (JAOG) until 2011.

## **Transfer Students - Frequently Asked Questions 2014**

The colleges and universities of Washington have long recognized the importance of facilitating travel for students moving from one institution to another in pursuit of their educational goals. Working both directly, college-to-college, and through voluntary associations such as the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC), the state's publicly supported institutions have established mutually acceptable guidelines and procedures to assist students in transition from college to college. The colleges work constantly, moreover, to obtain appropriate articulation between educational programs, to monitor transfer practices, and to improve the agreements, guidelines, and procedures that govern transfer.

It is important to acknowledge that the State of Washington has a dual system of higher education composed of public and independent colleges and universities. A significant number of community college students complete their studies for the Bachelor's degree in the independent sector. Although the provisions of this statement apply only to transfer from a community college to a public four-year institution, it should be noted that independent institutions work closely and in similar ways to facilitate transfer from community colleges to these institutions. The independent institutions are commended for their sensitivity and efforts in this regard and are encouraged to continue in this pattern in the future.

### **Q-1. Does every Washington College and University accept transfer students?**

The great majority of colleges and universities in Washington enroll transfer students. Some colleges have a limited number of transfer student "slots" and admission may be competitive. You should visit the admission web site of the college or university you are considering and review its transfer student admission requirements to help you prepare.

### **Q-2. Do students who go directly from high school to a baccalaureate institution do better academically than transfer students from community/technical colleges?**

Not necessarily. In many cases, students who transfer from a community/technical college to a baccalaureate institution do just as well, or better, academically than students who began as freshmen. If you are a good student and have developed good study habits at your community/technical college, you should be well prepared to succeed in classes at your transfer institution.

### **Q-3. After enrolling at baccalaureate institution, may I still make up necessary courses at a community/technical college?**

Many colleges and universities in Washington allow students to continue earning credits at a community/technical college after they have transferred. It is fairly common for students to return to their hometown in the summer and enroll in a community/technical college course, and increasing numbers of students enroll in classes at both the community/technical college and baccalaureate institution at the same time. Keep in mind there are limits on the amount of credit you can transfer from a community/technical college. There may also be time limits on when credits may be taken, especially during the last year of attending the bachelor degree institution. Check your institution for the number of credits they require you take on the campus, especially during the final year, before taking credits at another institution.

**Q-4. When should I apply to transfer?**

Each college or university has its own closing dates for admission applications and the dates may be different for each term. Closing dates for transfer applicants may differ from the closing dates for freshman applicants, and your major department may have a separate departmental application deadline as well.

A year ahead of your intended transfer, verify the closing date at each intended institution and plan to apply before the deadline. Also, check back once you get closer to the deadline to be sure that you have the right deadline date.

In general, you will submit an application in:

- January for fall admission (courses begin in August or September)
- August for winter admission (classes begin in January)
- October for spring admission (classes begin in March or April)

Don't wait until the last minute to apply. Applying early will give you enough time to prepare the appropriate application forms and to request the required official transcript from each institution you have attended.

**Q-5. Do I need to talk to an academic advisor before transferring?**

YES! It is highly encouraged! While there is information available on college websites to help you develop your own plan, talking to an admission representative or major advisor before transferring can help you make sure the courses you take count toward the degree you want to earn. While lots of credits transfer, you'll want to make sure those credits help you earn your chosen degree and graduate on time.

**Q-6. Which is more important for transfer, my grade point average (GPA) or my course completion pattern?**

You will have to pay attention to both your GPA and your course pattern. Many schools have a minimum cumulative GPA for admission, and a number of them require a certain grade, such as a 2.0 (C) or better, to transfer an individual course. In terms of your course pattern, some colleges or universities with competitive admission may require that you have an earned transfer degree:

- Direct Transfer Agreement – DTA associate degree, or
- Associate of Science Transfer – AS-T associate degree

and/or be “major ready,” while others may not require an associate or other degree and will allow you to transfer at any point in your studies. Make sure you know the admission requirements of the school you plan to attend.

**Q-7. Is there a minimum grade point average (GPA) required to transfer? Do I need a specific GPA to transfer?**

This varies by college and some majors require prerequisite courses or a minimum GPA. To find out if your intended college or major has any special admission criteria, contact an admission representative at the baccalaureate institution you plan to attend.

Most colleges require a minimum grade per course, either for admission into the college or into a major. The minimum transfer grade is usually a 2.0 (C grade). Should you earn a course grade below 2.0, you might not receive transfer credit for that course.

**Q-8. Are there advantages to earning a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or the Associate in Science Transfer Track 1 or Track 2 (AS-T #1, AS-T #2) associate degrees and then transferring?**

Earning a DTA or AS-T associate degree before transferring has advantages. Transfer degrees were developed by community/technical college and baccalaureate institutions to enable you to enter your upper-division course work and complete your bachelor's degree as efficiently as possible. Courses included as part of the DTA/AS-T that otherwise might not transfer on a course-by-course basis will transfer, and for many public baccalaureate institutions, the DTA/AS-T ensures priority during the admissions cycle if you apply prior to the admission deadline.

The DTA degree satisfies all or most of the lower-division general education requirements. The AS-T degree includes more math and science than can fit in the DTA, and leave some general education requirements to be completed at the baccalaureate institution. This pathway can save time for students majoring in math and science fields.

In addition, you may be able to complete your transfer DTA, AS-T, AA or other associate's degree after your initial transfer to your four-year school by either transferring classes back from your four-year school or taking remaining classes at your community/technical college. Check with both schools to be sure of their policies.

**Q-9. What do I need to know if I plan to transfer without earning an associate's degree?**

Completing a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or the Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree will often maximize the number of college credits that will transfer to a university and save students money. However some students may need to transfer prior to completing their DTA/AS-T degree.

Many colleges and universities will require applicants with fewer than 40 transferable credits to submit pre-college test scores (SAT or ACT) and meet earlier freshman admission deadlines. High school transcripts could play a more important role in the admission process. If so, you will need to consider whether your performance in these areas will meet a school's requirements should they be used in the admission application review process. Students should also know that in some cases, the highest priority for admission is given to applicants holding an associate degree.

**Q-10. How will courses be evaluated if I transfer to a Washington college or university without completing a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or the Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree?**

Each course will be evaluated individually to determine if it meets the general education requirements, satisfies specific degree requirements, or transfers as an elective to that school. Courses that might have been accepted toward fulfilling general education requirements may not be accepted as an equivalent without a DTA or AS-T degree.

**Q-11. When I get my Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree does that mean I will automatically have junior standing?**

A student who has earned a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or the Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree at a community or technical college will generally have junior standing at the four-year institution. When a student applies to a four-year baccalaureate institution, the courses are evaluated and the total number of transfer credits the university accepts determines class standing. The DTA/AS-T is the best route to take to transfer in with junior standing. Your advisor can help you review how different educational pathways transfer to various baccalaureate institutions.

**Q-12. Will my College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) credits also transfer to the baccalaureate university since they satisfied my core requirements toward my Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree at the community/technical college?**

Policies vary. While baccalaureate institutions and universities may accept the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) Associate Degree, you may also have to meet test score requirements to receive credit for particular coursework. Check with an advisor at the baccalaureate institution to which you plan to transfer. In most cases, original documentation for your CLEP, AP, and/or IB scores are required by the baccalaureate institution to correctly evaluate them.

**Q-13. I will be transferring, but am not sure where I will transfer. I want to keep the most transfer credits possible. What should I do?**

Generally speaking, students who complete a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) or Associate in Science Transfer (AS-T) associate degree can transfer those credits to any of the participating colleges and universities and have them count toward graduation. Certain majors do have specific requirements so you should work with an advisor to choose the courses or degree path that will work best for you.

Your desired major is as important as where you'll earn that degree. If you know what you want to study then you can work with admission representatives to compare similar programs at several schools. Then you can decide on a degree path at your community/technical college that will help make the transfer process smooth. Major Related Programs (MRPs) are major-specific DTA/AS-T transfer degrees that help you take the most efficient path towards your major and keep the most transfer credits.

**Q-14. There appear to be many transfer paths to get to the university – how do I decide which pathway to take?**

It depends largely on whether you know your career goals early in your education. The Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) associate degree is the most generally applicable pathway to all majors. It allows for the most flexibility in your decision-making and provides you with the largest number of opportunities as you get closer to transferring into your bachelor's degree.

Even if you change your mind toward your end goal, the completion of a DTA gives you a solid foundation toward continued progress in your education. However, it requires careful planning to be prepared for business or science-based degree programs. As you narrow your choice of degree program, pay attention to elective classes; complete as many pre-requisites as possible for your chosen degree program within the elective area of the DTA.

There are also several Major-Related Programs (MRPs) for students who know what they want to major in. If you know you want to major in business, engineering, nursing, science, or fields related to these areas, you should check out the MRP for that major. A current list of MRPs is available on the Washington Student Achievement Council website located at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/transfers>.

If, as a freshman, you are confident which degree program you are pursuing, a Major-Related Program (MRP) option is an efficient pathway to a bachelor's degree. The disadvantage to an MRP is that if you change your degree program, your options are restricted and you may end up taking additional courses. Consult an advisor prior to making this decision.

**Q-15. What if I know that I want to major in business—or a business-related field?**

If you know you will major in business or a business-related field, the Business Direct Transfer Agreement (Business DTA/MRP) associate degree is the most applicable option. The Business DTA/MRP includes the general education courses found in the DTA degree and the business prerequisite courses needed to begin junior level business courses at your transfer college. Check with the admission representative of your intended transfer college; different business programs may have slightly different mathematics requirements.

**Q-16. What if I know I want to major in science, engineering, computing, or a related field?**

If you plan to study a science, computer, or engineering field, one of the science-related DTA degrees or the Associate in Science Transfer Tracks 1 and 2 (AS-T #1, AS-T #2) are the recommended, most efficient options. The AS-T degrees include more math and science than can fit in the DTA, and leave some general education requirements to be completed at the baccalaureate institution.

**Q-17. What is the maximum number of credits I can transfer to a bachelor's degree program?**

It varies. Most baccalaureate institutions and universities accept 90 to 105 quarter (60 to 73 semester) credits from community/technical colleges. That does not mean all credits can always be applied to your intended bachelor's degree. Also, most baccalaureate institutions have "senior residency" requirements, meaning a student needs to earn the last 45 quarter or 30 semester credits of a bachelor's degree program at that college.

**Q-18. How many credits should I complete before transferring?**

While there is no set number of credits a student must earn prior to transfer, those who complete the DTA or AS-T may receive priority in the admissions process. The more college credits you have earned, the more likely your admission will be based on your college grade point average, not your high school GPA and/or pre-college test scores (SAT or ACT). Typically, students who have completed a minimum of 40 quarter credits (27 semester credits) may be admitted as transfer students at most institutions in Washington.

**Q-19. How many credits do I need to be considered a transfer student at four-year schools?**

If you have taken college courses after high school graduation, college and university admission representatives will consider you a transfer applicant. Although college-level courses taken while still in high school, such as Running Start or College in the High School, will transfer to most four-year institutions, you may be considered a freshman applicant. Typically, students who have completed a minimum of 40 quarter credits (27 semester credits) may be admitted as transfer students at most institutions in Washington. Contact the admission office at the four-year university you plan to attend for more information.

**Q-20. Will all of my courses transfer?**

College-level, academic courses from Washington State community/technical colleges will transfer to baccalaureate institutions. Remedial or pre-college level classes do not transfer. Professional/technical or vocational classes completed at either a community or technical college may transfer in certain cases, which depend on the baccalaureate institution and the degree you are pursuing.

Contact the admission office at the four-year institution you plan to attend for more information about credit transfer policy, minimum grade requirements, and whether your transfer courses will apply to your intended major. Keep in mind that while most academic classes do transfer, not all may apply to your major. Also, remember that all credits taken within an academic transfer degree (DTA or AS-T) generally transfer.

**Q-21. How can I find out whether my courses will transfer?**

As a general rule, most courses that are “general education” or “distribution” courses will transfer without any difficulty. The websites of each college or university can tell you if and how your major-specific courses will transfer. Contacting the school where you are transferring can be very helpful, and always, touch base with your college’s admission advisor.

**Q-22. How do I know which classes will transfer? Which credits will count towards core/general education requirements? Which to my major? Which as electives?**

The baccalaureate institutions and universities evaluate credits for transfer based upon course level, content, and the relationship of the course to other courses in the curriculum to determine equivalencies. Most classes transfer, but not all may apply to your specific degree choice.

Students can check how specific individual courses transfer by referring to each university’s transfer equivalency guide, which can usually be found on each school’s website. Students are encouraged to meet with an admission representative at their intended transfer institution if they still have questions about how courses transfer.

**Q-23. Why is the college or university that is evaluating my course transfer request asking for additional materials (e.g., course syllabus, course text, or course portfolio)?**

This additional information may be required to better describe the content of a course, the prerequisites for the course, or other information that will help determine its equivalent at the receiving institution. For example, this additional information may be used to evaluate the course’s instruction method to help determine whether it may satisfy requirements for a writing-intensive course.

**Q-24. Will my professional-technical credits from a community or technical college transfer?**

The number of professional-technical credits that transfer is limited. The Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) associate degree allows up to 15 professional-technical credits to be transferred as part of the degree. However, each institution determines its own transfer policy and many have developed special articulation agreements. Before you apply for admission as a transfer student, ask an admission representative about that institution's transfer policy on professional-technical courses so you know what to expect.

**Q-25. Do courses graded with a 'D' transfer?**

Sometimes. Each institution determines its own transfer policy and some institutions transfer courses with a 'D' grade and some institutions do not. A higher grade may be required for courses you plan to apply to your major. For specific information, contact an admission representative at the college or university where you intend to transfer.

**Q-26. When do my credits transfer?**

This varies from institution to institution. Some colleges evaluate your courses before you are admitted, although this evaluation is often considered unofficial. Most require you to either be admitted or enrolled before completing an official transfer evaluation. Read your destination institution's website or talk to the admission representative to find out how and when your credits will be evaluated and then transferred.

**Q-27. What can I do if a course does not transfer?**

The transferability of a course is determined by the receiving institution. If a course you thought would transfer did not, contact the office that prepared your transfer evaluation and ask why. In general, you can expect one of three responses:

- the receiving institution will explain how its transfer policy was applied to the course in question;
- you will be asked to provide more information, such as a syllabus, that more thoroughly describes the transfer course; or
- you may be asked to explain your intended use of the course because there may be some flexibility in an institution's transfer practices.

After review of your circumstances and your academic goals, the decision about course transferability could be reconsidered.

If, after discussing your transfer evaluation, you are still not satisfied, you may ask about the institution's appeal policy and then carefully follow the process for challenging your evaluation.

**Q-28. Do I need to declare a major at the time of making application to the university?**

No, not usually. Students can transfer with earned associate's degrees or just a few credits. You may be asked to indicate what field or major you are interested in or would like to study. This gives admission representatives at the institution information that will help them advise you. It is perfectly acceptable to indicate on the application you are undecided if that is the case.



**Q-29. Does an articulation agreement guarantee admission to a destination program?**

It depends on the institutions involved and the type of agreement. Following an articulation agreement helps ensure that you have the correct classes for the degree you want to earn. In some cases the highest priority for admission is given to applicants who have followed an articulation agreement.

Contact the admission representative or major advisor of the destination program at the college you plan to attend for the most reliable and up-to-date information. Typically, there are no admission guarantees for transfer students in any destination program.

**Q-30. What are the benefits of the articulation process?**

An articulation process or agreement means that two (or more) colleges have worked together to help students move easily from a specific program at one school to a similar program at another school. The benefit is that the classes and requirements are spelled out ahead of time and you know what is required.

**Q-31. Do I need to finish the full year sequence of courses (like biology, physics, or music theory) before I transfer?**

It is best that you complete a sequence at one institution, especially if you are transferring from a quarter-credit college to a semester-credit college or university (or vice versa). Colleges differ in the order they teach concepts, so interrupting a sequence could mean both duplication and gaps in your preparation for later courses. However, if you are not able to complete the entire sequence, consult with the university you plan to attend.

**Q-32. Can transfer students participate in intercollegiate athletics?**

Typically, yes, provided the transfer student meets the eligibility requirements of the athletic association for the intended sport. Athletic eligibility can be complicated, so be sure the admission representative at your intended institution is aware of your interest in varsity athletics and ask to be referred to someone (perhaps in the athletic department) who can answer your questions on athletic eligibility.

**Q-33. I am an adult student returning to college after several years of not taking courses. Is there a time limitation on courses that I took years ago and can those courses be transferred to a university for general admittance? Will my courses still transfer?**

Transfer policies vary from institution to institution. Generally, colleges and universities do not have time limits on when general education courses were taken. You will probably find that college-level general education courses count the same as if you had taken them very recently. Nevertheless, you need to check with your intended transfer college to make sure you're within their time limits for your courses to transfer.

Technical (mathematics or sciences for example) or major-specific courses may need to be retaken. There may be time limit requirements depending upon the program you plan to pursue. Be sure to check with the college you are planning to attend regarding its transfer policy and your specific situation.

### **Q-34. How do quarter credits transfer into a semester credit system?**

There are two major systems used in postsecondary education to quantify hours of instruction: semesters and quarters. The semester system divides the academic year into two equal sessions of 15 to 17 weeks, excluding summers. The quarter system divides the academic year into three equal sessions of 10 to 11 weeks, excluding summers. The total amount of time spent in instruction is equivalent.

#### **General formula for converting credits**

Convert quarter credits to semester credits: Divide quarter credits by 1.5.

Examples:     3 quarter credits  $\div$  1.5 = 2 semester credits  
                  5 quarter credits  $\div$  1.5 = 3.3 semester credits  
                  180 quarter credits are equal to 120 semester credits ( $180 \div 1.5 = 120$ )

Convert semester credits to quarter credits: Multiply semester credits by 1.5.

Examples:     2 semester credits  $\times$  1.5 = 3 quarter credits  
                  3 semester credits  $\times$  1.5 = 4.5 quarter credits  
                  60 semester credits equal 90 quarter credits ( $60 \times 1.5 = 90$ )

Three academic quarters equal two academic semesters. This 3 to 2 ratio can also be expressed as  $1.5 = 1$ , giving us the formulas for conversion listed above.

#### **Semester system**

15 credit hours per semester  $\times$  2 semesters per year = 30 credits per year. A two-year program equals approximately 60 credits; a four-year baccalaureate equals approximately 120 credits.

#### **Quarter system**

15 credit hours per quarter  $\times$  3 quarters per year = 45 credits per year. A two-year program equals approximately 90 credits; a four-year baccalaureate equals approximately 180 credits.

#### **Classroom hours**

There are many variations on classroom scheduling; the following are only for illustration.

Semesters: Generally, students attend a single class 3 hours per week (e.g. Monday/Wednesday/Friday one hour per day, or Tuesday/Thursday 1.5 hours per day) to earn 3 credits. Each student takes about 5 classes each semester to equal 15 credits.

Quarters: Students generally attend a single class one hour per day, five days a week, or two classes, 2.5 hours per week to earn 5 credits. Each student takes about 3 classes each quarter to equal 15 credits.

Generally, a 5-credit quarter course will satisfy a 3-credit semester course requirement, and 3-credit semester course will satisfy a five credit quarter course requirement (even though it transfers as 4.5 credits.) You should be aware that, in rare cases, once this mathematical formula is applied to your credits in transfer, you may be short a few credits in overall requirements for graduation. Check with your advisor or registrar to verify your courses will satisfy degree requirements and if you will be required to take additional courses.