



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY

90-Credit Bachelor's Degrees at WSU



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The 120 Credit Bachelor's Degree and the Culture of Higher Education

Why are Bachelor's Degrees 120 Credits?

1. In 1906, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching established the Carnegie Unit for K-12 education – One Carnegie Unit is 120 hours of classroom seat time over a school year
2. About 1908, colleges had to adopt the Carnegie Unit for admissions and for measuring the “work” of faculty to have access to a new faculty pension program (TIAA-CREF).
3. In 1910, the Carnegie Foundation set the standard that a bachelor's degree must consist of a minimum of 4 years of study.
4. Starting in 1910, the standard that a 1 credit course required 1 hour of seat time per week over 15 weeks was developed from the work of Morris Cooke (Academic and Industrial Efficiency)
5. All of this led to the development of the 120 Credit Bachelor's degree, and its codification by Regional Accreditation Organizations (e.g., NWCCU)



What is a 90-Credit Bachelor's Degree?

What it is

1. It is a Bachelor's Degree and will function the same as a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music, etc.
2. It is eligible for Federal Financial Aid the same as any other Bachelor's Degree
3. If a student earns a 90-Credit Bachelor's Degree as their first post-secondary credential, they will be a Post-Bacc student if they pursue another Bachelor's Degree
4. It is a degree that will follow the same approval process as any other degree at WSU (Provost, Faculty Senate, Board of Regents, NWCCU)

What it is not

1. It is not an Associate's Degree or a two-year degree.
2. It is not a non-rigorous path to graduation
3. It is not an "Accelerated" degree. These have summer courses and high semester credit loads designed to graduate students in less than 8 semesters with 120 credits.
4. It does not have to be strictly 90 credits in duration- a 90-Credit Bachelors could have between 90 and 119 credits



Why would WSU Offer 90-Credit Bachelors?

- Offering 90-Credit Bachelor's is aligned with WSU's Land Grant mission to provide a high-quality education to the people of Washington State.
 - There are areas and careers that can be better served by a shorter duration bachelor's degree
- 90-Credit Bachelor's Degrees will allow departments, programs, and campuses to be creative in their curriculum development.
 - Some existing degrees can benefit from reducing their total credits below 120 by eliminating non-major elective credits.
 - A 90-Credit Bachelor's can allow other areas to construct a high-quality degree that is not feasible now due to the 120-credit threshold.
- 90-Credit Bachelor's, especially those offered via global campus, may provide WSU new avenues to attract previously enrolled students with some credit, no degree. (Univ. of Maine)
- These degrees will allow WSU to graduate some students in a shorter time with lower student debt.
 - This may make WSU more competitive in the higher education marketplace
 - It may allow us to attract more students as we enter a time of declining high school graduation rates in Washington State and shifting demographics



NWCCU Review of Reduced Credit Bachelor Degrees

WSU will be required to:

1. Address how the student learning experience with general education/free electives at the lower division and upper division will be ensured.
2. Address how disciplinary depth and breadth will be ensured.
3. Address what is the expected graduation pathway for this degree (i.e., workforce, graduate school, etc.).
4. Address what type of review and assessment the institution has done to ensure that the proposed program will not hinder or limit a student's ability to obtain employment or apply to graduate school.
5. Address what type of review and assessment the institution has done to ensure that no programmatic or specialized accreditation requirements limit or impact this change.
6. Provide a robust assessment plan with a curriculum map, program learning outcomes, and measures of student learning.



What exists out there in terms of 90-Credit Bachelors?

Through NWCCU, only three institutions have been approved to offer 90-Credit Bachelors:
Ensign College, BYU-Idaho, and Weber State University

Nationwide, degrees are either being offered, or are in development, in these academic areas:

- Applied Business Management
- Applied Health
- Applied Politics, Philosophy, and Economics
- Communication
- Computer Science
- Criminal Justice
- Cybersecurity
- Global Health
- Hospitality Management
- Information Technology
- Software Development



What modifications to Academic Regulations are needed to accommodate 90-Credit Bachelors?

Since 90-Credit Bachelors will require fewer than 120 Credits, there are a host of Academic Regulations and other academic policies that need to be modified. They include:

- Academic Regulation 6, part c-Transfer Credit.
- Academic Regulation 6, part d- Transfer Credit.
- Academic Regulation 6, parts e and g-Transfer Credit.
- Academic Regulation 50- Pass, Fail Grading Options.
- Academic Regulation 53 – Admission to the Major.
- Academic Regulation 54, part b(4)-Undergraduate Minor or Additional Major.
- Academic Regulation 106-Undergraduate Application for Undergraduate Degree.
- Academic Regulation 114, Section e, part 4-Requirements for Baccalaureate Degrees.
- Academic Regulation 114, Section e, part 5-Requirements for Baccalaureate Degrees.
- Academic Regulation 118- Two or More Baccalaureate Degrees from WSU.
- EPPM 27 - Posthumous Academic Degrees or Achievement Recognition Policy.
- WSU Writing Portfolio Assessment



Example of Proposed Academic Regulation Changes Approved by AAC in Fall 2025

AR 114 e. To complete a baccalaureate degree, students shall:

- 1) Earn a 2.0 cumulative grade point average or better in graded course work.
- 2) Earn a 2.0 cumulative grade point average or better in graded course work in the major.
- 3) Complete the departmental and college requirements for an active baccalaureate degree. Baccalaureate degrees remain active for the purpose of degree completion for eight years following the last inclusion in the WSU catalog.
- 4) Earn a minimum of 120 semester hours of credit for a 120-credit bachelor's degree (Insert link to new catalog section). At least 30 must be WSU credits; see Academic Regulation 114.
- 5) Earn a minimum of 90 semester hours of credit for a 90-Credit bachelor's Degree (Insert link to new catalog section). At least 30 must be WSU credits; see Academic Regulation 114.
- 6) For either a 90-credit or a 120-credit bachelor's degree, earn a minimum of 40 semester hours of credit in 300-400-level courses; 500-level courses will count toward the 300-400-level requirement, but an undergraduate may not be required to complete a 500-level course as a requirement for the baccalaureate degree.
- 7) Complete the University Common Requirements (UCOREs) for graduation.
- 8) Complete the university writing requirements, including two Writing in the Major courses and the Writing Portfolio.



Example of Proposed Academic Regulation Changes Approved by AAC in Fall 2025

The new AR 114 e will ensure rigor and make sure expectations are aligned for all bachelor's degrees.

To graduate with a bachelor's degree a student would be required to:

120-credit bachelor's

- 1) Earn a 2.0 cumulative GPA
- 2) Complete all departmental and college requirements for an active bachelor's degree.
- 3) Earn a minimum of 120 semester hours. At least 30 must be WSU credits
- 4) Earn a minimum of 40 semester hours of credit in 300-400-level courses
- 5) Complete WSU General Education and Writing Requirements.

90-credit bachelor's

- 1) Earn a 2.0 cumulative GPA
- 2) Complete all departmental and college requirements for an active bachelor's degree.
- 3) Earn a minimum of 90 semester hours. At least 30 must be WSU credits
- 4) Earn a minimum of 40 semester hours of credit in 300-400-level courses
- 5) Complete WSU General Education and Writing Requirements.



**Thank you for the opportunity to talk about 90-credit
bachelor's**

Questions and Thoughts Welcome

