

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1333

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to a systemwide credit policy regarding AP exams.

Brief Description: Requiring establishment of a systemwide credit policy regarding AP exams.

Sponsors: Representatives Stambaugh, Springer, Harris, Tarleton, Haler, Muri, Jinkins and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/31/17, 2/17/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the institutions of higher education, in collaboration with the Student Achievement Council (Council), to establish a policy for granting undergraduate credit for Advanced Placement exams.
- Requires the policy to be posted on campus websites and provided to the Council to post in accordance with their master list of courses, examination scores, and demonstrated competencies that qualify for post secondary credit, effective for the fall 2017 academic term.
- Requires the institutions of higher education to report to the Legislature by November 1, 2018 on the policy.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells and Stambaugh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Pollet, Vice Chair.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Tarleton.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

The Advance Placement (AP) program is administered by the College Board and offers around 40 AP classes. The AP classes are considered college-level courses, but are taught in high school. At the end of the AP class, an exam is issued to students in May each year to measure their preparedness. The exams are usually a combination of multiple choice and free-response questions. If a student scores well, the student may earn college credit or have the option to opt-out of an introductory college course. Each post secondary institution makes its own decisions about awarding credit for AP exams and most have a written policy about minimum required scores and how many credits may be applied. Overall, a minimum score of three or higher is required to earn credit, but this varies by subject.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The institutions of higher education, in collaboration with the Student Achievement Council (Council), must establish a policy for granting undergraduate course credits that fulfill general elective requirements, general education requirements, in the major credit requirements, or requirements towards earning a credential, certificate, or degree to students who earn minimum scores of three on AP exams. The credit policy for all AP exams must be posted on campus websites and provided to the Council to post in accordance with the Council's master list of high school courses, qualifying examination scores, and demonstrated competencies that qualify for post secondary credit, effective for the 2017 fall academic term. In addition, the institutions of higher education must report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by November 1, 2018, on the AP credit policy.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The entity in charge of establishing the policy for awarding undergraduate course credit for AP exams was changed to the institutions of higher education, in collaboration with the Council, rather than just the Council. The undergraduate course credit was described as fulfilling a general elective requirement, general education requirement, in the major credit requirement, or requirements towards earning a credential, certificate, or degree. Also, the agency in charge of reporting back on the AP credit policy was changed to the institutions of higher education, and the reporting requirement was reduced to a one-time report rather than an ongoing biannual reporting requirement. An intent section was also added to the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill provides consistency and equal opportunity to students taking AP courses, regardless of which institution they attend. There are over 37 AP courses offered in Washington. The tests are rated on a one to five scale. Most exams require a score of three to earn college credit, but there are some discrepancies across the higher education system. Some colleges may offer credit for a score of three, but the same course may require a score of five at another college.

Washington should follow other states in having consistent policies for awarding AP credit. A uniform application of credit helps equalize opportunity for lower income students. Inconsistent policies is problematic for transfer students who may be required to repeat a course they earned AP credit for at a different college. Students work hard to earn these scores, and they should be treated the same regardless of the college they attend. Having consistent policies means students can attend the college of their choice rather than selecting based on who awards AP credit.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) In 2016 the four-year public higher education sector adopted a policy to award credit for a score of three for general elective credit. Washington has a statewide dual credit policy already in place. These decisions should be institutionally led, rather than led by the Council. Ultimately, a minimum score should not be listed in statute because these things change, and there should be flexibility. If a student transfers with a transfer degree, that degree is not unpacked. All of their credits would be accepted, per the transfer agreement.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Stambaugh, prime sponsor; Vicki Christophersen and Pamela Kerouac, The College Board; and Nora Selander, Associated Students of Western Washington University.

(Other) Julie Garver, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.