

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5234

As Passed House - Amended:
April 5, 2017

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

Brief Description: Requiring establishment of credit policies regarding AP exams.

Sponsors: Senators Mullet, Palumbo, Rivers, Liias, Wilson and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/15/17, 3/22/17 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/5/17, 71-26.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill
(As Amended by House)

- Requires the institutions of higher education to establish a coordinated, evidence-based policy for granting undergraduate credit for Advanced Placement exams.
- Requires the policy to be posted on campus websites effective for the fall 2017 academic term.
- Requires the institutions of higher education to conduct biennial reviews of the policy and report to the Legislature beginning November 1, 2019.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

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

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

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.

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 postsecondary 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 and by institution.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The institutions of higher education must establish a coordinated, evidence-based policy for granting as many undergraduate college credits to students who earn minimum scores of three on AP exams as possible and appropriate. The credit policy for all AP exams must be posted on campus websites effective for the 2017 fall academic term. In addition, the institutions of higher education must conduct biennial reviews of their policy and report to the Legislature by November 1 each year, beginning November 1, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended 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) The AP system is inconsistent in terms of who gets credit, and this is a good piece of policy to make it more consistent. Certain schools have large disparities between how many credits, or what credits, are awarded for AP credit. This is a good step forward for students that makes college more affordable and more equitable by creating a uniform policy. The institutions currently have a policy that awards elective credit at a minimum for an AP score of three, and this does allow for exceptions where it is not appropriate. This level of flexibility needs to be maintained.

Studies have looked at student performance in introductory courses at a college and compared it with students who scored a three on an AP exam, and the AP students do just as well. At first there was not agreement on this bill, but there seems to be agreement now between stakeholders. If more work needs to be done over the interim to make sure AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) are equivalent, that can be done.

(Opposed) In principle the bill is a good idea, but schools should treat students equitably. This bill does not mention IB classes at all. It is disappointing that the bill makes a distinction for AP, which contradicts Title I funding for students taking both IB and AP classes. Studies show that students who take IB courses graduate college at higher rates than

students who did not take IB courses. Students may decide to leave the state in order to attend an institution that will award them more credit, and some institutions tie scholarships to these types of courses. It is extremely frustrating to see a bill skirting the process and coordination of AP and IB efforts. This creates a distinction between the two that is not good policy.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Mullet, prime sponsor; Vicki Christophersen, The College Board; Dave Arbaugh, Meridian High school; and Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents.

(Opposed) Ken Joling, Olympia School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.