

The WOU Way: Questions Answered

Where did the 30-60-90 numbers come from?

The **180** (90 + 90) framework is an earnest response to the wishes of state agencies (i.e., HECC, our source of state funding) and other legislative pressures that public universities provide affordable and attainable degree paths. Additionally, the recently completed strategic plan calls for WOU to develop “intentional and effective paths to graduation within 180 credits” (IP I.2.1). Parsing the 180 total credits into the 30-60-90 framework provides:

- A self-contained, **90**-credit program that facilitates the development of disciplinary knowledge and skills while allowing seamless transfer and degree completion for transfer degree holders.
- **30** credits of free electives to enable purposeful (and serendipitous) interdisciplinary exploration.
- A robust, **60**-credit general education program to introduce students to fundamental academic habits and practices and provide opportunities to engage in integrative, multidisciplinary learning.

What needs to be accounted for in the 90 program credits?

The program allotment of 90 credits must incorporate all courses required for the major, including prerequisites, and, if applicable, room for a required minor or required BA, and 62 upper-division credits (either program-related, minor-related or general UD-elective credits).

Why was gen-ed set at 60 credits?

A 60-credit general education is commensurate with other state universities in Oregon (range: 51 – 65) and national norms (e.g., the “rule of thirds,” James Madison University, University of Oregon Honors College).

Why are students granted 30 free electives?

A liberal education requires freedom for students to engage in interdisciplinary exploration without undue punishment for false starts and changes of mind. Including 30 free elective credits also allows AAOT and other transfer degree holders to count more, if not all, of their credits towards their WOU degree. Also, as above, many universities specify that significantly more than 1/6 of their curriculum consists of free electives (additional examples: University of Chicago, DeSales University, Goshen College).

Isn't this just catering to the community colleges?

No. The WOU Way is responsive to our evolving student body. First-time freshman enrollments are on a distinct downward trajectory, and we face stiff competition as a result of the Oregon Promise and the perception that a community college education costs less.

How many programs will this affect?

The current requirements of **most** of WOU programs would fit into this model with little or no adjustment.

Will remedial courses count in the 180?

No. Sub-100 level courses (e.g., MTH 070) do not count toward fulfillment of the 180 credits.

How is this an example of shared governance – and not administrative overreach?

Establishing a consistent curricular framework that meets state requirements and student needs is within the purview of Academic Affairs. One of the responsibilities of academic administrators is to scan the environment and remain aware of trends as well as challenges facing the institution. The 30-60-90 framework responds to challenges facing WOU such as Oregon Promise, the launch of OSU Cascades, college affordability, and the long decline in state support that has made WOU and other public institutions increasingly reliant on student tuition to fund operations. As always, the specifics of academic programs, including general education, is the charge of the faculty. This framework was created, in large part, to facilitate (and enable) faculty to re-envision the WOU curriculum.

Why wasn't this first proposed to Faculty Senate for debate?

Discussions about revision of the LACCs/gen-ed have gone on for many years, with multiple attempts to update the curriculum. Simply put, these efforts have taken much time and stalled out. The higher education landscape places WOU in a precarious situation. Taking years to study – without likelihood that entrenched positions will waver – is no longer viable. In order to enable the faculty to engage in much-needed curricular reform, the administration established this general framework consistent with national norms and invites the faculty to create academic programming within that framework.

What about the minor?

Programs are welcome to require minors of their students. Likewise, many students may choose to pursue a minor with their free electives—especially if advising presents the student with an understanding of why a particular minor would be helpful to their future (see below).

So programs can require a minor?

Absolutely, as long as the required credits are accounted for in the 90-credit program allotment.

What happens to all of the “leftover” credits in the 90-credit program portion of the curriculum if a program chooses not to require a minor?

“Leftover” credits will become (primarily upper-division) electives. 62 upper-division credits are still required to graduate, and those must be accounted for in the 90 program credits. To accomplish this, the total program-required, upper-division credits PLUS the available “leftover” credits must equal at least 62.

For example, Program X requires a total of 72 credits (leaving 18 “leftovers”), 46 of which are upper division. Program X is in compliance because $46 + 18 = 64$.

In addition, programs and advisers could recommend their students use a combination of their 30 free electives and their “leftover” program credits to:

- Pursue a minor, a second major or pre-professional pathways
- Complete an internship, practicum or obtain a career-related certificate
- Study abroad or take additional foreign language classes
- Engage in independent or collaborative research
- Explore elective coursework in the liberal arts tradition

What is the difference between the B.S. and the B.A.?

The framework requires students to complete the gen-ed requirements and demonstrate 203-level proficiency in a foreign language in order to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. There is past precedent at WOU for this approach, which will mitigate unneeded complexity and streamline student support structures (e.g., advising). As with a minor, programs who wish to require their students to attain a B.A. must account for the requisite credits as part of their 90-credit allotment.

What is the targeted completion date for this project?

President Fuller and Provost Scheck have set an aggressive timeline for this project; it is expected that gen-ed re-envisioning be ready for implementation for **fall 2018** and the vast majority of program adjustments be fully implemented by **fall 2019**. Due to various factors beyond the control of the faculty, there may be some variability in when a certain curricular change is activated.

What about Teacher Ed?

As WOU's only externally accredited undergraduate licensure program, Teacher Ed is being temporarily exempted from compliance with the 30-60-90 framework. If Teacher Ed wishes to continue to be recognized as a "four year" program at WOU, it will be required to come into compliance by **fall 2019**. However, because Teacher Ed (with TSPC licensure) is basically a "double major," it will be allowed the full 120 credits (program + electives) allotted to double major programs (see below).

What about double/combined majors and pre-professional pathways?

As long as there is an option for completion of a "root" major (e.g., math, CS) within the 90-credit framework, double/combined majors (e.g., math/CS) may prescribe up to 120 credits, which could eliminate the guarantee of free electives.

Similarly, pre-professional pathways (e.g., pre-med, pre-occupational therapy, pre-law) will be considered "elective add-ons" to the "root" major and can therefore amount to up to 120 credits (major plus "add-ons"). As above, the "root" major must comply with the 90-credit framework, which would permit students to complete the major even if they opted out of the pre-professional track.

Are there any other exemptions?

The 30-60-90 framework is intended to define WOU's B.A. and B.S. degrees; the BFA and BM are currently exempt (although it is expected that the general education re-envisioning may influence the alternative core curricula for these degrees). All other programs are expected to be in compliance.

Could some NTTs lose their jobs?

Potentially, but our focus on curricular offerings should be tailored toward our students' needs and the state's needs. Additionally, if we do not act boldly to shore up the fiscal sustainability of WOU, retrenchment becomes a real possibility. However, because the new framework likely will lead to **more** students choosing WOU, enrollment (and the number of faculty needed) should **increase**.

Assessment, program review and now 30-60-90? Isn't this a lot of work?

Absolutely. Responsible stewardship of a dynamic, relevant and demonstrably valuable curriculum that serves the evolving needs of our students requires constant vigilance, introspection and effort. It is work for sure, but it is **good** work. It is work that **needs to be done**, and we have a dedicated faculty and staff that will **ensure it succeeds**.

As with many of our recent innovation efforts, (e.g., the strategic planning process, online teaching initiatives, assessment PLCs and Gen-ed Task Force) the administration pledges to provide responsible and sustainable support for faculty (including necessary reassignment time) to lead this work.

Additionally, the university will make provisions to ensure the considerable extra work that this project will place on the Registrar's office and the Faculty Senate curriculum review process can be completed.

What can I, as a member of the WOU community, do to support this effort?

Faculty members who are interested in bringing both a disciplinary and larger perspective to the Gen-ed Task Force are encouraged to nominate themselves to serve and/or share their interest with their department/division chair (**deadline May 4**). Also, program faculty should begin discussions about potential curricular innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration enabled by the framework (The Center for Academic Innovation and Academic Effectiveness is happy to provide information to help facilitate these efforts). Finally, departments are encouraged to begin discussions about establishing purposeful and coherent advising structures that will guide students toward the best use of the increased curricular flexibility inherent in The WOU Way.

