Many community college students who plan to transfer to UW ask about the advantages of earning an associate degree before they apply to a transfer program. The Direct Transfer (transfer as opposed to vocational/technical) associate degree, and only to those whose degrees are from community colleges in Washington.

**Direct Transfer Agreement—Admission**

One of these, the 1987 Direct Transfer Agreement, assures students of admission to the UW if they have completed associate degrees, as long as they don't matriculate at another four-year institution between earning the degree and transferring to UW, and also meet the following criteria: classification as a resident of Washington State (this includes resident students), completion of the required number of high school units and/or college courses in required core subjects (math, foreign language, English, social studies, science, and arts); and a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or higher for all transferable college-level academic coursework—not just for the last community college attended—up to the time that the first qualifying associate degree is completed and up to the time of actual admission. Note: up to fifteen credits in some kinds of vocational/technical credits transfer if they are used as part of an academic-transfer associate degree, but are not calculated into the GPA. Not more than one quarter of work may be outstanding at the time the application is reviewed. If all associate-degree spaces are filled for the quarter that the student wishes to transfer, he or she will be placed on a waiting list for the earliest subsequent quarter for which space is available. Admission under the 1987 Direct Transfer Agreement does not guarantee admission to any specific program within the University. (The DTA also applies to some students without AA degrees who have already been accepted by a professional program at UW, see the last paragraph of this handout.)

If the student is accepted through the DTA, test scores (such as SAT's) are not required, nor is the admission statement that other applicants must submit; students whose GPA is borderline, however, should submit both scores and the statement, just in case.

Students who don’t qualify for the 1987 Direct Transfer Agreement may still be admissible, depending on their grades, statement, and other qualifications, and will have to submit test scores unless the grade-point average is very high. (How high may vary.)

**Associate Degree Agreement—Graduation**

The other agreement, the Associated Degree Agreement, has to do with how courses from the community college apply toward graduation requirements at UW. It was approved by the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S), but the colleges of Architecture, Business, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work also benefit some students. It does not include Engineering. To qualify for the agreement, a student must complete all the requirements for the associate degree before regular admission to UW; earlier enrollment as a nonmatriculated student in summer quarter or UW extension, or enrollment in UW correspondence courses, however, is allowed. Unlike the Direct Transfer Agreement, the Associated Degree Agreement does apply to a student who has matriculated at another four-year institution between earning the degree and transferring to UW. To make things simpler, this agreement is structured for all students with academic-transfer associate degrees from Washington community colleges, no matter how long ago they were granted, even if the degree pattern doesn’t meet the current guidelines of the Intercolligate Relations Commission.

For students who entered college (anywhere) for the first time in autumn 1985 or later, the A&S requirements outside the major are:

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<th>credits</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>English Composition</td>
<td>3 credits (6 credits) Foreign language (through 3rd quarter)</td>
<td>Minimum grade of 2.0 in English composition course and in third quarter of the foreign language. These courses (including the first two quarters of language), unlike the QSR and W courses, will not transfer with the Associate-in-Science requirement.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td>5 credits (10 credits) Additional writing required and additional composition</td>
<td>Any passing grade accepted. We can be assigned by a UW advisor after the transfer of the course meets the criteria for the requirement. Even if not designated as a W course by the community college, the student should consult his advisor after the transfer to see if the course meets the criteria for the Associate-in-Science requirement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Selected Areas of Knowledge (VSPA)</td>
<td>20 credits Visual, Literary, and Performing Arts (VSPA) 20 credits Individuals and Societies (IES) 15 credits The Natural World (NW)</td>
<td>Includes all arts and sciences undergraduate courses and selected courses from other UW colleges. VSPA includes language courses beyond the first year, three years in a language that is not being used for the foreign-language requirement can be used for VSPA, but only if student completes the first year (or has an associate degree) and used the language for humanities at the community college. Up to 30 credits in the major department may be counted toward Areas of Knowledge.</td>
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A common misconception seems to be that earning the associate degree means that the “first two years’ requirements” at UW have been satisfied. The College of Arts and Sciences does not have any “first two years’ requirements.” Its requirements are grounded in the assumption that general education continues throughout the entire college career. Nevertheless, students entering Arts and Sciences with an associate degree should be aware of the implications of transferring these courses.

The benefit of having an associate degree is that A& S (and the other colleges that follow its policy) will honor the community college’s way of counting courses toward humanities/social science/natural science requirements, with three exceptions. In other words, if a course counted for humanities toward the associate degree, it will count toward the Visual, Literary, and Performing Arts (VLPA) category for UW’s Areas-of-Knowledge requirement, even if the course isn’t counted that way for someone without an associate degree. A& S’s course will count toward the Individual’s and Societies category, and a Natural Science course toward the Natural World category.

The three exceptions are these:

1) If a course doesn’t transfer for credit, it doesn’t count toward requirements (but it’s pretty unlikely that a course that meets a humanities, social-science, or natural-science requirement at a community college wouldn’t transfer to UW).

2) No more than 15 credits in the student’s major department can count toward A& S’s 75-credit Areas-of-Knowledge requirement (but this restriction is not likely to affect anyone negatively either).

3) First-year language courses (e.g., Spanish 101, 102, and 103) cannot be used for both the foreign-language requirement and VLPA, even if they were used for humanities at the community college. So there are only four kinds of students who can use first-year language for Areas of Knowledge (VLPA): (a) one who meets the foreign-language requirement with another language (by coursework, by proficiency testing at UW after admission, or by official A& S approval as a “native speaker”); (b) one who matriculated anywhere before autumn of 1985 and is therefore eligible to use an older set of requirements; (c) one who is in a college (such as Business) that doesn’t have a language requirement beyond the two quarters (or two years in high school) required for admission to UW; (d) one who already has a bachelor’s degree and is therefore exempt from the skills (but not the Areas-of-Knowledge) requirements.

Some courses in traditional humanities disciplines count for A& S rather than VLPA at UW. The most common advantage to be gained by earning an associate degree is that a course that counted for humanities toward the associate degree can be counted for VLPA even if it wouldn’t be if taken at UW. For example, some courses in history, philosophy, or religion count for humanities at some community colleges but not for A& S at UW. In cases of this sort, the student may count the course either way, but not both.

Most students with associate degrees will have fewer than twenty credits in at least three of the Areas of Knowledge when they transfer, and thus will be finishing off the requirement at UW. This is not a bad thing! While some programs outside of A& S (namely Architecture, Building Construction, Landscape Architecture, Medical Technology, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Nursing, Environmental Health, and Social Welfare) require or recommend that all or almost all of their general-education requirements (some of which differ from those of A& S) be done before admission to the professional-training program, no major in A& S expects a student to have general-education requirements done before beginning the major.

In fact, it is important to investigate the requirements of any intended major and to buy the proper foundation during the first two years. It is definitely not a good idea to sacrifice preparation for (or exploration of) the major in order to get all of the general-education requirements done. For many majors, the first quarter of the junior year is too late to begin taking major requirements if the student wants to graduate in two more years. This is particularly important in majors that require a lot of courses in sequence, such as language, art, music, and science majors. For example, a junior transfer student who has taken no math or chemistry is not much further along than a freshman toward completing a degree in oceanography.

Some community colleges have an associate-degree option (called Option B at some schools) that allows the student to follow the requirements of a program at a four-year school instead of meeting the usual associate-degree requirements. In addition, the Admissions Office encourages participation of the DTA to students who have already applied and been accepted by professional programs with selective admission criteria (business, engineering, medical technology, prosthetics and orthotics, nursing, social welfare). Such students have to be Washington residents, have completed at least 90 transferable credits, have completed all high-school core subject requirements, and have at least 2.75.

Depending on the likelihood of admission without recourse to the Direct Transfer Agreement, some other students may be better off not earning the associate degree; it may even be better to transfer with fewer than ninety credits. For example, students planning a major in certain languages may need to start earlier than their junior year in coursework available only at the University. Architecture, in particular, requires sophomore-level courses that are not available at community colleges. Recently, however, the University has been so crowded that admission without an associate degree has required high grades. It’s a good idea to contact the University regularly to keep abreast of admission trends and of changes in admission policy. Students in some pre-professional programs such as pre-medicine or pre-dentistry, while they will probably not need to transfer early, would be wise to talk with a UW adviser in their chosen field late in their freshman year.