

ACADEMIC RECORDS INFORMATION

Academic Load

Academic (or course) load refers to the number of credits taken by a student each semester. It is used to determine full- or less-than-full-time status and may change throughout a student's academic career for various reasons. Students may change their academic load through the myWCU (<https://my.wcupa.edu>) portal; consideration should be given to the impact it may have on financial aid, housing, and other credit-dependent services. Graduate academic loads are broken down as follows:

| Academic Load | # of Credits |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Less than Half-time | 0.001 - 4.000 |
| Half-time | 4.500 - 6.500 |
| 3/4-time | 7.000 - 8.500 |
| Full-time | 9.000 |

Transcripts

Transcripts of work taken at West Chester University may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. To access online ordering, log on to myWCU (<http://my.wcupa.edu>) and click the link "order official transcript." For updated information on how to obtain a transcript, visit the Office of the Registrar website (<http://www.wcupa.edu/registrar/>).

Changes in Name or Address

Students may update their address through the Change my Address link within their myWCU (<https://my.wcupa.edu/>) account. Detailed instructions are located on the Registrar's website (<http://wcupa.edu/registrar/documents/ManageStudentRecords.pdf>).

Any student wishing to change their name from that currently on record must provide legal documentation supporting the change, such as: a marriage license, court order, divorce decree, etc. A driver's license is not adequate. All name change requests must go through the Office of the Registrar (<http://wcupa.edu/registrar/default.aspx>). Requests for name changes received through the mail will be acknowledged by letter.

Students should also notify The Graduate School (gradschool@wcupa.edu) and their department of any change of address or change in name.

Preferred Name Policy

West Chester University recognizes that members of its community use and identify with first and/or middle names that are different from their legal names and may be a valuable component of a person's identity, impacting their ability to successfully navigate the campus environment. Therefore, a policy has been developed to allow preferred first and/or middle names to appear in select University systems and records, even if individuals have not changed their legal names.

Definitions

Legal Name: "First and/or middle name that identifies a person for legal, administrative, and other official purposes. A person's legal name generally is the name that was given to the person for the purpose of registration at birth and which then appears on a birth certificate, but may change subsequently."

Legal/Given Last Name (Surname): "Legal last name used, which cannot be changed/alterd within the University's information systems unless it has been changed through a legal process outside of the University."

Preferred Name: "Name designated in the University systems and communications as the preferred alternative to the individual's legal first and/or middle name. Only first and/or middle names may be changed to a preferred name."

Instances Where a Preferred Name Can Be Used

- University identification cards
- Official e-mail display name
- Phone directory
- Class and grade rosters
- Diplomas
- Commencement
- Select student activities records
- Student Information System (myWCU account)
- Learning management systems (e.g., D2L)
- University communications and mailings
- Press releases
- Social media

Instances Where a Preferred Name Cannot Be Used

- Legal documents and reports produced by the University
- Student account statements
- Financial aid and scholarship documents
- Transcripts
- Enrollment and degree verifications
- Employment and personnel records
- Paychecks, tax documents, and other payroll documents
- Benefits enrollment

Related Information

- Preferred name changes are only permitted once per semester. A one-time waiver of the fee to update the student identification card with the preferred name will be provided. Subsequent changes will result in an applicable fee (https://www.wcupa.edu/_services/STU/ramsEyeView/ssi.aspx).
- Individuals will be held responsible for any actions under their signature with the use of their preferred or legal name.
- Preferred-name requests may be denied or revoked when the name is deemed inappropriate for any reason, including--but not limited to--the following: avoidance of a legal obligation; fraud; obscene language; or misrepresentation. Reports of such activity will be addressed pursuant to University policies and procedures and applicable law.
- Within 30 days of the notification of a denied preferred-name request, students may appeal in writing to the Vice President of Student Affairs or their designee.
- Further information is available through the Preferred Name Policy FAQs (https://www.wcupa.edu/_admin/diversityEquityInclusion/preferredNameFAQ.aspx).

Student Local Address Policy

Based on federal regulations and intended to aid in maintaining updated contact information, all enrolled students must provide the University with a local address, defined as "the address where a student is living while enrolled at the University and actively attending classes." The sharing of this information is governed by the University FERPA policy.

Procedures:

- At the start of each fall/spring semester, students will be prompted to update their local address as part of their start-of-term tasks in myWCU.
- Students can update their local address at any time via myWCU. This information must be updated within 10 days of a change of address.
- Periodic outreach from the Registrar's Office will occur for students who do not indicate a recent review of their local address for accuracy.

- Failure to provide information and/or provision of false information will result in referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

West Chester University is committed to protecting the privacy of its students and to maintaining the confidentiality of student education records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Students at West Chester University are afforded the following rights regarding their education records:

1. The right to inspect and review their education records within 45 days from the date the University receives the student's request for access.

The Registrar has been designated by the University to coordinate the inspection and review procedures of student education records. Students must submit a written request to the Office of the Registrar identifying the item or items of their record they wish to inspect. The Registrar's Office will contact the student as soon as possible, but no later than 45 days from the date the request was received, to arrange a time and place for the student to inspect the requested records. At the time of inspection, the student will be required to show photo identification and must inspect the records in the presence of a representative from the Office of the Registrar.

2. The right to request an amendment to their education records, if they believe the record contains inaccurate or misleading information.

If a student believes their education record contains information that is inaccurate, misleading, or is otherwise in violation of their privacy rights, the student may request in writing that their record be changed. Students seeking a change of grade should refer to the Grade Appeal policy found in their undergraduate (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/grading-information/>) or graduate (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/grade-information/>) catalog. The written request must clearly identify the part of the record the student wants amended and must specify why the record is inaccurate or misleading. If the Registrar agrees with the student's request, the appropriate records will be amended. If the Registrar decides not to amend the record, the student will be notified of the decision, within a reasonable period of time, and the student will be advised of their right to a formal hearing.

Student requests for a formal hearing to contest the Registrar's decision must be made, in writing, to the Associate Provost. A hearing committee will be appointed and the student will be notified of the date, time and place of their hearing. The student may present evidence relevant to the issues raised and may be assisted or represented by one or more individuals of their choice, including an attorney, at their own expense. Decisions of the hearing committee, which will be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, will be final. Following the hearing, the committee will provide their written decision and a summary of the hearing to the concerned parties. If the decision is in favor of the student, their education record will be amended accordingly.

Students who are dissatisfied with the result of their hearing may place in their education record an explanatory statement commenting on the information that was under review. The explanatory statement will be maintained as part of the students' education record and will be released when the records in question are disclosed.

3. The right to provide consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their education records.

No one outside the university shall have access to, nor will the university disclose, any information from students' education records without the students' prior written consent, except to the extent permitted under FERPA. (See "WCU Use of Student Directory Information" (p. 3).)

FERPA does establish several exceptions that allow the university to disclose student education records without prior consent. Some of these exceptions include:

- To school officials with a legitimate educational interest. A school official is a person employed by West Chester University in an administrative, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); members of the board of trustees; third-parties acting on behalf of the university; or individuals, including students, serving on university committees. School officials are considered to have a legitimate educational interest if the student education information is necessary in order for that official to: complete a task specific to their job description/contract, perform a task related to a student's education, perform a task related to the discipline of a student, or provide a service or benefit relating to a student.
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. The university will make an effort to notify the student in writing prior to disclosing information, unless directed otherwise by the order or subpoena.
- To persons or organizations providing the student financial aid, or who determine financial aid decisions concerning eligibility, amount, conditions and terms of the financial aid.
- To appropriate parties in a health or safety emergency.

4. The right to file a complaint with the United States Department of Education concerning alleged failures by West Chester University to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

FERPA is administered by the Family Policy Compliance Office. Student complaints can be sent to:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

5. Additional Provisions

For the purposes of this policy, the term "student" refers to any individual who has secured admission to the University in the form of a deposit, has enrolled in a course, has completed a non-degree application, or any individual who has previously attended West Chester University. The term "education records" refers to any records directly related to a student, with certain exceptions, that are maintained by the university or its agents. These records include but are not limited to grades, transcripts, class lists, student course schedules, student financial information, student identification card photo, and student discipline files.

For the purposes of record inspection and release, the University reserves the right to redact records so that personally identifiable information pertaining to other students can be removed. Pursuant to a subpoena or record request, student records shall be reviewed for all personally identifiable information related to students that are not named as part of the subpoena or request. Once identified, this information shall be redacted to ensure protection of student information as provided by FERPA.

It is the policy of West Chester University that no records of deceased students be released to third parties, unless specifically authorized by the executor of the deceased's estate or in response to a validly issued subpoena.

WCU Use of Student Directory Information

Directory information is information contained in your education record that generally would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.

Under FERPA, West Chester University may release the following categories of information without students' prior consent:

- Student's name
- Local and permanent address
- Telephone number
- WCU e-mail address, which includes WCU student ID number
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Enrollment status
- Expected graduation date
- Degrees, awards, and honors received
- Most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height, if a member of an athletic team

The University will limit information that is made public to categories such as these but will not necessarily publish all such information in every listing.

West Chester University does not make directory information generally available to the public. West Chester University limits its release of directory information for official University purposes, such as: identifying athletic team members, publishing names of scholarship recipients, graduation lists and Dean's Lists, issuing academic awards, verifying enrollment or degree status, and providing such information to faculty and/or staff as it pertains to their job responsibilities or with whom the University has a contractual relationship. West Chester University's Office of Commuter Services does provide West Chester Borough Department of Building, Housing, and Codes Enhancement with student's enrollment status. West Chester University's Office of Public Safety will release the names, local addresses, permanent addresses, and dates of birth for enrolled students to the West Chester Borough Police upon request.

Staff, faculty, student employees, and others with whom the University has a contractual relationship are not permitted to use or disclose student's directory information for purposes other than those pertaining to their job responsibilities. Release of directory information may not be performed by anyone not authorized to do so.

Undergraduate and Graduate students who do not wish to have their directory information published, without their prior consent, must submit a Non-Disclosure of Directory Information Request form (<http://www.wcupa.edu/registrar/documents/nondisclosureDirectoryInformationRequestEN.pdf>) to the Office of the Registrar. Forms must be submitted within the first 15 calendar days of the semester. Once a student restricts the release of their directory information, the restriction will remain in effect until the student makes a written request to the Office of the Registrar to reverse the non-disclosure restriction.

Student Verification Code Policy

Although each student has a unique WCU ID number assigned to them upon acceptance to the institution, it is considered directory information and therefore can be publicly available. As a result, students are asked to create their own personal verification code as a means of

confirming their identity when utilizing remote services, such as those done via phone. By establishing this code, the student is granting West Chester University permission to discuss confidential student record information with them in situations where a face-to-face meeting is not possible and/or necessary.

Procedures:

- At the start of each fall/spring semester, students will be prompted to review and/or update their verification code in myWCU as part of their start-of-term tasks. This is considered a confidential code and should not be shared with anyone. It is not intended as a means of granting access to anyone other than the student.
- Students will be able to update their verification code at any time through their myWCU.
- When providing virtual services, staff will ask students to verify their student ID number and verification code in order to confirm the student's identity prior to discussing confidential information.

Applicable Catalog Year

All students are bound by the graduate catalog in the year they are admitted to the University under one of the matriculated student categories (see "Classification of Students (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/classification-students/>)"). Students are bound by the requirements in the graduate catalog at the time that they are admitted to the degree, certificate, or teacher certification program. If a student is admitted more than once, the year of the most recent admission is applicable. If any of the requirements for the program change while students are matriculating, they may, but do not have to, meet the changed requirements. In some instances, accrediting and/or certification standards necessitate the change in the degree or certificate or teacher certification program requirements. In such situations, the respective college will formally inform each student that the must meet the new requirements. Readmitted students are bound by the requirements in place at the time of readmission, except where permission for change in requirements or exception has been granted by the respective department and the Dean of The Graduate School.

Change of Status

A provisional degree student who has met the various conditions stipulated at the time of admission may petition for full graduate standing by completing the change of status form available online. Credit earned as a provisional degree student or as a non-degree student may be accepted in a degree program only on the recommendation of the student's advisor. Provisional degree students should consult their advisors well in advance in order to select work appropriate for transfer toward the degree.

Changes in Program

In order to change from one degree program to another, a student must submit the appropriate form to The Graduate School. The student must meet all specific admission requirements of the program for which the change is requested and receive the approval of the program coordinator. No fee is charged.

Forms can be found on The Graduate School (<http://www.wcupa.edu/grad/>) website.

Changing to Auditor Status

Before the end of the ninth week, a student may apply to become an auditor by completing a change in class status form and by obtaining the necessary approval. The form can be found on The Graduate School (<http://www.wcupa.edu/grad/>) website.

Student WCU E-mail Accounts

All incoming students to West Chester University will be issued an official WCU e-mail address. Students are advised to check this e-mail

account frequently since University administrators and faculty will be communicating information regarding classes, financial aid, billing, emergency announcements, and other important notifications. These e-mails will only be sent to a student's "wcupa.edu" e-mail account and not to any other personal e-mail address.

WCU Emergency Contact Protocol

All students are required to identify an emergency contact prior to starting classes at WCU.

The following circumstances will initiate outreach to an emergency contact:

- If a student is concerned to be missing. WCU assumes a student is missing if all efforts to contact an enrolled student fails.
- Emergency Health Concerns.
- If a student is transported to the emergency room and is unable to self-identify an emergency contact themselves, WCU will provide emergency contact information to the hospital.
- If WCU is alerted by the West Chester Borough, or other police department of an off-campus housing or other safety emergency.
- In the event of an emergency during a study abroad or other WCU trip.
- When there is concern for the student's health and safety.
- In instances of arrests for underage alcohol possession/consumption

Emergency contacts (including parents/families) will not be notified if students are alleged to have violated WCU's Student Code of Conduct. Should the student be found responsible, the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives West Chester University limited ability to notify parents when students under the age of 21 have been found to violate any law or policy concerning the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance.

Emergency Contacts (including parents/families) will not be notified of circumstances related to sexual misconduct.