

CENSUS DATE REQUIREMENTS & LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

An overview of options for colleges, April 2024

This one-pager provides an overview of the complex landscape of the FAFSA simplification changes, and the funding challenges it presents to our community and technical colleges. This document seeks to:

- Highlight the importance of adhering to the census date requirements, as it directly impacts FTE calculations and other associated matters.
- Highlight areas of flexibility afforded to colleges through their exception policies and board of trustee decisions.
- Equip stakeholders with an understanding of the dynamics between regulatory mandates and institutional discretion to navigate enrollment, advising, business services, and financial aid complexities.

What is the Census Date?

- The census date of a class represents the time frame within which students must register or attend with intent to register for a class, to count for enrollment reporting. Full-time equivalent (FTE) is generated for any student enrolled as of the census date of the class. [[Policy Manual–Chapter 5: SBCTC Enrollment Policy, Chapter 5.1, 5.2](#)]
- See also section [5.40.10 Determining the quarter census date for regular session classes](#)
 - The quarter census date is based on the number of weeks in the quarter. If the quarter is 10 or 11 weeks, the census date is the tenth instructional day. If the quarter is 9 weeks, the census date is the ninth instructional day. If the quarter is 8 weeks, the census date is the eighth instructional day, etc.
- The census date is not the same as the tuition due date.

Statutes and Processes that Rely on the Census Date

- FTE calculations – end of term snapshot is also captured
- Estimating Building Fee revenue for the next budget year – end of term snapshot can be used
- Faculty contracts
- Federal and state reporting
- Data integrity for IPEDs, National Student Clearinghouse

Local Policy Flexibility

Colleges have varying degrees of local flexibility when it comes to shaping policies, with certain key areas allowing them to tailor their approaches to meet the unique needs of students and communities.

- Drop period
- Enrollment dates
- Waitlist timelines
- Refunds
- Payment plans
- Collections

Resources

- [2024-25 FAFSA Resources](#) web page: includes toolkit items, Q & A, [link to submit questions or ideas](#)
- WSSSC-led position paper: [A Unified Approach to FAFSA Simplification Implementation for Washington Community and Technical Colleges](#), released March 21, 2024
- [FAFSA Simplification Action Plan Template](#), released April 10, 2024

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) & RCWs

- [WAC 131-28-015 Assessment of tuition and fee charges](#): It shall be the general policy of the state board that all tuition and services and activities fees shall be assessed on a uniform and equitable basis, except when the requirement to pay all or part of such fees has been specifically waived or altered by law or by rule of the state board or the district board of trustees.
- [RCW 28B.10.293 Collection of debts—Conditions and limitations on institutions of higher education](#)
- [RCW 28B.50.140 Boards of trustees—Powers and duties](#)
- [Definitions of Terms for Enrollment Reporting](#)
- [Enrollment Targets and District Enrollment Allocation Base](#)

WAC per college

Regulations of executive branch agencies are issued by authority of statutes. Like legislation and the Constitution, regulations are a source of primary law in Washington State. The [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\)](#) codifies the regulations and arranges them by subject or agency.

WAC	COLLEGE OR DISTRICT
Title 495A	Bates Technical College
Title 132H	Bellevue College
Title 495B	Bellingham Technical College
Title 132R	Big Bend Community College
Title 132Z	Cascadia College
Title 132L	Centralia College
Title 132N	Clark College
Title 495C	Clover Park Technical College
Title 132S	Columbia Basin College
Title 131	Community and Technical Colleges, Board for
Title 132Y	Edmonds Community College
Title 132E	Everett Community College
Title 132B	Grays Harbor College
Title 132J	Green River College
Title 132I	Highline College

WAC	COLLEGE OR DISTRICT
Title 495D	Lake Washington Institute of Technology
Title 132M	Lower Columbia College
Title 132C	Olympic College
Title 132A	Peninsula College
Title 132K	Pierce College
Title 495E	Renton Technical College
Title 132F	Seattle Colleges
Title 132G	Shoreline Community College
Title 132D	Skagit Valley College
Title 132X	South Puget Sound Community College
Title 132Q	Spokane, Community Colleges of
Title 132V	Tacoma Community College
Title 132T	Walla Walla Community College
Title 132W	Wenatchee Valley College
Title 132U	Whatcom Community College
Title 132P	Yakima Valley Community College