LOW-COST COURSES

Background

The Washington Community and Technical College system has completed its 2-year journey to establish the policies and coding to identify OER and Low-Cost codes.

- 2017 Student Survey on Low Cost Threshold
  - research brief & slide presentation
  - interactive dashboard
- 2018 Faculty & Staff Survey on Low Cost code

Definition

The required instructional materials cost $50 or less; there may be additional mandatory equipment or supplies to purchase.

> **Note:** The Low-Cost code and description were simplified to offer easy-to-understand, intuitive course attributes on the course search/class schedule for students.

Criteria

To be designated as a Low-Cost course, the combined cost of the required course materials should be $50 or less.

- **This includes** ALL required instructional materials such as textbooks, websites, software programs, apps, courseware packages, access codes to homework websites, etc.

- **This does not include**

  - **Tools & supplies**, such as lab coats, goggles, notebook paper, art materials, thumb drives, or calculators.

  - **Course fees**, such as lab fees, technology fees, testing fees, or eLearning fees.

  - **Small copying/printing costs**. For example, if instructors expect students to incur minor printing/copying expenses (for printing out worksheet drafts, assignments, etc.), this expense should not be factored into the $50 threshold.

The $50 threshold is based on the pre-tax retail price and is applied to all class sections regardless of number of credits offered.

- **The coding is applied to an individual class section of a course**, not to the overall course itself.

- **The threshold is based on the price** at the campus bookstore or charged by the publisher directly, whichever is lower.

- **Prorating the book cost** based on the number of credits or number of sections used is NOT allowed. For example, a $100 textbook spanning two quarters is not to be prorated 50/50, thus not to be labeled Low-Cost.

Consider the cost of not only new, but used, rented, and older editions of the required materials.

- **For used, rented, and older editions** to be included in the Low-Cost labeling,

  o students should be able to purchase the materials for $50 or less either from the college bookstore or the publisher directly and

  o the college bookstore/the publisher *must* have sufficient stock for all enrollments.

- **Prices offered by other third-party vendors** such as Amazon.com are *not* to be considered due to price fluctuation and uncertainty of stock availability.

A lecture course with an associated lab section must be coded together, if lecture courses are integrated with lab sections (lecture and lab are simultaneously registered into a single course).

- **A combined cost for the required instructional materials** from lecture and lab should be $50 or less in order to be labeled as Low-Cost. This excludes the lab fee and the cost for any supplies or equipment needed for the lab section.

- **A lecture with lab may be coded separately** only if they require separate registration with independent section numbers.

If a course's required course materials are not determined prior to registration, the class section cannot be evaluated against the Low-Cost coding criteria. The Low-Cost code cannot be applied until the cost has been determined.

Examples of courses meeting the Low-Cost threshold:

- **Use of an inexpensive commercial textbook** costing $50 or less
- **Use of a course material bundle** (e.g., textbook and homework website) costing $50 or less
  o A textbook costing $30 and online homework site costing $20
- **Use of faculty-developed course packages** costing $50 or less

Examples of courses that do not meet the Low-Cost threshold:

- Textbook costing $50 and online homework site costing $150
- Textbook costing $150, but it is used for 3 courses in a sequence

Low-cost Course Coding

Courses that meet the criteria above are coded with a Student Attribute of "SLCM". Students in these courses will be identified with a Student Group of "SCLM". The student group will be set automatically each night based on the Course Attribute.

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