

UW Tacoma Community-Engaged Learning (CEL)

E DESIGNATION POLICY

The community-engaged learning “E” course designation (formerly “S” for service-learning) process, guidelines and application form was updated, reviewed and approved by UW Tacoma’s Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee (APCC) and Faculty Assembly Executive Council on May 29, 2026.

UW COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING (CEL) DEFINITION

The UW University Committee on Curriculum Administration (UCCA) approved a tri-campus institutional definition of community-engaged learning (CEL) and a new “E” course designation in Spring 2024. This definition was developed by a faculty committee between 2020 and 2023, following the UW’s 2020 Carnegie classification as community-engaged campuses. The UCCA also approved each campus to develop their own process to identify and approve “E” courses on their respective campus.

Definition: Community-engaged learning (CEL) courses are hands-on, skill-building opportunities for students to engage with community partners through the mutually beneficial exchange of creativity, knowledge, and resources.

WHY IS AN E DESIGNATION IMPORTANT?

As of Spring 2025, related to the 2020 Carnegie Community-Engagement classification, all campuses of the University of Washington have replaced the legacy “S” (for service-learning) course designation with a revised “E” (for community-engaged) course designation. “E” was chosen for Community-Engaged, as the “C” designation is already in use to denote composition courses.

While “E” courses are not a required category in the general education curriculum, it is important to have a searchable and transcribed way for students to demonstrate this component of their coursework. Additionally, having a well-defined “E” designation serves a number of other purposes:

- Signaling to students which courses include community engagement.
- Allowing for assessment of CEL opportunities, including equitable access for students.
- Providing guidance for faculty interested in practicing CEL in their courses.
- Creating a mechanism for identifying CEL courses and potential resources to support them.

SUPPORT FOR CEL COURSES AND E DESIGNATION

For support with developing CEL courses and pursuing the “E” designation, faculty can reach out to the Office of Community Partnerships, uwtocp@uw.edu.

E COURSE GUIDELINES

The UW Tacoma CEL Course Guidelines were developed by a Community of Practice consisting of faculty and staff who worked together in the summer of 2018 as part of a High Impact Practice

initiative of the Student Success Council. In 2026, edits and updates were made by faculty and staff and subsequently (are pending) approval into policy by UW Tacoma APCC and Faculty Assembly Executive Council.

Faculty teaching courses that meet the minimum criteria as outlined in the **UW Tacoma CEL Guidelines** should seek an “E” designation for their course through their respective academic programs.

IMPLEMENTATION

While the overall definition and requirements of “E” designation applies to all disciplines, schools/departments/majors can consider further refining the UW tri-campus CEL definition to suit their unique learning objectives and community partnerships. The comprehensive guidelines, definitions, characteristics, heuristics, outcomes, objectives and glossary of terms provided in UW Tacoma CEL Course Guidelines are intended to aid in this process.

The designation process can take up to two quarters to complete, and applications are reviewed on a rolling basis by the APCC. Faculty who would like to apply for “E” course designation should:

1. **Review** the list of current “E” designated courses by program or school on this [APCC spreadsheet](#) to verify that your course is not already “E” designated. *Please note that all previously designated “S” courses have automatically been converted to “E” courses, as of Spring 2025.*
2. **Complete** the UW Tacoma “E” Designation Application and upload course syllabus.
3. **Submit** the application to your school/unit leadership (Dean, Department Chair, etc.) and curriculum committee for review and to request approval in writing (email, letter, etc.).
4. **Submit:** To receive “E” designation, the signed application and syllabus must be brought to a meeting of the [Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee \(APCC\)](#). Note: Campus level review of new courses and the “E” designation process can happen in parallel.

Approved “E” courses will be noted as such in the quarterly Time Schedule. A list of “E” designated courses will be provided to APCC by the UW Tacoma Registrar’s Office for posting. An annual review of “E” courses will happen prior to each Autumn quarter. Any update to the “E” designation happens only through the School’s designated scheduling staff. Students will be able to see the “E” designation in the Time Schedule (example, see below) and is a searchable value on [UW Tacoma’s Tentative Time Schedule](#).

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