

# Some differences between High School and College

The following table outlines for you some of the significant ways in which your new world at WCU differs from your old world in high school. Read through this document so that you and your parents know what to expect.

<b>Responsibility</b>	
<b><i>Guiding principle: High School</i></b> You will usually be told what to do and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	<b><i>Guiding principle: College</i></b> You are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.
Your time is structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities and you may face new moral and ethical decisions.
Graduation requirements are the same for everyone.	Graduation requirements are more complex, and can differ from year to year. You are expected to know those that apply to you and take responsibility for meeting both general education and major requirements
<b>Guidance Counselor vs. Academic Advisor</b>	
<b><i>Guiding principle: High School</i></b> Someone else is keeping track and will inform you of what you need to do.	<b><i>Guiding principle: College</i></b> You are responsible for your academic life and for seeking out the resources you need to be successful.
The guidance counselor's primary job is to carefully monitor your progress on graduation requirements.	Academic advisors are faculty members with many other responsibilities: teaching, research, service.
The guidance counselor will register your classes for you each term.	Academic advisors make recommendations about class selection, but you register yourself.
The guidance counselor will seek you out to check on how you are doing.	Academic advisors will expect you to initiate contact and take responsibility for your decisions.
The guidance counselor will inform your parents about your grades and your progress towards graduation.	Academic advisors are not permitted to speak with your parents about your academic life unless you give written consent.
<b>Class Structure</b>	
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending 6 hours each day – 30 hours a week – in class.	You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are. Class times vary throughout the day and evening and you spend about 12 to 16 hours each week in class
The school year is 36 weeks long.	The academic year is divided into two separate 14-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for

	exams.
Your class textbook(s) usually determine(s) what will happen in class.	Professors hand out syllabi at the beginning of the semester. The syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded. You are responsible for keeping up with assignments.
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Classes may vary in size from 6–100 students or more.
<b>What Does it Take to Succeed?</b>	
<b><i>Guiding principle: High School</i></b> You will usually be told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings	<b><i>Guiding principle: College</i></b> It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so.
You may study outside class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.	You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough.	You need to review class notes and text material regularly.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class.
Grades are given for most assigned work.	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	Grades on tests, major papers, and final exams usually provide most of the course grade.
Extra credit projects are often available to help you raise your grade.	Extra credit projects are rarely offered to help raise a grade in a college course.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.	The first test is usually a “wake-up call” to let you know what is expected – but it also may account for a substantial part of your course grade.
<b>Teaching Style</b>	
<b><i>Guiding principle: High School</i></b> High school is a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills.	<b><i>Guiding principle: College</i></b> College is a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you learn.
Teachers check your completed homework.	Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests.
Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work.
Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours.
Teachers present material to help you understand the material in the textbook.	Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or they may expect you to relate what happens in class to the textbook readings.

Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes.	When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes from the lecture are a must.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus, and know when assignments are due.
Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	Professors expect you to get any notes from classes you missed from classmates, not from the professor.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance, but attendance seldom affects course grades.	Professors may not formally take attendance. However, some professors take off points from missing class.
<b>Tests and Exams</b>	
<b><i>Guiding principle: High School</i></b> Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to do.	<b><i>Guiding principle: College</i></b> Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. You, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.
Makeup tests are often available.	Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them, and often you must provide documentation to explain the reason for the missed exam.
Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events.	Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out important concepts.	Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant, one who comes prepared with questions.

*Adapted from materials developed by several other universities, including Southern Methodist University, Ball State University, State University of New York at New Paltz, Macalester College, Northern Kentucky University, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.*