



HACKING YOUR TRANSCRIPT: HOW TO INTENTIONALLY SHAPE YOUR TRANSCRIPT TO SERVE YOU

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Every student who attends The Evergreen State College will leave with a narrative-based transcript unlike that of nearly any other school. No matter what you learn, create, or achieve here, your transcript is a fixed and semi-public record of your undergraduate education. The unique nature of an Evergreen transcript gives you an incredible amount of influence over its content, which can let you shape it to effectively serve you after graduation. Much is left to your control, and it is yours to harness if you choose.

See Your Transcript as Your Audience Will See It

You most often see your transcript in pieces at each evaluation conference, but a future reader of your transcript will see it as a complete collection of documents. Getting perspective on your transcript as a whole and imagining its journey out into the world beyond Evergreen can help you think about how to shape it effectively.

Every Evergreen transcript is composed of the following documents:

1. A one-page letter from the College that explains Evergreen as an institution. This gives outside readers context as to why they are holding something more complex than a list of course titles and grades.
2. Your Record of Academic Achievement, which most resembles a traditional transcript. It lists the program and course titles you've taken in chronological order, followed by their course equivalencies and the amount of credit you've earned. If you have any transfer credits, the name and credit amount of each institution will be listed at the top.
3. Your Academic Statement, which acts like a cover letter to your transcript and introduces readers to your education at Evergreen as a whole.

Then, paired by program in reverse chronological order:

1. Faculty Evaluations, which form the bulk of your transcript in the absence of self-evaluations and give your faculty's perspective on your performance in each program and course.
2. Self-Evaluations, which are optional but can add important perspective and detail not captured in your Academic Statement or faculty evaluations.

In a sense, your Record of Academic Achievement unpacks the integrated programs that you've taken so they make sense to the outside world, while your Academic Statement and evaluations fill in the details that course listings and credit equivalencies cannot convey. All of these documents work together to communicate to your reader what you've gotten out of your education at Evergreen.

To get a sense of your transcript as a whole, consider either collecting the pieces of your transcript and putting them together, or requesting your unofficial transcript from Registration and Records. Anticipating your audience's experience will be much easier when you hold your transcript in your hands and get the chance to read it yourself.

Consider having someone outside the Evergreen community look through your transcript. Ask if they find anything confusing and what understanding they come away with about you and your education. It's easy to forget what doesn't make sense to someone outside of Evergreen after you've been here a while.

Think about how someone in your intended field will read your transcript. What may be considered too personal or too dispassionate will vary; commenting on your growth by admitting your struggles will be received differently in different disciplines. You may want to talk to a faculty member in your field of choice about this.

Identify the Purpose of Your Transcript

Whether you know your immediate after-college plans or not, you might have plans one day that will benefit from a well-crafted transcript. You want your transcript to stand this test of time. Looking back at your transcript and wishing you'd made other choices with it could be painful—and worse, impact your ability to pursue your new goals. Don't pretend to commit to something you aren't sure about. Everything that you study will inform, in some way, everything that you do in the future.

When surveyed, Evergreen alumni have commented that they have used their transcripts to apply for graduate school, professional and fellowship programs, scholarships, financial aid, employment, and internships, and to get promotions and pay raises. Many alumni also expressed that their transcripts were valuable for personal reflection and preparation for interviews, as a reference tool

for writing cover letters and application essays, and as a model for writing performance reviews and recommendations for others.¹

The purpose of your transcript goes hand-in-hand with whomever you anticipate will read it: admissions boards, employers, yourself. It tells readers what you've learned and done—and therefore what you can do. Your transcript is how you can justify that you have an equivalent of the major asked for by a graduate program or job posting; it's where you can refer employers to demonstrate that you have a skill set that bumps you into a higher level of qualification; it's how you convince an organization that their internship will add to the experience you've been building in their field.

Your tone, or the attitude conveyed by your writing, is important for appealing to your audience. Your transcript is not a place to rant, make excuses, or be dramatic. The tone should be a balance of professional and personable, similar to a cover letter.

When thinking about purpose, audience, scope, and tone, you also want to think about how these manifest in each part of your transcript and how they relate to one another. Each document plays a nuanced role that supports the overall intent of the transcript.

Record of Academic Achievement

Your Record of Academic Achievement is the document that most resembles a traditional transcript, giving credit counts and course equivalencies in terms more familiar to your reader. Besides your Academic Statement, your Record of Academic Achievement will likely receive the most attention from your reader.

While most of the influence you have over this document is in which programs or courses you choose to take, you can also negotiate with your faculty what credit equivalencies you'll be awarded. If you know a graduate program or career path will favor certain credit, you can talk to your faculty about how to earn it.

You can also negotiate having your credit labeled as Intermediate or Advanced. Although upper-division credit is only officially awarded in mathematics and science programs, upper-division work

¹The Evergreen State College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, *The Evergreen State College Five/ Ten/ Fifteen Year Alumni Survey: Administered to the Undergraduate Classes of 2007, 2002, and 1997 in 2012.*

The Evergreen State College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, *Evergreen One-Year Alumni Survey 2012: A Survey of the Undergraduate Class of 2011.*

is done across the curriculum—having your credit called Intermediate or Advanced is the best way to reflect this. This may involve altering the coursework, since not all students come into a program with the same background on the program’s subjects. It is also possible that your faculty will ask you what credit you want, so be prepared to supply an answer. The earlier you can negotiate your credit, the more successful you’ll likely be.

Academic Statement

Your Academic Statement is your readers’ first—and possibly only—encounter with your voice in your transcript. In a way, your Academic Statement can attempt to answer the “So what?” of your education. It can highlight the big points in your education in order to synthesize and draw connections between all the coursework you’ve taken. It can tell your reader why you took the programs and courses you did at a college with no course requirements; how your choices helped you accomplish your goals at a college with no majors; and how all together your decisions have brought you to graduation and prepared you for your next steps after college.

In your Academic Statement, you may want to focus on what you’ve done and what you can do as a result, rather than focusing on what you think and feel. It may be tempting in narrative writing about ourselves to delve into these deep places, but consider whether that’s appropriate for a semi-public audience. Also, use caution in what kind of personal information you include. It is advisable to *not* include anything that cannot be legally asked in an interview—marital status, religious practices, disability status, etc. While these things may feel critical to your story, they can be compromising to include.

You will want to sharpen your focus as you near graduation. Start early and take advantage of the support the College offers, including workshops during Orientation Week, in-program support from faculty in Fall Quarter, Mentoring Days in Winter and Spring Quarters, and the services offered by the Writing Center and Academic Advising.

Faculty Evaluations

Evaluations from faculty form the bulk of your transcript, especially if you choose not to include many self-evaluations. Though you can’t dictate their content, there are ways you can influence it. Before enrolling in a program, ask the faculty how they approach writing student evaluations and what they typically include. Faculty have a range of styles, so don’t assume what theirs is like. From their answers, consider if theirs is a voice you would value in your transcript.

Typically, faculty have their evaluations of students ready for the evaluation conference. Go into this meeting having considered what you think you will see and what you would like to see. Take this opportunity to read through the evaluation carefully and really think about what it conveys to your

intended future audience. If there is anything you would want revised, faculty are usually open to this input.

Self-Evaluations

Whereas your Academic Statement looks at your Evergreen education overall, self-evaluations focus on the work you did in a particular program or course. Self-evaluations are optional in your transcript, and there are several things to think about when considering whether to incorporate them.

First, you can pick which self-evaluations to include. Having one does not mean you must put them all in. Second, you can be choosy about what content a given self-evaluation contains. A self-evaluation doesn't need to touch on everything you did in a program; you can write one just to detail a particular project. Third, you do not need to submit them to Registration and Records at the end of the quarter; you can wait and revise them all together as you near graduation. Self-evaluations do add bulk to a transcript, and it can take time to make them transcript-worthy. So in what situations might you make room for one or more?

- If you do not have space in your Academic Statement to speak to something important that you want in your transcript.
- If your faculty evaluation did not include something you want your readers to know, especially if you did an internship or independent learning contract (ILC) where your faculty saw less of your learning process and experience.
- As a defense against a negative evaluation from your faculty, or to explain extenuating circumstances that your faculty cannot disclose.

If included, a self-evaluation should add something valuable to your transcript that would not otherwise be there. Do not add a self-evaluation just to have it; the extra length will not be worth it to your reader or to you. Self-evaluations should not describe the program, since faculty evaluations already include course descriptions. They need to go beyond, telling your reader what you did, what you learned, and why it matters.

Your self-evaluations are also a place to use coded language: certain words that indicate to readers the level of rigor of your coursework. Words like “exceeded” and “beyond expectations,” both in your faculty and self-evaluations, will be read as if they were As. Words like “met expectations” are read as Bs. Use this kind of language to convey to readers the strength of your academic performance.

The Power of Your Voice

By requiring you to generate some of the content of your transcript, Evergreen asks you to be a primary source on your education. The difference between reading “Cumulative GPA: 3.5” and “The meaning of my education is...” can be tremendous. This is the most essential strength an Evergreen transcript offers you as a student. Having your voice in your transcript is about saying what you want to say and owning the relationship it creates with your reader. Your voice marks you as an individual, allowing you to stand out as a real person among a sea of grade point averages.