

The Aquarium Science Program (AQS) is a competitive entry, career and technical education CTE program that offers both an AAS Aquarium Science degree for students with little to no college credit and a Certificate of Aquarium Science for students with a bachelor's degree in one of the Natural Sciences. Additionally, the AQS program has a partnership with Western Oregon University (WOU), wherein students spend three years at WOU and one year at OCCC and graduate with a Bachelor of Science from WOU and a Certificate in Aquarium Science from OCCC.

Requirements for admission to the AQS program

1. AAS requirements – Applicants for the two-year degree program must have received a high school diploma or GED and may have completed some college level coursework.
2. Certificate requirements – Students applying for the AQS Certificate program must have completed or about to complete a bachelor's degree in one of the natural sciences. Students with bachelor's degrees in other areas, but with sufficient credits in the natural sciences, may be considered for the Certificate program with permission of the AQS Program Director. Matriculation into the AQS certificate program for any applicant can only occur after proof of graduation is submitted.

Aquarium Science Program Admissions process

All applicants to the AQS program need to first apply to OCCC. In early January, the AQS program application is posted to the AQS program website at <https://oregoncoast.edu/aquarium-science-program/> and remains until mid-March. All applications received before the March deadline are reviewed at the same time and all applicants meeting minimum requirements are scheduled for a Zoom interview. The application review committee is made up of at least three persons including the AQS director, an AQS faculty members, and an AQS staff member. Committee members score each candidate independently before the Director compiles all reviews for discussion.

Applications to the Aquarium Science Program are evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Grade Point Average (GPA) and courses completed. 1-10 points (14%)

- For degree students, max points for all pre-requisites completed with B or higher, deductions for fewer college courses taken, lower grades, or lack of history of full-time enrollment.
- For certificate students, max points for degree completed with B or higher in all science courses and with degree completed in 4 years. Deductions for lower grades, longer time to completion, or missing basic coursework like Biology, Chemistry, Math.

2. Work or volunteer experience involving animal care. 1-20 points (29%)

Maximum points earned for record of volunteering at AZA zoo or aquarium, points given for other animal care settings including shelters, rehabs, farming. Aquatic hobbyist experience may earn points depending on extent and duration. Minimal points if experiences only include domestic pets like cats/dogs.

3. The written experiential assessment essay. 1-10 points (14%)

Maximum points earned for clear, insightful answers that are free of spelling and grammar mistakes.

4. Letter of recommendation from one professional or academic source. 1-10 points (14%)

Maximum points earned for recommendations that communicate the student is exceptional in all ways, likely in the top 5% of all students the recommender has encountered. Recommendations that are generic descriptions of the relationship between writer and student with little detail of what make candidate stand out will receive minimal scores. If multiple letters were submitted, reviewers will consider an overall impression in their scoring.

5. Zoom interview evaluation. 1-20 points. (29%)

Zoom interview scores are max 10 points for content and 10 points for delivery. A separate score sheet is done during interviews by each committee member and averaged.

Exclusion and Re-entry processes

Students may be excluded from the Aquarium Science program (or significant learning opportunities) if they fail a security check at our partner institutions including the Oregon Coast Aquarium and Hatfield Marine Science center. Students may be excluded from the AQS program due to poor conduct that threatens the safety of staff, students, or animals. Failure to earn a C grade or better in two courses in Aquarium Science curriculum, or in the same course after a second attempt will result in suspension from the AQS program.

The re-entry process is outlined in section 4.1.17 of the AQS student handbook.

Re-entry is defined as re-entering the aquarium science program as an Oregon Coast Community College aquarium science student at some point other than at the beginning of the program. A request to re-enter usually occurs when the student has been absent from the program due to suspension or withdrawal.

1. Any student who seeks readmission to the Program must follow application procedures and Program requirements in effect at the time of re-entry. Because Aquarium Science courses must be taken as a whole, re-entering students are required to meet all requirements for the course of re-entry, even if this means repeating previously completed coursework.
2. Re-entry is based on space available, college resources and an assessment of the students' current knowledge and ability to be successful.
3. A student is eligible for re-entry if all curriculum courses required in the term(s) prior to the term of entry have been completed and are current where time limits apply.
4. Applications for entry at any point in the year other than the beginning of the program must be submitted to the program director.
5. Students who have not attained a C grade in any aquarium science course more than once or failed to earn C's in two separate aquarium science courses, or withdrew while not in good standing more than once will not be considered for re-entry or admission to the program.
6. If a student is dismissed from the program because of serious or multiple breaches of safety or professionalism, the student will not have the option of re-entry to the program.

When considering any application for re-entry, advanced placement or transfer, faculty will discuss and prioritize the request for entry into the available spaces based on the following criteria:

Category 1: Returning students who were in good standing in both lecture and practicum portion of the course. Note: Good standing in theory means that the student individual test average was $\geq 75\%$, and good standing in practicum means the student was meeting all practicum competencies for that point in the program.

Category 2: Returning students who were in good standing in practicum portion of the program, but whose individual lecture averages were $< 75\%$.

Category 3: Returning students who were in good standing in lecture portion of course, but who were not in good standing in practicum portion of program (were not meeting one or more critical benchmarks for practicum).

Category 4: Returning students who were not in good standing in either theory or practical portion of the course.

Should there be more requests for re-entry than spaces available, admission of re-entry will be offered to the student placed in the highest category, with the highest GPA in aquarium science courses taken prior to the aquarium science course from which the student exited the program.