

Step 1: How Career Choice Works With MCCC

Cheryk Manning: Hi, Amazon Associates. This is Cheryk Manning with Enrollment Concierge Services with Maricopa Community Colleges, and I am just reaching out to, uh, go over the next portion of the advising session for step one. So now that you know a little bit about who we are and what we do, we are going to chat a little bit about the Amazon Career Choice benefit and how it works with Maricopa Community College. Now, do bear in mind that if you attend-, decide to attend another college, um, their processes and policies might be different.

But, um, when you are attending Maricopa, this is the standard that we follow. So, the first thing that we're going to ask is, are you a, um, Amazon associate, who has had a blue badge for at least 90 days? You are not eligible to use Career Choice before your 90 days. And you're also not eligible to start classes and have career choice, pay for it before, you have had your blue badge for at least 90 days. So please keep that in mind. You want to make sure you don't schedule classes that start before that 90-day benchmark.

Um, unless you plan on using, using different options to pay for those classes. And the next question, I'm gonna ask is, are you in good standing? A certain disciplinary actions can prevent you from being eligible for Career Choice. If you're not sure about that, that probably means you are in good standing, but if you still have questions, you definitely wanna reach out to your HR helpdesk. They can just verify that you are eligible for this benefit.

The third question I'm going to ask is, are you full-time with Amazon? Or are you part-time? Because that determines how much benefit you qualify for. Now, um, full-time for Amazon is designated as scheduled for 30 hours or more every week. So, as long as you are above 30 hours, you are considered full-time and eligible for that full-time benefits. The next question that I typically ask has to do with your residency status. Are you a US citizen or permanent resident who has lived in Arizona for at least one year?

If so, you wanna make sure you provide your Arizona ID, uh, during the application process. If your ID is still out of state, there are extra steps that you will need to do. So you want to make sure you connect with me or the Admissions and Records team at your campus before your classes begin. This is very important. If you are a

DACA status student, you do qualify for in-state tuition as long as you provide proof of high school completion in Arizona.

Which can include getting your GED while you live in Arizona or at least two years of attending a high school in Arizona. So if you do have questions on that, you can definitely work with my team. But most of the time, we will refer you to the college's Admissions and Records site for your campus. And I'm more than happy to get you their information. Just when you send out a, send the email to us, just let us know that you need to speak to them or that you're DACA and need to know your next steps. And then the final question that I usually ask is, do you have any prior college experience?

Uh, this is important, because if you've earned college credit before, we definitely need to know a little bit more about that to see if we can transfer that credit in. If you're eligible to provide, to provide you a quicker pathway to graduation without having to repeat work, you've already done. So if you do have college transcripts from a regionally accredited college, and you would, and your grades are at least a C or above and you're interested in transferring those credits, you will need to order your transcripts to be sent directly from your prior college to Maricopa Community Colleges.

And, um, just if you need any assistance on how to do that, just, you know, reply to your, uh, confirmation of your appointment, by email will get that and we'll make sure that you have the correct address for your former school to send them to so that we can get those transcripts and then evaluate it and just make sure that you don't have any necessary additional steps.

So, if you're a full-time associate, you are eligible for up to \$5250 every year in Amazon Career Choice benefit, um, and there is no lifetime maximum. That amount will reset every January 1st. If you're part-time, which remember is less than 30 hours a week, you are eligible for \$2625 per year with no lifetime maximum. That amount resets every January 1st. And that amount will upfront cover 100% of your tuition and fees.

You do not need to pay out of pocket and get reimbursed. You do not have to complete your FAFSA application. Once your scheduled and not before please, only because the Amazon's very picky with start and end dates on the application. But once you're scheduled for classes, we'll walk you through how to apply for your

tuition voucher. Now you're probably thinking that amount doesn't sound very much, but if you are eligible for in-state tuition at this time our tuition is \$85 per credit hour.

And even if you were to take 12 credits, which is about four classes or a full-time load with Maricopa, your tuition for the semester for a full-time load would probably be somewhere between \$1200 - \$1400 for that semester. So you should theoretically have more than enough to pay your tuition and fees at the in-state rate at that full-time rate. Um, most of the Amazon Associates, we work with opt not to do college full-time while they're working full-time.

So it's perfectly fine to start with one, two or three classes and just make sure that you, um, find a good balance between work and life. Textbooks are not covered up front. So anytime we schedule a course together, I'm gonna let you know how much I see the textbook costs and when you need to have it by. On the first day of class, you can submit for textbook reimbursement and we'll show you where that is when you apply for your voucher.

And Amazon Associates have told me in the past, it typically takes about three pay cycles to be reimbursed. So just something to keep in mind. And then the biggest change to the Amazon Career Choice program last year was that any credit-bearing, Associate degree, or certificate that we offer does qualify for Career Choice. Um, also, if there is a credit-bearing course that you want to take you can use career choice benefits to take that.

For example, if you'd like to take a Spanish class or if you wanna take welding on the side, you can absolutely use Career Choice for credit-bearing classes even if they're not directly related to your certificate. Um, and then also, when we start offering bachelor's degrees in 2023, our bachelor's degrees will also be covered under Career Choice, which is really exciting. Um, so yeah, as more information comes out, we'll definitely go over that. So the Career Choice program is great. And I am going to go over now, what I lovingly refer to as the big five.

These are the rules that I go over with every student as they get started. Um, they're the things that I either get the most questions on, or that I see come up the most. Um, so and some of these be a little bit of a review. But there have been some changes in the last couple of years that are updated in this video as of February 2023. So if it's review for you, I appreciate the listen. If this is new information, that's great. If you have additional questions, write them down.

So that when we connect, we can go over it and make sure that you understand everything. So rule number one, what is not covered by Career Choice? So things that Career Choice wouldn't cover include things like sports or sports fees, uniforms and tools. Now, this isn't going to come up in most programs, but let's say you're doing a Health Care program like nursing or dental hygiene where you need scrubs in certain classes.

The scrubs are considered uniforms. So you would have to cover them out of pocket. Or let's say you were doing a class like welding where you would need protective equipment, like the gloves or the helmet. Those are considered tools. Or let's say you were doing an HVAC program or an auto mechanics, or an aeroplane mechanics program, any program like that, that does have tools that are required. Those tools would not be covered under Amazon Career Choice.

If you are going into one of these programs, I usually make sure that you know about it upfront. And have a contact in for that department at the college. So that you know who to reach out to to get the full list of what would be required. Rule number two, grants and scholarships are totally allowed. So the way that it works is, we will bill Amazon before any other funding source. And you might be wondering why that's important. Well, the reason why we bill Amazon first is, um, if you decide to apply for any grants or scholarships, which is money you don't have to pay back. Um, any additional money that you get would be given to you probably towards the middle or end of that semester.

So, for example, let's say you wanted to apply for the Pell Grant, which is a grant that is not needing to be, uh, paid back. Um, you would be able to qualify for this. Um, uh, and you know what? That another good thing about that is, is like let's say you wanted to apply for the Pell Grant, um, and you're taking at least six credits, and you qualify for a book advance. You could theoretically use that book advance to buy your textbooks and still submit for reimbursement by Amazon.

So it can be a benefit for you. On that same note, student loans are also allowed. However, Amazon does want you to graduate as close to debt free as possible. So they really, really discourage it. Um, grants and scholarships are free money. You don't have to pay them back whereas student loans you do, usually with interest. So just keep that in mind. If you absolutely want to apply for an except student loans, you can and will still bill Amazon first and the extra would eventually come. But their hope is that you won't need to do that.

Rule number three, let's say you get an Amazon tuition voucher for classes and you separate from Amazon. Which is a really polite way of saying, either you choose to get, to get another job and you choose to leave Amazon or if you get let go, what happens? So, as long as your classes have started, as long as you have an approved tuition voucher, Amazon will honour that voucher. They won't cover any future classes if you don't qualify, but you can rest assured that you can start your classes and you will not end up having a big balance at the end of that semester.

Rule number four is a newer policy. So if you've looked into a Career Choice in the past, this is one that has changed. So the way that the um, Career Choice voucher works is that you can take classes, but if you have a non-passing grade, which for us would be a D as in dog. A W for withdraw or an F as in Frank. So a D grade, an F grade, or a withdraw, um, those grades are considered non-passing for Maricopa. And you can have a non-passing grade and continue to use the Career Choice benefit, but Amazon will no longer cover the same class twice.

So in some instances, that's okay. I'm gonna pick up some common classes here. Let's say you're doing a regular Associates of Arts and you take Psychology 101 for your Social Behavioral Studies and something happens where you don't end up passing that class, that's okay. Because the Social Behavioral course can be one of several different courses. So maybe when we go to reschedule you, we look at intro to Sociology instead it's a different class so Amazon would cover it, and it still meets that criteria.

But let's say you're in a class like English 101. Well, there's only one English 101, so if there's not a class that we can substitute for it and you do have to take it to graduate. You would have to pay for the retake out of pocket. So keep that in mind. Um, all of our campuses do offer free tutoring, and I do believe most of the tutoring can either be done virtually or in person. Um, I do know that for some classes, it can take up to a week to find a tutor that works with you or your particular area of study if it's not like a normal class or if it's something very specialized.

So the minute you start struggling. I always say number one, reach out right to the instructor, and let them know. Cause most of the time, the instructors can set up an appointment with you and work with you directly to help make sure that you can grasp the information and move forward. Um, and then the second thing is, you'll want to contact the tutoring centre to get the tutoring set up sooner rather than

later. Um, if you need the contact information for either your instructor or the tutoring center, please let us know. We're happy to get that to you.

And then rule number five has to do with an accommodation. So if you have to take a class that interferes with your work schedule. Like you're in a nursing track, and you have to take classes on certain days sometimes. Or it's a class like math where you know, like hey, this is one that I might need in-person support for. Or even if you need to schedule some accommodation time to have extra time available at home to get homework done, even if it's an online class, you can apply for an accommodation of up to 10 hours a week. Now the accommodation from Amazon is unpaid.

So, I always recommend that students check with their HR helpdesk before you apply for this. And you do need to show proof of your schedule. Before your accommodation can be granted. And it can take a couple of weeks to put into place. So once you're scheduled, if you know you need an accommodation, just feel free to reach out and let me know. And I'll make sure you have a copy of your proof of schedule, so that they can prove your request for you. So the process for using your Career Choice benefits with us is very simple.

Once you're scheduled, and I don't mind if you schedule yourself. If you get scheduled directly with the campus or if I help schedule you. Um, I mean in some instances, the campus has to do it, but once you're scheduled, you and I will usually set up a phone call, or you can watch the video where I walk you through how to apply for that tuition voucher. The application is all online. You do not need a printer, a faxer or a scanner. Once you apply for the voucher, you'll submit the payment request and then our team will go and pull that directly from the Amazon Career Choice portal that we can access for schools.

Now we will also ask you for what's called a FERPA release. So FERPA is the law that protects your privacy. It means even if you give us a tuition voucher, we're not gonna give Amazon your information without your permission. And in this case, Amazon is asking access to certain academic records and certain finance records. And because all that information goes through our team. I'm gonna tell you exactly what they ask for and what we give them. So if you read your approved tuition voucher, it'll state down there that the colleges have to give that voucher back to Amazon with the breakdown of your tuition and fees.

They need to know what courses you're taking and how much they cost. So we need your permission to send that to them. Once we get that permission, we will send that back to them automatically. There's no extra steps for you to do, and we'll just make sure they have that information so that they'll cut the cheque for your tuition. The second thing that they need access to the academic records at the end of every class, for every student, using a Career Choice voucher. I'll go in, and I'll say, yes, you've passed your class, you've earned that class credit.

No, you did not pass the class. You did not earn that credit or the greatest [inaudible]. And I do this for every single student and for every single class. So, because they want this information, we do need your academic permission to send that to them. I do not give the right grades. I don't give any other progression information, but they do need to know. Are you passing your classes or not? Are you still active or not? Um, and that's all the information we give them. The FERPA, we will ask for once a year, or if you move campuses, the campus is tied to your FERPA. So if you start at Phoenix College and you end up going to Glendale Community College, the semester that you moved to Glendale Community College. We will need a new FERPA for that campus.

Um, and then another point of housekeeping, all of your classes need to be at the same college for that semester for Amazon to cover it. You cannot take two or three classes at Glendale and one or two classes at [inaudible]. All of the classes need to be at the same campus every semester. Now, it's fine to switch campuses in between semesters. Like let's say you need a class, it's only offered at Mesa Community College. We can move all of your classes for that semester to Mesa so you can take it and have Amazon cover it.

But you cannot split the voucher between more than one campus, and they will not let you apply for multiple vouchers to cover more campuses. So it is very important to note. All classes must be at the same campus. And again, I'm really happy to help schedule you. I'm in a unique position where I can help schedule at any of our ten campuses. Happy to do it. So, um, we'll work with that directly. This is why having an advising appointment is very important.

Um, or working with campus advising. I know, sometimes my wait can be long, but if you can meet with the campus advising and they assist you in getting scheduled, that's perfectly fine too. Once you're scheduled, you're gonna go ahead and move on to the next step. Which is applying for your Career Choice voucher. So watch for that video, and I definitely look forward to chatting with you then. Thank you.