

**Statewide Placement Policy Recommendations**  
**Secondary to College Articulation Committee**  
**Ohio Board of Regents**  
**December 2007**

**Summary Background, Recommendations and Key Points**

**Background:** The Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council created the Secondary to College Articulation Committee in 2005, and charged it with developing strategies to improve the transition of students from high school to college, including:

- Developing a clear definition of “college level” work;
- Aligning college and university entrance expectations with P-12 Academic Content Standards and communicating these expectations to students, parents, teachers, and higher education staff;
- Ensuring that college placement instruments consistently reflect the necessary competencies and skills needed for a student to successfully transition to, and between, institutions of higher education in Ohio;
- Recommending a process for continual review and update of college placement policies to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade content standards in mathematics and English.

The Committee focused its work in two key areas: the development of expectations for college readiness in English and mathematics; and the development of a statewide policy for placement in the first non-remedial courses in English and mathematics (primarily English composition and college algebra).

Following a period of discussion and development, the Secondary to College Articulation Committee developed recommendations to the Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council that: 1) affirm the importance of clear expectations for college readiness to guide students in preparing for the transition into college; 2) recommend a minimum benchmark score for placement; 3) encourage campuses to strongly consider the use of writing assessments for the placement of students in courses; and 4) affirm the authority of institutions to establish admissions policies and practices.

**Rationale:** Statewide articulation and transfer policies provide students with the opportunity to complete a specified course for college credit anywhere within the public system of higher education and be guaranteed the credit will transfer and count toward degree requirements. **The guaranteed transfer of credits across the higher education system is a result of careful review and approval by faculty panels and other committees, and therefore, assumes that courses are comparable and that students entering the courses have achieved a specified minimum level of mastery of knowledge and skills to be successful in those courses.**

Far too many students, however, are not prepared for college and require remedial education in writing and mathematics according to annual studies of Ohio student remediation rates. Students need a clear and consistent understanding of both the

*knowledge and skills* required for these critical gateway courses, as well as the *minimum level of performance required for placement*. Currently, the minimum level of performance required for placement is established at the campus level. This practice does not provide a consistent benchmark for placement in college-level course. This inconsistency in the system is confusing for students and educators and makes the statewide transfer of courses somewhat suspect.

The specific policy recommendations from the Secondary to College Articulation Committee to the Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council are briefly outlined below.

**Recommendation 1:** The College Readiness Expectations in English and Mathematics should be communicated to students, parents and educators and serve as a standard for determining the placement of students in the first college-level course in these areas.

- The College Readiness Expectations, which reflect the knowledge and skills required for the first college-level course in English and mathematics, have been developed by high school and higher education faculty; and have been endorsed by the provosts and chief academic officers.
- The College Readiness Expectations can provide a powerful means of illustrating to students the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college level mathematics, writing and reading courses while students still have time to address potential deficiencies while in high school. The College Readiness Expectations address what students should know. The statewide placement policy addresses the level of mastery at which a student demonstrates their knowledge and skills before entering their first college-level English and mathematics course. The College Readiness Expectations should be available to students, teachers and educators through a variety of formats, including the student portal and other means.

**Recommendation 2:** Ohio's statewide placement policy provides general advice for students, parents and teachers using readily-available and existing resources and 2) provide campuses with a benchmark for communicating overall readiness for the first non-remedial course in English and mathematics that is consistent with messages at campuses across the state. Ohio's placement policy builds from the College Readiness Expectations and provides benchmark scores on the ACT and/or COMPASS (or comparable score/alignment on other assessments, as demonstrated by institutions).

- ACT/SAT or COMPASS/Accuplacer may be considered as one indicator for college placement. These scores reflect a minimum benchmark of readiness for the first college-level course in English or mathematics. The ACT/COMPASS benchmarks are:
  - ACT of 18 or higher for English (or an equivalent SAT)
    - COMPASS of 69 or higher (or an equivalent assessment)
  - ACT of 22 or higher for Algebra (or an equivalent SAT)
    - COMPASS of 65 or higher (or an equivalent assessment) for placement in non-remedial algebra.

- Students interested in majors such as mathematics, physics and engineering will need to achieve a mathematics ACT score of 27 or higher for placement and success in college calculus (and equivalent COMPASS or other assessment score).

**A few important notes:**

- The statewide placement policy is not intended to replace individual campus admissions policies. Campuses will continue to determine their own recruitment and admissions practices including establishing enrollment targets, admissions criteria and class profiles. Ohio's statewide policy is intended to provide a benchmark for campuses to review their placement policies for alignment with the statewide policy in the first college-level mathematics or English writing course at a public college and university.
- The policy recommendations are intended, however, to 1) provide general advice for students, parents and teachers based upon clear expectations and using readily-available and existing resources; and 2) provide campuses with a consistent benchmark for communicating overall readiness for the first non-remedial courses in English and mathematics (English Composition, College Algebra).
- Campus placement policies should be consistent with the minimum expectations outlined in the College Readiness Expectations in English and Mathematics. Campuses will continue to determine which assessment tools will be used to place students in specific courses (locally-developed assessment tools, commercially designed assessments, or a combination of both).
- The placement policy does not guarantee placement in a specific course. Individual campus policies and practices may reflect additional or higher expectations for placement. Campuses may have expectations that exceed the minimum benchmarks or employ strategies such as “decision zones” or “placement ranges” for advising students with special needs or under special circumstances. Students with scores close to the minimum standard should be advised that they will likely need assistance and might find the college-level content very challenging.
- An assessment of writing is strongly encouraged for placing students in courses in English composition.