

**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 12th 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.

Ohio's Current Admissions and Placement Policies

Ohio colleges and universities establish policies and procedures that guide the admission of students for academic study. Some campuses use ACT and SAT scores to place students in courses and other campuses administer the COMPASS test, or ACCUPLACER. Campuses also have developed their own assessments in mathematics and writing for the purpose of placing students in courses. The use of ACT products already is extensive throughout Ohio, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. 2006 Ohio Board of Regents Placement Policy Survey		
Percentage of Ohio campuses using either the ACT or COMPASS as 1) one determination of placement or 2) to pre-qualify students for placement testing or 3) automatic placement into a credit-bearing, non-remedial course in English or mathematics.		
	English (Writing)	Mathematics (Algebra)
Community and Technical Colleges (23 campuses reporting)	87%	87%
University Regional Campuses (10 campuses reporting)	90%	80%
University Main Campuses (13 campuses reporting)	54%	46%

Even when the same assessments are used for placement (ACT or COMPASS, for example), campuses are not uniform in the placement score required for a student to enroll in a remedial course rather than a course for college-level credit. The 2006 Board of Regents Placement Policy Survey revealed a wide variation among Ohio's placement policies and placement scores (see ACT and COMPASS Placement Score graphs) used in college-level writing (composition) and mathematics (college algebra) courses.

This variation in placement scores is confusing for students, leads to inconsistent expectations for performance and makes the transfer of such credits somewhat suspect in a system that guarantees statewide articulation. Specific courses are guaranteed to transfer and count towards degree requirements based upon established learning outcomes for each course and the review of specific campus course syllabi for rigor and alignment with learning outcomes. **The guaranteed transfer of credits across the higher education system assumes that courses are comparable and that students entering the courses reflect a minimal level of mastery of knowledge and skills.**

National Trends in College-Level Placement

Many states are considering the role that college entrance tests might play in advising students on preparation for college and as part of an overall strategy for communicating expectations to students, parents and educators before the transition is made to college. Some states have gone the extra step of requiring tests such as the ACT and SAT for all students either as a replacement for testing in high school or as a supplement. States have also modified the tests by adding additional questions or requiring writing samples. Numerous states are administering the ACT

on a statewide basis and using the scores for an early assessment of college readiness and as a means of placing students in the first college-level course in English (writing and reading) and mathematics (algebra)¹. Kentucky, as one example, is using ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks as part of its strategy for communicating expectations to students and for general placement of students in college courses. While Ohio has not taken this approach, it is reasonable to design an overall strategy using ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks since the use of the college entrance test is extensive within the state of Ohio. Based on 2005 Board of Regents data, 82% of fall term, first-year students at University Main Campuses took the ACT, while 67% of students at University Regional Campuses and 34% of fall term, first-year students at Community and Technical Colleges took the test. Although fewer students took the ACT at Community and Technical Colleges, either COMPASS or Accuplacer are used for placement purposes at most of these campuses.

ACT's has developed the College Readiness Benchmarks help students, parents and educators understand the level of achievement required for a student to have a high probability of success² in credit-level, first-year college courses such as English Composition and College Algebra. The ACT Standards for Transition College Readiness Benchmarks for both the ACT and COMPASS tests are as follows:

ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

ACT TEST	ACT Sub Score	COMPASS Score
English	18	69
Mathematics (College Algebra)	22	65
Reading	21	88

Considering the alignment between Ohio's College Readiness Expectations, K-12 Academic Content Standards, ADP Benchmarks, and ACT's Standards for Transition, the ACT assessment instruments provide a starting point for the dialogue on creating a statewide approach to placement.

¹ Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, and Michigan all have incorporated the ACT or SAT into their state's assessment policies according to Achieve's Closing the Expectations Gap 2007 Report.

²ACT defines success as a 75% or better chance of earning a course grade of C or better, or a 50% chance of earning a B or better in the first credit-bearing college course. ACT has established similar benchmarks on EXPLORE and PLAN, two additional components of ACTS Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS). The EXPLORE and PLAN scores indicate whether students are on track to be ready for first-year college-level work when they graduate from high school. ACT has defined similar college readiness benchmarks on COMPASS (2005).

Placement Summit and Case Studies

The Secondary to College Articulation Committee hosted a Placement Summit in March 2007 for campus administrators, faculty, and K-12 representatives. The Placement Summit focused on promoting a dialogue with educational leaders on the development of common placement guidelines for campuses, updates on national and statewide efforts to improve the college readiness of students making the transition from high school to college, and featured the work of several campuses engaged in placement case study investigations. More information on the Placement Summit can be found at http://regents.ohio.gov/placement_summit/index.php.

In December 2006, campuses were invited to participate in a case study project in response to the draft placement guidelines. The Secondary to College Articulation committee selected five proposals to study the impact of the proposed guidelines on campuses. Campuses were asked to advise the committee on the various issues that might arise at the participating campuses with the implementation of the statewide placement guidelines. Campuses made several observations including that placement benchmarks could have a significant impact on the number of students enrolling in remedial courses. Some of the recommendations from the case studies include:

- Allow for campuses with valid placement practices to continue as long as the campus policies align with the statewide guidelines;
- Include the use of decision zones/placement ranges when using the ACT/SAT or COMPASS/Accuplacer benchmarks, allowing for campus staff to determine if special consideration is required for a specific student or group;
- Use the proposed statewide guidelines not as a single measure of placement, “but the articulation of a coherent yet varied system of equivalent measures that meet the needs and interests of students in all types of post-secondary institutions across Ohio.”
- Post all placement information on campus websites to inform parents, students, and teachers;
- Include a writing assessment to accompany the ACT English benchmark score.

Summaries of the five case studies are listed below.

Kent State University proposed to conduct a research study and analysis of Kent State’s current placement guidelines and procedures on each of the eight participating campuses involving over 16,000 student records. The University then conducted an ex-post facto descriptive research study on the impact of the statewide placement guidelines on placement and student success in the first and subsequent college-level courses on each of the eight campuses for fall 2003, fall 2004, and fall 2005. The results were shared with campus focus groups to identify issues related to the impact of change.

Ohio State University – Mathematics focused on using five years of data to analyze the current process for placing entering freshmen into math courses at Ohio State by studying whether the ACT-math score or various ACT sub-scores, could substitute for current procedures without much loss of accuracy. The University also compared students’ placement levels with their performance in math courses and investigated consequences of a decrease in placement accuracy.

The University of Cincinnati addressed the feasibility of the university's current placement protocol in addressing the draft guidelines and determine the accuracy of the following assessments in predicting the course grade in the first credit bearing course in mathematics and English (writing and reading). The University of Cincinnati uses a 24-question adaptive online assessment for mathematics. The English placement essay is also available online and both English and Math ACT/SAT scores are considered. The study will determine if the draft guidelines would have predicted the same course placement as the university's current system.

Lakeland Community College researched the predictive value of whether the ACT or Compass test scores can effectively demonstrate the level of performance needed for students to achieve a B or higher and C or higher in their first college-level (non-remedial/non-developmental) English or math course at Lakeland. Lakeland also participated in the Course Placement Service offered by ACT Research Services to conduct an in-depth analysis of the current placement levels, recommended placement scores and compare the predictive value of the ACT and Compass tests.

Ohio State University – English investigated the implications of the proposed statewide placement guideline on the potential impact for change on the 1) assessment culture and student autonomy at OSU-Marion where students participate in directed self-placement, 2) curricular alignment of course objectives, 3) institutional policies and practices for student placement at OSU-Marion and OSU-Columbus, and 4) mechanisms for communicating revised policies to students, families, and faculty.

The Secondary to College Articulation Committee carefully considered each of the recommendations from the case studies and several now are reflected in the placement policy.

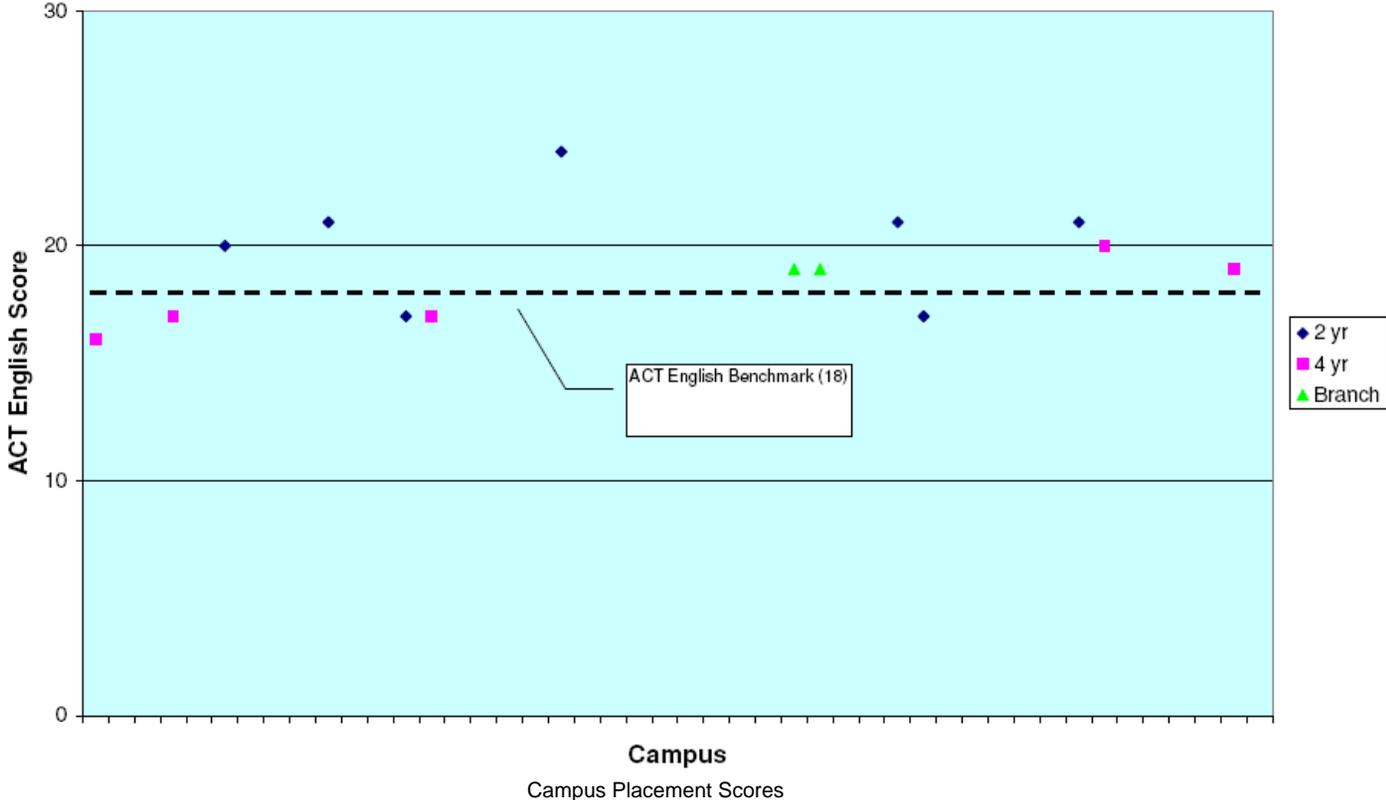
Timeline for Development and Comment

July-Aug 07	Review of feedback from Placement Case Studies and Placement Summit, development of preliminary recommendation on placement from Secondary to College Articulation Committee.
Aug-Sept 07	Solicit campus feedback on draft recommendations
Oct 07	Review of campus and key stakeholder comments, development of revised recommendation on placement from Secondary to College Articulation Committee
November 07	Revised Recommendation from the Secondary to College Articulation Committee
Dec 5, 07	Final Statewide Placement Policy recommendation from Secondary to College Articulation Committee to Articulation and Transfer Council for adoption.
2008-2009	Phased Implementation
2009-2010	Proposed full implementation

4/16/2008

The Secondary to College Articulation Committee values the input from campus leaders and requests campuses to respond with comments on the proposed Statewide Placement Policy. The Committee asks that you share the draft policy with your campus departments and comment on the feasibility of implementing the proposed placement policy. A revised version of the draft placement policy will be sent to you in October once we review feedback from campuses. The Committee will then forward its recommendations to the Articulation and Transfer Council for consideration at its December meeting.

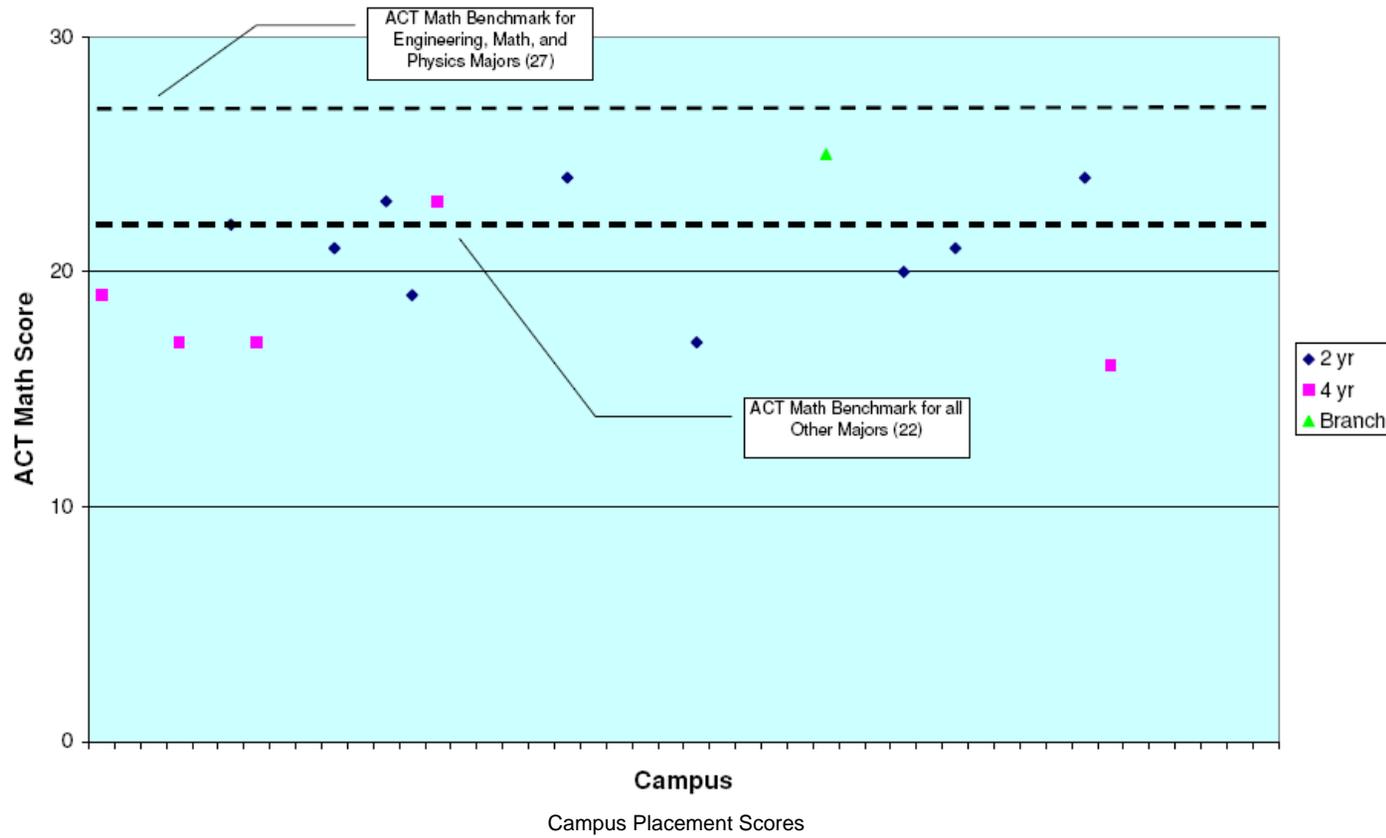
The 2006 Board of Regents Placement Policy Survey
ACT Standards for Transition
ACT Scores Used for Placement Purposes by Campus Type



The 2006 Board of Regents Placement Policy Survey

ACT Standards for Transition

ACT Scores Used for Placement Purposes by Campus Type



The 2006 Board of Regents Placement Policy Survey

COMPASS Standards for Transition

COMPASS Scores Used for Placement Purposes by Campus Type

