

## **Connecticut State University System Report on Proficiency for College Level Courses**

### **Background**

Pursuant to Special Act No. 07-7, *An Act Concerning Public Institution of Higher Education System Transfer and Articulation Process*, the enclosed materials are submitted to the Department of Higher Education to assist in their consideration of (3): “placement test scores for the community-technical college system and the Connecticut State University system that establish specific proficiency levels for all matriculated students entering college level courses.”

Attached is a complete matrix of the existing placement criteria and procedures at each of our four CSUS universities. This matrix was developed by a committee of CSUS faculty leaders who teach basic skills and who have met regularly over the past few years to discuss matters related to this aspect of our curricular offerings. Placement for university courses takes place in the context of specific university missions, teaching and learning philosophies, structure of general education requirements, students’ profile, available university resources and development of proven proficiency strategies, which are often home grown.

While it is recognized that such distinctiveness among universities exists, the enacted legislation provides an impetus for the reexamination of current criteria and procedures to achieve consistency in the identification of students for remedial work and to ensure that they are placed at equivalent courses within the CSUS. This reexamination can result in a more efficient transfer of early college credits throughout the CSUS. In addition, because of current legislative action, the Connecticut Community College (CCC) System is now completing the standardization of their placement criteria and processes throughout its 12 colleges. The result of such standardization will be used to inform the CSUS so that a coherent framework regarding proficiency is created for the state public higher education system.

It should be noted that the need for proper remediation and placement to ensure student success in university programs has been acted on by the Board of Trustees of the CSUS through BR#03-42. This resolution requires that all students demonstrate proficiency and complete proficiency courses within their first 24 academic credits. To accomplish this, the resolution also mandates that *each university*: a) determines what mathematics and English proficiencies are necessary for the completion of each bachelor’s degree it offers; b) establishes a proficiency curriculum for students identified for remedial work; and c) defines proficiency scores on standardized pre-admission tests.

The current plan is submitted to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the legislation while taking into considerations all the factors above.

## **CSUS Placement Review Plan**

### **Phase 1:**

Research and Analysis – Timeline: Spring 2008 semester

Determine the results of current practices at the four CSUS universities to answer the following critical questions: a) To what extent are current criteria and practices equivalent? b) To what extent are students being identified for remediation consistently and/or placed in courses that are equivalent? c) To what extent are current remediation and placement approaches contributing to the success of students in university programs?

### **Phase 2:**

Consideration of the CCC System Framework – Timeline: Fall 2008 semester

The CSUS will meet with the CCC System leadership early in 2008 to discuss the specifics of the standardization of proficiencies that is underway. The CCC System has tentatively scheduled the implementation of its plan beginning the incoming class of 2009-10. Since the legislative intent is to develop more seamless transfer process to benefit Connecticut students, it is worthwhile to consider how the CSUS and CCC System test cut-off scores and procedures are aligned to ensure a proper level of congruence. It is important to note, for example, that students whose only goal is to obtain associate level degrees should not be required to demonstrate the same proficiency level that bachelor level programs require at the CSUS universities.

This phase will also include examination of placement procedures and instruments utilized in other states. Minnesota, for example, has a standardized system used across all public Universities and Community Colleges.

### **Phase 3:**

Review of Proficiencies and Course Placements in the CSUS – Timeline: Spring 2009  
(Revised proficiency and placement system to apply to students entering in the Fall 2009)

Based upon the results of the previous work, an equivalent set of proficiencies and course placements will be developed. This work will also take into account the work in response to legislation in the areas of common course numbering and transfer and articulation with the CCC System colleges.

### **Phase 4:**

Continuous Monitoring and Review – Timeline: Ongoing

The CSUS Basic Skills faculty group will conduct biennial reviews in consideration of the above phases. This continuous review will be particularly relevant to the state higher education system as a whole in light of the current efforts by the State Board of Education to reform secondary schools in the state. The proposed reform includes changes in the required courses for high school graduation that intend to incorporate college preparation curriculum and end-of-course assessments.

## Cut-off Scores for Placement into English and Mathematics Courses in the Connecticut State University System

This report has been compiled in accordance with Special Act No. 07-7 approved by the Legislature on June 11, 2007. Its purpose is to report on the current status of placement in English and Mathematics courses for students matriculating at the four constituent universities in the CSU System: Central, Eastern, Southern, and Western Connecticut State Universities.

Differences among the universities reflect differences in curriculum as well as in the instruments used to place students.

As Table 1 shows, a variety of instruments are used to place students.

Table 1 Tests Used (See Guide to Acronyms in the Appendix)

Institution	English	Mathematics
CCSU	SAT Writing , SAT Verbal, ACT, Accuplacer for transfer students, TOEFL or TSWE for ESL students, and diagnostic essay on the first day of class for all students.	SAT Math and Accuplacer
ECSU	Essay	SAT Math and Accuplacer
SCSU	Essay	Accuplacer
WCSU	SAT Critical Reading and Essay	SAT Math and Accuplacer

The writing requirements at the four universities are different. CCSU and ECSU each require a one semester composition course. Students who are not prepared for that course must either take a remedial course (ENG 099 at CCSU) or a more intensive version of the standard course (ENG 100P at ECSU). SCSU has a two semester sequence ENG 111 and 112, although a few extremely well prepared students may place out of ENG 112. Less prepared students may be required to take ENG 99 or 110. At WCSU the General Education writing requirement is fulfilled by taking a “W” course. WRT 101 (Composition I) is a prerequisite for “W” courses. Less prepared students at WCSU take a remedial course WRT 098 or WRT 099.

The criteria for placing students in writing courses are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Writing Courses

Institution	Courses	Criteria for Initial Placement
CCSU	ENG 099 Remedial English	SAT Writing and SAT Verbal both below 450 or ACT below 21 or Accuplacer Sentence Skills below 86 (transfer students), TSWE below 35 of TOEFL below 173 (for ESL students), and a diagnostic essay on the first day of class for all students.
	ENG 110 Freshman Composition	SAT Writing or SAT Verbal at least 450 or ACT at least 21 or Accuplacer at least 86 (transfer students), either TSWE 35 or better or TOEFL 173 or better (for ESL students) and a diagnostic essay on the first day of class for all students.
ECSU	ENG 100 (regular 3 hour course)	Self selection plus essay
	ENG 100P (English “plus”) Intensive five-hour course	Self selection plus essay
SCSU	ENG 99 (for ESL speakers)	Self selection plus essay
	ENG 110 (native speakers with significant weaknesses)	Self selection plus essay
	ENG 111 (incoming students with competent writing skills)	Self selection plus essay
	ENG 112 (extremely well prepared students)	Self selection plus essay
WCSU	WRT 098 (or 099 for ESL) Written Communication	Writing placement test (essay) for students scoring below 510 on SAT Critical Reading
	WRT 101 Composition I	SAT Verbal of 510-590 or writing placement test
	Writing intensive courses for general education	SAT Verbal of 600 or higher or writing placement test

In mathematics there is more uniformity at the level of remedial courses than at the level of general education courses. Each university offers a non-credit course in elementary algebra and a credit-bearing course in intermediate algebra that does not satisfy a general education requirement. There are some variations to this pattern, however. CCSU offers an intensive course that combines elementary and intermediate algebra in one semester to students with placement scores in a certain range. ECSU offers intensive “workshop” courses for both elementary and intermediate algebra. SCSU has both a one semester intermediate algebra course as well as a two semester sequence for less well prepared students.

All four universities use the Accuplacer examination package, which consists of three mathematics exams: Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra, and College Level Mathematics. Most students taking the exam start with Elementary Algebra, and if they score sufficiently high they are given the opportunity to take the College Level Mathematics Exam.

At ECSU and WCSU students with Math SAT scores of 600 or above are exempt from taking Accuplacer. At CCSU initial placement is determined by Math SAT. Students who believe they have been misplaced are invited to take Accuplacer and if necessary their placement is adjusted.

Tables 3 and 4 show the criteria for placement into Elementary and Intermediate Algebra courses. EA refers to the Elementary Algebra Accuplacer Test. CLM refers to the College Level Math Accuplacer Test.

Table 3 Elementary Algebra

Institution	Course	Criteria for Initial Placement
CCSU	MATH 099 Elementary Algebra	SAT Math 450 or below or $EA + CLM < 80$
	MATH 099/101 combination (an intensive course)	SAT Math 460-490 or $80 \leq EA + CLM < 110$
ECSU	MATH 098W Elementary Algebra with Workshop	SAT Math $< 600$ and ( $EA < 28$ or $28 \leq EA < 30$ and number of high school math courses $< 4$ )
	MATH 098 Elementary Algebra	SAT Math $< 600$ and ( $28 \leq EA < 30$ and number of high school math courses $\geq 4$ or $30 \leq EA < 40$ )
SCSU	MATH 095 Elementary Algebra	$EA < 60$
WCSU	MATH 098 Remedial Level	SAT Math $< 500$ or (SAT Math $< 600$ and $EA \leq 70$ )

Table 4 Intermediate Algebra

Institution	Course	Criteria for Initial Placement
CCSU	MATH 099/101 combination (an intensive course)	SAT Math 460-490 or $80 \leq$ EA + CLM < 110
	MATH 101 Intermediate Algebra	SAT Math 500-540 or $110 \leq$ EA + CLM < 125
ECSU	MATH 101W Intermediate Algebra with Workshop	SAT Math < 600 and $40 \leq$ EA < 55
	MATH 101 Intermediate Algebra	SAT Math < 600 and ( $55 \leq$ EA < 70 or $70 \leq$ EA < 75 and number of high school math courses < 4)
SCSU	MATH 100 Intermediate Algebra A and B	$70 \leq$ EA < 85 and CLM < 63
	MATH 101 Intermediate Algebra A	$60 \leq$ EA < 70
WCSU	MATH 100 Intermediate Algebra	$500 \leq$ SAT Math < 600 and $71$ $\leq$ EA $\leq$ 90 and CLM < 42

All four universities require students to take at least one course in mathematics above the intermediate algebra level. Students typically qualify for these courses either by passing intermediate algebra or by placement scores. (An exception is three courses at WCSU indicated in Table 5 for which an A in elementary algebra is sufficient.) At all four universities Calculus I requires a prerequisite course in pre-calculus or placement scores significantly above the general education level. Therefore Calculus I placement will be described in a separate section below.

Table 5 shows the criteria used to place students in general education courses. At SCSU there are three different cut-off points as the courses are arranged in tiers. At the other three universities the same criteria are used to place students in all general education courses below Calculus I.

Table 5 General Education Mathematics Courses (excluding Calculus I)

Institution	Courses	Criteria for Initial Placement
CCSU	MATH 105, 106, 110, 113, 115, 119, 121, 123, 124, 125, STAT 104, 200, 215 all satisfy general education requirement (Choice depends upon major)	SAT Math $\geq 550$ or EA + CLM $\geq 125$
ECSU	MATH 130, 135, or 139 all satisfy general education requirement (Choice depends upon major)	SAT Math $\geq 600$ or ( $75 \leq EA$ and CLM $< 60$ ) or ( $70 \leq EA < 75$ and number of high school math courses $\geq 4$ )
SCSU	MATH 108 or below (including MATH 103, 105, 106, 107)	$85 \leq EA < 108$ and CLM $< 63$
	MATH 122 or below (including MATH 120 and those listed in the box above)	(EA $\geq 108$ and CLM $< 63$ ) or $63 \leq CLM < 86$
	MATH 139 or below (including MATH 124 and those listed in the two boxes above)	$86 \leq CLM < 103$
WCSU	MATH 110, 113, 127 (prerequisite A in MATH 098 or pass in MATH 100)	SAT Math $\geq 600$ or EA $\geq 91$ or CLM $\geq 42$
	MATH 105, 106, 115, 118, 120 (prerequisite C or higher in MATH 100)	
	MATH 133, 135 170 (prerequisite B or higher in MATH 100)	

All four universities offer a four-credit Calculus I course. This course is generally required of students majoring in mathematics, computer science, engineering, and the physical sciences. The criteria for placement into Calculus I are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6 Courses Requiring Qualification for Calculus I

Institution	Courses	Criteria for Initial Placement
CCSU	MATH 135 Applied Engineering Calculus I MATH 152 Calculus I (or any course in Table 5)	SAT Math $\geq 600$ and calculus or pre-calculus in high school with a grade of B or higher or EA + CLM $\geq 165$
ECSU	MATH 243 Calculus I	SAT Math $\geq 600$ or (EA $\geq 75$ and CLM $\geq 60$ )
SCSU	MATH 150 Calculus I MATH 178 Elementary Discrete Mathematics MATH 221 Intermediate Applied Statistics (or any course in Table 5)	CLM $\geq 103$
WCSU	MATH 181 Calculus I	(SAT Math $\geq 600$ or EA $\geq 91$ or CLM $\geq 42$ ) and permission of math faculty advisor

**Appendix: Guide to Acronyms**

ACT = American College Test

CLM = College Level Mathematics section of the Accuplacer Test

EA = Elementary Algebra Section of the Accuplacer Test

ESL = English as a Second Language

SAT = Scholastic Aptitude Test, consisting of three sections: Verbal (or Critical Reading), Writing, and Mathematics

TOEFL = Test of English as a Foreign Language

TSWE = Test of Standard Written English