



DATE: September 9, 2020

TO: Education and Community-Based Partners

SUBJECT: Resource Memo: Continued Processes for Student Placement During the COVID-19 Pandemic Period

Since the Spring Semester Minnesota State Colleges and Universities have been using interim guidance on student course placement due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and limitations on placement testing. The Academic and Student Affairs unit updated the course placement guidance in August and the updated guidance largely continues the same policies and practices through the Summer 2021 courses including the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters.

The updated guidance does clarify a few issues important to those who work with adult students entering Minnesota State institutions. First, the guidance clarifies that among system-endorsed measures including previous course completion, ACT, SAT, MCA, and Accuplacer scores, and HS GPA, only one of those is needed for placement. Previous guidance had been interpreted by some institutions to combine more than one method in placement. This is important in that students may utilize the method of placement to choose the highest placement for which they qualify.

Second, the updated guidance defines and clarifies the role of Informed Self-Placement:

5. Informed Self-Placement

- a. Informed Self-Placement (also known as Guided Self-Placement or GSP) is a locally developed tool or process that allows students, in consultation with counselors, advisors, or other faculty and staff, to determine suitable coursework including the appropriate mathematics, reading, English, and English as a Second Language (ESL) course.
- b. Colleges and universities may allow students without valid ACT, SAT, MCA, ACCUPLACER, or HS GPA scores to register for courses up to and including the college-level gateway course within the disciplines of reading, writing, and mathematics (i.e., college algebra) through a locally developed informed self-placement model.
- c. As part of a locally established informed self-placement model, colleges and universities may use scores from alternative assessments to provide course placement recommendations, including but not limited to the following:
 - i. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
 - ii. General Education Development (GED)
 - iii. Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
- d. To the greatest extent possible, students who qualify for informed self-placement should meet with an advisor prior to registration as outlined in the pre-registration advising section below.



The new guidance expands upon previous examples of guided self-placement and provides an increased emphasis on the pre-registration advising. It is important to note, students determine their placement level in the GSP model. The above tests or others created locally are not placement tests, but used to inform the student and advisor during their discussion.

Third, the use of additional measures locally may be utilized only in addition to the approved measures including the ACT, SAT, MCA, HS GPA, and ACCUPLACER scores. This means colleges and universities may use such measures for placement only if the student does not receive a college level placement in any of the system-endorsed measures. This ensures students are not placed below college level if they have system-endorsed scores that qualify for college level courses.

The revised guidance emphasizes students may place into college level courses with one placement measure that indicates college level course readiness.

Students without the system-endorsed measures may still be placed utilizing guided self-placement during this period. Students may still opt for guide self-placement if they are not able to sit for ACCUPLACER due to technology or health concerns during the period covered in the guidance.

Current guidance covers placement through the Summer 2021 enrollment periods. There may be some overlap during that time with students looking for placement in Fall 2021. Further guidance will follow in early 2021 to address this.

For assistance in developing self-placement, additional resources, and answers to questions, contact Larry Handlin, Director of Equity Assessment at Larry.Handlin@minnstate.edu or 651-201-1865. Please also call for assistance establishing evaluation methods around self-placement. As noted above, these are time-limited changes, but Minnesota State will evaluate the effectiveness of these changes to inform future practice.