

Georgia

2016 College- and Career-Readiness Policies and Practices

The Southern Regional Education Board has long emphasized the critical need to strengthen students' readiness to succeed after high school. SREB's recommendations to improve readiness (SREB.org/Readiness) cover standards, assessments, transitional courses, postsecondary placement and remedial education. To support states' efforts, SREB compiled information through interviews of P-16 education agency staff and review of numerous documents to determine state progress as of fall 2016 on the recommendations. This state profile summarizes selected findings for each of the five areas. SREB plans to update this information annually.

Standards

Does the state have statewide college- and career-readiness standards in reading, writing and mathematics? Do K-12 and postsecondary education agree on the same standards?

The Georgia State Board of Education initially adopted college- and career-readiness standards — the Common Core State Standards — under the title of Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. In 2015, the State Board of Education renamed the standards the Georgia Standards of Excellence, and adopted them as policy. These standards align to national standards. Postsecondary and K-12 agree on the same set of standards.

Readiness Assessments

How does the state assess high school students' readiness? What are the options for students who do not meet them?

End-of-course assessments determine high school students' progress; there is no junior year assessment. Only the English assessment is administered in the junior year, but the state has not decided how to use the assessment for feedback or placement.

Transitional Courses and Interventions

Does the state require transitional readiness courses or other interventions for students who are not ready to succeed in college-level courses?

Instruction or curriculum targeted to the specific readiness standards has not been available during the senior year, but the University System of Georgia's Mathematical Subjects Academic Advisory Committee approved and implemented the SREB Math Readiness Course for the 2016-17 school year. Students throughout the state will be able to take transitional courses, but schools do not require them. College Transition Math will carry one math credit as a fourth mathematics course.

Postsecondary Placement

How do institutions place a student who is not ready for college-level work? Are the same standards, assessments and qualifying score levels applied statewide or systemwide? Are multiple criteria and measures used in placement decisions?

To determine readiness, all University System of Georgia institutions will use a formula that includes SAT or ACT, high school GPA, and, secondarily, Accuplacer. Technical college system institutions determine readiness primarily with Accuplacer.

Each system has placement policies that apply to all institutions in their respective systems. The Complete College Georgia Articulation Agreement in 2012 called for comparable placement and exit test results between the systems. Performance standards are set empirically. The USG assesses reading and writing. TCSG assesses reading comprehension, sentence skills, arithmetic and elementary algebra. Accuplacer assesses literacy skills. Consistent, systemwide minimum qualifying scores apply throughout the University System; institutions can set higher placement cut scores as appropriate. Each system monitors its policies: USG collects and reviews data from institutions and reports to the Board of Regents periodically. TCSG monitors placement policies to determine validity of placement scores.

University System of Georgia institutions use ACT or SAT to assess math skills for placement; a passing score exempts students from testing unless institutions set higher standards. The USG sets cut scores empirically, based on a 55 percent probability of success in collegiate mathematics. As of January 2017, all institutions must use multiple weighted measures to determine placement or exemption from remediation. The measures include high school grade point average, SAT or ACT scores, and placement test scores. Institutions may calculate placement indices without placement testing for students who have high school GPA and SAT or ACT scores. Students without high school GPA or SAT or ACT scores must be tested. USG institutions do not recognize math areas such as statistics and quantitative reasoning for placement. To determine the effectiveness of its placement process, the University System routinely collects data on the number and percentage of students who are placed in remediation, the number of semesters it takes to exit remediation, and success rates in initial collegiate courses for students starting with remedial requirements versus those that did not.

Technical College System of Georgia institutions use only Accuplacer to assess for math placement, but institutions may accept appropriate scores from Compass, SAT, ACT and GED. Content experts from the colleges set qualifying scores using an empirical process. TCSG conducts an annual validity study that compares placement to student course success.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Are there state or system policies for remedial and developmental education in colleges? What curricular and support paths are available for students? Is corequisite instruction—an academic course taken in conjunction with another course—required or optional? How do institutions and the state monitor student progress? What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these interventions?

Since fall 2015, the University System of Georgia has required that most students who need remediation begin with corequisite instruction. Some USG institutions will only provide remediation as corequisite instruction; others will provide stand-alone remedial instruction. In institutions that offer both corequisite and stand-alone remediation, students scoring highest on the placement measures take corequisite remediation, while those who score lowest take stand-alone remediation. USG uses a parallel supplemental course model. Most Technical College System of Georgia institutions allow all remedial students to take corequisite courses, and all TCSG colleges must implement a corequisite model by fall 2017. Most colleges use an accelerated learning program; each institution determines how the model is structured.

The University System collects data on the success rates of students directed to gateway credit courses to monitor their performance. Monitoring differs from institution to institution and may include tutoring, supplemental instruction and other strategies. In the technical college system, each college determines the appropriate path based on test scores, and each has a plan to monitor performance in gateway courses. Statewide, TCSG monitors success rates of learning-support students, including those in corequisite remediation. Both systems have evidence of effectiveness of alternative models.