

Mississippi

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 Mississippi Department of Education approved and implemented the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for English language arts and mathematics in 2015-16.

Readiness Assessments

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

High schools report three readiness metrics: student performance on end-of-course assessments, student ACT scores and graduation rates. Students who were first-time test takers in English II and Algebra I and re-testers of the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) examination took the Mississippi Assessment Program, or MAP, in fall 2015. Students may enroll in SREB's Readiness Courses in lieu of developmental education requirements per statewide policy. Instruction is targeted to specific readiness standards. Seniors who meet college and career readiness standards may enroll in dual enrollment and Advanced Placement classes. Students may qualify for dual credit and dual enrollment if they have a 3.0 GPA on 14 core units, junior status or an ACT score of 30.

Placement measures for the state's 15 two-year colleges may include ACT and Accuplacer. Students who do not meet qualifying cut scores for college math or English must complete remedial math and English courses before enrolling in college-level math or English courses. Mississippi's four-year state institutions use multiple measures to determine placement, including ACT and Accuplacer. Students who do not meet the readiness standards may need to complete another placement process such as an interview.

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?

Mississippi has no policy or statute requiring schools to offer transitional courses to help students gain college-level skills if they do not meet standards by 11th grade. One-third of the state's 144 school districts offer the SREB Literacy Ready and Math Ready courses for full credit. To receive the state's supplemental licensure endorsement, teachers must complete the SREB and Mississippi Department of Education professional development training.

The Math Ready course counts as a mathematics course for the college preparatory curriculum. SREB and the Mississippi Department of Education studied the scores of 400 Mississippi students to evaluate the impact of the SREB transitional courses on ACT performance. An analysis of the data available shows increases in ACT sub-scores and composite scores of students who retook the test after completing the Readiness Courses.

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?

Students who do not meet requirements for unconditional admission to a Mississippi public university may be admitted to the institution but must participate in an on-campus placement process which includes a summer developmental program at the institution. Students who complete the summer program may enroll in college-level courses. Systemwide placement standards are applied to all eight public universities under Institutions of Higher Learning Board policy. Four-year institutions use ACT with a threshold score of 17 on English and mathematics for placement in credit-bearing courses. Each higher education institution has authority to require higher ACT subtest placement scores.

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?

Members of the Mississippi Community College Academic Officers Association set guidelines for math and English remediation for two-year colleges. The Uniform Course Numbering System lists the series of developmental courses and labs that institutions may offer. Some community colleges are piloting corequisite remediation in English and math for students who are 1 to 2 points below cut scores. Institutions monitor each strategy through data collection and report to the system office.

Other monitoring strategies vary by institution. Institutions use student performance data at all levels of mathematics and English, as well as input from high school guidance counselors, to measure the effectiveness of alternative instructional options.

At the state's public universities, all entering freshmen with ACT English or reading subtest scores of 16 or lower are required to take intermediate English or intermediate reading during their first semester. The institution may require the same of students with scores of 17, 18 or 19. Entering freshmen with scores of 16 or lower on the ACT mathematics subtest must take intermediate algebra during their first semester. Students with a grade of 80 or higher on the SREB Math Ready course, regardless of their ACT mathematics score, do not need to take intermediate algebra and are enrolled in a college-level mathematics course during their first semester. Individual institutions may provide curricular and support paths, but there is no policy systemwide. Students enrolled in more than one remedial course must enroll in an academic support laboratory at the college. The state higher education agency monitors system policies through data collection.