

North Carolina

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?

Legislative action in 2015 required a new set of standards. A committee of representatives from the legislature, K-12, higher education and business designed the state's new standards. These standards have been under review, and secondary and postsecondary leaders have been aligning secondary programs with higher education expectations and program requirements. The definition of college and career ready was approved in April 2015 by the state board of education. The North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction must approve the standards.

Readiness Assessments

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

North Carolina community colleges use multiple measures to determine readiness. The Multiple Measures of Placement Policy determines if students are ready to begin gateway entry-level English and mathematics courses. Concurrent credit is allowed for students with an unweighted GPA of 2.6 and higher. Colleges use the North Carolina Diagnostic Assessment and Placement Test, developed in cooperation with the College Board. North Carolina research shows that the Compass and Accuplacer assessments are not good indicators of college readiness and that the best indicator is unweighted high school grade point average.

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?

Several North Carolina high schools use the SREB transitional courses, and there is an effort underway to gather research to determine best practices. The state's Multiple Measures of Placement Policy aligns with ACT and SAT benchmarks. North Carolina community colleges are working with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction on a statewide plan for implementing interventions during the high school senior year for students who do not demonstrate college readiness during their junior year.

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?

Community colleges rely on the Multiple Measures of Placement Policy for recent high school graduates to determine their readiness for college-level courses. The North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges has established multiple measures for determining student readiness and placement in college coursework by using ACT or SAT scores, high school GPA or other measures. Students who graduated from high school less than five years ago and meet the GPA benchmark and math requirement are exempt from diagnostic placement testing and are considered college-ready for gateway entry-level math and English courses. Students who are not placed via multiple measures take the North Carolina Diagnostic Assessment and Placement Test, which aligns with the math and English and reading modules for student placement.

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?

Faculty teams from North Carolina community colleges redesigned all developmental education programs and policies. This included converting all developmental math from four traditional 16-week courses to eight math modules designed for delivery in four-week segments. Developmental English and reading courses are now integrated and consolidated into eight-week modules. The Multiple Measures Placement Policy allows postsecondary institutions to require supplemental supports for recent graduates with an unweighted high school GPA of 2.6 to 3.0. These supports may include corequisite classes (labs) or online individualized remedial modules. Colleges use both parallel supplemental courses and supplemental assistance as part of the credit course. Institutions are examining student success rates to determine which measures yield the greatest rates of student success. The implementation deadline was fall 2016, and preliminary results are mixed.