

# UK Institutional Research Brief: CPE's Mandatory Placement Policy and the Academic Readiness Program

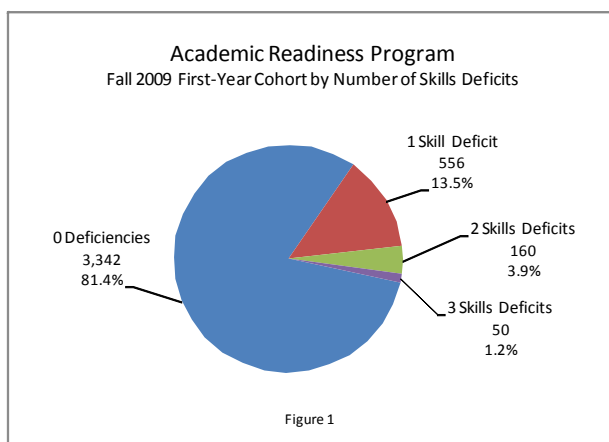
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Eight years ago, the Council on Postsecondary Education implemented a policy requiring institutions to remediate students who did not meet statewide readiness standards in English, math, and reading. Students who achieved sub-standard scores were required to take a developmental course to improve their skills before being eligible to enroll in a college-level course for credit. Alternatively, students could be placed into a credit-bearing, entry-level course that offers supplementary support, such as extra class sessions, additional labs, tutoring and the like. In 2004 and 2009, CPE amended its Mandatory Placement Policy by adjusting the readiness standards. The revised policy establishes the following system-wide standards on the ACT Assessment<sup>1</sup> to qualify for placement in a college-level course:

- A score of 18 or above in English
- A score of 19 or above in math
- A score of 20 or above in reading

## Skill Deficits in the First-Year Cohort

An analysis of first-year students' scores on standardized tests found that four of five students scored above the system-wide readiness standards in all three skills areas (see Figure 1). Students with a skill deficit in one area, typically math, accounted for 13.5 percent of the cohort. And the percentages of students with two and three skills deficits were 3.9 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively.



<sup>1</sup> The comparable standards as measured by the SAT are 450 in Verbal (for English), 470 in Math, and 490 in Verbal (for reading).

### **Academic Readiness Program**

Students identified as eligible for the Academic Readiness Program (ARP) based on sub-standard ACT or SAT scores must demonstrate their proficiency within the first two academic semesters that a student is enrolled. The Director of Retention and Student Success works with each student's college to determine whether the student has displayed evidence of meeting readiness standards in these basic skill areas. To increase students' likelihood of success, UK offers several opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiencies—even before they start classes at the University. During the spring or summer prior to their arriving at UK, students can:

- earn an acceptable score on the COMPASS Placement Test taken at a local ACT Testing Center or at no cost at the UK Compass Testing Center;
- fulfill the college-approved learning contract for Academic Readiness Online Tutoring offered free to eligible students; or
- complete successfully a developmental education course at a local community college.

After they enroll at UK, students with deficient skills in math have the option of taking and successfully completing a remedial math course. ARP students requiring supplemental instruction in English are typically placed in a new "writing workshop" developed by the UK Writing Program's faculty and researchers. This one-credit-hour section includes content and objectives from ENG 104, thus serving as a type of advance organizer for students who (upon showing success in the workshop) will enroll in ENG 104 this spring.

Students who do not meet the readiness standard in reading have other interventions designed to improve their skills. The deans of Arts & Sciences and Agriculture agreed last year to support the needs of students in the Academic Readiness Program who require supplemental instruction in reading. Five new "Reading Lab" one-credit-hour sections for ARP students enrolled in ANT 160, HIS 108, SOC 101 and GEN 100 are taught by graduate students trained in their disciplines and in the instruction of critical reading skills. A partnership with the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development includes the reading lab instructor training, oversight of the new classes to assure quality in critical reading skills instruction, open clinics offered to ARP students during the fall and spring semesters, and regular evaluation reports.

### **ARP Pipeline Statistics at a Glance**

The ARP Pipeline presented in Table 1 shows the numbers of students in the Fall 2009 cohort with deficits in the three skill areas, along with statistics on placement and related interventions. A total of 478 students, 11.6 percent of the first-year cohort, scored below the readiness standard in math. Nearly one in ten (8.8%) placed out of remedial math on the basis of a university placement test. Half of the students (51.7%) with deficiencies in this area were enrolled on or before September 1 in a developmental math course. And one-fourth (23.2%) of students who fell below the math readiness standards were recommended other interventions, such as online tutoring, to remediate their deficiencies.

Table 1  
The Academic Readiness Program Placement Pipeline: Fall 2009 Cohort

Deficient Skill Area	Scored Below Statewide Standard	Placed Out Using Univ. Placement Test		Enrolled on or before 9/1 in A Develop. or Supp. Course		Enrolled in College Credit-Bearing Course		Recommended Other Intervention		Unassigned As of 9/1	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Math	478	42	8.8%	247	51.7%	56	11.7%	111	23.2%	22	4.6%
English	183	67	36.6%	39	21.3%	29	15.8%	16	8.7%	32	17.5%
Reading	365	135	37.0%	95	26.0%	60	16.4%	38	10.4%	37	10.1%

Students with skills deficits in reading constituted the next largest group. Table 1 shows 365 students, 8.9 percent of the freshman cohort, fell below the system-wide standard. Over one-third (37.0%) of these students were able to raise their proficiency level in reading, as assessed by a university placement test, so they did not require further remediation. One-fourth of the students (26.0%) with reading deficits were enrolled in a credit-bearing social science course that also offered supplementary instruction in reading.

Finally, a total of 183 students fell below the readiness standards in English. A substantial share of these students, 36.6%, was able to score above the readiness standard in this discipline area. Of the students with an identified deficiency in English, however, nearly one in five (17.5%) was unassigned either to a credit-bearing section that offered supplementary help or some other remedial intervention.