

Placement Tests and Testing

A CASP Position Paper



College Academic Support Programs



Texas Association for Developmental Education and Texas College Reading and Learning Association

Research shows that students who are successful their first semester in college tend to re-enroll and persist to earn a credential, certificate, or degree. Conversely, students who are misplaced tend to drop out. Accurately placing students into the college class that best matches their skill levels is essential to improving the numbers of students who achieve a credential, certificate, or degree. Achieving a credential impacts the economic health of not only the State of Texas but our country. This position paper represents research best-practices that should be implemented across Texas in order to improve student success as well as degree attainment. Position points are presented first, followed by discussion, a bibliography, a list of questions related to access and placement, and an appendix.

Position Points

1. Accurate placement is a result of applying placement assessment instrument(s) and/or institutional placement policies.
2. State-of-the-art placement is 90% accuracy, and that should be the target of every higher education institution in the State of Texas.
3. Placement instruments measure skill levels on the day and time of testing. They do not predict successful course outcomes or degree attainment; however, they do predict negative outcomes quite accurately.
4. Placement tests and policies efficacy should be assessed about a month into a semester. Best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey.

5. Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys should be done annually until results achieve 90%, but at least once every three years afterwards to assess continued placement accuracy.
6. As long as the placement accuracy is 90% or better, it should be the institution's decision about which instrument or strategy to employ. Institutions that achieve 90% or better accuracy as determined by a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey should share their placement strategies, policies, and/or testing instrument cut scores with the state so that best practices can be quickly scaled up.
7. Placement instruments should not be used as course exit assessments.

Discussion

1. Accurate placement is a result of applying placement assessment instrument(s) and/or institutional placement policies.

In an ideal world, a student intake process would include an individual, lengthy interview to explore career or interest goals, selection of an appropriate course of study that directly leads to those goals, and assessment to accurately discern the best first classes. However, the reality is that most institutions are severely limited by the large numbers of first-time-in-college students, the short window of registration time, and the small numbers of advisors, counselors, and faculty who advise students. Placement has to be quick, timely, accurate, easy, and inexpensive for both the students and the institution.

Most universities use the SAT or ACT to determine college entrance, but these assessments should not be used to place students into Developmental Studies classes because they are designed for a different purpose, namely admission decisions to more selective four-year institutions. As such, they contain a focus on questions that measure higher order skills more suitable for making decisions on admissions. In contrast, placement tests aim to make decisions about courses below college level and thus contain more questions from below college level skills (Morante). Most community college institutions in the country use a placement instrument like COMPASS or Accuplacer (Boylan).

Some institutions who are achieving 90% or better placement accuracy take advantage of the placement instrument's ability to add several questions at the end of the test in order to refine the metrics and improve the final score accuracy. Other institutions incorporate additional assessments like the LASSI, Learning and Study

Skills Inventory, or they add a strategy like a faculty team which reads and scores student placement essays of students in a “gray zone.” Few institutions have improved their placement accuracy through the use of a writing sample in addition to the adaptive placement exam. Those who achieve high placement accuracy use test scores augmented by background information such as perception of time management requirements, study attitudes, academic background, or current application of the discipline in addition to environmental issues such as having a place to study, employment issues, and family support (Gordon). Gordon calls these multiple measures, and properly applied, it can improve placement accurately by three to seven percentage points.

So long as the result is state-of-the-art placement, it should be the institution’s decision of what instrument(s) and strategies to employ. Best practices should be shared so that they can be quickly scaled up.

The best assessment instrument in the world can be immediately sabotaged by institutional policies (Morante). Some questions institutions should ask include:

- Is testing mandatory for all first time in college students?
- Can a student retake a placement test to improve a score? If so, must he or she retake the same instrument, which is an invalid assessment of their skill levels? How many times are retakes allowed? Who makes the decision? How are testing policies enforced? How are students who retake an instrument tracked and compared with students who were placed without retakes?
- Can placement test scores be overridden? If so, who has the authority to override a score? How are the students whose test scores are overridden tracked and compared with students who are placed by testing?
- Is there firm prerequisite control or can a student be placed into a course, drop it, and register for a more advanced course?
- A more complete list of questions may be found at the end of this report.

2. State-of-the-art placement is with 90% accuracy, and that should be the target of every higher education institution in the State of Texas.

Students are frustrated when they are unnecessarily placed into a developmental class. If they are placed too low, students become frustrated and drop out. If they are placed too high, they become frustrated and drop out. Faculty members are frustrated by the institutional pressure for student success when the skill level of their students varies widely and when some students do not have the entry level skills required to succeed. When students enter with a similar skill set range because they have been

accurately placed, faculty can more effectively target interventions and teach the course learning outcomes. Accurate placement impacts morale, motivation, and persistence through the all-important first semester of higher education. Accurate placement directly affects student success.

High student placement accuracy, 90%, is currently being achieved by colleges like Yuba Community College and College of the Desert. Their strategies for achieving accuracy are one option that can be scaled up.

3. *Placement instruments measure skill levels on the day and time of testing. They do not predict course outcomes or degree attainment.*

A large body of evidence shows a very poor correlation between a placement test score and end of course grades (Aligning Expectations). Expecting a test score to predict a course outcome defies common sense. Many factors other than skill levels impact a student's ability to complete a course successfully. Motivation, health of the student or a family member, number of employment hours, stability of the family, whether or not the student purchased course materials, time devoted to effective study and practice, and good teaching that wipes out deficits are only some factors.

However, just because placement tests do not predict course outcomes or degree attainment, does not mean they are not useful indicators of skill levels. In fact, they do well, particularly when other metrics are added to the placement decision making.

Another criticism leveled at placement tests is that test questions do not reflect the rigor of college level work. However, because a placement test is used to identify skills at the developmental level, a large proportion of the total question pool is at below college level. Since placement tests should not be used for advanced placement, fewer questions are above college level. The test need only identify skills at the entry level.

The most popular placement tests are adaptive. Both Compass and Accuplacer begin each test at the middle of the difficulty range and move as required by the student's responses. Accuplacer administers the entire test content structure at the appropriate difficulty level for each item. Compass may abort some content if the student answers incorrectly more than once. This style of testing is new for most entering students. For example, students who have successfully completed high school calculus occasionally are placed into developmental math because their basic arithmetic skills are rusty. Other students report not taking the test seriously. Still others report that by the time they figured out how the test worked, it was over.

Assisting students in understanding the purpose of the test and the kinds of questions asked, and giving them an opportunity to take some practice questions and review the materials covered, especially in mathematics, can greatly assist the accuracy of the results and the efficacy of the placement decisions that need to be made. Some institutions have students read and sign an information page before taking a placement test. Many offer quick review sessions or online practice testing opportunities. These best practices should be identified and scaled up across the State of Texas.

Studies show that the use of multiple variables adds significantly to the accuracy of placement decisions. No one score on any test should be used alone to make a placement decision. Adding additional metrics to the decision making process improves placement accuracy. One example is the use of an essay to compliment multiple choice questions. Many Texas institutions incorporate the machine scored essay portion of a placement test in their placement decisions. Current scoring algorithms have become more sophisticated and also analyze sentence complexity, grammar, and organization (Gordon). Student essays scored at the far ranges accurately measure writing ability, but essays in the middle range sometimes are penalized for creative answers outside of the assessment programming, or they are scored higher because the student used lots of transition words.

Austin Community College is one institution which works with essays in the “gray zone” immediately above and below a cut score. A team of trained, calibrated adjunct and full-time instructors read and score these essays using a rubric in order to refine placement. Some students are sent to credit level classes, and some are sent to developmental or English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. This is one example of a relatively inexpensive, scalable placement strategy that improves placement accuracy.

In California, all community colleges are required to use a variety of variables outside the test in making placement decisions. Used as an integral part of a counseling/advising model, these additional variables, ranging from high school grades, to motivation, to years out of school can add significantly to the accuracy of placement decisions when used appropriately by trained advisors.

- 4. Placement tests and policies efficacy should be assessed about a month into a semester – early enough so that students have taken one or more first tests but before significant interventions have altered entry skill levels. Best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey.***

Placement accuracy should be assessed about a month into the semester or term. Psychometrics experts like Dr. Edward Morante, Dr. Ron Gordon, and Dr. Paul Nolting recommend assessing placement at this time because it is late enough so that students have taken one or more first tests in the course, but early enough so that interventions have not wiped out deficits. The National Association for Developmental Education concurs with these experts that best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey (Boylan). The expert assessors are the faculty members who are teaching the students.

This type of survey is simple and inexpensive for most institutions to set up and administer, easy for instructors to complete, and quick to tally. Instructors are given an electronic roster for each of their first-time-in-college classes. They are asked to identify whether or not each student entered the class with the necessary skill level to succeed. The radio button answer option is either “Yes” or “No.” Institutional researchers remove the students who transferred from another institution and those whose placement was overridden. The total “Yes - accurately placed students” are compared with the “No – entered without the appropriate skill levels students” are compared.

Based on the data from the Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey, institutional stakeholders can examine their placement policies and test score cut zone decisions with the aim of improving accuracy to at least 90%.

5. Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys should be done annually until results achieve 90%, but at least once every three years afterwards to assess continued placement accuracy.

Achieving 90% placement accuracy may take a few years for some institutions. For example, as simple a change as requiring prerequisite control may mean significant programming changes with online registration. Placement testing companies periodically revise their question pools and update electronic essay scoring. Every decision affects the accuracy of student placements. Therefore, we recommend that Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys be done annually until results achieve 90%. Thereafter, the survey should be done at least once every three years.

Evaluating the results of the Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys should be done at many levels since there are many stakeholders. Curriculum teams, advisors and Student Service Personnel, test center personnel, and administrators should discuss the results both individually and corporately.

- 6. As long as the placement accuracy is 90% or better, it should be the institution's decision about which instrument or strategy to employ. Institutions that achieve 90% or better accuracy as determined by a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey should share their placement strategies, policies, and/or testing instrument cut scores with the state so that best practices can be quickly scaled up.**

There may be many ways to achieve 90% placement accuracy. Allowing institutions to experiment and pilot with policies and instruments may result in better, less expensive, and highly scalable methods. Institutions should be allowed freedom in this process. After all, it is in the best interest of each institution that their first-time-in-college students are accurately placed. These students are more likely to succeed in that important first semester, more likely to re-enroll for the next semester, and more likely to persist to a credential, certificate, or degree. Student success directly impacts the financial health of any higher education institution.

Institutions that achieve 90% accuracy should share their placement strategies, policies, and/or testing instrument cut scores with the State of Texas so that best practices can be quickly scaled up. This should be a priority initiative at all levels: faculty, administrative, institutional, state, and legislative. The practical result of such an initiative is that best practices will be implemented quickly, and scores, instruments and policies will eventually become more uniform across the state. State-wide increased student success should be the result, but the process will take time. That is better than mandating instruments, cut scores, and policies across the state that later prove to be inadequate, inefficient, or costly.

- 7. Placement instruments should not be used as course exit assessments.***

Accurate measures of learning begin with establishing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which are specific and measurable. SLOs take into account the entry level skill set of the course(s) at the next level so that learning articulates smoothly from one level to the next.

While a placement test measures skill levels, it does not closely measure attainment of SLOs. The best assessments of learning outcomes are designed by an institutional team of faculty who are trained to create appropriate assessments. Best practice assessment is distributed throughout the semester. Employing distributed assessment, appropriate interventions and teaching can be implemented in a timely way that enables students to master course content.

Gateway testing or high stakes testing, which is the practice of employing one test to determine whether or not a student advances, is a poor practice. Research demonstrates that many factors interfere with the accuracy of gateway, high stakes testing including anxiety, race, and whether or not the student is female. Practice should be influenced by this data.

Resources

Cited experts: Dr. Edward Morante, Dr. Ron Gordon, Dr. Paul Nolting, Dr. Hunter Boylan

Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look At College Admissions and Placement Tests. Achieve, Inc. American Diploma Network, 2007.

Boylan, Hunter. *Targeted Interventions for Developmental Education Students*, *T.I.D.E.S. Journal of Developmental Education*, Spring 2009. EJ868669

Clayton, Hughes and Scott Clayton. *Reassess Assessment in America's Community Colleges*. Columbia Teacher's College. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Home.asp>

Gordon, Ron. *Procedures for Test Score Validation*. (See Appendix)

Morante, Edward A. *A Primer On Placement Testing*. *New Directions for Community Colleges*. n59 p55-63 Fall 1987. EJ361449

Morante, Edward A. *Selecting Tests and Placing Students*. *Journal of Developmental Education*, v13 n2 p2-4,6 Win 1989. EJ39994999

Appendix A

At the prestigious Kellogg Institute, sponsored by Appalachian State University and the National Association for Developmental Education, educators spend at least four days with a national expert on student access and placement. In 2009, Dr. Edward Morante was the featured guest speaker. The 2009 cohort devised the following questions which should be asked when developing a placement instrument, administering a placement instrument, and evaluating the placement policies at an institution.

Questions related to the development of a placement instrument.

1. Are students accurately placed by this instrument? How do you know?
2. Is the creation of a new test justified? Why?
3. What subjects will be covered?
4. How was the question-content developed?
5. How many levels will be included?
6. Is there a writing component?
7. Is the instrument computer adaptive? Can it be? Is there a paper-pencil version?
8. Is the test to be administered all at once or over several sessions? Is there an option?
9. Is it timed? Is there a time limit to answering questions on the instrument?
10. Is the test easy for students to use? How do you know?
11. Can students take the test sections in any order?
12. How will potential bias be addressed?
13. Will placement waivers be available? Will and how will these waivers be tracked?
14. What is the role of faculty in the test development process?
15. Who has supervisory responsibility?
16. What is the test validity?
17. What is the co-efficient of reliability?
18. What is the Standard Error of Measurement of the test?
19. Is there an ability to customize the instrument to our student population, both in background questions and in adding additional test questions an institution may have found helpful?
20. Is there a robust ESL/ESOL component to accommodate our growing international population?
21. Can the test be deployed to local high schools without making additional technical demands upon the schools?

22. Is the test useful for placement into career/technical programs in lieu of full-course prerequisites?
23. Is it cost effective to develop an instrument?
24. How much time will a new test take to create, develop, test, validate?
25. Are the administration costs of a new instrument worth the money that we spend?
26. Is the consultant affiliated with any testing company?
27. What independent, professional studies have been done on the test? Where is the data? Who evaluates and interprets the data?
28. Which state faculty members will be consulted? Which national placement testing experts will be consulted?
29. What are the latest trends?
30. What is the latest research?
31. Who are the national and state experts? Will they be involved?
32. What is the role of the Texas Association of Developmental Education, the National Association of Developmental Education, the Texas College Reading and Learning Association, the College Reading and Learning Association, and the National Center for Developmental Education?

Questions related to the administration of a placement test.

1. What is the cost of administering and proctoring the placement test? How does the new test compare to other instruments?
2. How capable of excellent customer service is the testing company, especially during peak weeks of registration?
3. How convenient is the test?
4. Is the instrument well-perceived by all stakeholders: academic departments, community, students, administrators, state officials?
5. Is the test easy to administer (meaning relatively small technical support requirements, preferably being entirely internet-based and quickly installed to avoid more software to install)?
6. Is the test easy to proctor?
7. What computer resources are required?
8. Who will pay for testing?
9. Are there institutional waivers for testing? For whom? Why? How will these students be tracked? Who will evaluate the data and what schedule will that take place?

What is the current assessment and placement process in my institution?

1. What are the institution's policies governing assessment and placement? If it is in writing, where is it published? Is it updated regularly? Are all institution personnel notified of the policies and any changes made?
2. Is assessment mandatory or voluntary? Is placement based upon test scores mandatory or voluntary?
3. Are there state restrictions?
4. Who needs to be tested? Who actually is tested?
5. Are students accurately placed? How do you know?
6. What has been the effect on A,B,C course success? How do you know?
7. Are students in institutions which require mandatory assessment and placement more successful than students in institutions with voluntary assessment? How do you know? What are the implications for state regulation?
8. What is the impact of testing upon student progress? How is that measured?
9. How many students are assigned to developmental math, English, and ESOL classes? What is their retention and course success? How well do they do in a subsequent class? What is their retention rate in a subsequent class? How is this documented, tracked, and evaluated?
10. Of those tested, how many students actually enroll in classes? How is this process documented?
11. What are the retention rates of developmental level students? Credit level freshman students?
12. What are the A,B,C,W,IP rates of developmental level students? Credit level students?
13. Is the placement test reliable? How do you know?
14. Is there a process of surveying faculty of FTIC students to determine their satisfaction with student placements? How is this done? Who evaluates the results? Does this data drive decision-making?
15. How well do students who take a placement test and delay enrollment do in their classes? How is this tracked?
16. Do students accept their placement willingly, confident that placement is accurate and all factors were carefully considered? Are they scared of testing?
17. Do advisors buy into the process and support it?
18. When, how, and by whom is assessment done?
19. Are prerequisites enforced?
20. Are students blocked from registering in courses that they do not qualify to take or courses which are below their levels?
21. Who chooses the placement instruments, and what criteria are used? Is there assurance that the instruments are reliable and valid? How is that determined?
22. How are test scores interpreted? Who does that?

23. Who decides cut ranges?
24. Have faculty, advisors and counselors taken the instruments?
25. Who makes the placement decisions? Is there a process for appealing the decision? Is that process sufficient? Is there placement flexibility? Are there exemptions or waivers? What are the primary reasons for waivers? How many times may a student retest? How long are scores accepted? How are those students tracked?
26. Does the institution have a process for ensuring the security of the test and confidentiality of student scores and placements?
27. Is the current process evaluated periodically and systematically? How often? By whom? How? How is the information from the evaluation used?
28. How much does placement testing cost? Who pays for testing?
29. What additional measures are used to supplement the test and improve the accuracy of placements? What is the cost? Who pays for those additional assessments?
30. What is the cut score or range? How is this decided? What is the process?
31. What are our expectations for a placement test (remember that tests are NOT predictive of course success)?
32. Does placement testing have value? How do we know?
33. What percentages of FTIC students receive counseling/advising as well as their test score? Are there students who do not receive advising or counseling? Is there a difference in their retention and grade success? How is this tracked?
34. What percentages of students subsequently withdraw from the classes they place into? What are the primary reasons for dropping a class? How is this tracked? What percentages of students subsequently re-enroll in classes?
35. What percentages of students complete the developmental sequence, and how do they do in certificate or credit level classes?

**These questions were edited by Sharon Miller, Lone Star College, and this list does not capture every question developed by the 2009 Kellogg Institute cohort.*

Appendix B

Gordon Associates

Ronald J. Gordon, EdD

16382 Lawrence 2170

Aurora, Missouri 65605

Phone: 417-678-0946

FAX:417-678-0491

rgordon@docgord.com

TPID: 74-3086543

Procedures for Cut Score Validation

Introduction

This document is created to help our clients understand the philosophy behind the Gordon Placement Accuracy Model for cut score research, and to dispel any myths or false expectations related to cut score research. The procedures outlined below can be adapted to each college's needs. This process has been tested in more than a dozen colleges in and outside California, and has proven to produce a system which places students with unusually high accuracy. It is based on the simple premise that we must analyze the placement system in a manner unaffected by the many extraneous factors which influence student success in classes, such as transportation, work schedules, and family obligations. This method is focused on the academic skills each student brings to the classroom, as measured by a valid placement examination.

Disclaimer

Gordon Associates is an independent contractor not affiliated with any test publisher. Gordon Associates has no specific authority from any state or federal agency.

Philosophy

We believe that one of the key elements for students' success in college is for them to follow a progression of skills development beginning at the level most appropriate for each individual's current skill level. Assessment instruments must be validated for the particular curriculum in which they will be used, and cut scores must be set on the basis of how students' assessed skills relate to particular levels of study within the curriculum. The data used to set cut scores must relate as closely as possible to the placement system and the application of students' skill levels to the levels of study. We believe strongly that, although placement must ultimately be related to course outcome, too many factors not related to academic skills as measured by assessment tests enter into the assignment of course grades, and therefore, course grades are inappropriate variables to be used in setting assessment test cut scores. We believe that placement relates not only to success in an individual course, but to successful completion of educational goals and to the educational mission of the institution.

The Placement Accuracy Model

The Placement Accuracy Model was developed to assist educational professionals with placing students as accurately as possible into courses in which they can build on their current basic skills levels and eventually perform at the level required to complete their educational goals. Placement Accuracy is defined as the percentage of students in a particular course who, after being placed by a validated assessment system, are judged by their faculty, and judge themselves, to be placed in a course for which they possess the basic academic skills to keep pace with the learning goals, and who would be unlikely to be able to do so at a higher level. As an extension of the model, students who are judged, and judge themselves, to be under-prepared for the course in which they are enrolled must fail or drop the course in significantly greater numbers than those judged adequately prepared. Thus, the model relates course grades to placement, but excludes the many factors unrelated to academic skills that influence grades. The premise is that students with substantial academic skills may fail a course for a variety of reasons not related to academic skills, but students with inadequate academic skills are unlikely to be able to pass a course.

The Data Gathering Process

Data are gathered for this research through classroom surveys. Early in the term, after faculty have given some kind of assessment and given students feedback on their performance, both faculty and

students are surveyed to determine students' ability to meet the learning requirements for the course. Survey responses can be "Under-prepared," meaning the student is unable to learn and keep pace with the learning process; "Adequately prepared," meaning the student is able to keep pace with the learning process and master the required material; and "Over-prepared," meaning the student would be highly likely to be able to keep pace with the learning process at the next higher level. Survey terms are carefully defined so each participant understands the response choices in the same way. The surveys are pre-marked to indicate the course level and section number for tracking purposes.

After the surveys are collected, the faculty and student responses are combined into a single record for each student in each discipline. This can be performed on-site using college staff, or by Gordon Associates after the survey forms are forwarded to us. The student record must include the student ID so other data can be merged into the file.

The college will supply an electronic file containing each student's testing record, marked as to whether the student has taken (passed or failed) a prerequisite course. The purpose here is to ensure that the placement system gets a fair evaluation, using only students who are in the course on the basis of their placement, not on their performance in a lower-level course. It is best to include the student's ethnic identity, gender, and disability status in the file to analyze for disproportionate impact.

A note on disproportionate impact Disproportionate impact occurs when a function treats one identifiable protected group differently than it treats other groups. Most tests indicate some surface-level disproportionate impact. That is, some ethnic groups generally score lower than other groups on standardized tests. Good practices require that, if surface-level disproportionate impact occurs, analysis be conducted into the overall effect of that difference. In this case, students survey responses will be analyzed to determine if those groups which score lower on the test tend to have higher levels of "over-prepared" ratings on the surveys. That would indicate that the specified group is, in fact, being treated differently by the placement system. However, if the preparation ratings, which indicate the appropriateness of the placement, are approximately equal for all groups, then the score, as a measurement of the student's level of skill, is accurate, and the system is functioning as it should, even though one or more groups did score significantly lower than other groups.

Data Analysis

For analysis purposes, all "Over-prepared" responses are assigned to the next higher level, since by definition, they are judged to be adequately prepared to be there. "Over-prepared" responses are eliminated from the highest level in each discipline, because they are moot. There is no next higher level in the placement system beyond the highest level. Students could not be placed higher.

The correlation between faculty and student survey responses is tested. By rule, if the responses do not correlate highly ($r \geq .60$) the faculty and student results are analyzed separately. If the correlation is adequate, the results will be combined into a single variable for analysis.

Only student records which indicate that the student did not take a prerequisite course are used in the final analysis. The frequency of each response at each level is determined. The appropriate cut score is the point or range at which the highest level of “adequately prepared” ratings is found, while minimizing the “over-prepared” rating (remember, in the analysis phase, the “over-prepared” rating came from the lower level). Thus, the cut score is set at the point which provides a high indication of appropriate placement, while minimizing the number of students inappropriately held back.

Final Analysis At the end of the term, the college will provide an electronic file containing a record for each student who participated in the survey. The record will hold the student’s ID and final grade in the course. We expect to find that more than 80% of the students who were rated “Under-prepared” will have failed or dropped the course. If the result is less than 75%, it is likely that the survey results do not accurately reflect each student’s ability to perform in the course. To date, that has not occurred.

Expectations

It is not possible to predict how accurately a placement system will function after cut scores are set. It is certain that some students still will be placed into courses for which they lack sufficient preparation. It is likely that a few students still will be held back inappropriately. The hope is that these placement errors will be minimized. In some states, the standard for acceptable cut scores requires that 75% of students be judged to be adequately prepared for the course into which they are placed. Our standards are somewhat higher. We expect that at least 85% of students placed by a well developed placement system, including properly researched cut scores, are accurately placed.

Follow-Up

Due to changes in faculty, textbooks, course outlines, and other factors, cut scores should be reviewed every 3 years, more frequently if changes in the curriculum are known to have occurred.