



# Policy Snapshot: Assessing and Increasing College Readiness in New England

“Nationally, as many as 60% of community college students take at least one remedial class, and only around a quarter of these go on to complete a credential. It is essential that states focus on developing policies that will help colleges achieve better results.”

—Tom Bailey, Katherine Hughes and Shanna Smith,  
May 2012

*As New England and the nation at large become obsessed with “college completion,” there is a leak in the pipeline. Many students leave high school who are not “college ready.” These students, upon entering college, are often steered toward “remedial” courses that cost money and time. Remedial courses are also generally non-credit-bearing, pushing off the day when students can become educated contributors to society. Plus, research shows that students placed into remedial programs are less likely to graduate. Now, deep-in-debt students and graduation-focused states are taking notice.*

*State adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics has been one area of focus to improve student readiness and success in K-12 and beyond. All six New England states have adopted the CCSS and joined one of two assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or Smarter Balanced. The CCSS assessments are slated for 2014-2015 implementation, and with this comes the possibility of new tools for measuring college and career readiness.*

*Given these regional and national foci, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) sought to better understand the current policies and practices in place for assessing and increasing college readiness in the region. The results of that work is summarized below in order to:*

- *Provide information and data on policies and practices across the region.*
- *Create a starting point for regional dialogue.*
- *Assist states in examining statewide policies within the context of CCSS implementation and upcoming college readiness assessments.*

**September  
2012**

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## Introduction

In a time of rising tuition prices and growing wage premiums for college degree holders, too many New England students enter college unprepared to succeed in college-level work (defined here as credit-bearing college coursework that counts toward a degree). According to the U.S. Department of Education, 42% of first-year undergraduates at two-year public institutions in 2007-08 reported taking at least one “remedial” (developmental) education course. The share of students taking a remedial education course was almost as high at public four-year institutions, ranging from 24% to 39% depending on the type of four-year institution.<sup>i</sup> Estimates from state policymakers and education leaders suggest that the remediation needs of all students entering community college is even higher, around 60%.<sup>ii</sup> Some institutions, however, serve even more underprepared students—remediation rates are as high as 90% of an incoming student cohort at some New England public postsecondary institutions.<sup>iii</sup>

The knee-jerk reaction is often that students didn’t learn what they should have in high school. Yet the need to promote and support student success through secondary and postsecondary schooling is a joint responsibility shared by K-12 and postsecondary education. To understand the way states and higher education systems identify students for remediation in New England, NEBHE reached out to practitioners and system- and state-level higher education leaders across the region during the 2011-2012 academic year, and conducted online reviews of remediation policies and practices currently in use.

NEBHE also examined a number of pre- and post-matriculation efforts designed to increase college readiness and improve success in remedial courses. Examples of these efforts are cited below. We hope that this Policy Snapshot will contribute to the ongoing dialogue around remedial education policies and changes needed to increase students’ readiness and success in higher education.

## The Unintended Consequences of Remediation

High remediation rates stem from a number of factors, including inadequate student preparation, misalignment in the P-20 educational pipeline and the misreferral of some students into remedial coursework. Unfortunately, remedial education isn’t always the best way to address the lack of student preparation, misalignment or misreferrals.

Remedial coursework increases the time and cost of a college degree, often discouraging students from continuing toward a degree or certificate. The Strong American Schools initiative found that approximately 57% of students who entered postsecondary education without taking a remedial education course earned a bachelor’s degree within eight years of enrolling—twice the graduation rate of students who enrolled in one or two remedial courses (29%) and three times that of students who took four remedial courses (19%).<sup>iv</sup>

The high number of students taking remedial courses, combined with correspondingly lower college completion rates, means that many students spend time and tuition money without realizing their degree attainment goals in a timely manner, if at all.

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The high number of students taking remedial courses, combined with correspondingly lower college completion rates, means that many students spend time and tuition money without realizing their degree attainment goals in a timely manner, if at all. The failure to attain a college degree results in lost personal income, and by extension, lost state tax revenues. Addressing students' college readiness levels is thus imperative for any state or higher education institution attempting to increase college graduation rates and meet economic development goals.

## Assessing College Readiness

In New England, states and individual higher education institutions use a variety of college placement policies and “cut-off scores” (passing scores) to determine students' levels of college readiness. As a result, based upon placement scores, a student might be deemed college ready in one state, but be assigned to a remedial course in another. The variation in placement policies also extends to programs within colleges. Thus, even institutions and state higher education systems with clearly articulated college-placement policies might have additional requirements or policies for a subset of degree programs.

Of the six New England states, only Massachusetts has established a placement policy for all two- and four-year public institutions. Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine and Vermont have systemwide placement policies only for community colleges.

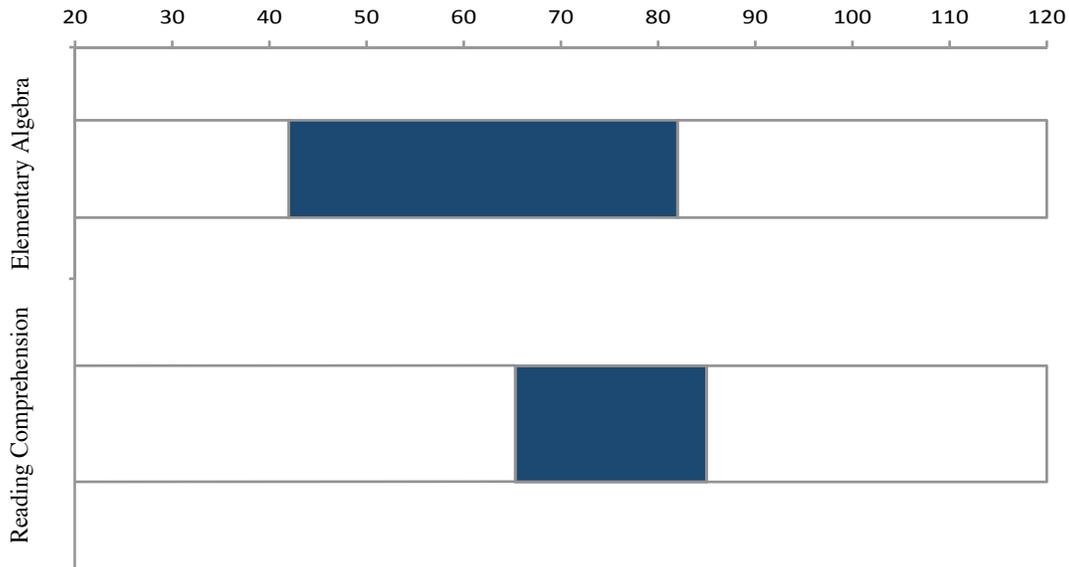
The vast majority of public institutions reviewed for this report use the College Board's Accuplacer exam for determining placement of students into remedial or college-level coursework.<sup>v</sup> *Figure 1* depicts the range of Accuplacer cut-off scores for eligibility in entry-level, college credit-bearing math and English courses on the Elementary Algebra and Reading Comprehension exams across community colleges in the region.

However, not every New England public postsecondary institution uses these two exams for placement. Some state systems and institutions use students' scores on these Accuplacer exams in conjunction with other Accuplacer exams—such as Arithmetic, College Math, Sentence Skills and WritePlacer—in order to determine course placement. The Community College of Vermont, for example, places students into college-level English courses based on combined scores on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills and Reading Comprehension exams.

Of the six New England states, only Massachusetts has established a placement policy for all two- and four-year public institutions. Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine and Vermont have systemwide placement policies only for community colleges.

Other placement criteria used in conjunction with, or in lieu of, Accuplacer scores include SAT scores, high school GPA and institution-developed assessments. Many four-year public institutions rely more heavily on student performance on these other criteria than do their two-year counterparts. Four-year public institutions that do rely on the same Accuplacer exams as their two-year counterparts often have different, and in at least one case, lower passing scores. (For examples of state-specific placement policies at both two- and four-year institutions, please refer to the Remedial Education Snapshots at the end of this document.)

**Figure 1: Range of Minimum Cut-Off Scores at New England Community Colleges on Two Accuplacer Exams**



College-placement policies specific to a particular institution’s degree programs and target student populations contribute to the diverse placement policies and practices across New England public higher education institutions. Although diverse, these placement policies serve as the *de facto* working definitions of college readiness. Moreover, when defined by a single placement exam score—or even a combination of standardized exam scores—these definitions of college readiness speak narrowly to an individual’s performance on various assessments, without identifying specific academic competency areas needing improvement.

The vast majority of institutions reviewed for this report use the College Board’s Accuplacer exam for placing students into remedial or college-level coursework. However, not every New England public postsecondary institution uses the same Accuplacer exams. In addition, even when the same exam is used, the minimum passing scores vary across the region.

## Increasing College Readiness—State Strategies and Initiatives

Even though a single operational definition of college readiness remains elusive, systems and institutions across the region are working to address gaps in students’ academic preparation before and during college enrollment. Current college-readiness initiatives include partnerships between colleges and local high schools, accelerated course-delivery models, and joint professional development opportunities for high school and college faculty.

A summary of promising practices across New England is presented below. These examples were chosen in an effort to highlight the myriad of approaches being taken to address college-readiness gaps, but they are not meant to comprehensively represent all efforts within each state or the New England region.

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### ***Connecticut: Partnerships between Higher Education and Local School Districts***

In Connecticut, public two- and four-year higher education institutions have partnered with local high schools to increase students' levels of college readiness.

Manchester Community College and its two largest feeder high schools, Manchester High School and East Hartford High School, with support from the Connecticut Board of Regents and the state's College Access Challenge Grant Program, have collaboratively developed high school course curricula. The partnership is currently piloting math and English curricula in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades that are aligned with requirements of the new Common Core State Standards and expectations

of the highest level of remedial courses offered at the state's community colleges.<sup>vi</sup> The new courses were informed by the college's previous work in redesigning remedial math courses while participating in the National Center for Academic Transformation's (NCAT) Changing the Equation program.

Western Connecticut State University has partnered with two area high schools since 2004 through the Building a Bridge to Improve Student Success project. While participating in the Bridge program, high school juniors take Western's Writing and Mathematics placement exams. Using the results, university and high school faculty then meet to plan coursework and additional services for high school students during their senior year. Students are then re-tested in the spring of their senior year. Early results from the Bridge program point to lower remediation rates and higher college-retention rates. By 2010, other Connecticut state universities were adapting the model to work with their feeder high schools and even middle schools.<sup>vii</sup>

More recently, legislation passed by the Connecticut General Assembly will require public high schools, state universities and community-technical colleges to align curricula by fall 2016. In addition, the legislation prohibits public higher education institutions from offering extensive remedial education programs beginning in the fall of 2014.

### ***Maine: Alternative Pathways to College-Level Work***

In Maine, public higher education institutions have focused on providing specialized access programs for prospective students who may not otherwise attend college.

Systems and institutions across the region are working to address gaps in students' academic preparation before and during college enrollment.

Cited examples include:

- Partnerships between higher education institutions and local school districts (CT)
- Alternative pathways to college level work (ME)
- Accelerated delivery (MA)
- Combining college-high school collaborations with dual enrollment (NH)
- A statewide College Readiness Network (RI)
- Contextualized remedial education (VT)

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For example, the Onward Program at the University of Maine is a separate academic program offering specialized courses in composition, reading, science and mathematics. Designed for individuals who, for academic or economic reasons, may not otherwise attend college, the program requires all prospective students to take placement exams in reading, writing and math. Students who are accepted and successfully complete the program can transfer to a degree program at the University of Maine without needing to reapply.<sup>viii</sup>

Community colleges in Maine offer academic support to students who require remediation in the form of academic advising as well as hybrid coursework and access to online, self-paced computer-assisted learning tools such as PLATO. Kennebec Valley Community College, for example, offers the KV Academy program to adult college applicants who have not met Accuplacer cut-off scores. These students meet with advisors to review educational goals and establish an academic plan with local adult-education providers. KV Academy participants are also eligible for adult education fee waivers, college application fee waivers, college workshops, counseling services and coursework in math, writing and computer essentials. Once students are able to pass the Accuplacer, they can transition into the college.<sup>ix</sup>

### ***Massachusetts: Accelerated Delivery***

In Massachusetts, the Department of Higher Education recently hosted professional development workshops around the state for college administrators and faculty on remedial education. Currently, Massachusetts public postsecondary institutions have implemented a number of different delivery models for remedial education. These include modularized courses and compressed summer coursework, such as the Summer Sprint program at Middlesex Community College.<sup>x</sup>

The Summer Sprint program uses both modularized and compressed delivery models. Students who test into remedial education can enroll in the Summer Sprint program, which offers remedial math, writing and reading courses in an accelerated summer session. These courses are identical in content and delivery to the remedial courses offered during the academic year. For example, students who require remedial math are enrolled in Prep for College Math, a 12-module sequence. Program courses are offered at a discount—students may enroll in two courses for the price of one.<sup>xi</sup>

### ***New Hampshire: Combining College-High School Collaborations with Dual-Enrollment***

The New Hampshire Mathematics Learning Communities (MLC) Project is a statewide Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) initiative intended to increase students' preparation for postsecondary math coursework and decrease the number of students placed into remedial math. One MLC outcome has been the development of two high school math courses to help students make a successful transition to college-level math.

Funded through the state's College Access Challenge Grant Program, the MLC Project partners all seven NH community colleges with a pilot group of 14 public high schools. The project

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uses a two-tiered strategy to increase the math preparedness of high school students, and is aimed at those not seeking to major in a STEM field. Tier One, Senior Math, is a course that encompasses the 14 algebraic competencies judged to be necessary to succeed in a threshold college-level mathematics course. Tier Two, Topics in Applied College Mathematics (TAC Math), is a common threshold college level mathematics course taught at the high schools for dual high school and college credit through CCSNH's dual-enrollment "Running Start" program.

Students attending one of the pilot high schools can enroll in either Senior Math or the college level TAC Math course. Eligibility for enrollment is determined in the student's junior year of high school. As juniors, students take the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam. Those who score below 63 are recommended for the Senior Math course; those scoring 63 or above are encouraged to take TAC Math. TAC Math is a credit-bearing course and is recognized by all seven community colleges in the state.<sup>xii</sup>

### ***Rhode Island: Building a Statewide College Readiness Network***

Housed at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), the Center for Excellence and College Readiness (CECR) is a new state initiative. The initiative also includes other partnering organizations such as the Rhode Island Campaign for Achievement Now (Rhode Island-CAN). Funded by the Office of Higher Education, Rhode Island-CAN has developed a statewide college access and readiness support network that provides professional development for college access and readiness practitioners, including teachers, guidance counselors and adult education providers.

In addition to administratively supporting Rhode Island-CAN, CECR oversees three programs aimed at increasing students' college-readiness levels:

- A dual-enrollment course offered to high school students at CCRI. The course focuses on college success skills such as study skills, goal-setting and personal finance. Participating students are provided with a scholarship from CCRI to enroll for free.
- A six week summer institute providing individually paced remedial coursework to high school students.
- A college-readiness program administering Accuplacer diagnostic exams in reading, writing and math to 10th and 11th graders. The program includes follow-up advising to participating students.

Students may participate in some or all the programs. The state's public higher education institutions recognize all coursework and Accuplacer scores from the summer program and the dual-enrollment course.<sup>xiii</sup>

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### ***Vermont: Contextualizing Remedial Education***

At Vermont's four-year public institutions, students may be referred back to the community college for remediation. In these cases, students are denied admission or provisionally accepted. At Vermont Technical College, promising engineering students who need additional academic support but are interested in attending Vermont Tech are given an intermediate option called the Engineering Technology Foundation (ETF) program.

The ETF program is a one-year track for students identified by Vermont Tech's admissions office as needing remediation, particularly in math, prior to enrolling in an engineering program. Students enrolled in ETF take a remedial math course and a remedial English course, if necessary. In addition to these courses, students select entry-level, first-year courses in a college major program from a selection of majors. At the end of the year, successful students will earn college credit toward a major, lightening their courseload in future semesters and providing some college-level context to pre-college work.<sup>xiv</sup>

## **Implications and Recommendations**

Placement policies and students' college-readiness levels play a significant role in college-completion rates. However, placement policies and practices across the region are not always informed by the current research findings, data, validity studies or best practices that promote multiple measures of college readiness as well as alternative teaching and learning models meant to increase college readiness. Rather, New England postsecondary systems and institutions vary in their assessment of and philosophy behind increasing students' college-readiness levels.

It is also clear that state and institutional leaders are rethinking their current placement and remedial education policies as well as developing new initiatives to boost students' academic preparation for college-level work. In fact, the conversations and reviews undertaken for this Policy Snapshot reflect many recent changes by institutions and systems to assess students' readiness for college-level work. Findings also point to many rich secondary and postsecondary partnerships formed to increase college readiness and help align the K-12 and postsecondary education systems in English, math and other areas. Also well underway are new and promising approaches to deliver remedial education and to offer students opportunities for earning college credit while still in high school.

The diversity of efforts—more recent or otherwise—around assessing and increasing students' college-readiness levels provides opportunities to reexamine placement and remediation policies for state and higher education policy leaders as well as other stakeholders, including legislators. It is an opportunity for educators and education leaders to convene either at the state or regional level to share and develop solutions to common problems.

States, the K-12 and higher education sectors, students and the economy can only benefit with more effective remedial education policies and programs. To assist state and institutional leaders in defining possible next steps for assessing and increasing college readiness, NEBHE proposes the following areas of work with related next steps for consideration:

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### *Increase system and institutional capacity for decision-making*

- Convene faculty, educational leaders and policymakers and other concerned parties to review existing placement and remediation policies as well as emerging research and policies from other leading states.
- Use research and data to inform changes in policy and remediation programs.
- Conduct validity evaluations of current assessment cut scores and make the results available to faculty and administrators.

### *Redefine placement policies beyond a point-in-time measurement of abilities*

- Utilize multiple measures of college readiness in addition to Accuplacer exam results. These measures could include high school transcripts, SAT or ACT test scores, successful completion of Advanced Placement courses or International Baccalaureate programs, or other relevant performance measures.
- Provide opportunities for high school students to take placement exams in their junior year and use the results for senior year course selection and/or seeking extra help.
- Provide opportunities for students to prepare for and practice taking placement tests and allow multiple retakes when students are close to the cut-off score in order to minimize the misreferral of students into or out of remedial coursework.

### *Recognize remedial education's impact on students' educational needs and aspirations*

- Ensure that the topics and competencies covered in remedial education are aligned to college level “gateway” courses across major and program requirements.
- Provide opportunities to complete remedial coursework using modularized, competency-based systems through topic-specific course sections or computer software such as MyMathTest, ALEKS, and Hawks Learning.

### *Move toward greater transparency*

- Publicly report at an institutional and statewide level: a) the percentage of students requiring remediation based on college-level placement rates and b) student success rates in subsequent college coursework at an institutional and statewide level.
- Publicly report the percentage of students requiring remediation by high school.

## **State Remedial Education Snapshots**

# CONNECTICUT

## Placement Policy Overview

The 12 Connecticut Community Colleges have a systemwide placement policy to determine whom to place into remedial education. The four-year public institutions in Connecticut each set individual placement policies.

### Specific Placement Policies

#### CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

##### College English Requirements

To place into college-level English, students must achieve a minimum score of 88 on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills exam and a minimum score of 83 on the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension exam. (See Figure.)

Students are waived from taking the placement exam and placed into college-level English with a score of 450 or higher on the SAT Critical Reading or Writing sections or with a score of 47 or higher on the ACT English and Reading portions.

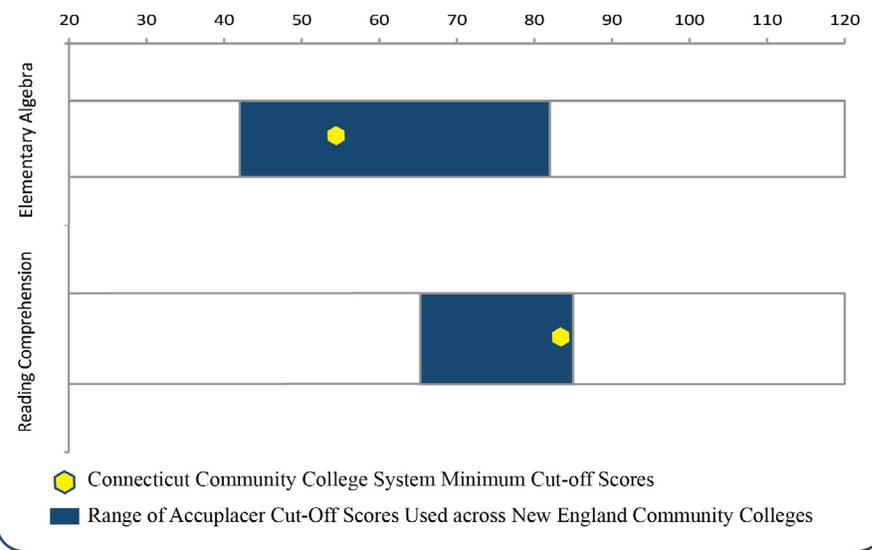
##### College Mathematics Requirements

Incoming students with scores of 54 or higher on the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam are eligible for placement into the foundational college-level math course, Intermediate Algebra. The Accuplacer Arithmetic exam is used for placement into lower-level developmental courses.

Students may have the Accuplacer placement exam waived and enroll in Intermediate Algebra with an SAT Math score of at least 500 or a score of at least 18 on the ACT Math test. Additional placement testing and/or higher standardized test scores are required for placement into higher-level math courses beyond Intermediate Algebra.<sup>i</sup>



Examples of Accuplacer Cut-off Scores Used in New England and Connecticut



#### CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITIES

The Connecticut State Universities define remedial courses as those that carry no college credit. Developmental courses, on the other hand, carry college credit as elective courses but do not count toward general education credits in any major. Remedial and developmental course placement is determined by placement policies that vary across institutions.<sup>ii</sup> For example, all Connecticut State Universities have agreed to use a score of 550 on the SAT Math section for placement into math courses that count toward general education credits and/or a college major. Students who score below 550 on the SAT Math section may be placed into developmental or remedial courses, depending on the institution.

##### Sources

- i. (2011) Policy Manual Board of Trustees of Community-Technical Colleges. Connecticut Community Colleges. [http://www.comnet.edu/Board-Docs/BPM\\_COMPLETE\\_MASTER.pdf](http://www.comnet.edu/Board-Docs/BPM_COMPLETE_MASTER.pdf)
- ii. (2011) Students' Postsecondary Remedial/Developmental Needs Handout. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities Board of Regents for Higher Education.

## Placement Policy Overview

Maine’s seven community colleges devised a common definition of “college-ready” using Accuplacer exam scores in fall 2011. The seven universities in the University of Maine system each have their own institutional placement policies.

### Specific Placement Policies

#### MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Although all seven community colleges have agreed on common cut-off scores for college placement, each college continues to define specific admission requirements for specific programs of study due to variations in program requirements.

##### College English Requirements

Students must score at least a 68 on the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension exam, a 74 on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills exam and a 6 on the Accuplacer WritePlacer exam in order to qualify for college-level coursework.

##### College Mathematics Requirements

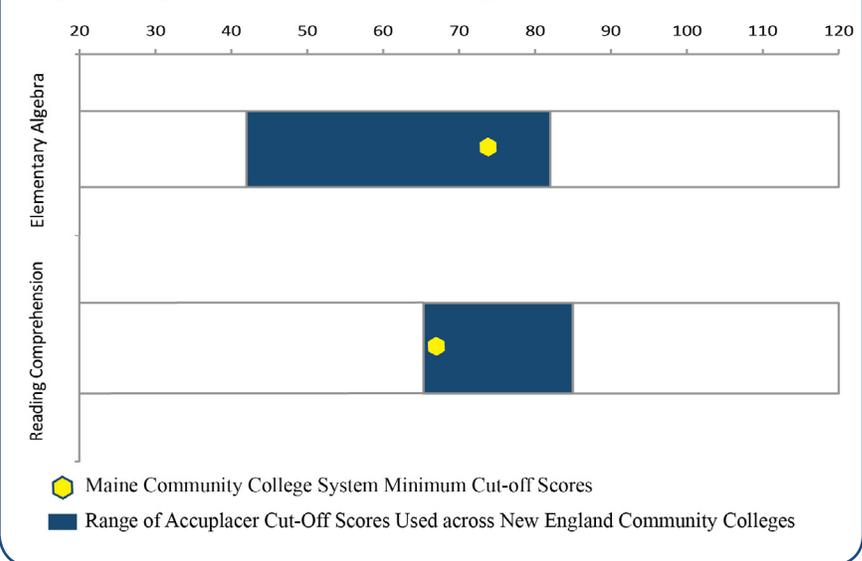
Students must score at least a 75 on the Elementary Algebra exam in order to qualify for college-level coursework.<sup>i</sup> (See Figure.)

#### UNIVERSITY OF MAINE, AUGUSTA

##### College English Requirements

The University of Maine at Augusta uses a combination of scores from the Accuplacer Sentence Skills and Reading Comprehension exams to place students in the appropriate English class. Depending on a student’s SAT scores, placement testing may be waived. Students are placed into non-credit remedial

Examples of Accuplacer Cut-off Scores Used in New England and Maine



coursework if they score an 80 or below on the Sentence Skills exam and a 71 or below on the Reading Comprehension exam.<sup>ii</sup>

#### UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

##### College English Requirements

Beginning in 2008, students requiring extra support in English no longer enroll in non-credit bearing developmental coursework; an English placement exam is no longer used.

Instead, students are placed into a 4-credit course or equivalent 3-credit College Writing course based on standardized exam scores and/or department discretion. Students are required to take ENG 104 (the 4-credit Enriched College Writing course) if they score below a 520 on the SAT Writing section, below a 22 on the ACT English portion or have no SAT or ACT scores. The 3-credit College Writing course is required of all other students.

##### College Mathematics Requirements

Students are required to take Accuplacer if they score below a 550 on the SAT Math portion or below a 22 on the ACT Math portion. The university uses a rubric that includes a combination of scores on the Accuplacer Arithmetic and Elementary Algebra exams to place students into the appropriate credit or non-credit math course.<sup>iii</sup>

##### Sources

- i. Karen Hamilton and Jean Mattimore, Maine Community College System
- ii. University of Maine at Augusta, <http://www.uma.edu/assets/docs/advising/placementreport.pdf>
- iii. University of Southern Maine, <http://usm.maine.edu/assessment/placement-exams>



# MASSACHUSETTS

## Placement Policy Overview

The Massachusetts public postsecondary education system comprises 15 community colleges, nine state colleges and universities and five University of Massachusetts campuses. These 29 campuses use the same developmental education policy, otherwise known as the Massachusetts' Board of Higher Education Common Assessment Policy. Massachusetts is the only New England state with a placement policy established for all two- and four-year public postsecondary institutions.

### College Mathematics Requirement

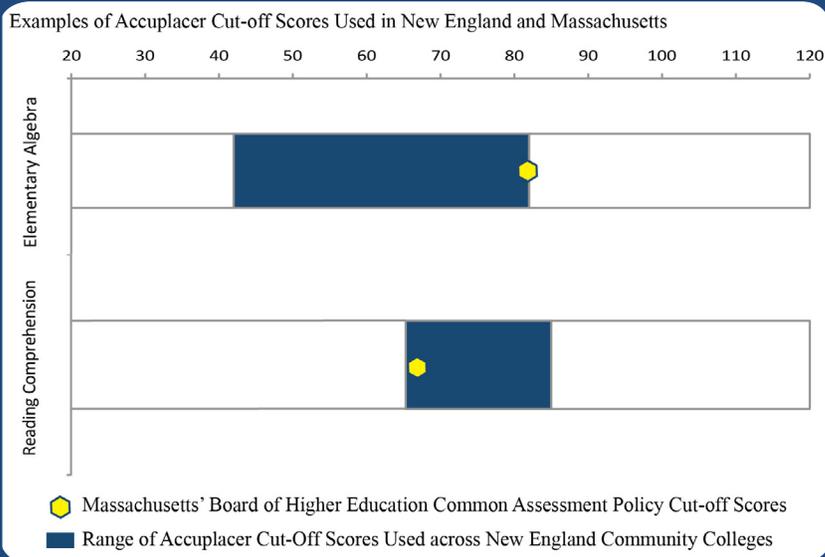
The Common Assessment Policy requires that all campuses use Accuplacer to assess incoming students' basic academic skills. In math, institutions use both the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra and College Math exams. Students place into college-level math courses if they score an 82 or higher on the Elementary Algebra exam and a 40 or higher on the College Math exam.

### College Reading Requirement

The cut-off score for college-level reading placement is a 68 on the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension exam. Students are exempt from placement testing if they score 500 or above on the SAT Critical Reading section.

### College Writing Requirement

Placement into college-level writing courses is determined by using WritePlacer or an impromptu writing sample that is evaluated by local campus faculty. Students are exempt from testing if they score 600 or higher on the SAT Critical Reading section.<sup>1</sup> (See Figure.)



## Specific Placement Policies

### BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In fall 2012, Bristol Community College will begin piloting a modularized delivery of developmental math coursework. The developmental curriculum is divided into 12 modules; all students who place into developmental math (by the Accuplacer Arithmetic and Elementary Algebra placement tests) will begin at Module 1, but will have the opportunity to pre-test out of each module through assessments developed by college faculty. Thus,

although the college will continue to use the Common Assessment Policy to determine student placement in college-level math courses, additional assessments will also be used to determine students' progression through developmental math coursework.<sup>2</sup>

### FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY

Incoming students at Framingham State University (FSU) who do not achieve the placement exam cut-off scores as articulated by the Common Assessment Policy have three options:

- Students with scores significantly below the cut-off score should take and pass appropriate remedial courses at another institution, ideally before enrollment at FSU.

- Students with scores close to the cut-off scores may participate in summer workshops prior to retesting.
- Students may also study independently and schedule a time to retake the placement exams.<sup>3</sup>

#### Sources

1. Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, [www.mass.edu/forstudents/admissions/placement.asp](http://www.mass.edu/forstudents/admissions/placement.asp)
2. Greg Sethares, Bristol Community College
3. Framingham State University, <http://www.framingham.edu/first-year-programs/placement-testing/index.html>



# NEW HAMPSHIRE

## Placement Policy Overview

There are two public systems of postsecondary education in New Hampshire – the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) and the University System of New Hampshire (USNH). The seven community colleges that comprise CCSNH offer remedial education courses, primarily in mathematics, reading and writing. The three residential campuses in the USNH (the University of New Hampshire at Durham, Plymouth State University, and Keene State College) do not conduct placement testing. The University of NH at Manchester and Granite State College, which both serve a primarily nontraditional student population, do conduct placement testing and offer some remedial education courses.

## Specific Placement Policies

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

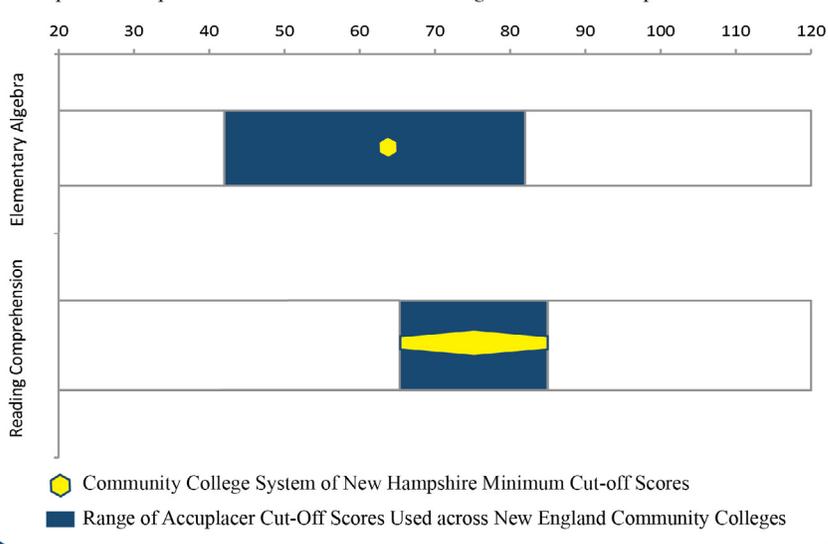
#### College Reading and Writing Requirement

Each institution at CCSNH has its own Reading Comprehension and Writing requirements for placement into a first-level college composition course. Six of the seven NH community colleges use Accuplacer; one college has developed its own placement exam. College requirements range from 65-85 on the Reading Comprehension portion of the Accuplacer test, and a score of 5-8 on the WritePlacer portion of the assessment, to place into college-level courses. For students not achieving these placement scores, remediation courses are available for students to improve their skills to successfully place into a first-level college composition course.

#### College Mathematics Requirement

Although each institution at CCSNH has its own college mathematics placement policies, all seven community colleges have agreed to recognize a 63 on the Elementary Algebra exam as the cut-off score for placement into the first level of college-level math. Six of the seven NH community colleges

Examples of Accuplacer Cut-off Scores Used in New England and New Hampshire



use Accuplacer for mathematics placement; one college has developed its own placement exam.<sup>i</sup> (See Figure.)

### MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In addition to placement policies in math and English, Manchester Community College (MCC) tests students' computer skills. Students must score a 65 on the Accuplacer Computer Skills exam in order to place into college-level computer courses.

### GRANITE STATE COLLEGE

Accuplacer exams are used at Granite State College to assess students' preparations in English and math. Students are deemed eligible for the college's foundational college-level

math course with a score of 36 or higher on the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam and 80 or higher on the Accuplacer Arithmetic exam. For college-level English courses, students must score at least 87 on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills exam and 79 on the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension exam. Students with lower scores may choose between self-study, ALEKS tutorial programs or enrollment in developmental coursework. Granite State College also offers Accuplacer preparation workshops and an opportunity to take the exam three times. Students are waived from placement exam requirements depending on their SAT scores.<sup>ii</sup>

#### Sources

- i. Beth Doiron and Shannon Reid, Community College System of New Hampshire
- ii. Tessa McDonnell, Granite State College



# RHODE ISLAND

## Placement Policy Overview

The Community College of Rhode Island uses the same remediation placement policy at all of its six campuses. Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island have their own institutional placement policies.

### Specific Placement Policies

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

##### College Reading Requirement

The cut-off score for college-level reading placement is a 71 on the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension exam or a 65 on the Reading Comprehension in conjunction with an 80 or higher on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills exam.

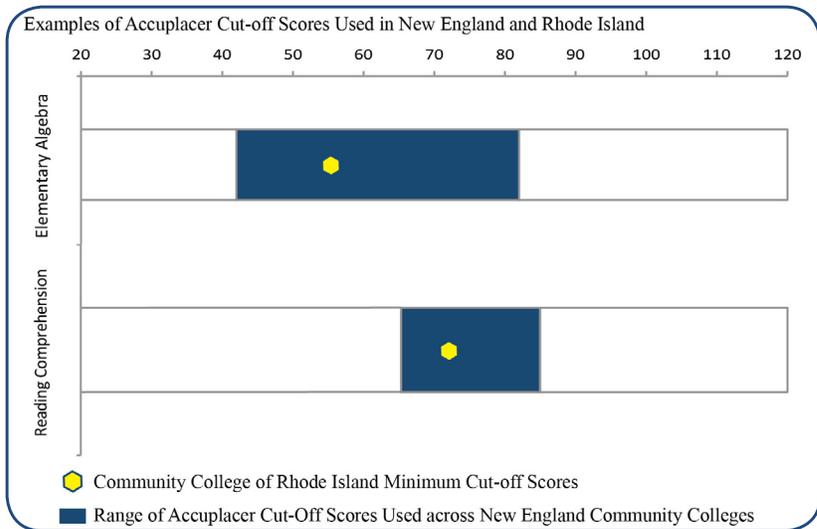
##### College Writing Requirement

Student placement into college-level writing is determined by a combination of Accuplacer exam scores. Based on the following equation,  $0.20 \times$  Accuplacer Reading Comprehension score  $+ 0.20 \times$  Accuplacer Sentence Skills score  $+ 1.5 \times$  Accuplacer WritePlacer score, students who score over 48 may enroll in a college-level writing course.

##### College Mathematics Requirement

Cut-off scores for college-level math placement include a 52 on the Accuplacer Arithmetic exam and a 55 on the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam. (see Figure.)

Students may be exempt from Accuplacer testing if they have taken and passed the exam at another institution within the past year, or depending on their major, if they have transfer credits in English and math classes at the college level.<sup>i</sup>



#### RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

##### College Mathematics Requirement

Incoming students with scores below 480 on the SAT Math or 20 on the ACT Math portion are required to take the Mathematics Accuplacer Examination prior to or during freshman orientation. Students who do not achieve a satisfactory grade on the Accuplacer exam (which may be repeated once) must enroll in Mathematics 010 prior to or during their first semester. Students who fail to earn a satisfactory grade during that semester shall be required to retake Mathematics 010 until successful completion. Credit for Mathematics 010 does not apply toward graduation.

##### College Writing Requirement

Incoming students with scores of 430 or below on either the SAT Critical Reading or Writing sections (or 17 or less on the ACT English subscore) are required to sit for the institution's College Writing Examination. This exam determines a student's readiness for Writing 100 and is evaluated by three faculty members. As a result of

the placement exam, some students are required to enroll in English 010 prior to taking Writing 100, a course that fulfills the College's writing requirement. Credit for English 010 does not apply toward graduation.<sup>ii</sup>

#### UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

URI uses a web-based assessment, MyMathTest, to place students into appropriate math classes. All students take this assessment prior to Summer Orientation. Based on their scores, students needing additional preparation are recommended for MTH 099: Basic Algebra and Trigonometry or MTH 101: Basic Algebra and Trigonometry for the STEM disciplines. Both classes count toward the number of credits taken, but do not fulfill the general education requirement.<sup>iii</sup>

##### Sources

- i. Robert Cipolla, Community College of Rhode Island
- ii. Holly Shadoian, Rhode Island College
- iii. Dean Libutti and Jayne Richmond, University of Rhode Island



# VERMONT

## Placement Policy Overview

The 13 campuses of the Community College of Vermont all use the same remedial education placement policy. The other four-year public institutions under the Vermont State College system each set their own institutional placement policies through the college admissions process and placement testing requirements.

### Specific Placement Policies

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF VERMONT

##### College English Requirement

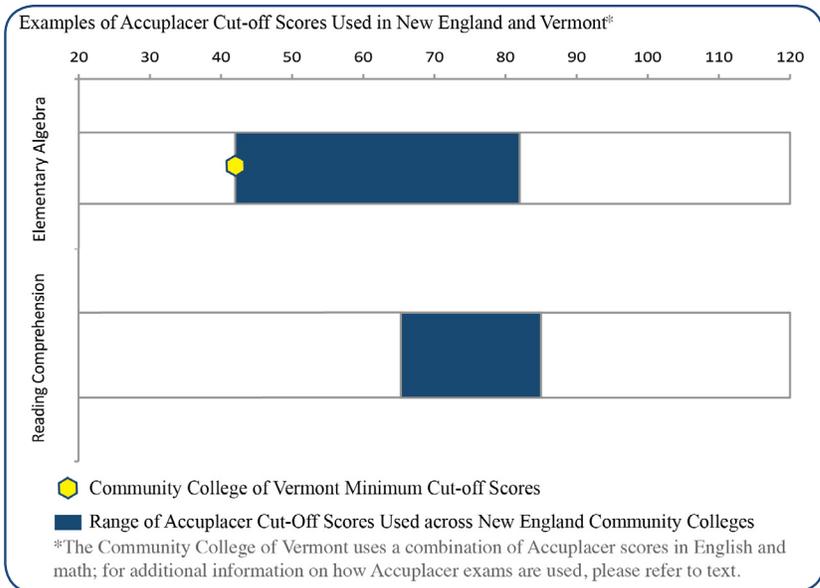
Students place into college-level English courses if their scores from the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension and Sentence Skill exams sum to 170 or higher. Students are exempt from placement testing if they score at least an 1100 on the SAT Critical Reading and Writing sections with neither section less than 500 or if they score at least a 22 on each of the ACT English and Reading sections.

##### College Mathematics Requirement

Students place into college-level math courses if they score at least a 66 on the Accuplacer Arithmetic exam and at least a 42 on the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam. Students are exempt from these placement exams if they score at least a 520 on the SAT Math section or a 22 on the ACT Math section.<sup>i</sup> (See Figure.)

#### CASTLETON STATE COLLEGE

At Castleton State College, SAT scores determine student placement and/or eligibility for Accuplacer testing. Regardless of placement, all coursework counts towards graduation with the exception of a 1-credit lab, Essential Writing. This lab accompanies a 2-credit introductory English Course. Students are exempt from the writing lab if they score above a 4 on the Accuplacer WritePlacer exam.<sup>ii</sup>



#### JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE

At Johnson State College, the admissions office determines college placement through a review of students' application materials, particularly the high school transcript and SAT/ACT scores.<sup>iii</sup>

#### LYNDON STATE COLLEGE

Incoming students at Lyndon State College take placement exams in English and math. In English, students write a persuasive placement essay arguing which writing course they are best suited: Basic Writing, which does not carry college credit; College Writing, which does; or Exposition & Analysis, a research writing course. Members of the English Department evaluate the essays and either agree with the student's self-placement or suggest another placement. In math, students must score a 42 or higher on the Accuplacer Elementary Algebra exam in order to enroll in a credit-bearing math course.<sup>iv</sup>

#### VERMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Many incoming students at Vermont Technical College take Accuplacer tests in Elementary Algebra, Arithmetic, College Math, Sentence Skills and Reading Comprehension. The English department and admissions office also use combined SAT/ACT scores and GPA to place students into English courses, when these scores are available. Based on these exams, the admissions office places students into appropriate coursework and/or recommends additional summer enrichment programs or other interventions.<sup>v</sup>

##### Sources

- i. Community Colleges of Vermont, [www.ccv.edu/assessments/scores](http://www.ccv.edu/assessments/scores)
- ii. Joe Mark, Castleton State College
- iii. Penny Howrigan, Johnson State College
- iv. Chandler Gilman, Lyndon State College
- v. Diana Mellar and Rosemary Distel, Vermont Technical College

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## Endnotes

- i. Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Tahan, K. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011 (NCES2011-033)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ii. Complete College America. (2012). *Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere*. Washington, DC: Complete College America.; Bailey, T., Hughes, K., Smith, S. (2012). *Law Hamstrings College Remedial Programs*. *The Hartford Courant*. Retrieved from <http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/hc-op-bailey-college-remedial-education-bill-too-r-20120518,0,7360303.story>; Spence, D. (2010). “Not Ready for College: State must have a systemic, comprehensive agenda for college preparation.” In William Trombley and Todd Sallo (Ed.), *American Higher Education: Journalistic and Policy Perspectives from National CrossTalk* (pp. 267-269). San Jose, California: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.
- iii. (2011) *Students’ Postsecondary Remedial/Developmental Needs Handout*. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities Board of Regents for Higher Education.
- iv. (2008). *Diploma to Nowhere*. Strong American Schools
- v. Institutions and systems cited in this report include: (CT) Manchester Community College, Southern Connecticut State University, Western Connecticut State University; (ME) Kennebec Valley Community College, University of Maine, University of Maine at Augusta, University of Southern Maine; (MA) Bristol Community College, Framingham State University, Middlesex Community College; (NH) Manchester Community College, Granite State College; (RI) Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, University of Rhode Island; (VT) Community College of Vermont, Castleton State College, Johnson State College, Lyndon State College, Vermont Technical College.
- vi. (2011). *Connecticut College and Career Readiness Toolkit*. Educational Policy Improvement Center on behalf of the Connecticut P-20 Council.
- vii. (2010). *Building a Bridge to Improve Student Success: A Collaborative Project between the Connecticut State University System and Area School Districts*. Connecticut State University System Report to the Connecticut General Assembly. <http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/Bridges%20Report%20-%20January%202010.pdf>
- viii. University of Maine, Onward Program. <http://www.umaine.edu/onward/default.htm>
- ix. Karen Hamilton, Maine Community College System
- x. Francesca Purcell, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
- xi. Middlesex Community College, [www.middlesex.mass.edu](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu)
- xiii. Robert Condon, Beth Doiron and Shannon Reid, Community College System of New Hampshire
- xiii. Naglaa Gaafar, CCRI Center for Excellence and College Readiness
- xiv. Rosemary Distel and Diana Mellar, Vermont Technical College