

Measures of College Readiness for Senior Year Plus Programs

The Measures

House File 308, passed during the 2021 legislative session, provides an option for students to meet the required proficiency requirements of the Senior Year Plus program through measures of college readiness jointly established between a school district and postsecondary institution. The following guidance is issued to postsecondary institutions and school districts for the purpose of jointly establishing measures of college readiness. This statutory change took effect on March 8, 2021.

What does this mean?

In practice, this means the primary means for determining proficiency for purposes of Senior Year Plus is through a student's scores on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP); however, if a student is not proficient in one or more of the content areas of reading (English-language arts), mathematics and science on the statewide assessment, students may qualify to access arts and sciences postsecondary coursework through measures of college readiness jointly agreed upon by the school board and the eligible postsecondary institution.

Please note that students enrolling in a career and technical course under the concurrent enrollment program are not required to meet established proficiency requirements (281 IAC 22.2).

Why establish measures of college readiness?

Senior Year Plus statute requires that a student test proficient in reading (English-language arts), mathematics and science on the statewide assessment in order to access arts and sciences courses through concurrent enrollment and the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEO). To determine proficiency, school districts are to refer to the student performance results from the most recent administration of the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP).

281 22.2(2)(b) The student shall have demonstrated proficiency in all of the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science as evidenced by the most recent administration of the statewide assessment for which scores are available for the student...

For purpose of determining proficiency from the statewide assessment, achievement scores from the ISASP administered during the school year beginning July 1, 2019 shall be considered the latest available scores.

Accordingly, school districts may find it difficult to determine proficiency for purposes of accessing Senior Year Plus programming through traditional means due to the lack of recent/and or relevant assessment scores, including the absence of a school district establishing equivalent but qualifying performance measures (281 22.2(2)).

In order to ensure Iowa high school students continued access to Senior Year Plus opportunities, postsecondary institutions will need to work with their school districts to jointly establish measures of college readiness.

Establishing measures of college readiness as an alternative option to meeting the statewide proficiency requirements is also beneficial to students who may not test well or who are in the "academic middle," but show promise in benefiting from access to concurrent enrollment coursework.

Measures of College Readiness

Measures of college readiness established should demonstrate an equivalent level of proficiency as the statewide assessment benchmark for reading (English-language arts), math and science and align to measures of college readiness used by the postsecondary institution. The measures of college readiness should be implemented consistently across school districts to ensure equitable access is maintained for all students.

Therefore, the Department strongly encourages postsecondary institutions, in cooperation with their school district partners to jointly establish the measures of college readiness as outlined below. One or more of these measures can be used collectively to create a more complete understanding of a student who does not test proficient on the statewide assessment to demonstrate their college readiness and may be utilized when determining placement for Senior Year Plus opportunities.

Postsecondary institutions are granted flexibility to be specific about required testing requirements as well as add additional measures of college readiness; however, the standards that are set for testing requirements and any additional measures should not be higher than what is expected for a traditionally enrolled freshman student attending the postsecondary institution.

Institutions should incorporate these agreed-upon measures of college readiness into formal contracts to ensure transparency and consistent application across all students. These contracts should be approved by the board of the respective institutions.

1. Testing:
 - a. The student shall satisfy admissions placement and/or entrance requirements established by the postsecondary institution, or
 - b. Complete the ACT or SAT assessment (or other college readiness exam). Acceptable placement scores should be established by the postsecondary institution and applicable to the intended course enrollment (discipline/subject specific), or
 - c. Have a RIT score equivalent to the 41st percentile or higher (rating of average) on most recent administered Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test and applicable to the intended course enrollment (discipline/subject specific).
2. Proficiency in the corresponding content area on the most recent administration of the statewide assessment.
 - a. Example: If the student tested proficient in English language arts, but not math or science – the student would be eligible to access humanities and social/behavioral science coursework but not STEM.
3. Individual review of student transcripts.

Does the student show progress in improvement in coursework? Are grades improving over time? Evaluation of a student's transcript may be reviewed in entirety or may be evaluated within a specific discipline or subject area.
4. Coursework:
 - a. The student shall have previous high school course performance of a "C" or higher linked to the intended college course enrollment (discipline/subject specific), or
 - b. Student success in prior concurrent enrollment coursework of a "C" or higher (inclusive of all successes; including CTE coursework), or
 - c. The student's coursework may be assessed as proficient by the high school counselor or team of faculty/staff using a related coursework portfolio, or
 - d. Proficiency in previous corresponding high school coursework based on a standards-based grading system, this would be a score of a "3" or "4" which indicates proficiency in most standards-based grading systems.

5. Grade Point Average (GPA):
 - a. The student's GPA shall show improvement over time versus a certain point on a four-point scale, or
 - b. Have a high school GPA of 2.0 in the corresponding discipline or subject area, or
 - c. Have a cumulative high school GPA of 2.0, or
 - d. Utilize the GPA established by the postsecondary institution which reflects that of traditionally admitted first-time freshmen within the corresponding discipline or subject area.

Nonacademic Measures of College Readiness

Critical behaviors needed for success in college often include those aligned to nonacademic measures. School counselors and academic advisors play a critical role in helping students understand the rigor and expectations of college-level coursework in order for students to be adequately prepared to be successful in these opportunities.

The nonacademic measures of college readiness provided below would be appropriate to use when advising students and assist in determining college readiness. These measures should not be used alone in determining whether a student should access Senior Year Plus opportunities as they are less objective than the academic measures listed above or the assessment scores students will have received to demonstrate proficiency through the ISASP. Rather, these measures may be utilized in conjunction with both assessment test scores and measures of college readiness to look at a student holistically and to help guide conversations with students when discussing course opportunities.

1. **High school discipline specific instructor recommendation.**
2. **The student's skills may be assessed as proficient by a high school counselor or teacher using the following criteria:**
 - a. Maturity
 - Demonstrates self-advocacy and communication of academic needs
 - Successfully manages academics, work, extracurriculars and other commitments
 - Takes responsibility for their learning and success
 - b. Academic skills or standing
 - Satisfactory attendance record
 - Successfully completes related high school coursework
 - Completes assignments by due date, including assigned readings
 - Demonstrates self-motivation as a learner
 - c. Personal traits/dispositions
 - Demonstrates respect for others
 - Exhibits intellectual curiosity and openness to new ideas
 - Works well as part of a team
 - Demonstrates honesty and ethical decision-making
 - Devotes time each week outside of class to study, review and prepare for coursework.

3. **Monitored academic support from a counselor, teacher or designated staff member at the secondary or postsecondary institution.**

Research indicates that students who may fall below what is deemed "college ready", but are close to college-ready range, are likely to succeed in college-level coursework with additional academic support.

4. **Postsecondary Academic Advising:**

The student may meet with an academic advisor for evaluation at the postsecondary institution prior to enrollment in a college-level course. The advisor should evaluate the student to determine if they are prepared to be successful in college-level coursework and provide a recommendation to the high school counselor.

Student Eligibility Requirements

The concurrent enrollment program shall be made available to all eligible resident students in grades 9 through 12 (281 IAC 22.11(1)) and jointly established measures of college readiness shall apply equally to all eligible students through the concurrent enrollment program. It would not be permissible for a school district or postsecondary institution to place additional restrictions on student enrollments based on grade level. Eligibility shall apply equally to all students.

...The institutions shall not place restrictions on participation in senior year plus programming beyond that which is specified in statute or administrative rule (281 IAC 22.4(1)(h)).

A student who has demonstrated proficiency in the content areas of reading (English-language arts), math and science on the statewide assessment, is eligible to immediately access arts and sciences coursework (281 22.2(2)(b)) and would not need to be evaluated through measures of college readiness.

Lastly, a student may still be required to meet assessment and/or placement exam requirements of the postsecondary institution prior to enrolling in a concurrent enrollment course opportunity (281 22.2(1)).

This guidance replaces prior guidance issued by the Department for alternative measures of proficiency.

Iowa Department of Education guidance should be viewed as advisory unless it's specifically authorized by state statute, according to Iowa Code section 256.9A. This does not apply to administrative rules, declaratory orders or materials required by federal law or courts.

Questions or Comments

Please contact the Senior Year Plus Consultant at syp@iowa.gov.