



Multiple Measures Placement Assessments: Benefits and Challenges to Consider

Measures used for postsecondary course placement each have benefits and challenges to consider when determining which ones to include in a state, system, or institutional placement policy or process. The following table identifies some of the benefits and challenges of the measures commonly found across the eight campuses included in Research for Action’s spring 2016 field work on multiple measures implementation.

Measures (Defined Below)	Benefits								Challenges			
	Consistent and Objective Measure	Supported by Research as a Strong Predictor of College Readiness	Aligns HS and College Standards	Used to place non-traditional Students	Captures level of Student Motivation in Placement Process	Provides example of Student Work	Provides Data to inform Instruction	Easy to administer and use for Placement	Inconsistent and Subjective Measure	Requires additional staff capacity for review and student placement	Gaining access to results may be difficult	Explaining placement process and results based on measure
Placement Test	•			•				•				
SAT/ACT	•							•				
High School Grade Point Average		•	•		•				•	•	•	
High School Course Grades and Completion									•	•	•	
High School Standards-based Achievement Test	•		•									
Diagnostic Assessment	•			•			•					
AP and/or IB Test Scores	•		•									
Essay Prompt				•		•	•			•	•	
Self-Directed Placement				•	•				•	•	•	
GED	•			•								
Non-Cognitive Measures				•	•				•	•	•	

Defining the Measures

- **Placement Test:** A standardized exam, such as the ACCUPLACER, given to a student entering a postsecondary institution to determine proficiency in various subjects (i.e., math, English) in order to determine the appropriate level of coursework.
- **SAT/ACT:** Standardized college admission exams commonly used as a part of the application process.
- **High School Grade Point Average:** A calculated average of the letter grades earned in high school based on a weighted or unweighted scale in which each course grade is assigned a number value (e.g., A=4, B=3, C=2).
- **High School Course Grades and Completion:** The use of grades in individual high school courses (e.g., whether a student received a B or better in Algebra) or the completion of individual high school courses (e.g., whether a student completed four years of high school English).
- **High School Standards-based Achievement Test:** A standardized exam, whether developed by a national testing consortium (e.g., Smarter Balanced) or an individual state, that is given to students in high school to measure proficiency in content across subjects (e.g., math, English, science) or in a single course (e.g., Algebra 1 end-of-course exam) based on state standards of academic knowledge and skills, such as the Common Core State Standards.
- **Diagnostic Assessment:** A standardized exam, such as the ALEKS, designed to measure and provide information on a student's strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills in particular topics areas within a larger subject or course (e.g., fractions and decimals) that can be used to determine focus areas for additional instructional support and remediation.
- **AP and/or IB Test Scores:** Advanced Placement (AP) tests measure student learning in high school at the end of an Advanced Placement courses, such as Calculus or English Literature. International Baccalaureate (IB) is a rigorous curricular program offered in schools, which culminates in exams. Meeting threshold scores on either AP tests or IB exams can result in a student receiving college credit while still in high school.
- **Essay Prompt:** An assessment of writing ability based on a student composition in response to a question.
- **Self-Directed Placement:** This process, which can be online, in-person, or both, provides entering postsecondary students with questions and information that help them to decide for themselves the appropriate level of coursework.
- **GED:** States award a high school equivalency credential to people who meet the passing score requirements on the GED tests in language arts, math, science and social studies.
- **Non-Cognitive Measures:** Indicators of student experience and circumstances, such as work experience, military training, family obligations, that may be considered in course placement decisions.