

Florida

2016 College- and Career-Readiness Policies and Practices

The Southern Regional Education Board has long emphasized the critical need to strengthen students' readiness to succeed after high school. SREB's recommendations to improve readiness (SREB.org/Readiness) cover standards, assessments, transitional courses, postsecondary placement and remedial education. To support states' efforts, SREB compiled information through interviews of P-16 education agency staff and review of numerous documents to determine state progress as of fall 2016 on the recommendations. This state profile summarizes selected findings for each of the five areas. SREB plans to update this information annually.

Standards

Does the state have statewide college- and career-readiness standards in reading, writing and mathematics? Do K-12 and postsecondary education agree on the same standards?

The Florida State Board of Education approved the state's original readiness standards in 2010 and the Mathematics Florida Standards and the Language Arts Florida Standards in 2014. Schools fully implemented the final MAFS and LAFS across the grades in the 2014-15 school year. The standards are formalized in Florida State Board of Education and agency policy. Florida's postsecondary institutions adopted college- and career-readiness standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Readiness Assessments

How does the state assess high school students' readiness? What are the options for students who do not meet them?

Since 2014-15, all Florida College System institutions exempt students from placement testing and developmental education if they entered ninth grade in a Florida public school in 2003-04 or after and graduated high school with a standard diploma, or if they are serving as active-duty members of any branch of the U. S. armed services. For students who do not meet these exemptions, the state developed, in collaboration with McCann and Associates, the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test for high schools to determine college readiness.

Prior to 2015, students generally had to take the P.E.R.T. in their junior year. The P.E.R.T. had uniform cut scores to determine readiness and aligned with the postsecondary readiness competencies identified by Florida faculty as necessary for success in entry-level college-credit coursework in mathematics, reading and writing.

Transitional Courses and Interventions

Does the state require transitional readiness courses or other interventions for students who are not ready to succeed in college-level courses?

Florida statute provides for transitional courses, and they have been fully implemented for three years. K-12 and higher education collaborated to design five readiness courses, but this is not a statewide initiative. These courses align with the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test. The math readiness course is worth one full year of credit.

The state uses CNA Education, an external evaluator, for professional development. The Florida Department of Education Information and Accountability Services assists school districts with data. Since 2012, CNA Education has also evaluated the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative. The state launched FCCRI in 2008 to increase statewide college readiness by assessing students for the skills they need for introductory college courses and by providing college preparatory instruction for high school students who meet high school graduation threshold scores but fall below the college readiness threshold

Postsecondary Placement

How do institutions place a student who is not ready for college-level work? Are the same standards, assessments and qualifying score levels applied statewide or systemwide? Are multiple criteria and measures used in placement decisions?

State University System of Florida Board of Governors regulations guide placement for students admitted to state universities. Systemwide rule outlines assessment and qualifying score levels. Cut scores from State Board of Education are the same as those in Board of Governors regulations. If state university students score below threshold scores on P.E.R.T., ACT, SAT or Accuplacer in reading, writing or mathematics, they are assigned to college preparatory instruction in the deficit area.

Individual universities set placement requirements and use multiple measures to determine if students are ready for placement in a degree-bearing course. Measures include high school courses or diploma completed, assessments and career pathway. Each state university notes students in college preparatory in the university's college preparatory data file. There are no required assessment or qualifying scores for rising high school seniors.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Are there state or system policies for remedial and developmental education in colleges? What curricular and support paths are available for students? Is corequisite instruction—an academic course taken in conjunction with another course—required or optional? How do institutions and the state monitor student progress? What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these interventions?

Earning a standard high school diploma exempts a student from developmental and remedial courses at state college and universities. Florida statutes define developmental education for Florida College System institutions. Florida College System institutions offer developmental education courses using one of four delivery strategies: (1) modularized instruction customized to address specific skills gaps; (2) contextualized developmental instruction which is related to meta-majors; (3) compressed course structures that accelerate student progression from developmental instruction to college-level coursework; and (4) corequisite developmental instruction or tutoring that supplements credit instruction while a student is concurrently enrolled in a credit-bearing course. Student advising also relates to meta-majors. Tailored academic support for students varies from institution to institution. Florida A&M University is the only state university authorized to provide college preparatory instruction; all other institutions network with area Florida College System institutions to provide needed assistance. Each institution determines how it will monitor placement.

The System's Developmental Education Accountability Report indicates that 70 percent of students earned a C or better, regardless of delivery strategy, in reading and writing. In mathematics, between 56 and 64 percent were successful for three strategies. Anecdotal evidence suggests colleges use a variety of strategies to track and improve student progress in gateway courses.