Executive Vice Chancellor
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Academic Policy Brief OAA-19-01

Policy for the Use of CUNY's Proficiency Index in Developmental Education Assignments

September 4, 2019

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this brief is to inform you of how CUNY's new proficiency index will be implemented for spring 2020 admissions. To provide more information about the use of this index, I have enclosed the following:

- **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01:** This is a follow-up to the December 13, 2018 memorandum that announced the use of a proficiency index and changes in CUNY's developmental education assignment practices. This memorandum gives more information on how the index will be used to place students into the various developmental interventions available to them.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) OAA-19-01**: CUNY Developmental Education Policy Changes. These FAQs bring together responses to many of the questions that CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) has received about the new proficiency index and other aspects of developmental education reform as it has consulted with stakeholders about these plans. The FAQs will be posted online shortly and OAA will continue to update them as we receive additional questions or clarify practices.

Please share this letter and its enclosures with interested faculty and staff. Note that readers will likely want to refer to the FAQ document after they have read the technical guidance memorandum because it contains a great deal of information. For the purposes of implementation, the FAQs are part of official OAA policy regarding the proficiency index and corequisite education.

The launch of the new proficiency index will fulfill one of the major recommendations of the Developmental Education Task Force convened by my predecessor, Dr. Vita Rabinowitz and former Associate University Provost David Crook. The use of this index will also inform our efforts to replace outdated remediation strategies with more effective corequisite math or English courses, or high-quality, targeted interventions before matriculation. As such, I want to thank many of you for your service on that task force, and for your continuing consultation on developmental education reforms since then.

Since the task force issued its recommendations in 2016, OAA staff have been developing the proficiency index as a method for incorporating grades and multiple measures into the new CUNYfirst admissions system. We are confident that the proficiency index will more accurately assess the developmental needs of our students than placement tests, and that the new targeting guidelines contained in the technical guidance memorandum will ensure that students receive the academic support they need to succeed at CUNY. This change is part of CUNY's comprehensive developmental education reform, which will also change the way colleges provide developmental education.

I would like to highlight the following activities related to CUNY's developmental education reform in fall 2019:

August 2019
- OAA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking associate-granting colleges' requests for a share of $2 million in funding that the University has once again received from New York City to support continued developmental education reforms for the 2019-20 academic year. These additional resources, along with CUNY's Strong Start to Finish (SSTF) grant funding, will support your college to improve student success in crucial first-year English and math courses.

September 2019
- OAA will release guidance on placement options for students with a High School Equivalency credential or foreign credentials.
- OAA will share more information about how proficiency index results and other placement-related information will be presented in CUNYfirst.
- ASAP and Math Start will launch pilots of a new semester-long Math Start offering at two community colleges (Bronx and Kingsborough). This model will allow students who have deep math needs to participate in Math Start over the course of the semester while also taking some credit courses as non-degree students with support from ASAP. We expect that in the near future there will be opportunities for other associate-granting colleges to adopt this model.
- OAA will review responses to the NYC Developmental Education Reform RFP, make awards, and release funds to successful grants so that colleges can commence the proposed work.
- Colleges will continue their Strong Start to Finish work. They will offer additional sections of existing corequisite courses and continue to develop new courses as planned.

October – December 2019
- OAA will complete the first admissions run through the new proficiency index for spring 2020 applicants and colleges will guide prospective students into appropriate developmental interventions per the **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01.**

Our developmental education reforms are critically important to CUNY's goals of improving educational equity and ensuring that students who can benefit from engaging with CUNY's college-level curriculum are placed accordingly. Given CUNY's position in the national higher education landscape as a leading educator of first-generation students, immigrants, and under-represented communities, it is especially important that we embrace evidence-based practices that will allow us to better help them meet their full potential. I am gratified that so many colleagues across our colleges and University offices have done so much in the past three years to get us to this stage. I am also appreciative that the City and private funders have recognized the importance of our collective efforts and chosen to support them.

Feedback on the impact and implementation of this new process is critically important, and I encourage you to reach out to me and my office with any concerns that you and your team may have.

As always, I look forward to the hard, important work ahead.

Sincerely,

José Luis Cruz
Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01

To: Chief Academic Officers

From: José Luis Cruz, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost
                Sarah Truelsch, Director of Policy Research

Date: September 4, 2019

Subject: **Use of the CUNY Proficiency Index for Developmental Education Assignment**

Policy Context

Starting in fall 2019 for applicants entering in the spring of 2020, The City University of New York (CUNY) will use a proficiency index to assign students to developmental education; the use of placement tests for this purpose will be discontinued. This change in placement policy was first announced by the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) in December 2018, following several years of research and development by OAA staff and consultation with stakeholders across the University and its partner organizations.

As is current policy, applicants who meet certain scores on the SAT, ACT, or New York State Regents exams will be considered proficient and eligible to take credit-bearing courses in the associated subject. Historically, students who had not met those proficiency standards were required to take placement tests at a CUNY college to determine whether they were required to complete developmental education interventions before enrolling in credit-bearing math and English courses. Starting in fall 2019, applicants will no longer take placement tests. Instead, they will be evaluated by a proficiency index that combines overall high school grade point average and subject-specific SAT and Regents scores to determine whether they have a reasonably high probability of passing a credit-bearing course in the subject without any additional support.[1] Students who meet this criterion will be considered proficient. Those who do not will be required to participate in developmental supports before enrolling in or while enrolled in credit-bearing courses.

Additional technical guidance needed to implement this new policy is presented herein.

Mathematics Proficiency

In addition to defining basic proficiency, OAA has historically set a dividing line between top-level and lower-level interventions in math (traditionally elementary algebra and pre-algebra/arithmetic courses). For the spring 2020 term, an index score of 60 or higher will establish proficiency, while a

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[1] Note that while ACT benchmark scores may be used to demonstrate proficiency, ACT scores are not yet used in the proficiency index because CUNY has insufficient data on their relationship to performance in CUNY gateway math and English courses. Historically, very few CUNY applicants have submitted ACT scores rather than SAT scores.

score of 40 will be the dividing line between light and deep developmental math need. The corresponding placement guidance is presented in the table below.

Math Proficiency Index	Math Proficiency Status	Placement Guidance
60 or higher	Proficient	Colleges **must** allow students to enroll in at least one course that satisfies the Pathways Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning requirement.
Between 40 and 59	Light Developmental Need	Colleges should guide students to targeted USIP interventions and/or corequisite courses.[2] Students who score 40 or higher on the math proficiency index **shall not** be assigned to a pre-algebra course.
Below 40, but proficient in reading/writing	Deep Developmental Need	Colleges should encourage students to enroll in Math Start, which is delivered in varying timeframes from eight weeks to full-semester offerings.

English Proficiency[3]

For the spring 2020 term, students whose English index is 65 or higher will be deemed English proficient. OAA has not historically defined levels of developmental need in English, instead allowing colleges to determine different levels of need if they found it necessary. This has not changed. However, the table below presents OAA's placement recommendations for students who fall below an index score of 65.

English Proficiency Index	English Proficiency Status	Placement Guidance
65 or higher	Proficient	Colleges **must** allow students to enroll in at least one course that satisfies the Pathways English Composition requirement.
Below 65	Developmental Need	Colleges should consider guiding students to USIP or a CUNY Start Part-time Reading/Writing intervention if they are able to participate in a pre-matriculation intervention, or enroll in an English composition corequisite course.

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[2] For guidelines on targeting USIP interventions, see the April 26, 2018 memorandum. OAA will issue additional guidance on using the proficiency index to target USIP interventions.
[3] Students who are proficient in English will receive proficiency milestones for both reading and writing in CUNYfirst.

Students Not Proficient in Math and English

The table below presents OAA's placement recommendations for students assigned to developmental education in **both** math and English. Options are presented in order of strongest positive potential student outcomes.

Recommendation	Intervention	Placement Guidance
Strongly Recommended	CUNY Start or Math Start	Until corequisite courses are more widely available and we have a better understanding of which students are best served in such courses, CUNY Start and Math Start should be the first choice for students who have the greatest level of developmental need. Both programs have <u>well-documented success rates</u> helping the least-prepared students become skills proficient faster and achieve higher pass rates in gateway math and English courses than similarly-skilled students who start in traditional remedial courses.
Strongly Recommended	Corequisite courses in math and English	If students with deep developmental needs cannot enroll in CUNY Start or Math Start, OAA recommends that colleges offer them access to corequisite courses in English and math, rather than enroll them in traditional prerequisite remedial courses.
		Although CUNY has historically assigned students to two different levels of developmental math courses, evidence gathered at CUNY and in other systems demonstrates consistently that even students with the deepest developmental math needs have a better chance of eventually earning math credit when they enroll in corequisite courses than when they start in prerequisite remedial courses, especially multi-course remedial sequences.
		Furthermore, in fall 2019, a new semester-long Math Start offering will be piloted at two colleges (Bronx and Kingsborough). This model will allow students who have deep math needs to participate in Math Start over the course of the semester while also taking some credit courses as non-degree students with support from ASAP. We expect that in the near future there will be opportunities for other associate-granting colleges to adopt this model.
Not Recommended	Traditional prerequisite remedial courses	CUNY intends to phase out traditional stand-alone non-credit remedial courses and replace them with corequisite math or English courses, or high-quality,

Recommendation	Intervention	Placement Guidance
Not Recommended	Multi-course remedial sequences	targeted interventions prior to matriculation (i.e., CUNY Start, Math Start, USIP). Indeed, a recent randomized controlled trial with CUNY students[4] finds significant differences in outcomes between traditional remedial courses and college-level math courses with corequisite support. Corequisite courses are found to increase momentum toward a degree; reduce the number of courses needed to pass college math, thus preserving financial aid eligibility for a longer time; increase the number of students that take and pass advanced math courses; and result in almost 50% more students obtaining an associate degree in three years, while also decreasing racial/ethnic graduation rate gaps.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Placement

Per the recommendation of the ESL Discipline Council, for spring 2020, colleges will administer the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) to determine proficiency for students flagged via the admissions process as potential ESL students who cannot be assessed through the English proficiency index.[5] In addition, colleges may also administer the CATW to students identified via admissions as potential ESL students who have an English proficiency index value below the cut score of 65 in order to determine their placement into the ESL sequence. Passing the CATW will signify that the student is proficient in both reading and writing — there will be no separate reading proficiency test. There are no changes to scoring practices or ESL placement recommendations: Scoring of the CATW exams for ESL purposes will continue to be done by the four borough grading sites. Placement into the ESL sequence, including the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), will continue to be determined by each college, following their current practices.

The ESL Discipline Council will continue working with OAA to develop better ESL placement tools. More guidance on placing applicants in future academic terms will be released once it is finalized.

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[4] Logue, A. W., Douglas, D., & Watanabe-Rose, M. (2019). Corequisite mathematics remediation: Results over time and in different contexts. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. First published online May 20, 2019, at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0162373719848777

[5] Freshman applicants who have spent at least six months or more in an institution where English is not the primary language of instruction are flagged as potential ESL via the CUNY admissions process, but not all these applicants will be required to take the CATW for placement. Some ESL applicants will be proficient based on CUNY's exemption criteria on the English SAT and Regents exams. Applicants who do not meet exemption benchmarks, but have valid English Regents exam scores, will receive an English proficiency index value. Those whose English proficiency index value is 65 or higher will be deemed proficient. Applicants who have been flagged as potential ESL by admissions and have not demonstrated English proficiency through either the benchmark scores or the proficiency index will be identified as needing to take the CATW for ESL placement via the same CATSNeed report that provided this information for fall 2019.

Identification of Students Recommended for Math Start, CUNY Start, or ESL Testing

Students who fit the profile for either Math Start or CUNY Start will be identified in CUNYfirst so that staff who are involved in the onboarding of new students can refer them appropriately. Students who require ESL testing to determine proficiency will also be identified in CUNYfirst. More details about where the program identifications can be found in CUNYfirst will come in early fall.

Please consult Frequently Asked Questions OAA-19-01: CUNY Developmental Education Policy Changes for more information about the proficiency index. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact CUNY Director of Policy Research Sarah Truelsch at sarah.truelsch@cuny.edu.

CUNY Developmental Education Policy Changes

Last Revised: September 4, 2019

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is intended to provide further detail related to the **Academic Policy Brief OAA-19-01** and **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01** released on September 4, 2019 The content below reflects responses to questions CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) has received from a range of college and Central Office stakeholders regarding the planned implementation of a proficiency index and other topics related to CUNY's comprehensive developmental education reforms.

For the purposes of implementation, these FAQs are part of official OAA policy regarding the proficiency index and corequisite education. OAA will update the FAQs on a regular basis as we continue to receive feedback from stakeholders. FAQs and other official policy communications will be stored in an online repository (under construction) with major updates announced via email.

If you have additional questions about the proficiency index, please contact Director of Policy Research Sarah Truelsch or Director of Testing Melissa Uber.

For additional questions about practices and policies related to corequisite and developmental courses, please contact Senior University Dean and Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Policy Lucinda Zoe.

Contents:

Introduction to CUNY's Developmental Education Reforms

In the fall of 2015, then University Provost Vita Rabinowitz convened a CUNY Task Force on Developmental Education to review all aspects of the University's developmental education practices and make recommendations.[1] The Task Force was inspired by a wave of new research and innovative practices related to developmental education, both from across the country and taking place within CUNY, and the sheer scale of developmental education at CUNY. At that time, approximately 20,000 students each fall—more than half of all freshmen who started at CUNY colleges—were assigned to developmental education in at least one subject, especially mathematics. In associate programs, 74 percent of freshmen were assigned to developmental education in math in fall 2015, 23 percent in reading, and 33 percent in writing.

The national literature also strongly suggested that many students do not benefit from, and may even be harmed by, being assigned to conventional developmental courses. For example, at CUNY, students who place into math developmental education are about half as likely as other students to complete an associate degree within three years. Developmental education comes at a high personal and financial cost to students: Traditional developmental courses do not advance students toward a degree, but they do consume time and financial resources. Because black

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[1] The 19 members of the Task Force included the faculty chairs or co-chairs of the Mathematics, Reading, and English Discipline Councils, four chief academic officers from colleges offering developmental instruction and two from senior colleges, and members of OAA. The Task Force's report is available online.

and Hispanic students are almost twice as likely as white and Asian students to be assigned to developmental education at CUNY, developmental policies can contribute to racial gaps in educational attainment.

The Task Force launched a thorough and wide-ranging review of CUNY's developmental education policies and practices and made many recommendations. Since that time, the staff of OAA has been working to implement the Task Force's recommendations while integrating promising practices and lessons from research that have become available since the Task Force concluded its work.

General Questions

What are the changes to CUNY's developmental education assignment policy?

Currently, applicants who meet benchmark scores on the SAT, ACT, or Regents exams are considered proficient and eligible to enroll in credit-bearing courses in the subject (math or English).[2] In the past, applicants who did not meet those benchmarks were required to take placement tests at a CUNY college to determine whether they were eligible for credit-bearing courses or required to complete developmental interventions.

Under CUNY's new developmental education assignment policy, students will still be considered proficient if they meet the benchmark scores on the SAT, ACT, or Regents exams. Rather than using placement tests for applicants who do not meet the benchmark scores, CUNY will now use a proficiency index that combines overall high school grade point average with SAT and/or Regents exam scores.[3] The proficiency index will allow the University to determine whether the applicant has a good chance of earning a C or better in a credit-bearing math or English course without any additional support. Scores on the proficiency index, rather than scores on placement tests, will be used to make the final determination of whether students are proficient or not and guide them to appropriate levels of developmental interventions.

Why is CUNY changing its developmental education assignment policy?

In 2016, CUNY's Developmental Education Task Force recommended that CUNY incorporate high school grades and multiple measures of students' skills into determinations of proficiency, following emerging national best practices. Since that recommendation, OAA staff have been analyzing how well various indicators predict students' success in college courses and developing an efficient method for incorporating grades and multiple measures into the new CUNYfirst admissions system. Throughout the development process, OAA staff met with college administrators, faculty, and staff to discuss plans for the new proficiency index and respond to their questions and concerns.

The new proficiency index predicts students' success in credit courses more accurately than placements tests have done. It also removes the barrier of placement testing from the enrollment process and allows prospective students to learn their proficiency status earlier than they have been able to in the past, which will give them more time to learn about and participate in low or no-cost interventions before matriculation.

The use of this index will inform our efforts to replace outdated remediation strategies with more effective corequisite math or English courses, or high-quality, targeted interventions before matriculation.

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[2] See the CUNY testing webpage for the benchmark scores on each exam that demonstrate proficiency.

[3] Note that while ACT benchmark scores may be used to demonstrate proficiency, ACT scores are not yet used in the proficiency index because CUNY has insufficient data on their relationship to performance in CUNY gateway math and English courses. Historically, very few CUNY applicants have submitted ACT scores rather than SAT scores for admission.

How will the new proficiency index work?

There are separate proficiency indexes for math and English. Both use information that is already part of the application for freshman admissions: student's overall high school GPA at the time of application, SAT scores, and Regents scores.[2] If applicants have both SAT scores and Regents scores, the index formula will use both scores, but if they have only Regents or only SAT, it will use whichever is available. If applicants have only high school grades, the index will use only grades for placement. High school grades have the greatest impact on the proficiency indexes because research has proven they have a stronger relationship to college grades than the standardized test scores do, but higher test scores can help offset lower grades and vice versa.

Different high schools have different grading practices. How can CUNY rely on students' high school GPAs to determine whether they are ready for credit-bearing college courses?

Despite differences in grading practice among high schools, extensive research at CUNY and across the country has found that high school grades do a better job of predicting grades in college courses than standardized test scores. High school grades are also significantly better for predicting persistence into a second year and on to college graduation. The new CUNY proficiency index uses both grades and standardized test scores, so if an applicant attends a high school with strict grading standards, their test scores can boost their overall proficiency index value.

Why will CUNY still base some exemptions from developmental education solely on SAT, ACT, and Regents exam scores? Why not make all proficiency determinations based solely on multiple measures in the proficiency index results?

Although the relationship between high school grades and college grades is indeed stronger, standardized test scores still have some value in predicting performance in college courses. Given that, we had two related motivations for continuing to recognize these single-exam exemptions: First, our partners at the NYC Department of Education (DOE) strongly favor continuing to have clear markers of proficiency on the SAT or Regents exams that students can aspire to and meet while in high school. Second, continued use of the Regents and SAT/ACT exemptions provides some continuity with the current system and reduces uncertainty for applicants and high schools.

Why did OAA choose an index value of 60 as the dividing line for proficiency in math and 65 in English?

At either 60 or 65, the chances are substantially better that students will succeed in a first entry-level course rather than fail it. (Note that the index predicts how likely the student is to earn a C or better in a first entry-level course — students will have an even higher probability of simply passing the course.) These dividing lines are also roughly consistent with past practice (OAA used a 65 percent probability of success as the target for setting cut scores on Accuplacer exams). Until more corequisite courses are available, OAA research suggests that more students around these borderlines will benefit from gaining direct access to a credit-bearing course than from enrolling in a traditional remedial course. The proficiency index cut scores are different in math and English because OAA has determined that optimal balances between overall probabilities of success and failure are different between those subjects.

These cut-points are subject to possible adjustment as we monitor their impact and the availability of high-quality corequisite and developmental interventions.

Does this mean students will not have to take any more placement tests at CUNY?

This change in determining proficiency does not necessarily change colleges' use of tests to place students within credit-bearing course sequences. Individual colleges may still administer local placement tests to determine which credit-bearing courses a student should take (e.g., which level of a foreign language, a pre-calculus or calculus

class). Exams for placement within the credit-bearing sequence will be scheduled and coordinated by individual colleges.

Because of changes in the Accuplacer exams, colleges will no longer use the College-Level Math test to place students into credit-bearing math courses. A working group of math faculty convened by OAA has [recommended practices](#) that colleges can use to place students into STEM math courses based on their high school math grades and test scores without additional placement testing. These recommended placement practices are separate from proficiency index calculations, but based on similar principles and data.

Why is the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) still being used for English as a Second Language (ESL) placement when it will not be used for general English proficiency determinations?

The ESL Discipline Council voted to continue using the CATW for ESL placement purposes through spring 2020 while it works with OAA to develop better ESL placement tools. The general proficiency index, which relies heavily on high school grades, cannot be used to assess the English proficiency of students who attended high school in a non-English speaking environment unless they also have an English Regents exam score. The ESL Discipline Council and OAA were not able to develop feasible alternatives to the CATW by fall 2019. Colleges may also administer the CATW exam to students flagged by the admissions process as potential ESL who do not meet the English proficiency index cut score to determine appropriate placement in the ESL developmental course sequence. Note that there is no change in developmental education testing exemptions for ESL students: students who meet proficiency benchmarks on the English SAT, ACT, or English Regents exam will continue to be deemed English proficient, regardless of where they attended high school.

How will these changes impact the college Testing Office?

Although incoming student placement testing is being replaced by the proficiency index. there are some exams that the Testing Office will still administer. In addition to the CATW for ESL placement, the office will continue to administer the University final exams in top-level developmental math and writing interventions. The Ability-to-Benefit test, used for NYS TAP eligibility, will also continue to be administered by the Testing Office.

Will the new proficiency index impact admissions to the colleges?

In most cases, no. Each CUNY senior college has admission requirements and admission review processes, which are separate from determinations of proficiency. In most cases, students have to meet proficiency standards in math and English for admission into a bachelor's program, but merely meeting the proficiency standards does not guarantee admission to a bachelor's program. CUNY's senior colleges also have special programs for admitting some students who have not yet met proficiency, but show potential to succeed in college, such as the SEEK program. The proficiency index will not impact admission through these programs.

Will CUNY assign fewer students to developmental education through the proficiency index?

Not necessarily. In the first term of the index's implementation, we anticipate that the percentage of incoming students assigned to developmental education will be similar to the proportion assigned to developmental education in recent years (about the same as in the previous year for English and between the rates of assignment in 2017 and 2018 in math). Cut points on the indexes are subject to possible adjustment by OAA based on their impact, the availability of high-quality corequisite and developmental interventions, and consultation with college stakeholders.

How will OAA monitor the implementation and impact of the new proficiency index?

OAA will monitor pass rates in credit-bearing courses and evaluate how well the proficiency index predicts performance in those courses, adjusting elements of the index as needed. OAA will also monitor retention rates

(to the second year) and seek feedback from colleges about implementation and impacts. OAA will judge the overall success of the proficiency index implementation, and broader developmental education reforms, based on the percentage of each associate freshman cohort that earns gateway course credits within their first year of entry and on the percentage on track for graduation (earned at least 20 credits, in good academic standing, and retained into the second year).

Does this policy change mean that CUNY is lowering standards to boost graduation rates?

No. Developmental education reforms do not affect the requirements for passing credit-bearing courses, accumulating credits, or graduating from a CUNY college and so do not represent any lowering of academic standards. The reforms are designed to more accurately and efficiently identify students who are likely to succeed in credit courses without developmental support and improve the quality of developmental education for students who are likely to benefit from additional support. Students will still be required to meet the existing learning standards in order to earn credit in their courses and satisfy graduation requirements.

Index Implementation and Proficiency Status

How will students find out about their proficiency status?

The new proficiency status will be available when CUNY evaluates the student's application for admission. Students will be able to see if they have met proficiency standards in the CUNYfirst Student Center. If a student has met proficiency standards, there will be labels that say "Math Proficient," "Read Proficient," and "Write Proficient" in the Milestones section of the Student Center. If they have not met proficiency standards, the Milestones section will be empty.

Students who are not deemed proficient at point of admission will have several different options for achieving proficiency, which vary by college offerings (e.g., varieties of corequisite courses and targeted USIP offerings, in addition to Math Start and CUNY Start). Prospective students should meet with an advisor at their chosen college as soon as possible to discuss which developmental options are best for them. It is also crucial for students to discuss their intended major with an advisor to determine which math courses are required so that they can enroll in the appropriate corequisite course or other intervention. Science, engineering, and economics majors will all require algebra and calculus courses. Social science majors, like psychology and sociology, will likely require statistics rather than algebra. Humanities majors, like English, music, or art, will likely require a more general mathematical or quantitative reasoning course.

How will the proficiency index work for "direct admits" to a college who do not go through the central CUNY application system? When will college staff be trained to use the new system?

Training for admissions and enrollment staff on the campuses, including explanations for how the proficiency index will run for direct admits, will be offered in early fall in preparation for the spring 2020 admissions cycle.

Are reading and writing proficiency determined separately or at the same time?

The answer depends on how and when proficiency status is assigned. Historically, students who met CUNY's English proficiency benchmark scores on the SAT, ACT or Regents exams were deemed proficient in both reading and writing. Students who did not meet English proficiency benchmark scores were required to take separate placement tests for reading and writing. Although most students assigned to developmental education in reading were also assigned to writing and vice versa, it was possible for a student to pass the placement test in one subject but not the other.

Going forward, new students who meet the English proficiency benchmarks on the SAT, ACT, or Regents exam, or meet the English proficiency index cut score, will be deemed proficient in both reading and writing and receive both proficiency milestones. However, students who are *not proficient* may still participate in separate reading and writing interventions if their college chooses to offer them separately. Some colleges' developmental education courses and CUNY Start integrate reading and writing developmental instruction and therefore can lead to proficiency determinations in both areas, while other courses and interventions are specific to reading or writing and lead to a proficiency determination in only that area. OAA encourages colleges to consider offering integrated reading and writing supports.

Continuing students who have achieved proficiency in either reading or writing, but not both, will not automatically be granted proficiency in the other area as a result of these policy changes. OAA encourages colleges to allow such students to enroll in corequisite courses where they have a chance to both demonstrate proficiency and earn gateway course credit.

How will CUNY assess the proficiency of applicants who do not have traditional or domestic high school GPAs?

Applicants who do not have traditional high school GPAs can demonstrate proficiency through the SAT, ACT, or Regents exam benchmark scores. There will also be an optional review process for applicants for whom the proficiency index does not apply, specifically those who have a High School Equivalency (HSE) rather than a high school diploma or students who attended high school in a foreign country. More guidance on placing these applicants will be released is early fall 2019.

The default status for applicants who do not have high school GPAs and do not demonstrate proficiency through the SAT, ACT, or Regents exams will be "not proficient." OAA strongly encourages colleges to offer developmental education in the form of corequisite courses or high-quality pre-matriculation interventions, as described in **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01**. Providing developmental supports that cost students less time and money than traditional remediation reduces the consequences of potentially "underplacing" students who could succeed in credit courses.

What happens if an applicant is not a recent high school graduate and his or her high school GPA and test scores are several years old?

CUNY will use the high school GPA and SAT scores submitted as part of the application for admission to calculate the proficiency index. Either the Common Core-aligned or traditional Algebra 1 and English Composition Regents exam scores can be used in the proficiency index. Note that most applicants to CUNY who have been out of high school for several years apply as transfer students with previous college credit rather than as first-time freshmen. There is no change to CUNY's proficiency policy for transfer credits: Applicants who transfer in three or more credits in a subject will be deemed proficient and will not be assessed using the proficiency index.

Will the proficiency index results be less accurate than placement test results for returning adults because their high school credentials will be old, but the placement test results would assess their skills and knowledge at the moment?

Of students over the age of 25 who enter as first-time freshmen, OAA's simulations show that the math proficiency index resulted in the same placement determination for about 90 percent of students as the placement tests did. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to expect that students who have been away from school for several years and enroll directly in regular credit courses may require additional support. An important companion to our developmental education reforms in the future will have to be strengthening supports for students who have been placed directly in credit courses, but who may want or need additional help. This is especially important for returning or first-time adult students who may have been away from school for some

time. OAA strongly encourages colleges to consider optional variations of supplemental supports for students in gateway courses.

What if some students have a high Regents exam score and a lower SAT score — are they better off not submitting the SAT score?

No. Applicants should submit SAT scores if they have them. Submitting more information will allow CUNY to make a more accurate determination of proficiency. CUNY requires SAT scores from recent high school graduates for consideration of freshman admissions to its bachelor's programs, including through the SEEK program. SAT scores that are submitted for admissions consideration will also be used for proficiency calculations.

Can Advanced Placement (AP) test scores and College Now course grades be used to demonstrate proficiency?

There is no change in proficiency policy regarding AP or College Now: if a student has earned an AP test score that any CUNY college honors for credit in English or math, the student will be considered proficient. Similarly, if a student has earned math or English credit, or has completed a developmental intervention through a College Now or Early College Initiative (ECI) course, the student will be considered proficient.

How can current high school students demonstrate proficiency and readiness to take college courses through College Now or dual enrollment programs?

As is the case now, high school students can demonstrate proficiency by meeting the proficiency benchmark scores on the SAT, ACT, or Regents exams. Individual colleges may also establish additional criteria for admitting high school students into certain courses. The proficiency index will not be available until a student applies to matriculate at CUNY and therefore will not be available to demonstrate proficiency for the purposes of dual enrollment programs.

Can a proficient student enroll in any credit-bearing course in the subject?

No. A proficient student must have access to at least one credit-bearing course in a subject — not to *any* credit-bearing course. An English-proficient student is eligible to enroll in a course that satisfies the Pathways English Composition requirement. Likewise, a math-proficient student is eligible to enroll in at least one course that meets the Pathways Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning requirement. College faculties may set different standards for placement into some entry-level courses than others (e.g., they may require that students demonstrate a higher level of math preparation to enroll in a college algebra course than to enroll in a statistics or quantitative reasoning course).

Colleges will also continue to require that students demonstrate a higher standard of readiness for placement into pre-calculus, calculus, and further mathematics courses than for entry-level math courses. A working group of math faculty from multiple CUNY colleges was convened by Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Michael Guy to review data and [recommend placement practices](#) for these credit-bearing courses that make use of students' grades and Regents exams.

Can students appeal their proficiency status? Can they volunteer to take a placement test to demonstrate proficiency?

There will be an optional review process for applicants for whom the proficiency index does not apply, specifically those who have a High School Equivalency (HSE) rather than a high school diploma or students who attended high school in a foreign country. More guidance on placing these applicants will be released in early fall 2019. The review process is not intended for recent graduates of local high schools. The colleges will not administer a new test to applicants to determine proficiency.

Corequisite Courses

How are corequisite courses structured?

Corequisite remedial courses typically follow one of two models:

One-Course Model: Students enroll in one course that combines credit-bearing and developmental non-credit-bearing instruction. Instructors assign only one grade for this course. Proficiency milestones in CUNYfirst are triggered by students receiving a passing grade in the course. In this model, the corequisite course is a newly developed course that is not typically offered to proficient students. Note that colleges who utilize the one-course model should ensure that the course has been approved as a Pathways MQR or ENG course and is clearly identified as a Pathways course that will be accepted for transfer across CUNY.

Two-Course Model: Students enroll in one credit-bearing course and one linked non-credit developmental intervention. Instructors assign separate grades to the credit course and developmental intervention. In this model, the credit-bearing course is most often an existing course that has already been approved for Pathways. The two-course model is generally more efficient and less labor-intensive for colleges to maintain because it does not require the college to seek Pathways approval for a new course or establish new course equivalencies for transfer. The two-course-model also makes it easier for instructors to indicate that students have demonstrated proficiency even if they do not pass the credit-bearing course (see below for more detail on this matter). The non-credit developmental intervention that serves as the corequisite to the credit course can take a range of forms from a required one- or two-hour weekly supplemental instruction workshop taught by master tutors to a one-to-three-equated-hour course taught by faculty.

Does CUNY have evidence that corequisite courses work as well or better than traditional remedial courses?

Yes. A recent randomized controlled trial study[4] of CUNY students finds significant differences in outcomes among these curricular and pedagogical approaches. Corequisite courses are found to increase momentum toward a degree; reduce the number of courses needed to pass college math, thus preserving financial aid eligibility for a longer time; increase the number of students that take and pass advanced math courses; and result in almost 50 percent more students obtaining an associate's degree in three years, while also decreasing racial/ethnic graduation rate gaps.

Which students are eligible to take corequisite courses?

All non-proficient students should have the opportunity to enroll in corequisite courses rather than traditional, prerequisite non-credit remedial courses. As explained in **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01**, some non-proficient students may benefit from enrollment in one of CUNY's evidence-based pre-matriculation programs such as CUNY Start, Math Start, or USIP, depending on their level of need. If a student is not able to enroll in a pre-matriculation program, evidence gathered at CUNY and in other states has demonstrated that students at all levels of academic preparation are more likely to earn course credit when they enroll in corequisite courses rather than in prerequisite remedial courses. Colleges may consider versions of corequisite courses with more or less intensive levels of developmental supports, but research does not suggest that any students are better served by enrolling in a stand-alone prerequisite course rather than a corequisite course.

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[4] Logue, A. W., Douglas, D., & Watanabe-Rose, M. (2019). Corequisite mathematics remediation: Results over time and in different contexts. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. First published online May 20, 2019, at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0162373719848777

Does being enrolled in a corequisite course mean that a student is considered proficient?

No. A student is considered proficient after they have successfully completed an exit-level developmental intervention or earned credit in a course in the subject. Students enrolled in corequisite courses demonstrate proficiency when they pass the credit-bearing corequisite course or successfully complete the portion of the course associated with developmental content. As colleges expand corequisite offerings, we also recommend that they review the prerequisites for their entry-level courses in subjects other than math and English to determine which other courses students may take while enrolled in a corequisite course.

Is it possible for a student who fails a corequisite course to be deemed *proficient* (but not earn credit from the course)?

Yes. The determination of proficiency would be made by the individual faculty member who assigns grades in the course and handled differently depending on the corequisite course structure:

One-Course Model: If a student has not performed well enough to earn college credit in a corequisite course, but the instructor determines that the student is sufficiently prepared to re-take a gateway course in the subject without corequisite support, the instructor may deem the student proficient. In order to grant proficiency to students who have not passed the credit-bearing portion of a one-course corequisite course, the instructor must submit a list of students to the appropriate party on campus (either the registrar or a college-determined person with proper access) who will then manually populate the Proficiency Milestone for the appropriate skill area in CUNYfirst. That means the student must attempt another credit-bearing gateway course in the subject, but will not be required to complete additional developmental interventions. (No special action is needed to grant proficiency to students who earn a passing grade in the course; the Proficiency Milestone will be triggered by the passing grade.)

Two-Course Model: The instructor may assign a separate grade/outcome to the credit course and the linked developmental intervention. The non-credit bearing developmental course should be coded with the 'REME' course attribute in CUNYfirst and the subject-specific course attribute value ('MATH', 'READ', or 'WRIT'). If the instructor assigns a passing grade to the developmental course, CUNYfirst will populate a proficiency milestone for the appropriate skill area, regardless of the students' grade in the associated credit-bearing course. That means the student must attempt another credit-bearing gateway course in the subject, but will not be required to complete additional developmental interventions.

Are corequisite courses automatically equivalent to existing courses for failing grade replacement policy purposes?

It depends on the corequisite model used:

One-Course Model: Since corequisite courses that follow a one-course model are new courses, they are not automatically equivalent to an existing course. During the course approval process, colleges should include a sentence stating that the new course is equivalent to an existing course for grade replacement purposes. If course equivalencies were not stated at the time of initial approval, colleges should submit this additional information for approval through the ordinary course approval process.

Two-Course Model: If the credit-bearing course portion of a corequisite enrollment is an existing course, then grade replacement policy will automatically take effect. If it is not the same as an existing course, then during course approval colleges must state that the new course is equivalent to an existing course for grade replacement purposes. If this was not stated at time of initial approval, colleges should submit this additional information for approval through the ordinary course approval process.

Non-Course Based Developmental Interventions

How will students be deemed proficient from CUNY Start, the University Skills Immersion Program (USIP), and the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP)?

The standards for successfully completing most non-course-based interventions have not changed as a result of changes in placement policy. Since 2016, CUNY Start and USIP interventions have used results from a common departmental final exam as 35 percent of their final outcome. Students in CUNY Start and USIP will still be deemed proficient using the 65/35 split between coursework and results on the CEAFE or the CATW (the weight of the CEAFE/CATW in USIP interventions can be increased at the discretion of the college Provost).

CLIP is different from CUNY Start and USIP because it results in students re-taking placement tests. Until new ESL placement policies are developed, CLIP students may demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing by re-taking the CATW. They will no longer take the Accuplacer reading exam.

Will targeted USIP offerings include corequisite courses?

USIP offerings are non-credit-bearing. If a corequisite course follows the two-course model, then the non-credit-bearing enrollment can be part of USIP. The advantage for students in this case is that there would then be no tuition for this portion of the enrollment. The credit-bearing enrollment would still incur tuition and not be part of USIP.