

CSU Executive Order 1110

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: March 5, 2018

Note: This FAQ is an iterative document that will be updated frequently based on questions and feedback received in consultation with CSU constituents across the system.

GENERAL

Overview

1. What changes is the California State University (CSU) making to its approach to academic preparation?

At the March 2017 Board of Trustees meeting, the Chancellor's Office highlighted four areas of academic preparation where improvements are needed to support student success, facilitate degree completion and eliminate persistent equity and achievement gaps:

- Working to improve mathematics and quantitative reasoning skills among high school students
- Re-examining the CSU assessment and placement protocols for determining college readiness and course placement
- Strengthening the CSU Early Start Program
- Restructuring the CSU approach to developmental education

On August 2, 2017, the CSU issued [Executive Order 1110](#), which revises the policy for first-year student placement in English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses. It retires the CSU assessment exams (Entry-Level Mathematics Test and English Placement Test) currently used for course placement. It strengthens the Early Start Program by giving students an opportunity to earn college credit in the summer before their first term. Finally, it eliminates the use of stand-alone developmental education prerequisites and calls for alternative instructional models to support students in credit-bearing courses.

2. Will these changes result in lower quality learning experiences for CSU students?

No. These policy changes are not intended to “dumb down” the learning experience or the quality of a CSU degree. The changes will improve the way the CSU helps students meet existing rigorous course outcomes, not lower them. These policy changes are intended to provide more innovative and targeted academic support to help students achieve existing

rigorous course outcomes. The changes are not a mechanism for merely accelerating graduation rates. Compromising academic rigor is not in the best interest of students or the increasing value of their CSU degree.

3. What precipitated the changes to the CSU's approach to academic preparation?

While the CSU has made steady progress improving college readiness, nearly 40 percent of first-time students (approximately 25,000 each fall) are informed that they are admitted but are not ready for college-level coursework. Students from historically underserved communities are far more likely to be required to complete developmental education courses. For example, 59 percent of African American students and 47 percent of Latino students are informed that they are not prepared for college coursework after being admitted.

The overwhelming majority of these students are assigned to developmental education courses that do not count toward a degree. Being assigned to these courses has a negative impact on a student's credit accumulation in the first year. It also inadvertently sends the message that the student does not belong in college and decreases the likelihood that the student earns a degree. One-in-four students assigned to development education courses do not return for their second year. Only 10 percent earn a degree in four years and fewer than half graduate within six years.

The [CSU Graduation Initiative 2025](#) goals seek to significantly improve student success, increase degree completion and close persistent equity gaps. In pursuit of these goals, the CSU established six priorities, including improving academic preparation. The CSU is working to ensure that all students, including those who arrive in need of additional academic support, have the opportunity to earn 30 college-level semester units (or 45 quarter units) before their second academic year. This required a change in how the CSU serves students in their first year.

Many CSU campuses are already leading the way on improving academic preparation, whether by restructuring developmental education or through implementation of a more robust Early Start Program. Our goal is to build on this momentum, improving systemwide policies and procedures to better serve all CSU students.

For additional information and research on developmental education reforms nationally, please visit the [academic preparation resource page](#).

4. How was the new CSU approach to academic preparation – including Executive Order 1110 – developed?

The Chancellor's Office engaged in significant consultation with faculty, students, campus administrators and other educational partners on the new approach to academic preparation and the development of Executive Order 1110. A draft executive order was circulated for feedback from campus constituents. The final policy reflects the collective advice and guidance of experts from around the system.

5. How can interested parties stay updated on these policy changes?

This FAQ is a living document and will be updated on the [Graduation Initiative 2025 website](#) as new information becomes available. Additionally, Chancellor's Office staff will provide regular updates at a number of CSU affinity group meetings.

Developmental Education

1. Under the new executive order, what will be the CSU policy on developmental education?

Beginning in fall 2018, the CSU will no longer require students to take stand-alone prerequisite developmental education courses that do not count for college credit before moving on to college-level courses that do.

Effective fall 2018, the CSU will place students needing additional academic support in credit-bearing college-level courses that also strengthen skills. Supportive course models may include, among others, co-requisite approaches, coordinated supplemental instruction modules or “stretch” formats that could extend a course beyond one academic term. Additional academic support will now be embedded or attached to college-level courses for students who need it. Any instructional content considered pre-baccalaureate during the regular term will be limited to one unit and must be attached to a college-level course and offered concurrently.

2. How will these policy changes to developmental education benefit students?

CSU students will no longer be required to take courses that do not apply toward a degree. Instead, students will be able to earn college credit beginning day one, while receiving the academic support they need. These changes will potentially save students thousands of dollars. For many CSU students, these changes will also reduce the time required to earn their degree, allowing them to move into the workforce or a graduate program more efficiently.

3. Shouldn't these decisions be left to campuses?

Course development, curricular modifications and innovative instructional approaches will be at the direction of faculty leaders from campus English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning programs in concert with campus academic leadership. The Chancellor's Office will provide resources, technical assistance and professional development opportunities where appropriate, but will not prescribe specific implementation models.

Assessment and Placement of First-Year Students

1. Under the new executive order, what will be the CSU policy on the assessment and placement of first-year students?

Executive Order 1110 calls for the broadest utilization of multiple measures in assessing academic readiness and determining course placement for first-year students. Measures may include high school English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses completed and grades earned; high school grade point averages (GPA); grades in collegiate courses; ACT, SAT and/or SAT subject test scores; Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) scores; or Smarter Balanced Assessment/Early Assessment Program (EAP) scores.

2. How will the Entry-Level Mathematics (ELM) and English Placement Test (EPT) change and why?

As part of this new policy, these two tests were retired in August 2017. In addition to other measures, the CSU will move toward a greater incorporation of high school grades and coursework. High school grades, when used as one of multiple measures, are shown to be a₃

stronger predictor of how likely students are to achieve course outcomes over an academic term if given the opportunity. Placing a greater emphasis on previous classroom performance is expected to improve student assessment and help customize academic support. For more information about the use of multiple measures to inform course placement, please view the CSU [Coded Memorandum ASA-2017-27](#).

Early Start Program

1. Under the new executive order, what parts of the Early Start Program will change and why?

Effective summer 2019, students required to attend the CSU Early Start Program will have an opportunity to earn college credit the summer before beginning their first term. Instead of a one-unit requirement, the Early Start Program will offer credit-bearing courses in written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning systemwide. Instructional content considered pre-baccalaureate will carry a maximum of two units and shall be offered concurrently with a college-level, baccalaureate credit-bearing course.

Although the timeframe for this change is not until summer 2019, campuses can pilot innovative instructional approaches to the Early Start Program in summer 2018. Some CSU campuses are already implementing a more robust credit-bearing Early Start Program experience for students.

2. How will these changes impact low-income students and those who need to work in the summer?

Many CSU students need to work during the summer and throughout the academic year to afford college. The CSU provides financial support to cover tuition for students based on standard financial aid practices (i.e. the estimated family contribution). The Chancellor's Office continues to seek all possible forms of aid for Early Start Program participants including traditional forms of funding, micro-grants, the utilization of low-cost textbooks, etc.

Improving High School Quantitative Reasoning Skills

1. Why are changes to high school quantitative reasoning requirements not included in Executive Order 1110?

Any changes to high school requirements for admission consideration call for coordination with the University of California and the California Department of Education and would culminate in a change to California Administrative Code (Title 5). Therefore, it would be presumptive and not appropriate to include it in the executive order.

The CSU admission criteria have not changed. Although the CSU encourages high school students to take four years of mathematics/quantitative reasoning, the a-g eligibility requirements also remain unchanged.

IMPLEMENTATION

Resources

1. What funding supports the implementation of Executive Order 1110?

Approximately \$10 million has already been provided to campuses for new course development and course redesign, to support advising and to more effectively use campus data to support student success. These funds were outlined in [Coded Memo B 2017-04](#).

2. How will faculty be supported during the implementation of these new policies?

In addition to the allocated funds, the Chancellor's Office continues to provide multiple opportunities for faculty development and technical assistance. These opportunities are available to tenure-track faculty, lecturers and graduate teaching associates. Examples of faculty support and professional development in mathematics/quantitative reasoning can be found at the following links:

- [Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning Course Re-Design Webcasts](#)
- [Upcoming Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning Faculty Professional Development](#)

In addition, the CSU is actively working with local and national foundations to support faculty innovation and campus implementation efforts.

3. What course models are campuses developing in mathematics or quantitative reasoning to address Executive Order 1110?

A summary of example supportive course models is available as a [resource document](#).

Early Start Program

1. Can 2019 Early Start Programs consist of baccalaureate courses other than general education (GE) courses that meet the Subarea A2 or B4 requirements?

Yes. The following course types are approved for Early Start Programs:

- GE courses in Subareas A2 or B4
- Part one of a stretch course leading to Subarea A2 or B4 courses the following term
- Baccalaureate courses that prepare students for fall Subarea A2 or B4 courses. These courses could be (one or more unit) baccalaureate level non-GE courses and may be offered with up to two units of concurrent pre-baccalaureate-support.
- During summer 2018, campuses may pilot face-to-face Area C, D or E courses with a one or more unit baccalaureate written communication or mathematics/quantitative reasoning component. Following the submission of assessment of summer 2018 outcomes, these courses will be considered by the Chancellor's Office for the Early Start Program summer 2019.

Under no circumstance shall a sequence of courses (including those completed in the Early Start Program) leading to and satisfying the GE Subarea A2 or B4 requirement result in earning more than eight semester units of baccalaureate credit.

2. Are campuses required to offer traditional Early Start Program courses for summer 2018?

Yes. If a campus plans to pilot face-to-face Area C, D or E courses, the campus will still need to provide Early Start Program courses for service and destination students.

3. When and how will CSU multiple measures placement data be available to campuses for Early Start Program planning?

For planning purposes, campus leaders and members of the Math and English Councils have been provided with projected placement distributions based on fall 2016 data. The placement distributions include projections for the number of students in each placement category. In late March 2018, campuses will be able to review CSU multiple measures placement data for fall 2018 admitted students using the PeopleSoft Common Management System (CMS) updates.

4. May campuses require students to participate in more than one subject area for the Early Start Program? If a student needs the Early Start Program in both written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning, may a campus determine which subject the student will take?

Effective summer 2018, a student identified as Category IV in both written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning will not be required to enroll in both subject areas during the Early Start Program, but may elect to do so.

Effective summer 2019, campuses may not require students to participate in courses for both subject areas. Students requiring the Early Start Program for both subjects will determine which course they take. A student may elect to enroll in both courses.

5. May a non-GE Early Start Program course in 2019 be fewer than three units?

Yes. To prepare students for fall GE Subarea A2 or B4 courses, an elective (one or more units) baccalaureate level non-GE course may be offered in the Early Start Program. These Early Start Program baccalaureate courses may be offered concurrently with pre-baccalaureate-support units (two unit maximum).

6. May an Early Start Program course in 2019 be a stand-alone pre-baccalaureate course?

No. Instructional content considered pre-baccalaureate as part of the Early Start Program course may carry a maximum of two units and **must** be offered concurrently with a college-level, baccalaureate credit-bearing course.

7. What will happen to students who attend an Early Start Program at a CSU campus different than where they intend to enroll?

As is currently the case, a student's destination campus will be sent the results of the academic work completed at the service campus during the Early Start Program. Any baccalaureate credit earned during the Early Start Program under the new policy will be transferred and accepted by the receiving CSU campus.

8. May students be required to participate in the Early Start Program at their destination campus?

No. Students in Category IV must be given the option of completing Early Start Program requirements at a service-area CSU campus.

9. May students be required to participate in the Early Start Program at their destination campus if the course is online?

No. Students in Category IV must be given the option of completing Early Start Program requirements at a service-area campus.

10. Are campuses required to provide the Early Start Program for both service area and destination students in summer 2019?

Yes. Campuses must provide an Early Start Program for both “service” and “destination” students in summer 2019.

11. May campuses grade the first part of a stretch course as “Report in Progress” (RP) or “In Progress,” delaying course credit until after the second semester course is completed?

No. “Stretch” courses will require an evaluation at the end of each term. The “RP” symbol was previously available for pre-baccalaureate Early Start Program courses. The symbol is now only available for use in thesis-related courses.

CSU Multiple Measures and Alternative Placement Assessments

1. Can you explain the difference between “eligibility” criteria and “placement” criteria?

The terms “eligibility” and “admission” criteria are often conflated. [CSU admission criteria](#) have not changed. These criteria determine the minimum requirements to be eligible for CSU admission. The “placement” criteria weigh available academic information for admitted students to determine assignment to mathematics/quantitative reasoning and written communication courses in the first year.

2. How is the term “recommended” used in Category III and what latitude do campuses have in placement?

Students placed in Category III may enroll in courses with supported instruction in the regular term. The Early Start Program is recommended for students in Category III, but it is not required. Students may elect to enroll in the Early Start Program. Campuses cannot mandate or arbitrarily assign students in Category III to the Early Start Program using supplemental assessments.

3. May campuses use voluntary assessment activities to determine that students in Category III do not need supported instruction?

Yes. Voluntary supplemental assessment activities may be used for “upward placement” – for example, moving a student from Category III to Category II. Students shall not be charged for voluntary supplemental assessments and these assessments may not be used to mandate “downward placement” – for example, moving a student from Category III to Category IV.

4. If a student, through informed (or directed) self-placement, is permitted to take a course higher or lower than that indicated by the multiple measures, does this change his/her category?

Allowable course placement exceptions made based on voluntary supplemental assessments would not change CSU multiple measures placement categories for reporting.

5. What do the changes to assessment and placement mean for campus testing centers?

With the discontinuation of the EPT and ELM tests, campuses will be invited to develop new opportunities for campus testing centers. This may include more support as needed in the delivery of curriculum, monitoring performance on electronic assessments such as ALEKS, or a new focus on the administration of ACT, SAT and possibly College-Level Examination Program exams.

6. On some campuses, there is a commitment to use directed self-placement (DSP) to determine course placement for all students. May campuses continue to offer DSP as a separate assessment and not offer Early Start Program courses in written communication?

No. DSP does not replace Early Start Program requirements for students in Category IV. Campuses may continue to offer voluntary DSP assessments to all students; however, DSP may not be used to require enrollment in the Early Start Program. Students who elect not to take DSP may enroll in written communication courses aligned with their CSU multiple measures-determined placement.

7. May DSP be offered as a pre-baccalaureate, stand-alone course in the Early Start Program?

No. DSP is an assessment, not a course. Voluntary DSP assessments may be used to inform instruction in an Early Start Program course.

8. Could DSP be conducted as a part of an Area E course during the Early Start Program?

Yes. Voluntary DSP assessments may be used to inform instruction in an Early Start Program course.

9. What is the relationship between the local use of DSP and systemwide multiple measures placement categories? Can a student's choice override the recommendations or requirements of CSU multiple measures categories?

CSU course placement is guided by multiple measures. DSP and other alternative placement assessments are voluntary and may not be mandated. Campuses may choose how and when to administer these alternative assessments. Students may consider voluntary alternative assessments including DSP for upward placement. Voluntary assessments may not be used for downward placement or for requiring the Early Start Program. **All voluntary assessments must be free of charge for students.**

10. What support and processes are available to assess international students for placement, especially given that most international students arrive shortly before the term begins?

As outlined in [Coded Memorandum ASA-2017-27](#), new first-year students for whom comparable academic records (high school GPA, a-g coursework) and/or examinations

(standardized test scores) are not available should be assessed utilizing all available academic information that was used to determine admission.

Campus-based assessments may be used to inform placement in written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses as well as placement in higher-level or major preparation courses for all students.

11. Who defines what is considered a STEM major?

Any major requiring differential and integral calculus is generally categorized as a STEM major. However, campuses – using configuration tables delivered in PeopleSoft CMS – can reclassify majors based on unique degree requirements.

Communications

1. How will these changes be communicated to our PK-12 and community college partners?

The Chancellor's Office is actively meeting directly with PK-12 and community college partners to communicate the changes to the CSU academic preparation policy.

2. How will a student's CSU multiple measures placement category be communicated? How will information about course placements and participation in the Early Start Program be communicated to a student?

The CSU will deliver updates to PeopleSoft CMS to campuses to provide student placement information in March 2018. Admitted students will receive placement information through admission portals in late-March/early-April. Students in Category IV will be guided to the Early Start Program website for additional information and registration. Communication templates will be available to assist campuses in developing communications for new students.

3. How will information about CSU multiple measures placement categories be communicated to high schools, admitted students and parents?

The CSU, in collaboration with [campus outreach and EAP coordinators](#), has developed and delivered communications to various constituents. The information made available to students, parents, high schools and high school counselors is co-developed with campus representatives and is sent to all campuses to ensure clear and consistent messaging.

Evaluation

1. How will the implementation of Executive Order 1110 be evaluated? What criteria will be used to determine student success?

The CSU will partner with an objective external evaluation team to conduct formative and summative implementation assessments. Consultation is underway with various CSU stakeholders including the Academic Senate CSU to inform the evaluation. The current draft of the implementation assessment framework covers a three-year period.

More information on Graduation Initiative 2025 can be found on the [website](#). If you have additional questions not covered in this document, please contact [James T. Minor](#) or [Edward Sullivan](#).