FAQ TSI-Developmental Education

Please note any references in this FAQ document to "currently-approved assessments" or "current assessments" means ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, and Asset.

In order to address questions and concerns as they arise, this document will be updated quarterly.

TESTING AND PLACEMENT

1) **Can students place in both developmental and ABE courses during the same term?**
   Yes. Placement of non-exempt students is based on the results of their TSI Assessment by subject area. Students can be college-ready in one area but not in the other two, for example. A student's performance and placement in each subject area are independent of the others. Placement is based on meeting a student's needs in each subject area.

2) **If a student enrolls in a course that begins in the fall, but then is dropped from enrollment for non-payment prior to the beginning of the course, must this student retest?**
   If a student tests on one of the four currently approved tests for TSI purposes (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset) and is enrolled in at least one course prior to the institution's first class day of fall 2013, the student will not have to retest on the new TSI Assessment, even if the student is temporarily dropped for various reasons, provided the student is re-enrolled and takes the course in fall 2013.

3) **A student took a summer class and met TSI on COMPASS, but doesn't attend classes in fall 2013. Must the student test again on a new test?**
   No. This student has met TSI requirements. This student does not need to retest.

4) **If an exempt student takes the test and fails a section of the test, is this student required to enroll in developmental coursework?**
   The exemption for that student is still valid. Choosing to take the TSI Assessment does not override the exemption, and the student cannot be compelled to take developmental coursework.

5) **What about the "exemption" for students who are enrolled in a Level I certificate program? Some institutions have at least a reading prerequisite on these classes and consider these students "waived" but not exempt.**
   A student enrolling in a Level I certificate program is exempt from all three parts of TSI testing (reading, writing, and mathematics) and should be able to enroll in any course within that Level I program. Placing a reading prerequisite on a course within the Level I certificate program requires, in effect, the student to test on the TSI Assessment to determine if this prerequisite has been met. Requiring the student enrolled in a Level I certificate program to test on one or more parts of the TSI Assessment nullifies the Level I certificate exemption.

6) **Must students with STAAR EOC (End of Course) exemption scores but who don't enroll in the fall after graduating from high school take the new TSI exam?**
No. The score qualifying a student for a STAAR EOC exemption is valid for five years from the date of testing. The student can claim this exemption if he or she enrolls within this five-year period.

7) **Within developmental math, will there be a cut-off score between beginning and intermediate algebra?**
No. The minimum cut score standards required by the state only address whether or not a student is college-ready, and if not, whether the student is performing at the developmental or ABE level. Any determination of the point at which the student is performing *within* that level is still made by the institution, as is current practice. However, it is recommended that institutions establish a "bubble-score" range within which students who are nearly ready for the next level are given the opportunity to enroll in coursework at that next level.

For example, the statewide college-readiness standard for mathematics is 350 (Phase I). If a student scores 347 (or another score within the institution's "bubble-score" range), then this score, along with consideration for other holistic factors (e.g., motivation level, high school GPA, work and family responsibilities, etc.) would enable an advisor to recommend enrollment in MATH 1314 along with required enrollment in a DE math NCBO to provide the additional support.

8) **Regarding developmental education, how can an institution determine the cut-off between an upper-level and a lower-level developmental education course?**
Placement data can be reviewed to determine the approximate percentage of students who have been placed, using current assessment instruments (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset), into upper-level versus lower-level courses. For example, based on assessment instrument results, 64 percent of students have been placed in upper-level math and 34 percent in lower-level math. Institutions could apply those percentages for placement until enough data from the new TSI Assessment are gathered, during the first year of implementation, to make adjustments if needed.

9) **How will out-of-state transfer students, non-traditional students, and international students be assessed for college readiness?**
All students not exempt from the TSI should be assessed for college readiness with a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board-approved TSI instrument. Students demonstrate college readiness in a subject area when applicable courses are accepted for transfer by a receiving institution, as per TSI rule §4.59. For example, if the institution accepts a transfer course as ENGL 1301-equivalent, the transferring student with that course credit has demonstrated college readiness in reading and writing and is therefore exempt from testing for TSI purposes in those two subject areas.

10) What are exemptions?

As related to the TSI statute, students qualifying for an exemption as defined in TSI rule §4.54 must be allowed to enroll directly in entry-level coursework without further demonstration of college readiness. For example, the exemption relating to students with prior college credit allows transfer students with college credit in ENGL 1301 (or its non-Texas equivalent) to be exempt from both reading and writing at the receiving institution.

11) What are STAAR EOC (End of Course) TSI Exemption Scores?

For STAAR Algebra II and English III (reading and writing) end-of-course exams, the Commissioner of Higher Education (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board) and the Commissioner of Education (Texas Education Agency) agreed that a student who scores at Level 2 or higher is considered college-ready for English III (reading and writing) and Algebra II.

In 2008 and 2009, the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) were established and compared to TEKS requirements (as required by TEC, 28.008). Gap analyses were conducted in all four content areas (math, English, science, and social studies), and the TEKS in those four areas were revised as needed to align with the CCRS. The STAAR assessments are designed to measure knowledge and skills relative to TEKS requirements.

12) Can we include other test scores to place students?

Unless the student is exempt, the student must be assessed on a Board- approved TSI Assessment instrument to determine college readiness or developmental education/Adult Basic Education (ABE) placement. To determine if a student qualifies for a TSI exemption, please see TSI Rule §4.54 (http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=4&rl=54)

13) How are ESL (English as a Second Language) students who need developmental education in language arts identified?

All students not exempt from the TSI must be assessed for college-readiness with a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board-approved TSI Assessment instrument. Institutions are encouraged to consider additional factors to appropriately place ESL students not college ready. Additionally, an ESOL waiver that institutions may temporarily grant until completion of 15 hours of ESOL developmental education coursework or prior to enrollment in a credit-bearing course, whichever comes first, is being proposed. Approval is anticipated in July 2013.

The state is evaluating the ESL practices and might establish new or amended policies regarding the assessment and placement of ESL students.

NEW TSI ASSESSMENT

14) Will a centralized database allow access to TSI scores?

Yes. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is working with The College Board to allow a testing director at an institution to access test scores for students who took the TSI Assessment at another institution. More information regarding this issue will be provided by the availability date (when the complete assessment is available for institutional use prior to implementation date) of the TSI Assessment.

15) How and where is TSI information available and accessible?

Announcements regarding major changes in policies and/or legislation are typically emailed to the president, chancellor, chief academic/instructional officer, TSI contact, DEPS contact, and community college liaison at each institution. Information is also available at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's developmental education website at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/ (use P-16 Initiatives link). In addition, an Austin Community College website includes assessment updates, information about webinars, and related documents at http://irt.austincc.edu/IDS/THECB/.

16) When will the TSI Assessment be available for review? When must testing begin?

The TSI Assessment will be available to institutions on August 1, 2013, allowing testing directors time for setting up implementation. Faculty are encouraged to take the test, too. The TSI Assessment can be administered to students by an institution on the first day of its classes for Academic Year 2013-2014

17) What's the difference between the implementation date and availability date for the new TSI Assessment?

The *implementation date* is each institution's first day of classes for Academic Year 2013-2014, and marks the first day on which institutions may administer the new TSI Assessment. On this date, currently approved assessments (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset) can no longer be used for TSI purposes, and institutions no longer have the authority to make the cut scores more stringent.

The *availability date* is August 1, 2013, when the complete assessment is available for institutional use for:

- faculty members to take the test and review actual diagnostic profiles;
- testing administrators to complete their branching profiles and enter the demographic questions;
- College Board consultants to review each institution to ensure proper set-up and problem-free administration;
- institutions to review and test procedures and protocols related to information sharing/incorporation into existing systems (e.g., early warning, Blackboard, etc.), as necessary.

18) When are current assessments (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset) invalid?

The currently approved assessments (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset), approved for previous periods, cannot be used for TSI purposes on or after the institution's first class day of fall 2013 – the implementation date. A student who takes one of the four currently approved assessments (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset) must be enrolled by a higher education institution's first class day for fall 2013. A student who is not enrolled on that date and enrolls on or after this date must take the new TSI Assessment.

19) Are institutions of higher education allowed to raise cut-score minimums?

No. Institutions of higher education cannot raise standard cut scores for the new TSI Assessment or for TSI exemptions (SAT, ACT, TAKS, STAAR EOC).

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

20) Is it recommended/required that students retest after completing NCBO (Non-Course Competency Based Operations)?

All courses and interventions, including NCBOs, should include an end assessment (i.e., final exam) to help determine if the appropriate learning outcomes have been achieved. The TSI Assessment should not be used for such an end assessment for a course/intervention because it is not designed for that purpose.

21) May institutions set developmental prerequisites for Level I certificate courses?

No. Students enrolling in a Level I certificate program are exempt from the TSI statute and may enroll in any course in such a program without further demonstration of college readiness. Requiring students to test prior to enrollment in effect nullifies this exemption. Only students who have not met the college-readiness standard as demonstrated through TSI Assessment results can be compelled to enroll in developmental education coursework or interventions.

PRE-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

22) If a student completes the Pre-Assessment Activity (PAA) but answers "no" to the question on whether they've completed it, can the student log back into the TSI Assessment and then select "yes" to test? Or are students locked out?

After a student answers "no" to the TSI Assessment background question (No. 1), that student is locked out and will not be able to continue. The test will have to be reset by a test administrator for the student to log back in. The student might have to provide documentation that he or she did indeed complete a PAA before the test can be reset. The PAA must include this information for students.

23) Must institutions have verification that a student completed the Pre-Assessment Activity (PAA)? Or is it possible for a student who has not completed the PAA to respond "yes" – that he or she has completed it?

An institution must document participation in a PAA for *all* students taking the TSI Assessment at that institution. While this documentation will not be submitted to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, it must be available for audit. Institutions must ensure that students do not "slip through the cracks" and take the TSI Assessment at their institution without participation, and documentation of that participation, in the PAA. Institutions may assume that students who took the TSI Assessment at another institution were administered the PAA at that other institution, and the receiving institution is not required to contact the other institution for verification. In cases where a student was administered the TSI Assessment in a school district, the receiving institution of higher education must verify the PAA was administered and documented, usually through a memorandum of understanding or other agreement between the school district and institution.

DUAL CREDIT

24) What about students who take dual credit courses?

Students enrolled in dual credit courses and who are tested using one of the four currently approved assessments for TSI purposes (ACCUPLACER, THEA, COMPASS, Asset) prior to the institution's first class day of fall 2013 do not have to retest if they are enrolled in at least one college-level course in fall 2013.

For other questions about dual enrollment issues, contact Dr. James Goeman of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board at james.goeman@thecb.state.tx.us or 512-427-6249.