

**MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**Policy and Procedures Manual**

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 301.17 – Mathematics and Composition Course Placement

**Adopted: November 16, 2007; Revised: September 18, 2014, November 2023**

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**Board Policy:**

A. **Purpose.** This policy:

1. Sets forth expectations and requirements pertaining to math and composition placement testing on Montana University System campuses. Establishing placement approaches at all MUS campuses that follow common guidelines is intended to enhance implementation of best practices, enhance student ability to pass gateway math and writing in the first year, and create more seamless experiences for students within the system.

B. **Expectations and Requirements.** All MUS campuses shall have a mechanism for assessing all students' readiness for college-level mathematics and college-level composition courses. MUS campus placement processes and methods must meet the minimum guidelines in this policy. Campuses have discretion in determining implementation of the policy.

C. **Definitions**

**Placement:** In this document, *placement* refers to the assignment of a student to math and writing courses with a determination of the level of support needed. Students may be placed into college level courses with no additional support, co-requisite courses with support, or pre-requisite courses.

**Pre-requisite:** In this document, *pre-requisite* refers to stand-alone courses that do not earn college credit. Many college-level courses have other college-level courses that are listed as "course prerequisites," and this document does not refer to those prerequisites.

**Co-requisite:** In this document, *co-requisite* refers to additional support connected to a college-level, credit-bearing course. The corequisite portion may either be for additional credit or included in the course credits. Corequisite courses provide access to college-level courses by providing academic support when taken alongside college-level courses.

**Gateway courses:** In this document, *gateway* courses are those that are 100-level or above courses in math or writing.

D. **Mathematics and Composition Course Placement systems. Requirements**

1. Campuses may waive required assessment if a student has AP, IB, dual credit, and other types of coursework evaluated as college credit bearing.

2. Campus placement approaches should, by default, place students into college-level math and writing courses (traditional college-level or corequisite courses). Campus placement guidelines should emphasize determining the level of support needed and appropriate course placement for students to pass gateway math and writing courses within the first year.

3. For campuses that maintain pre-requisite course options for placement, campuses must provide rationale and supporting outcomes data that placement into pre-requisite math or writing is more likely to support students into passing gateway math or writing courses within the first year of study compared to placement into corequisite or traditional college-level.

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4. Campus placement approach should be holistic, consider multiple measures and students' college readiness skills in concert with their career and educational goals, and begin soon enough in admissions processes to allow students the opportunities to develop skills to place into the appropriate gateway course for their degree path. Placement approaches should avoid high-stakes single cut-off points (such as exclusively using a single placement exam or cut-off score) as a first step to placement. When available, multiple measures assessment should rely on data already available to institutions. Advisors and faculty should have input in development of equitable, non-biased instruments measuring skills and attributes essential for student success. Campuses will provide rationale for their measures and processes appropriate for their institution.

5. For math placement, campuses must follow MUS Math Pathways to guide placement into appropriate gateway math courses for students' degree path.

6. For students transferring within the MUS, all institutions shall accept gateway placement determination from other MUS institutions within the appropriate MUS Math Pathways of non-STEM or STEM math pathways. This guidance does not refer to placements beyond gateway math and writing courses.

**E. Approval of campus placement processes and data tracking.**

- 1. Placement process approval** The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education shall designate a steering committee to develop guidelines to implement this policy and to review and approve campus placement processes.
- 2. Reporting** On a regular cycle, the steering committee will report to the Board of Regents outcomes of placement approaches including placement by demographic and preparedness, gateway course success, and other metrics identified by the steering committee.

History:

ITEM 89-003-R1195 Proficiency Admission Requirements and Developmental Education in the Montana University System, approved November 17, 1995; ITEM 107-109-RO500 Report from Joint K-16 Composition Standards Committee on Writing Proficiency Standards for Admission and Graduation from MUS, approved July 6, 2000; ITEM122-115-R0104 Writing Proficiency Recommendation, approved January 15, 2004; ITEM 129-109-R1105 Writing Proficiency Policy, approved November 16, 2005, ITEM 135-1110R0507 Revisions to Policy 301.16, Writing Proficiency, approved May 31, 2007. Revised September 18, 2014, Item 164-103-R0914.