

Q&A with the MMAP Team
AB 705 Workshop
April 12, 2019

Here are the questions we received from the question and answer session and the answers we provided.

1. When can we expect the next stage of communication from the ESL Subcommittee of the AB705 Implementation Workgroup? What's coming and when? When can expect reasonably complete guidance similar to that produced for English and Math?

The work of the ESL Subcommittee and the research supporting that is complex and ongoing. New information should be forthcoming within the next week and additional research and additional guidance is in the process of being completed and should be available early next month. However, because of the complexity of the different approaches to ESL curriculum among the colleges and the variety of distinct populations being served at each college, colleges should expect that the guidance being developed for ESL to be somewhat less definitive than earlier guidance for English and mathematics and that it will continue to evolve on over a longer time span as a result.

2. A number of colleges have been piloting the ESL Survey developed by IVC as one method to assist with placement of students. Will evidence of its effectiveness and best practices for its use be provided as part of the guidance from the Chancellor's Office?

Research on understanding its effectiveness and use is in its early stages. At this time, it's uncertain whether that research will progress far enough to be able to included in initial rounds of guidance.

3. Previous research suggested that students who completed upper level ESL courses do better in transfer-level English courses and beyond? Is the CCCCO aware of such research and taking that into account in the ESL guidance that will be forthcoming?

As with previous research on basic skills, those findings often were influenced by selection effects, examining the outcomes only of students who had completed a sequence rather than the outcomes of a cohort of students that began at specific points in a sequence. Sequences with large attritions effects (i.e., many students leave the sequence for completion) can produce outcomes for the students that persist that appear superior when comparing only students that persist to all students that start at a later point in the sequence. New research is in progress that is taking greater care to examine outcomes for cohorts of students and with greater sensitivity to differences between different ESL subpopulations and to curricular structure differences between colleges to better understand the magnitude of such effects.

4. Does the Chancellor's Office anticipate requiring corequisite courses at some later date?

The Chancellor's Office, in close consultation with the statewide Academic Senate, has carefully sought to avoid requiring students or colleges to take a particular approach to whether or when to provide corequisite support to students with lower levels of high school preparation which is why the guidance to the colleges recommends or strongly recommends support to students at different level of preparation rather than require colleges to provide support to particular groups of students. No change to this approach to the guidance is anticipated.

5. Our understanding of the spirit of AB705 is to empower students to have access to and be able to choose among options that will be best for them. Our understanding based on some communications from the Chancellor's Office is that colleges are precluded from using guided self-placement to assist students in placement when high school GPA and other HS performance information is available. We would like to be able to use it to

help give agency to students in choosing whether to take a transfer-level course with or without support, particularly for students in the middle band of high school performance. Are we allowed to use GSP in such a way? If we are not, we have concerns that we will be providing opportunities to students more than ten years out from high school or international students different and potentially far more empowering experiences than students matriculating more directly from high school.

*Generally, the Chancellor's Office is wary of the possibility that guided self-placement might be used in a way to intentionally or unintentionally direct students away from having access to transfer-level courses, particularly when evidence of students' level of preparation is available. As long as students have access to transfer-level courses and are not being directed away from them, colleges have some flexibility in how they determine or help students determine whether the transfer-level courses with or without support are most appropriate. As a result, guided self-placement or other supports that help students select from options **that are all at transfer-level** such as, for example, the use of guided self-placement to help students in the middle band of high school performance determine they would prefer to take a transfer-level course with or without support or in choosing between different support options at the transfer level, would not be precluded provided they are not being used to direct students away from course options at the transfer-level.*

6. Can we use a short writing sample or assessment within guided self-placement to help provide students with informed guidance for placement?

Guided self-placement cannot be used in a way that provides a direct or indirect opportunity to have students complete aspects of an assessment test (e.g., having students answer sample items and using performance on those items as part of the guidance). Because a writing sample or assessment is viewed as a test by the Chancellor's Office and currently no tests have been approved for use in assessment by the Board of Governors, use of a writing sample or assessment in English placement is not currently allowed, either on its own nor as part of a guided self-placement. Samples of other students' writing that students could reasonably be expected to be able to produce at entry might potentially be allowable.

7. I'm currently teaching students in basic skills in mathematics and I have some that are currently struggling with specific topics within basic skills. Knowing they have weaknesses, I have concerns that corequisite support may not be enough to help these students succeed in a transfer-level course next semester. When my students ask me for advice, how should I advise such students about what courses they should attempt given that our college is maintaining some basic skills courses for students should they individually elect to take that route.

Certainly, one can have meaningful concerns about how students with less preparation or who might be struggling with specific skills might do, particularly if students are just going to be thrown into the deep end/given access to transfer-level courses without care being taken to students entry into those courses. However, students and ultimately colleges will be far better served by rethinking our pedagogy or andragogy as well as potential approaches to how such a weakness is best approached and there are myriad approaches to addressing it through targeted tutoring or targeted skill training through programs like MathLab, ALEKS, etc.

8. Many of the examples discussed today have been transfer-level courses with a two-unit corequisite support course. Are those support courses generally lecture, lab, or a mixture? What are the best practices for the number of units they should be (or whether/when to use noncredit for support courses), how those units should be constituted, and how those units should be best provided (e.g., as a separate companion course or embedded within a larger-unit version of the original course).

There has been a lot of variation across the state in how best to approach providing students concurrent support. Some colleges present volunteered that they'd been counseled by other colleges that providing that support within the umbrella of a larger unit course rather than as a separate course was far easier for room scheduling and faculty load purposes. Others mentioned local approaches (lecture but without additional homework, a mixture of lab and lecture time, etc.). Clearly colleges are very interested in more guidance on this topic.

9. Given that students that may struggle in transfer-level are now starting there, will there be changes to repeatability limits? Will students who run up against the limit just be lost?

First, we have to use care in the presumption that students will struggle under the new system and we should be thinking carefully as to how to best provide support and which types to provide to help mitigate that possibility. But, currently, no discussions of changes to repeatability are currently occurring. However, colleges do have local flexibility on how best to address students who have struggled in transfer-level courses. That is, while AB705 does require that colleges provide students access to transfer-level courses, how colleges address students who have failed to complete a transfer-level course would have far greater flexibility in how colleges might provide students with the assistance necessary to complete the course beyond just reenrolling in the same course with support.

10. Faculty will need more reliable, ongoing support after these changes. Is the Chancellor's Office working to guarantee funding for both embedded tutoring and drop-in tutoring to provide students and faculty the support they need?

Reinterpretation of opportunities to fund tutoring using apportionment for basic skills support being allowed to provide basic skills support in non-basic skills courses should open up additional resources to provide greater tutoring support in transfer-level courses. Additionally, the Student Centered Funding Formula provides additional funding for completion of transfer-level English and mathematics courses. Targeting additional funds gained in this way toward providing support for completion of transfer-level English and mathematics would provide an opportunity to create a virtuous circle that could be used to help fund additional tutoring.

11. Some of our students will be struggling for reasons that are not related to their discipline specific skills. What are best practices for addressing students that require other interventions, particularly for student that are persisting and who could pass with an intervention/the right student support services? What special programs, counseling, efforts by student support services faculty and staff work to help students once the semester has started? How do we make sure all our local faculty know/have access to these services?

We directed colleges to the AB705 Implementation Survey and it's documentation of the types of support approaches colleges were implementing but otherwise didn't have a relatively straightforward answer to provide.