The Basic Skills Progress Tracker – Introduction and instructions

The Basic Skills Progress Tracker (or Progress Tracker, for short) tracks cohorts of students in four general areas: English reading, English writing, ESL, and math. ESL may be subdivided into four related areas (integrated, reading, writing, & listening) depending on the curriculum of the college(s) included in the query. The Progress Tracker establishes cohorts of students by looking at the first basic skills course ever taken by a student in a basic skills subject area. This starting cohort will be in a yellow highlighted cell in the final report. Basic skills courses in the four major basic skills areas are identified by TOP code and by CB21 code (COURSE-PRIOR-TO-COLLEGE-LEVEL).

How to use the Basic Skills Progress Tracker (aka Progress Tracker)

Progress Tracker query selections are made in a left to right fashion, just as one would read the text on a page. You must go in order from the top left of the query page to the top right of the query page, then drop to the second row of selections and proceed from left to right. When all selections have been made, click on the “View Report” button to see the report for your selected options. The following steps provide a walk-through for the successful operation of the Progress Tracker query. You should proceed as follows (in the given order):

1. Select a specific college as the focus of your query (or select “Statewide” for a query that includes the entire CCC system)
2. Select a “Cohort Start Term”. This term defines the beginning point for the basic skills cohort you will be tracking. All students who first enrolled in a given basic skills subject area in the term selected here will be included in the tracker. They need not be first time students in that term; they may be, but that is incidental. The cohort is defined here based on this term being identified as the first term they ever took a course in the given subject area at the selected college. Note that only courses at the focus college are considered when evaluating “first time in a basic skills subject area”, i.e., courses taken at other colleges are not evaluated. This focus is part of the design, as the tool is intended to help with the evaluation of local curriculum (unless the “Statewide” option is chosen, then the evaluation crosses all colleges).
3. Choose an “End Term” for your cohort tracking. This selection, in combination with the start term selected in step 2 will define the window of time being evaluated by the query. A typical time window is three years, though it is informative to process a variety of different time frames to see how that affects the progress of cohorts. Note that it is possible to set the start term and the end
term to the same term in which case not much progress would be expected, though some patterns of cross-enrollment may be noted, particularly in the ESL and reading basic skills subject areas.

4. **Select a basic skills subject;** this is where you choose which basic skills area to focus on. The choices you see are dependent on the curriculum offered at the focus college selected in step 1 during the term selected in step 2. For instance, you may see only ESL – Integrated, if that is the only type of ESL course offered at the focus college, or you may see more options such as ESL – Listening, ESL – Writing, etc. Moreover, if the curriculum at the focus college was different at different points in times, the basic skills subject choices will reflect those changes when a new start term is selected. The four general basic skills areas (English – Reading, English – Writing, ESL, and Math) are defined by the Taxonomy of Program (TOP) coding used by the focus college.

5. **Select starting cohort level;** this drop down box allows you to select the starting level in the basic skills subject area. Courses that are “One Level Below Transfer” are the courses immediately prior to the transfer level course (i.e., the prerequisite for the transfer course). Courses that are “Two Levels Below Transfer” are the course prior to the prerequisite for the transfer level course, and so on.\(^1\)

6. The **“Customize Cohort” selection** is the final drop-down box and it is optional. It allows you to de-select courses that have been identified as belonging to a certain basic skills area at a certain level. In a typical query, there will be no need to use the “Customize Cohort” option, but there are several reasons why it may be useful in certain situations. For instance, you may click on the “Customize Cohort” button and see that some courses are improperly identified as courses at the level of interest. You could use this option to exclude those courses from being used in the formation of the basic skills cohort presented in the Progress Tracker report (you should also make a note of the improperly coded courses so that you can look into getting them coded properly, see FAQ below for more details). Another potential use of the “Customize Cohort” option is to refine a report so that you are focusing only on certain classes. Perhaps your college has some accelerated curriculum and some non-accelerated curriculum at a given level; you could use the “Customize Cohort” option to run a report for each type

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\(^1\) The CB21 MIS data element (COURSE-PRIOR-TO-COLLEGE-LEVEL) determines whether courses are identified as transfer level, one level below, etc. Only courses with TOP codes in English reading, English writing, math, and ESL are assigned CB21 codes. CB21 codes can be viewed for a given TOP code with the “Course Details” query on the CCCCO Data Mart 2.0. Oftentimes, issues with a Progress Tracker report have to do with improper coding of the CB21 data element. Your local academic specialist and/or MIS guru should be able to work with you to get your college’s CB21 codes (or other MIS codes) coded properly and reported to the Chancellor’s Office.
of course, as long as they have separate Course IDs. Cohort progress rates could then be compared across the different types of curriculum offered at the same level.

7. Click on “View Report” and after a brief wait the report should appear below your query selections.

8. If you wish, you may select to disaggregate the report by the demographic and programmatic categories provided in the “Report Format Selection Area” below the generated Progress Tracker report. Once you have checked the boxes corresponding to your areas of interest, click on the “Update Report” button in the bottom right of the screen.

9. Once a report is generated, clicking the “Advanced Layout” button provides new options are useful for customizing the look and content of your report. The advanced layout options replace the checkboxes of the “Report Format Selection Area” with a more complex set of options. You can filter the report area to show only selected categories of Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Financial Aid, etc. Filter categories can be dragged into the Row or Column display area and content that is displayed in rows can be dragged over to the column display area and vice versa. It may take some experimenting to see how to best use these options to create the custom report that best meets your needs. The “Data Area” allows you to arrange the order of the displayed data (Headcount, Enrollment, and Success) to suit your reporting needs. One important use of the “Course IDs” field in the “Columns” area is to de-select the Course IDs of courses that do not necessarily belong in your final report. For instance, you may wish to de-select non-gatekeeper transfer level English courses. That is, if English 1A is the first transfer level English course (aka, the gatekeeper course) you may wish to deselect English 2 or English 1B (for example) as those courses are subsequent to English 1A and do not carry the same significance in the context of a report that is focused on the progression of cohorts of students through the basic skills sequence. Also, if your college does not have pre-requisites on transferable English electives like literature or creative writing courses, you might also want to exclude these. By de-selecting those courses in the “Course IDs” field in the “Column Area”, headcount, enrollment and success in those courses are no longer counted or displayed in the report area of the Progress Tracker. Finally, if checked, the “Defer Layout Update” checkbox may improve performance by allowing you to make all your selections first and then apply all of your selections at the same time by clicking on the “Update” button in the lower right of the screen.