



Fall 2011 Consequential Validation Study

Prepared by:

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Introduction

The Consequential Validation Study is part of an on-going effort to validate the placement tests used by the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD). The tests will be validated every five years in compliance with the State Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) of Matriculation regulations. This study utilizes surveys to elicit both faculty and student judgment of appropriate placement into their Fall 2011 math, English, and ESOL courses in an effort to verify the accuracy of student placement as determined by the placement rules and cut scores.

Methodology

Table 1 provides a list of courses that were surveyed by skill level. Only courses with required placement by skill level were included. Students who assessed into these courses by test were the population of interest.

Table 1. Math, English and ESOL Courses by Skill Level

Subject	Skill level	Placement level	Course placement
Math	M30	Basic Skills	MATH 46
	M40	Associate	MATH 96
	M50	Transfer	MATH 104, 107, 116, 118, 119, 210A
English	R4	Basic Skills Reading	ENGL 48
	W4	Basic Skills Writing	ENGL 49
	R5 & W5	Transfer	ENGL 101, 105
ESOL	20	20 - Four Levels Below Transfer	ESOL 20, 21, 22
	30	30 - Three Levels Below Transfer	ESOL 30, 31, 32

Note. ESOL 40 courses were excluded due to a low sample size.

Three methods of data collection were used to gather input:

- Math, English and ESOL faculty were asked to rate the accuracy of student placement for students who placed into a course by test.
- Students in Math and English courses were surveyed online. Students were asked to rate whether or not they belonged in the course.
- Due to the small population size and students' English language constraints, ESOL students were surveyed in class.

Data collection occurred between the 5th and 8th weeks of the Fall 2011 term. Multiple reminder emails were sent in an effort to maximize the number of faculty and students who responded to the surveys. With the exception of the basic skills reading skill level, minimum sample targets were met or exceeded, which yielded a representative sample of each population.

For each skill level, a threshold of 75% judgment of appropriate placement by both faculty and students was set. Analytical response categories were: *Belong in Course* and *Belong in Lower/Higher Course*. (See Appendix A. for itemized survey responses by skill level.)

Highlight of the Findings

In five out of eight skill levels, judgment of appropriate placement exceeded the 75% threshold for both faculty and students, including: Associate math (M40), transfer math (M50), transfer English (R5/W5), ESOL 20, and ESOL 30. The skill levels that did not meet the 75% threshold were basic skills math (M30), basic skills reading (R4), and basic skills writing (W4). While faculty ratings exceeded the thresholds in these courses, student ratings did not. More than one-quarter of the students felt that they should be placed at a higher level.

In light of the findings, a recommendation would be to further explore the relationship between student placement levels, student judgment of appropriate placement, and actual success in the course once final course grades have been established.

Mathematics Ratings

Faculty and student ratings for appropriateness of student placement in basic skills math (Math 46), Associate-level math (Math 96), and transfer-level math (Math 104, 107, 116, 118, 119, & 210A) were examined.

Faculty and student judgment of appropriate course placement exceeded the 75% threshold in Associate-level math (faculty, 82% and students, 76%) and transfer-level math (faculty, 89% and students, 79%). However, the rating threshold was not met by both groups at the basic skills math skill level. While 95% of the basic skills math faculty contended that their students were appropriately placed, only 69% of the students in basic skills math felt they were appropriately placed (see Table 2). Twenty-six percent of the students felt they should have been placed in a higher course; they felt that the course was too easy (see Appendix A).

Table 2. Faculty and student ratings for Mathematics skill levels M30, M40, and M50

		Faculty		Students	
		#	%	#	%
Basic Skills Math	Belong in course	836	95%	247	69%
	Belong in lower/higher course	47	5%	109	31%
Associate Math	Belong in course	379	82%	191	76%
	Belong in lower/higher course	83	18%	60	24%
Transfer Math	Belong in course	765	89%	430	79%
	Belong in lower/higher course	94	11%	116	21%

English Ratings

Faculty and student ratings for appropriateness of student placement in basic skills reading (English 48), basic skills writing (English 49), and transfer-level English (English 101, 105) were examined.

Faculty and student judgment of appropriate course placement exceeded the 75% threshold in the transfer-level English skill level (faculty, 94% and students, 81%). However, the ratings threshold was met by just the faculty group in the basic skills reading and writing skill levels. While nearly all of the basic skills reading (99%) and writing (96%) faculty contended that their students were appropriately placed, fewer than three-fourths of the students in basic skills reading (67%) and writing (71%) felt they were appropriately placed (see Table 3). Thirty-one percent of the basic skills reading

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students and twenty-six percent of the basic skills writing students felt that they should have been placed in a higher level course; they felt that the course was too easy (see Appendix A).

Table 3. Faculty and student ratings for English skill levels R4, W4, and R5/W5

		Faculty		Students	
		#	%	#	%
Basic Skills Reading	Belong in course	330	99%	132	67%
	Belong in lower/higher course	5	2%	65	33%
Basic Skills Writing	Belong in course	549	96%	192	71%
	Belong in lower/higher course	25	4%	77	29%
Transfer English	Belong in course	637	94%	274	81%
	Belong in lower/higher course	42	6%	65	19%

ESOL Ratings

Faculty and student ratings for appropriateness of student placement in ESOL skill levels 20 (ESOL 20, 21, 22) and 30 (ESOL 30, 31, 32) were examined.

Faculty and student judgment of appropriate course placement exceeded the 75% threshold in both ESOL level 20 (faculty, 96% and students, 79%) and ESOL level 30 (faculty, 90% and students, 87%; see Table 4) courses.

Table 4. Faculty and student ratings for ESOL skill levels 20 and 30

		Faculty		Students	
		#	%	#	%
ESOL Level 20	Belong in course	101	96%	85	79%
	Belong in lower/higher course	4	4%	22	21%
ESOL Level 30	Belong in course	139	90%	127	87%
	Belong in lower/higher course	15	10%	19	13%

Appendix A: Itemized Survey Responses by Skill Level

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Table 1. Instructor responses by skill level

		Should definitely be placed in a lower level course		Might be better placed in a lower level course		Is appropriately placed		Might have the ability to do well in a higher level course		Should definitely be placed in a higher level course		Total Count
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Math	Basic Skills (M30)	35	4%	130	15%	577	65%	129	15%	12	1%	883
	Associate (M40)	71	15%	100	22%	231	50%	48	10%	12	3%	462
	Transfer (M50)	84	10%	150	18%	516	60%	99	12%	10	1%	859
English	Basic Skills Reading (R4)	3	1%	37	11%	273	82%	20	6%	2	1%	335
	Basic Skills Writing (W4)	1	0%	45	8%	401	70%	103	18%	24	4%	574
	Transfer (R5 & W5)	15	2%	97	14%	440	65%	100	15%	27	4%	679
ESOL	Level 20	0	0%	4	4%	82	78%	15	14%	4	4%	105
	Level 30	7	5%	13	8%	109	71%	17	11%	8	5%	154

Note 1. ESOL 40 courses were excluded due to a low sample size.

Note 2. Only courses with required placement by skill level were included. Only courses that enrolled students who placed in by test were included.

Note 3. When rating categories are reduced to two categories, ratings that a student should 'definitely be placed in a lower level' or 'definitely be placed in a higher level' equate to 'belong in lower/higher course'. All other categories equate to 'belong in course'.

Table 2. Student responses by skill level

		I should be enrolled in a lower course - This course is too difficult		I belong in this course - This course is about the right level of difficulty		I should be in a higher course - This course is too easy for me		Total Count
		#	%	#	%	#	%	
Math	Basic Skills (M30)	17	5%	247	69%	92	26%	356
	Associate (M40)	17	7%	191	76%	43	17%	251
	Transfer (M50)	21	4%	430	79%	95	17%	546
English	Basic Skills Reading (R4)	4	2%	132	67%	61	31%	197
	Basic Skills Writing (W4)	6	2%	192	71%	71	26%	269
	Transfer (R5 & W5)	8	2%	274	81%	57	17%	339
ESOL	Level 20	3	3%	85	79%	19	18%	107
	Level 30	3	2%	127	87%	16	11%	146

Note 1. ESOL 40 courses were excluded due to a low sample size.

Note 2. Only courses with required placement by skill level were included. Only courses that enrolled students who placed in by test were included.

Note 3. When rating categories are reduced to two categories, courses rated as 'too easy' or 'too difficult' equate to 'belong in lower/higher course' and 'right level of difficulty' equates to 'belong in course'.