



Washington Community and Technical College System Smarter Balanced Placement Policy:
Updated Clarifications of the Revised System Agreement (Summer 2018)

Questions Regarding the Terms of the Agreement	Clarifying Language
1. Are colleges able to modify the terms of the system-wide agreement in any way?	In both the old and the revised agreement, colleges have the flexibility to make any of the terms more generous for students than the statewide agreement, just not less generous. And per #3 in the “specific terms” of the document, anything not explicitly defined in the language is up to the college to define operationally.
2. Does the agreement mean that other courses that require placement into college-level English or math will also be bound by this placement or should that be a local option?	No, the primary focus and intent of the policy was for placement into English 101 (composition) or entry-level math courses as defined by the agreement. Placement options beyond that would be at the discretion of local colleges.
3. Can students choose any course in a course sequence up to the course/s offered as part of the agreement?	Yes, students are free to choose a “lower” course in the course sequence than what is offered by the placement agreement. The intent of the agreement is offer the highest placement possible for students and avoid taking remedial classes as much as possible but also to support and improve student success/completion. So a <u>student-driven decision</u> to take a remedial course based on an understanding of the need for the prerequisite course for the specific college-level math course they want to take is in keeping with the intent of the placement agreement.
4. Are additional placement processes available to all students if they want a higher-level course than what is specified in the agreement?	Yes, all colleges have additional placement processes available to any student who requests placement in a higher-level course than what is specified in the agreement.
5. Does the system placement reciprocity agreement extend to placement arrangements based on the Smarter Balanced high school assessment scores if they go beyond the terms of the statewide agreement?	The Smarter Balanced agreement applies only to placement into college-level courses; the relevant language of the placement reciprocity agreement reads “A student who qualifies for entry into college-level math, English, or reading, <u>either through course completion or local skills assessment</u> (emphasis added), will be considered to have met the entry college-level standard at every community and technical college.” As defined, technically colleges would be bound by the broad terms of the statewide Smarter Balanced agreement but not necessarily by placement arrangements colleges make that go beyond that agreement. Those decisions would be left up to local colleges.



6. How does the agreement affect students in professional-technical pathways?	A student who places into college-level English or math would also have a professional-technical writing or math course placement honored (see answer to previous question for additional details).
7. Will Smarter Balanced scores from students from other states be honored?	Yes, level 3 and 4 Smarter Balanced scores will be honored regardless of where the student takes the assessment. The statewide level 2 agreement is dependent on students taking the Washington-specific transition courses being developed in math and English, so without that course no statewide level 2 agreement is available for out-of-state students.

Math-Specific Issues

Question	Clarifying Language
1. In several places the agreement includes grade expectations (B or better) for Bridge to College Math and other high school math courses. Does this mean a B for all terms of the course?	<p>Bridge to College Math (BTCM) was designed intentionally as a year-long course in such a way that demonstrating proficiency in the content and skills in the second half of the course depends critically on a certain level of mastery in the concepts from the first half. Thus, for students with multiple term grades that aren't the same, a B in the final term for Bridge to College Math as it carries the most weight with respect to signaling whether the student is ready for college-level work in math</p> <p>For other classes referenced in the agreement, anything not specified in the agreement is up to the college to define operationally: a B could mean all terms, any term, or the final term.</p>
2. What does “passing” mean when the agreement references a “passing grade”?	Similar to operationally defining a “B” grade, defining “passing” is left to the college to determine, based on its common practices. The agreement work group had a C grade in mind but wanted to allow local colleges to be consistent with whatever local definition they used.
3. In the revised agreement it appears that pre-calculus placement is now allowed with a Smarter Balanced score of 3 or 4, not just level 4 as in the original agreement. Is that correct?	<p>Yes, given the shift in the assessment timing and the additional courses as conditions on top of the score, the math work group decided to eliminate the Level 3-4 distinctions.</p> <p>The level 4 only requirement is accurate for the current agreement based on students who took the junior version of the assessment (last offered in spring 2017). Colleges currently (spring/summer 2018) may be seeing some of these students entering in fall 2018, so the key is to check the administration date: for an assessment taken in spring 2017, the old agreement applies; if it was taken in spring 2018, the new agreement takes effect.</p>



<p>4. For placement into math courses other than Math& 107 and Math& 146 (Washington community and technical colleges common course designations for Math in Society and Statistics, respectively), what high school math courses are considered “pre-calculus or higher”?</p>	<p>The intent of the agreement language is to encourage students interested in this level of college math to take a rigorous level of math in the senior year of high school. Any courses labeled “pre-calculus” or with Algebra 2 as a formal or informal prerequisite in the high school math course sequence would qualify under these terms. We are working with OSPI to see if we can provide a reference list of specific high school math course titles that would qualify based on information provided to us by OSPI.</p>
<p>5. For Math& 107 and Math& 146, the agreement language indicates that a student would need BOTH a B in Algebra 2 and successful completion of one math course in the junior or senior year (in addition to a Smarter Balanced score of 3 or 4), but <i>Note #1</i> indicates that dual-credit students can get into MATH&107 or &146 with a B in Algebra 2 with no reference to a junior or senior year math course. Can you explain this discrepancy?</p>	<p>The language in the main agreement is intended to help ensure that students who score in Level 3 or 4 on the 10th grade assessment and then want to use it for placement after they graduate (2 years later) are taking at least some math in their junior or senior years (taking Algebra 2 as a junior or senior would meet that criterion). The note regarding dual credit students doesn’t reference the same requirement based on the assumption that there has been less time between taking the assessment and using the placement agreement. In addition, students would be potentially using the placement agreement for dual credit as <u>juniors</u> (possibly seniors, though that seems much less common) and therefore it would be hard to apply the junior/senior year math course requirement to them.</p>
<p>6. What are the acceptable senior-year math courses for students scoring in level 2—is it only the transition course, or are other post-Algebra II courses OK?</p>	<p>For the statewide placement agreement, students scoring at level 2 would need to take the official <i>Bridge to College Math</i> transition course (and earn a B or better grade) as seniors to get the automatic placement deal offered to students scoring at level 3 as juniors. Local colleges could extend that agreement to additional algebra-intensive courses (with Algebra 2 as a formal or informal prerequisite) in the high school math course sequence courses based on local transcript-based placement discussions, potentially a viable option for colleges with transcript-based placement agreements given the Bridge courses are not yet available in all districts across the state.</p> <p>OSPI has agreed to set up a system that would allow colleges to access Smarter Balanced scores and specific transcript information for students who have agreed to release their scores; the goal is to have a prototype of this system available for review by September 2018 and have the process operational by March 2019. For the immediate future, though, it’s up to each college to decide what kind of evidence/documentation would be adequate for offering placement to these students and how to manage the process.</p>



<p>8. For math the agreement now means we need both Smarter Balanced scores as well as high school transcripts. Am I correct in assuming that we can no longer give automatic placement for a Smarter Balanced score level of 3 or 4?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced assessment is now administered to sophomores, not juniors; the math work group was concerned that because there would be less focus on Algebra 2 content in the 10th grade version of the assessment the score levels alone would be insufficient for automatic placement, so the statewide agreement for math now requires transcript information for automatic placement: Algebra 2 for Math& 107 and 146, a pre-calculus or higher class for Math& 141. However, as noted in question #1 in this document, colleges may make the agreement terms more generous than the statewide agreement—in this case, offering automatic placement to Running Start students based just on their Smarter Balanced scores.</p>
<p>9. The revised agreement requires that Running Start students will have to submit a Smarter Balanced math score as well as a high school transcript documenting students' completion of high school coursework for course placement. This requirement seems to limit these students from early college registration in math coursework (typically occurring in May/early June prior to the receipt of high school transcripts documenting final grades). How are colleges managing this issue?</p>	<p>The recent Placement 360 initiative sponsored by SBCTC focused on helping colleges investigate their existing placement practices and policies and examine how well students were being served by those practices and policies. One recommendation that emerged from the work is that requiring “official” transcripts is a barrier that often results in students just defaulting to a test for placement, and ultimately, inaccurate placement. In terms of accepting transcripts for placement prior to grades being finalized or on an official transcript, some “good practice” suggestions that emerged from this work include (contact Shannon Waits, Highline, swaits@highline.edu, for more details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept any form of transcript that shows the student’s grade and/or GPA, requiring only that their name and information be on whatever document is presented. • For Math placement, which uses 2nd semester grades in high school math courses, colleges can begin to accept the grade they have in mid-May, when there are only 4 weeks left in their school year. Generally grades will not change dramatically in this time period, which is also the when there is typically a huge influx of Running Start students who are pushed to register for fall classes quickly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To view these grades, many school districts have online student portals where students can log in and check their grades, along with additional information (potentially including the Smarter Balanced scores). The students access the portal and can show—or print—their current grade. ○ For schools that don’t have an online portal, students can be asked to have their teacher email their current grade.