



Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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AUG 2 2005

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Date: July 28, 2005
To: Chief Academic Officers
From: Selma Botman *SB*
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Subject: Testing Policies and Procedures

I am attaching two documents summarizing CUNY's testing policies and procedures. The first document addresses assessment testing; the second covers the CUNY Proficiency Examination.

I hope these materials provide clarity for students and staff on the campuses. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dean David Crook at david.crook@mail.cuny.edu.

Thank you.

cc: Chancellor Matthew Goldstein
CUNY Presidents
Enrollment Management Council
Directors of Admission
Registrars
Testing Coordinators
CPE Liaisons

The CUNY Assessment Testing Program: Policies and Procedures 2005-2006

Testing Policies

All students pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree program at CUNY must satisfy the reading, writing, and mathematics basic skills requirements of the University. These requirements govern admission to baccalaureate programs and placement into and exit from remedial and ESL course work. The policies and procedures related to the CUNY Proficiency Examination (CPE) are summarized in a separate document, *The CUNY Proficiency Examination: Policies and Procedures 2005-2006*.

Admission to the University

The policies governing admission to baccalaureate and associate programs are as follows:

Baccalaureate Programs

- Applicants for freshman and transfer admission must demonstrate minimum proficiency in reading, writing, and math in order to be admitted (some students are exempt; see below).
- Proficiency may be established on the basis of the SAT, ACT, or the New York State Regents examinations in English and math. If proficiency is not demonstrated in this way, an applicant may do so by passing the appropriate basic skills assessment test or tests.
- Applicants who do not demonstrate minimum proficiency in all areas may enroll in the University Skills Immersion Program (USIP), the Winter Immersion program, or the Prelude to Success program if they qualify. They also may opt to matriculate in an associate program and take the necessary remedial instruction there.

Associate Programs

- To be admitted to an associate program as a freshman or transfer, students must demonstrate their level of basic skills proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics. Proficiency can be established on the basis of the SAT, ACT, or the New York State Regents examinations in English and math. Individuals who do not document proficiency in a skill area on the basis of one or more of these tests may do so by taking CUNY's basic skills assessment test in the appropriate areas. Based on these tests, the student is either exempted from remedial instruction or placed into one or more courses in reading, writing, math or ESL.

Math Placement

- Currently the University requires students who have demonstrated minimum proficiency in mathematics on the basis of the SAT, ACT or New York State Regents examinations to take the COMPASS math assessment to be placed properly in credit-bearing math courses. While placement testing for these exempted students before the beginning of classes is desirable, not all colleges are prepared to do so at this time. Therefore, colleges have the flexibility to establish

appropriate placement testing schedules for exempt students. Currently, placement testing in mathematics is not scheduled for two groups: 1) transfer students from outside CUNY who have completed 45 or more credits, and 2) intra-CUNY transfers who are math proficient.

Readmission

- Students applying for readmission are subject to the skills policies in place at the time they apply.

Non-degree students

- Non-degree students who wish to register for courses that require skills proficiency are subject to the same pre-requisites as degree students. Examples of such courses are freshman composition and credit-bearing math courses. A college may waive this requirement for visiting non-degree students who are matriculated at a college outside the CUNY system. All non-degree students who wish to apply for admission to a CUNY degree program are subject to the same skills requirements as transfer students.

Exit From Remediation

- In order to enroll in a college-level English composition course students must have achieved minimum proficiency in both reading and writing.
- To enroll in a credit-bearing mathematics course, students must have demonstrated minimum proficiency in mathematics. The colleges may set standards for placement in these courses that are higher than the minimum established by the University.

Certification and Graduation

The CPE has replaced the skills assessment tests as a requirement for graduation from associate programs and for entry to the upper division of baccalaureate programs. All students must demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing before they can sit for the CPE.

Exemptions

- *SEEK Students.* Students who are eligible for the SEEK program may be admitted to a baccalaureate program without first demonstrating basic skills proficiency. SEEK students enrolled in baccalaureate programs must achieve proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics within one year of initial enrollment. The one-year time limit is interpreted as consisting of the required pre-freshman immersion program, two regular semesters, the winter immersion program, and a final summer immersion program.
- *ESL Students.* Under Board policy, students "who received a secondary education abroad and who otherwise are not in need of remediation" may be admitted to a baccalaureate program without first reaching proficiency in reading and writing in English. The University currently implements the policy as follows: ESL students are those who have received a term or more of instruction in a foreign high school (language of instruction was not English) and can demonstrate minimum proficiency in mathematics, on the basis of the SAT, Regents, or the COMPASS math assessment

test. In Spring 2002, the University established a second procedure for identifying ESL students. CUNY/ACT essays that have received an ESL designation during the scoring process and other essays that have received a score of 2/2 or above may be reviewed by college ESL program chairs or directors to determine whether these students should be classified as 'ESL'. ESL designations by faculty must be relayed by the college to the University Application Processing Center to be incorporated into the student's application. Note that ESL students identified in this way must also be proficient in mathematics.

ESL students pursuing a bachelor's degree must pass the reading and writing assessment tests by the end of their fourth full semester of attendance. They may not repeat an ESL course after receiving either no credit or a failing grade twice previously in that course. These limitations on time and attempts do not apply to ESL students pursuing an associate degree.

- *Transfers from outside CUNY.* At this time, students transferring from outside CUNY into a CUNY baccalaureate program and who have 45 or more credits in progress are considered skills proficient. This exemption does not apply to students transferring into associate programs, which may not accept more than 30 transfer credits.

ESL students who are eligible for the 45-credit exemption will be scheduled for placement testing in reading and writing in order to assess their English language needs. In this context, ESL students are those who have

1. spent one or more semesters of their secondary education in a non-English-speaking environment and
2. accumulated fewer than 30 credits (earned and in progress) in an English-speaking post-secondary environment.

If the assessments indicate a need for ESL instruction, the college may require the student to take the instruction. These students should receive a deferral from the CPE until they are deemed ready to take the examination. Colleges are encouraged to provide transfer students whose English-language skills are weak the instruction they need before they sit for the CPE.

- *Prior baccalaureate.* Students who previously have earned a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited program verified by CUNY are deemed skills proficient. They are also exempted from the CPE. Only students who document the degree at the time of application for admission to the college they currently attend are entitled to this exemption.

Colleges may test ESL students who have completed a baccalaureate to assess their proficiency in English. The criteria for identifying ESL students are the same as those described above for transfer students. If the assessments indicate a need for ESL instruction, the college may require the student to take it and set standards for proficiency in English.

- *Students who matriculated at CUNY Prior to 1978.* Exemptions from the skills requirements for students who initially had matriculated at CUNY prior to September 1, 1978, are no longer in force.

Minimum Proficiency in Basic Skills

There are several ways in which minimum proficiency may be demonstrated:

- *Reading and Writing.* Individuals are deemed proficient in reading and writing if they meet any of the following criteria:
 - Score 480 or higher on the SAT verbal
 - Score 20 or higher on the ACT verbal
 - Score 75 or higher on the New York State Regents examination in English.

Individuals who do not show proficiency on the basis of any of these examinations must sit for the CUNY/ACT essay and the COMPASS reading assessment. Minimum passing scores on these exams are currently 7 or higher and 65 or higher, respectively. Effective fall 2005, the cut point on the reading assessment will rise to 70 for students applying for Spring 2006 admission or exiting from remedial instruction in December 2005.

- *Mathematics.* Individuals are considered minimally proficient in mathematics if they meet any of the following criteria:
 - Score 480 or higher on the SAT math
 - Score 20 or higher on the ACT math
 - Score 75 or higher on the New York State Regents Mathematics A or B examination or the Sequential II or III Regents examinations.

Individuals who do not show proficiency on the basis of any of these examinations must sit for the COMPASS mathematics assessments in pre-algebra and algebra and score 27 or higher on both modules. Some colleges require students to achieve higher scores before they can register for credit-bearing mathematics courses.

- *Time Limits.* A documented passing score on a CUNY skills assessment test, no matter when completed, qualifies the individual as proficient. Similarly, there is no time limit on SAT, ACT, and New York State Regents examination scores that qualify the individual as skills proficient. However, applicants for admission or readmission who have not met the basic skills requirements should be re-tested if the most recent assessment test result will be more than two years old as of the date the individual wishes to matriculate.
- In the years before the implementation of the Board policy of September 1999 mandating the use of common objective tests to qualify students for exit from remediation, CUNY colleges did not consistently administer assessment tests to students in top-level remedial and ESL courses. Consequently passing test scores may be not available for some students who successfully completed their remedial or ESL instruction before the policy was first implemented in fall 2000. Such students (that is, students who satisfactorily completed their remedial course work before fall 2000) who wish to transfer from a CUNY associate program to a baccalaureate program without the degree will be considered skills proficient in math if they have successfully completed a credit-bearing math course at CUNY. They will be credited with proficiency in reading and writing if they have successfully completed freshman composition at CUNY. Those candidates who have completed a CUNY associate degree will be considered skills

proficient. All other students must take the appropriate skill assessment tests at the CUNY college which they attended most recently.

Testing Procedures

All CUNY basic skills tests and ACT diagnostic assessments must be administered under the direct supervision of the college testing office. The results of testing conducted under any other circumstances cannot become part of the student's official record.

Retesting

Re-testing should be conducted as follows:

Courses

- Colleges re-test students in top-level developmental English and ESL semester-length courses in reading and writing or top-level developmental semester-length courses in mathematics during "windows" established each semester. These windows are generally set for the last two weeks of the semester.
- Colleges re-test students in top-level short courses/modules that end at other dates only at the end of the short courses/modules. Re-tests for students in short courses or modules must be preceded by a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math courses, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).
- Colleges may re-test individual students no more than 2 times during a semester. Re-tests must be preceded by a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math courses, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).
- Departments or programs may recommend a few outstanding students from intermediate-level ESL or English reading or writing courses, or intermediate mathematics courses for exit testing. Such students may not be re-tested without the approval of the appropriate Chair or Program Director.
- Students in top-level reading and developmental mathematics courses must be tested under the direct supervision of the college's testing office. Class teachers may not be present during the testing.
- Students in developmental and ESL writing courses write their essays in rooms designated by the testing office or, with the agreement of the testing office and the appropriate department or program, they may write their essays in their regular classrooms. Class teachers may not be present during the testing.

Workshops/Immersion Programs

- Workshops and other intensive instructional programs preparing students for the CUNY basic skills tests must offer a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math instruction, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).
- Students may participate in an intersession workshop and be re-tested at its conclusion, after a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math instruction, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).
- Students in June workshops may be re-tested once, at the conclusion of the workshop, after a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math instruction, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).

- Students in Summer Immersion Programs may be re-tested twice. Re-tests must be preceded by a minimum of 20 hours of instruction (15 hours for math instruction, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer).
- Matriculated students may enroll in skills workshops only at their home college and they may be re-tested only at their home college, except with written permission from the testing office (or other designated office) at their home college. On completion of the workshop, students will be retested at their home college.

Early-semester retesting

- Colleges may re-test outstanding students registered in top-level ESL or English or mathematics developmental skills courses during the first 10 days of the semester to re-evaluate their course placement.
- Re-testing of this limited group of students should occur only after diagnostic testing in the course, faculty recommendation, and consultation with program directors have been completed.
- Re-tested students who pass the appropriate basic skills test(s) may be placed into the suitable college-level course.

Instructional interventions

Students in an official workshop or lab, under departmental or learning center direction, must participate in a minimum of 20 hours of intensive instruction to qualify for re-testing (15 hours for math instruction, on a pilot basis, at the discretion of the chief academic officer). Workshop or Writing/Learning Center Directors are responsible for certifying that students have completed the required instruction before the testing office may give students permission to be re-tested.

Ordinarily matriculated students receive such instruction only at their home college and are re-tested only at their home college, except with written permission from the testing office (or other designated office) at their home college. On completion of the instruction, students will be retested at their home college.

CLIP

The following guidelines govern the re-testing of students participating in the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) on the CUNY/ACT essay and the COMPASS reading and math assessments.

- Re-testing is done only at the end of a CLIP cycle.
- CLIP students may be re-tested in reading and writing as warranted if
 - a. they have completed 900 hours (the maximum allowable number of hours of instruction) or
 - b. they are Level 3 and have completed at least 150 hours of instruction.
 - c. In rare cases, Level 1 and 2 students who have completed at least 150 hours of instruction may be tested, but only if they have made exceptional progress and only upon the recommendation of the program director.

At this time the testing of CLIP students in COMPASS mathematics is limited to those who have completed at least 15 hours of math instruction since the last time they took the examination. The CLIP program director must document that this instruction has taken place before the student can be retested. COMPASS math assessment testing must be conducted at the same time as testing in reading and writing as specified above.

Appeals

Students may appeal a score on the CUNY/ACT essay, but not on the COMPASS reading and mathematics assessments. Students who receive a score of 3/3 on the essay and who have demonstrated proficiency in reading may appeal the essay score within 6 weeks of the test date. All appeals must be initiated at the college testing office.

Appealed essays are reviewed by the Chief Reader of the college and by another certified reader. If both readers agree that the essay should be rescored, the essay is sent to the Borough Center, where the Borough Chief Reader masks the original scores and assigns two new readers to score the essay. If the essay achieves a passing score, the new passing score is entered on the student's record.

Testing of Continuing Education Students

Unless specifically authorized to do so by the University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment, testing directors may not administer the basic skills assessment tests and ACT's diagnostic tests to individuals who are not matriculated in an undergraduate degree program or applying for admission to such a program.

College Now Program

College Now students are not administered the CUNY assessment tests except as part of the admissions process.

Accommodations and Waivers Based on Disability

Accommodations based on disability will be granted to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who wish to seek such an accommodation must be registered with the college's office of disability services.

In rare instances, when no accommodation is practicable, the student may request a waiver from the college's Scholastic Standards/Course & Standing Committee. A student typically must demonstrate: a) a disability, documented by a certified professional, which affects that student's ability in the skill domain, b) a history of disability-related difficulty with the skill, c) and an evaluation of the request by the office of disability services, typically indicating that despite good faith efforts to demonstrate proficiency, with all appropriate reasonable accommodations and support services in place, the student has been unable to pass the exam. The waiver applies only at the college the student currently attends.

The CUNY Proficiency Examination: Policies and Procedures 2005-2006

As of September 1, 2003, all students pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree at CUNY must take and pass the CPE. Passage of the CPE is a requirement for earning the associate degree. Students pursuing a bachelor's degree must pass the exam by the time they have completed their 60th credit. Effective September 1, 2003, these requirements apply to all students pursuing these two degrees, no matter when they first entered CUNY. (Exemptions are no longer in effect for freshmen who had matriculated at CUNY before Fall 1999 and for transfers who first arrived before Fall 2000.)

Eligibility to take the CPE

- Students must take the CPE for the first time in the regular semester immediately after completing their 45th credit; students may take the CPE for the first time during the semester in which they register for their 45th credit. The CPE is offered in October and March. Additional administrations are offered in January and June for students who have deferred a required administration and for other students, at the discretion of the college.
- Students must be in good academic standing. Students whose GPA is below 2.0 may not take the CPE. Students who have not met the CUNY basic skills requirements in reading and writing may not take the CPE.
- Students may defer a required exam by submitting a request in writing to the appeals committee at their college. Generally the exam will be deferred to the next administration. (The appeals process is described below.)
- Students who do not take the CPE when required to do so forfeit one of their opportunities to take the exam. Students who have been permitted to defer the examination to the next test administration will receive a forfeit if they fail to take the examination when required to do so. All forfeits count as failures. This policy has been enforced strictly since the March 2004 examination. Students may appeal to have a forfeit removed from their record.

Exemptions

Students who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited program verified by CUNY are exempt from CPE requirements. This exemption applies only to students who documented the prior degree at the time of application for admission to the college they currently attend.

Appeals

All appeals must be made in writing to the committee designated for that purpose at the college. Students may appeal to request a deferral, remove a forfeit, or petition for additional opportunities to test. Students may also appeal to receive permission to take the CPE early (before registering for the 45th credit), or to take the test when lacking one of the pre-requisites. Specific information on appeals procedures is available through the college Testing Office.

All CPE examinations are re-scored automatically if the total scaled score from the first reading is one or two points below the minimum passing score. No other examination papers will be re-scored.

Transfers from outside CUNY

- Students transferring into a baccalaureate program who enter with 45 or more credits must take the CPE in their first semester at CUNY. For this purpose, the credit calculation is based on evaluated credits if known at the beginning of the semester, when the roster of students who must take the CPE that semester is prepared. Otherwise the calculation is based on unevaluated credits.
- Students who transfer to baccalaureate and associate programs and who have fewer than 45 credits must take the CPE in the semester immediately after completing their 45th credit.

Transfers within CUNY

- Transfer students who have completed 45 or more credits and who have not passed the CPE should take the test in their first semester at the transfer college.
- Students who transfer from an associate to a baccalaureate program and who have completed all associate degree requirements except passage of the CPE are not eligible for the benefits accorded associate degree recipients by the articulation policy of 2000. The policy requires passage of the CPE and award of the associate degree. Under the articulation policy, students who have completed an associate degree (AA or AS) are able to transfer all of their credits to the senior college.
- In general, transfer applicants should be admitted if the applicant meets the college's admission criteria, without consideration of CPE results. Individual programs at a college, however, may require passage of the CPE as a condition of admission.
- A history of multiple failures on the CPE does affect eligibility for transfer, however. Students who have failed the CPE three or more times may not apply for transfer to a degree program. Such students may not continue to matriculate at any CUNY college except under the conditions specified below. Students who receive permission to retest and who ultimately pass the CPE may apply for transfer.
- Candidates who at the time of application have failed the CPE twice and who accrue an additional failure after application but before enrolling at the transfer college should be allowed to matriculate if they meet the college's admission criteria. However, these students must appeal at the transfer college to take the test a fourth time at that college.

Multiple Attempts

The University's policies and guidelines governing multiple attempts have been designed to balance two goals: timely completion of the exam and delivery of appropriate interventions to the student. Ordinarily, students who have forfeited or failed the CPE must retake the exam at the next October or March administration, whichever is sooner. However, these required administrations are deferred as appropriate to allow time for the student to receive necessary instruction. Students who do not participate in a prescribed intervention are required to take the test at the next administration (January, March, June or October).

Students who have one CPE failure/forfeit. Colleges should contact students who have failed or forfeited the CPE once and require them to meet with an advisor designated by the college to plan preparation for the exam. The advisor will discuss the results of the exam with students and help plan a program that may include one or more of the following activities: tutoring, workshops for students repeating the exam, writing course or discipline-specific writing intensive course.

Two failures/forfeits. Students who have **taken and failed** the test twice or have not passed the test by the end of the extended semester in which they have completed their 60th credit will receive a registration stop. ("Extended semester" refers to the fall plus the subsequent winter intersession or the spring semester plus the subsequent summer session.) These students must meet with an advisor, who will discuss the results of the exam and help the student to plan a required program that may include a writing course or discipline-specific writing intensive course, a workshop or other appropriate instruction, in addition to any taken previously. The instruction should be completed by the end of the student's next semester of attendance. Students will not be allowed to sit for the CPE again until they document that they have successfully completed this instruction.

Students whose record on the exam contains one or two forfeits counted as failures will also receive a registration stop and will be required to meet with an advisor. Each college should develop appropriate guidelines and interventions for such students.

Three failures/forfeits. Students who have failed the test three times may not continue to register in an associate or baccalaureate program at The City University of New York. These students may, however, appeal for an opportunity to attempt the test a fourth time. In evaluating such an appeal the committee should weigh the student's history of participation in writing interventions, academic record in writing courses and in other course work, performance on the test, and other pertinent information. Permission, if granted, will require an additional intervention. The appeals committee has discretion to permit continued registration until this testing has been completed. Under no circumstances may a matriculated student take the CPE more than four times. Forfeits accrued March 2004 or later count as failures in the context of this paragraph.

Colleges may consider for readmission former students who have failed the CPE three or more times. Before applying for readmission, a student must take the examination (with the permission of the appeals committee) and pass it.

Substitution for CUNY-ACT Basic Skills Tests

Students may no longer meet the CUNY/ACT basic skills requirements in reading and writing by passing the CPE.

ESL Students

ESL students are subject to the same CPE requirements as other students. However, ESL students should not sit for the CPE if their English language skills are weak. To assess these skills, the University currently schedules for placement testing in reading and writing those ESL transfer students who have completed 45 or more credits outside CUNY. For this purpose, ESL students

- have spent one or more semesters of their secondary education in a non-English-speaking environment and
- have accumulated fewer than 30 credits (earned and in progress) in an English-speaking post-secondary environment.

If the assessments indicate a need for ESL instruction, the college may require the student to take appropriate ESL coursework. ESL students taking ESL courses should receive a deferral from the CPE until they are deemed ready to take the examination. Colleges are encouraged to institute policies and procedures designed to give transfer students whose English-language skills are weak the instruction they need before they sit for the CPE.

ESL students who have completed a baccalaureate degree in an accredited institution verified by CUNY are not required to take the CPE. However, these students are scheduled for placement testing in reading and writing, and may be required by the college to take appropriate ESL course work.

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations based on disabilities will be granted to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who wish to seek such an accommodation must be registered with the college's office serving students with disabilities.

In rare instances, a student with a disability may not reasonably be accommodated within the framework of the CPE as currently administered. Such students may demonstrate proficiency through an alternative means, to be determined by the academic administration of each college in consultation with the disability coordinator. Students who wish to receive such an accommodation should request it in writing from the appeals committee at least one month in advance of the test administration that the student wishes to attend.

Pass with Distinction

Students who obtain a scaled score of 58 or higher will receive a notation on their transcript that they have passed the CPE with distinction.