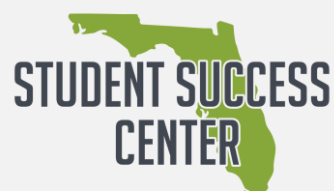




# Resource Guide: Alternative Methods Placement

May 19, 2020



# RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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## Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
Background .....	3
Purpose of this Resource Guide.....	3
About the Florida Student Success Center .....	4
DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT POLICY .....	5
Overview .....	6
Policy Considerations .....	6
Placement Methods .....	6
Minimum Placement Standards and the Placement System.....	7
Process Recommendations for Establishing a Placement Policy.....	9
Additional Considerations .....	9
IMPLEMENTING AN ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT POLICY .....	10
The Employee Perspective .....	11
Staff Responsibilities and Training.....	11
The Student Perspective .....	12
Communication Plan.....	13
Placement Process and Support .....	13
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....	14
National Research .....	15
Expanding Access to College-Level Courses .....	15
Resources and Examples From Other States .....	15
References.....	16
APPENDICES .....	17

# INTRODUCTION

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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### Background

The Florida Department of Education released [DOE Order No. 2020-EO-02](#) in response to COVID-19, which provides Florida College System (FCS) institutions flexibility in the method by which students can demonstrate college-level communication and computation skills. For summer and fall 2020 admissions, section VIII(e) of the emergency order suspends the provision in section (s.) 1007.263(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.) that requires that admissions counseling “must use tests to measure achievement of college-level communication and computation competencies by students entering college credit programs.”

To that end, the order expands upon the methods by which students can demonstrate achievement of college-level communication and computation skills, in addition to or in lieu of common placement tests; including, but not limited to:

- Grade point averages,
- Work history,
- Military experience,
- Participation in juried competitions,
- Career interests,
- Degree major declaration, or
- Any combination of such achievements identified in s. 1008.30(5)(a)1, F.S.

In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1720, which made major reforms to advising, placement, and instruction within the FCS. The bill exempted Florida standard high school diploma recipients who enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade in a Florida public school in 2003-04 and thereafter and active duty military from being required to take a common placement test and enroll in developmental education. The bill also required each FCS institution to develop an implementation plan for developmental education strategies, including local policies for evaluating the documented student achievements listed above, for advising students of enrollment options. At the time, FCS institutions reported implementing procedures to evaluate various combinations of these alternative measures when advising students for placement. However, for nonexempt students, these alternative measures were to be evaluated in combination with common placement test results, and placement test results have remained the primary method by which nonexempt students are placed into coursework.

### Purpose of this Resource Guide

Pursuant to the emergency order, each FCS institution has discretion in selecting the method(s) required for students to demonstrate readiness for college-level work. For colleges considering alternative methods, the Florida Student Success Center has developed this resource guide. It is a living document that includes considerations for institutions developing alternative placement policies, as well as a repository of resources from national research and other states. For questions regarding this resource guide or to request additional resources from other states, please contact Abbey E. Ivey, Director, Florida Student Success Center, at [Abbey.Ivey@fldoe.org](mailto:Abbey.Ivey@fldoe.org).

**Share your Best Practices!**

*FCS institutions lead the nation in developmental education reform. If you have an institutional resource around multiple measures and placement that you'd like to share, please email [flstudentsuccess@fldoe.org](mailto:flstudentsuccess@fldoe.org). We will post these resources on the center's [webpage](#) and update this document.*

This resource guide is for informational purposes only; it does not supplant guidance provided by the Division of Florida Colleges, Florida Department of Education regarding the emergency order. Questions regarding the

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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emergency order should be directed to Dr. Carrie Henderson, Executive Vice Chancellor, at [Carrie.Henderson@fldoe.org](mailto:Carrie.Henderson@fldoe.org).

### **About the Florida Student Success Center**

In 2018, the Florida College System launched the Florida Student Success Center in partnership with Jobs for the Future, Helios Education Foundation, and the Florida College System Foundation, with the vision of serving as a resource of evidence-based, innovative practices and timely information for Florida's colleges. As part of the national Student Success Center Network, the center supports Florida's 28 state and community colleges' efforts to develop student-centered pathways and increase student completion rates. Working collaboratively with colleges, the center aims to create a coherent, statewide strategy so colleges can integrate their varied student success efforts, share best practices with one another and maximize resources. The center also represents the collective voice of practitioners in state-level policy discussions. Visit our website at <http://flstudentsuccess.org/> for more information.

# **DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT POLICY**

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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### Overview

Traditionally, colleges have used standardized test scores to place students into developmental education courses. However, as research has shown that other measures may be better predictors of success in college-level coursework, states and individual institutions across the nation have begun to implement policies that allow for the use of alternative methods to place students (Ganga & Mazzariello, 2019). Therefore, there is a wealth of national information and research available for FCS institutions to draw upon in developing their own alternative methods placement policies.

The implementation of multiple measures placement, as it is often referred, varies across and even within states. Some states, like North Carolina, have implemented a mandatory and uniform multiple measures placement policy across all two-year institutions. Other states, like Oklahoma, have an optional multiple measures policy and the placement criteria varies across institutions. There are multiple resources available online to get a sense of the national landscape of multiple measures policies, including Research for Action's [State Policy Landscape](#) and the [50-State Comparison](#) of multiple measures policies developed by the Education Commission of the States. It should be noted that the emergency order does not require multiple measures for placement; a singular measure may be used at the discretion of the institution. That said, the order does not prohibit institutions from using multiple measures for placement.

### Policy Considerations

While implementation of alternative methods/multiple measures varies and policies will likely look different across FCS institutions, there are standard considerations that institutions will need to evaluate and address when developing their policies.

### Placement Methods

Likely the most important decision FCS institutions will need to make is which alternative placement method(s) the institution will consider when determining a student's readiness for college-level work (RCW). These methods can include measures administered by the college, such as placement tests, noncognitive assessments, writing assessments, and questionnaires, and those obtained from outside of the college, such as high school GPA and standardized test results (Cullinan et al., 2018).

#### Grade Point Averages

Colleges may consider GPA's earned by the student in high school or previous postsecondary coursework, including dual enrollment coursework. There is significant evidence that high school GPA is one of the best predictors of college success (Cullinan et al., 2018), and several states including Wyoming, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Georgia have incorporated the high school GPA into their statewide placement policies (Education Commission of the States, 2018).

#### Other Factors

Additional placement criteria can include, but is not limited to:

- Course grades earned in individual high school or previous postsecondary courses, particularly math and English courses. Research has shown that while not as predictive of college success as overall GPA, coursework can be used in combination with the overall GPA to address concerns about subject-specific knowledge (Cullinan et al., 2018).
- A student's work history that indicates a demonstration of learning equivalent to RCW.
- Military experience, including military coursework and occupations validated by the American Council on Education as having appropriate content, scope and rigor for college credit recommendations.
- Participation in juried competitions, such as artistic, literary or media competitions, where the student's work is assessed by one or more experts and demonstrates RCW.

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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- The student's career interests and/or degree major declaration and the level of communication and computation skills necessary for success in that career or degree program.
- Portfolio evaluation that documents a student's experience with computation and communication competencies.
- Noncognitive assessments that measure attitudes and behaviors that have been found to be relevant to college success, such as a student's approach to learning, motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation (Cullinan et al., 2018).

### Minimum Placement Standards and the Placement System

#### Placement Standards

Once an institution has identified the methods to be included in its placement policy, minimum placement standards must be established. For example, if an institution has opted to include high school GPA in its placement policy, it must identify the minimum GPA to be considered for placement into developmental and college-level courses. This will likely vary by institution. Cullinan et al. (2018) examined multiple measures assessment policies at colleges in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the minimum high school GPA identified for college-level placement ranged from a 2.1 to a 3.0 (p. 31). The North Carolina community college system has established 2.8 as the minimum GPA for direct placement into college-level coursework (personal communication, 2020), and Clackamas Community College in Oregon allows for online placement of students into college-level courses who graduated high school with a GPA of 3.0 or higher (Clackamas Community College, n.d.). When establishing minimum placement standards, Cullinan et al. (2018) recommends considering, with input from faculty, the minimum standards that are most likely to increase student success, along with how they may change the number of students enrolled in each course.

An additional factor to be considered when establishing the minimum placement standards is how recently the student must have met those standards. In the above examples, North Carolina requires a student to have earned the 2.8 high school GPA within 10 years of enrollment, whereas Clackamas Community College requires a student to have graduated high school within two years to be eligible for online placement based on the high school GPA. Similar to North Carolina, Cuesta College in California allows students that graduated within 10 years to place via multiple measures assessment rather than a placement test (Cuesta College, n.d.). At Rappahannock Community College in Virginia, placement measures, including the high school GPA, are valid for five years (Rappahannock Community College, n.d.). There is significant variation across states and institutions on this factor, and FCS institutions will need to determine what makes the most sense for their unique student populations.

#### Placement System

Using the established placement methods and minimum placement standards, FCS institutions should develop a placement system that includes the order in which the placement measures will be considered. Cullinan et al. (2018) identifies the following placement system elements and options. These placement systems are also outlined by Ganga and Mazzariello (2019).

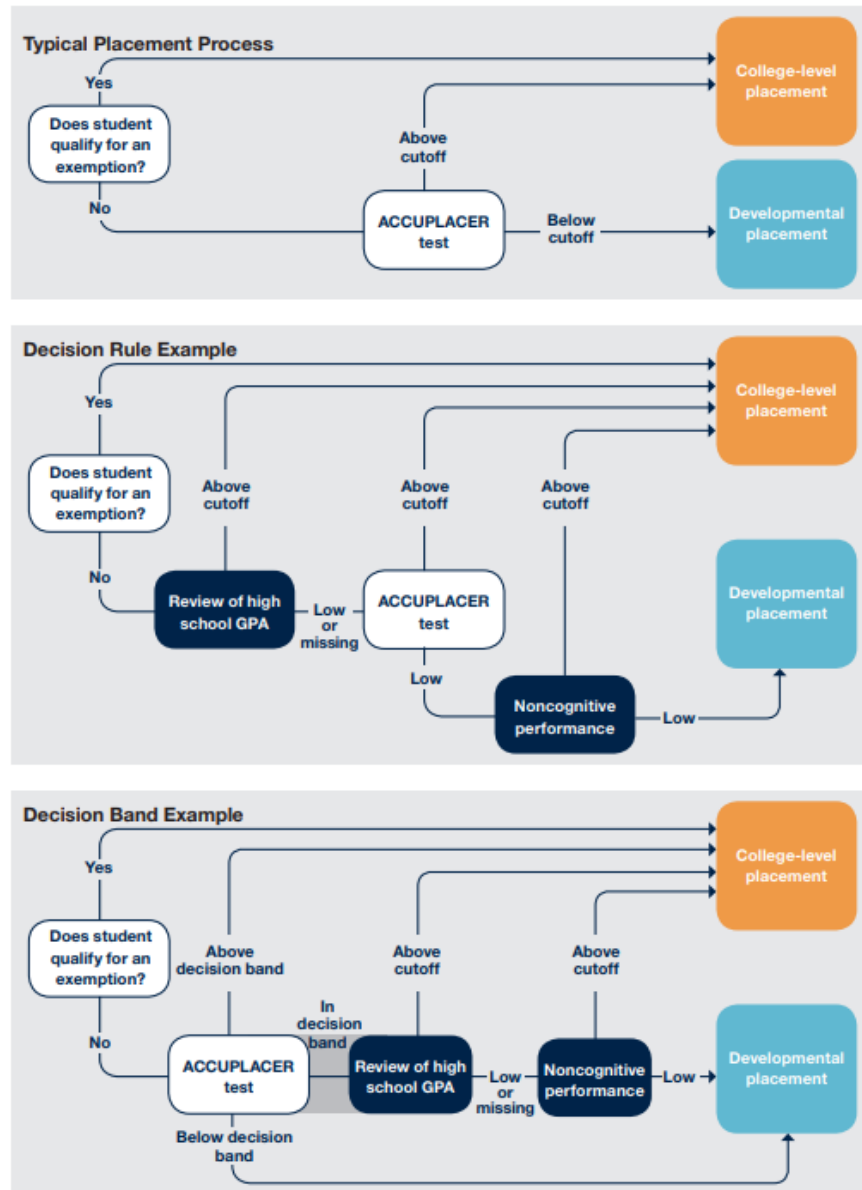
- Exemptions or waivers: Students are placed directly into college-level courses without the need for placement testing if their scores on specified tests or other measures exceed a certain threshold.
- Decision rules: A sequence of rules compares each selected measure to a threshold in a predetermined order. If the threshold is met, a placement is generated; if not, another rule is applied.
- Decision bands: Decision rules apply only to students who fall within a certain range on a specified indicator (such as high school grade point average or a placement test score), usually just below the cutoff.
- Placement formula (algorithm): An algorithm applies a weight for each of various factors based on an analysis of historical data to calculate the probability of success in college courses and generate a recommended placement.



- Directed self-placement: Can be used in conjunction with any of the above methods, or on its own. When this is used with another method, the student is told of the generated placement but given the option to enroll in either developmental or college-level courses. In a system where no definitive placement is given, the student has a conversation with the adviser or counselor about test results, prior courses, and grades, and selects preferred courses.

Examples of placement systems are illustrated in Figure 1. In Florida, the ACCUPLACER test box can be more generalized to include all of the accepted placement assessments.

**Figure 1: Examples of Placement Systems**



Source: Cullinan et al. (2018)

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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### Process Recommendations for Establishing a Placement Policy

Establishing a new placement policy will likely be a challenging task for FCS institutions, particularly on an expedited timeline. Some of the recommendations developed by Cullinan et al. (2018) to help colleges organize the work and choose the placement criteria include:

- Establishing a committee, clarifying which college leaders will provide oversight for the process. Per Mt. San Antonio College planning documents (2017), workgroups could include:
  - Implementation
  - IT
  - Research
  - Enrollment management/course scheduling
  - Support services
  - Communication strategies
- Involving faculty early in the process.
- Looking at any historical student data on the measures being considered.
- In the absence of student data, prior research can be a guide.

### Additional Considerations

While perhaps not explicitly included in an institution's established placement policy, colleges should also consider the following when developing their placement policy.

- What documentation will the student be required to submit, and how will that documentation be captured and maintained? Will you accept self-reported data from the student, unofficial transcripts, or more official documentation?
- How will you ensure fairness for all students, including those with disabilities or who are learning English?
- How will placement recommendations be made to the student? What will they see in their student portal, if applicable?
- Will you implement a formal student appeals process for placement decisions?
- Will there be a cost to students for placement evaluation?
- What impact will this new policy have on other areas and processes within the college?
- What IT needs will be required to implement this policy?
- What additional resources are needed?

#### **Want to contribute your college's practices?**

*The Florida Student Success Center is posting Florida resources on our [webpage](#). If you have an institutional resource around multiple measures and placement that you'd like to share, please email [flstudentsuccess@fldoe.org](mailto:flstudentsuccess@fldoe.org). We'd love to highlight your work!*

# **IMPLEMENTING AN ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT POLICY**

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

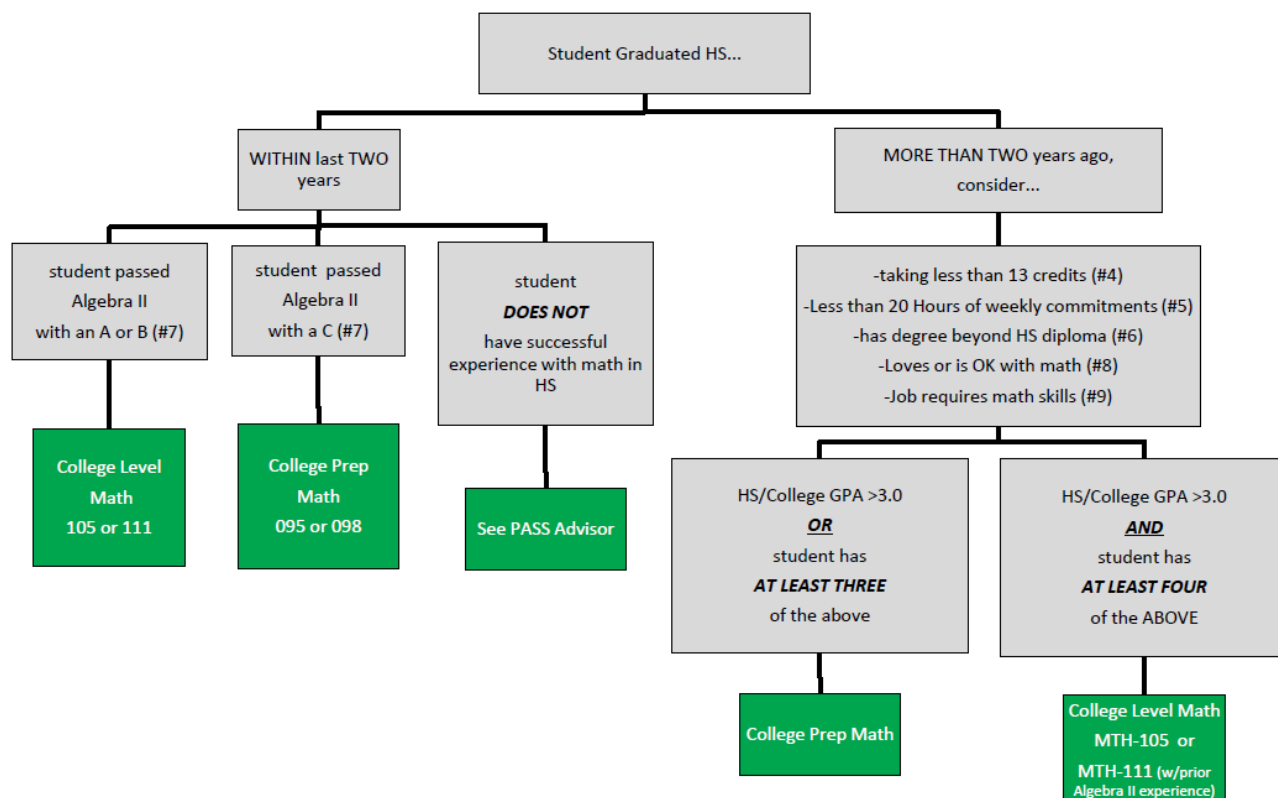
### The Employee Perspective

#### Staff Responsibilities and Training

Once an institution has solidified its placement policy, the institution will need to establish who “owns” and implements the policy on the ground. The responsibility for evaluating and placing students could fall on an institution’s welcome center, general or departmental advisors, faculty, the testing center, a separate placement office, or another area as appropriate for each institution. Protocols will need to be put in place for the evaluation, placement recommendation, and record-keeping.

The appropriate staff will need detailed training on the new placement policy, as well as their specific roles in implementing the policy. Step sheets, guides, and flow charts can be useful for training purposes and serve as a reference for staff conducting the work. Below are two examples of placement charts from Clackamas Community College (2017) for placement into developmental education and college-level math courses.

## Math Placement Guide



## High School Math Placement Chart

(This is a guide for simple placements. If there are questions, please direct them to PASS office.)

High School Math Classes	Grade Earned	CCC Math Courses
(Refer to this chart if student completed math class with an A or B within the last 2 years. Additionally, consider if math class was an AP or Honors class.)		This is the CCC math course they should sign up for. If they earned a C in the class or it was longer than 2 years ago, they should take course one step below.
		MTH-010 Fundamentals of Arithmetic I MTH-020 Fundamentals of Arithmetic II
<b>Pre-Algebra</b>		MTH-050 Tech Math MTH-060 Algebra I MTH-098 College Math Foundations
College Math Foundations / Prep math		MTH-050, MTH-060, MTH-098
Integrated Math		MTH-050, MTH-060, MTH-098
Geometry		MTH 050, MTH-060, or MTH-098
Algebra I	C	MTH 050, MTH-060, or MTH-098
<b>Algebra I</b>	A or B	MTH-065 Algebra II MTH-080 Tech Math II MTH-098 College Math Foundations
Algebra II/Advanced Algebra	C	MTH-095 Algebra III MTH-098 College Math Foundations
<b>Algebra II/Advanced Algebra</b>	A or B	MTH-111 College Algebra MTH-105 Intro to Contemporary Math
Discrete Math (See Algebra/Algebra II/Trig/Pre-Calculus/Calculus to determine math placement)		
Statistics (See Algebra I/ Algebra II /Trig / Pre-Calculus /Calculus to determine math placement)		
Trigonometry	C	MTH-112 Trigonometry
<b>Trigonometry</b>	A or B	MTH-251 Calculus I
Pre-Calculus (w/Trigonometry Included)	C	MTH-112 Trigonometry MTH-243 Statistics I (if took Trigonometry too then MTH-251)
<b>Pre-Calculus (w/Trigonometry Included)</b>	A or B	MTH-251 Calculus I MTH-243 Statistics I
<b>Calculus (See Advanced Placement score or ACC course to place or see PASS Advisor)</b>		MTH-251 Calculus I MTH-252 Calculus II MTH-253 Calculus III

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## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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### The Student Perspective

#### Communication Plan

Colleges will need to establish a communication plan to ensure current and prospective students are aware of the new placement policy, and how long it will be in effect. Website updates should be considered. Examples of student-facing placement websites are linked below:

- [Clackamas Community College](#)
- [Cuesta College](#)
- [Hawai'i Community College](#)

#### Placement Process and Support

At some institutions that have implemented multiple measures policies, the placement process begins with the student completing an intake form or questionnaire about the student's previous educational experience and future goals. Some institutions may use solely the information provided on the form to place students, while others may require additional documentation such as transcripts or test scores.

The types of questions and information that can be included on such an intake form include:

##### General

- What was your unweighted high school GPA (grade point average)?
- What was your high school graduation year?
- Do you have previous college credit?
- Do you plan to transfer to a four-year university?
- What degree program do you plan to pursue?
- What term do you plan to begin taking classes and how many credits do you plan to take?

##### Math Placement-Related

- What was the highest math course you took in high school? What grade did you receive?
- What was the highest math course that you passed with a Pass or C- or better grade in high school? What grade did you receive?
- How do you feel about math?
- Does your current job require math skills?

##### English Placement-Related

- What was the highest English course you took in high school? What grade did you receive?
- Have you ever written an essay longer than three pages?
- Have you ever written an essay that requires research, quotes, and references?
- How do you feel about reading? Writing?

Clackamas Community College has developed an example of such an [intake form](#). The institution has also developed overview documents for each of their developmental and gateway mathematics and English courses. These documents show the student the types of mathematics problems/reading and writing assignments that are covered in the course. This allows the student to make a more informed decision regarding if they are ready to tackle the course content. Examples of these documents are included in the appendices.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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### National Research

#### **Multiple Measures State Policy Landscape (includes placement criteria and links to individual state policy documents)**

*Research for Action (2020)*

<https://www.rfamultiplemeasures.org/state-policy-landscape/>

#### **Core Principles for Transforming Remediation within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy**

*Strong Start to Finish (2020)*

<http://www.strongstart.org/deepening-understanding/core-principles>

#### **Modernizing College Course Placement by Using Multiple Measures**

*Education Commission of the States & Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (2019)*

<https://postsecondaryreadiness.org/modernizing-college-course-placement-multiple-measures/>

#### **Expanding Access to College-Level Courses**

*MDRC (2019)*

<https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/GLMultipleMeasures2019.pdf>

#### **Toward Better College Course Placement: A Guide to Launching a Multiple Measures Assessment System**

*MDRC & CCRC (2018)*

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/toward-better-college-course-placement.html>

### Resources and Examples from Other States

#### **California**

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Assessment and Placement Guidance Memorandum

[https://asccc.org/sites/default/files/AA%2018-40%20AB%20705%20Implementation%20Memorandum\\_.pdf](https://asccc.org/sites/default/files/AA%2018-40%20AB%20705%20Implementation%20Memorandum_.pdf)

#### **Hawai'i**

University of Hawai'i Community College Assessment and Placement Testing Criteria (includes links to individual college placement information)

<http://uhcc.hawaii.edu/go/assessments/>

#### **North Carolina**

Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence (RISE) Documentation – Placement Guides

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CSWh2gh6d8InYMA3IUyE2Zpyrr0Opvu0>

#### **Oregon**

Clackamas Community College Placement Assessment Policy

[https://www.clackamas.edu/docs/default-source/about-us/accreditation-and-policies/institutional-and-student-services-policies-and-procedures/evaluation-examination-and-placement/isp-260-placement-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=1a5c8c68\\_4](https://www.clackamas.edu/docs/default-source/about-us/accreditation-and-policies/institutional-and-student-services-policies-and-procedures/evaluation-examination-and-placement/isp-260-placement-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=1a5c8c68_4)



## RESOURCE GUIDE: ALTERNATIVE METHODS PLACEMENT

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# **APPENDICES: Clackamas Community College Placement Resources**