

Cover Memo for Proposed Admission and/or Standards Change (MTSU)

On-campus memo:

TO: Admission and Standards Committee

FROM: _____
(Department Chair or Program Coordinator)* (College, Program or Department)*

Contact Person: _____ EMAIL _____

RE: _____
(Specify issue[s] being submitted to the committee.)

DATE: _____

Level or area to which change(s) would apply:

University College School Department Program
 Other? _____

Program(s) and/or student population(s) affected: _____

(Note that an Impact Data Form must be submitted along with the proposal.)

This change would fall into the following classification(s) (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| Proposed change in GPA for admission | Proposed change in policies or requirements for retention |
| Proposed change in GPA for retention | Proposed change in policies or requirements for graduation |
| Proposed change in GPA for graduation | Proposed change in grading scale |
| Proposed change in test or pre-requisite requirements for admission | Proposed change to academic program requirements |
| Proposed change in other requirements for admission | Proposed standards for a new program |
| Proposed change in policies or requirements for placement | Other |
| | _____ |

Description of Change Proposed:

(Attach separate sheet as needed.)

Rationale/justification for change (Please ensure that all aspects and ramifications of the change are addressed. Attach separate sheet as needed.):

Dissemination of information:

The following colleges, program or departments may be affected by this decision:

I certify that I (or my representative) have consulted with each college or program that may be affected by the proposed changes.

Proposer's signature *Kate Pantelides* 11/22/2021

Other permissions sought: *If this change is connected to curriculum or program development, have the appropriate forms been submitted to the general education, curriculum or graduate committees? If a proposal will/may impact enrollment in specific courses or programs, have concerned departments or programs been consulted? Please include dates of submission and/or approval as relevant.*

Other signatures needed for approval of proposal:

 Dr. Steve Severn
Department Chair or Program Coordinator*

 11/22/2021

 Jeff Gibson
College Dean*

Date of initial proposal

11/23/2021

Date of college approval

Chair Admission and Standards Committee

Date approved by ASC

Vice Provost for Academic Programs

Date approved by VPAP

Provost

Date approved by Provost

President

Date approved

* Note: When the proposal does not come from an academic unit, replace titles as needed. If a proposal comes directly from a dean or higher, the first signature may be omitted.

Cover Memo Attachment for Proposed Admission and/or Standards Change (MTSU)

ADMISSION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FROM: Kate Pantelides and Erica Stone, Dir. and Assoc. Dir. of General Education English

Description of Change Proposed:

Currently, prospective students who choose to verify their placement into General Education English courses or who do not have ACT/SAT test scores from within the last five years take the WritePlacer exam to identify appropriate placement. However, the WritePlacer does not effectively predict student success in college writing courses. Instead, we propose the replacement of this test with a Guided Self-Placement (GSP) instrument that uses multiple measures to recommend student placement and ultimately values the student's preferred course placement. Since all of the courses that students can place into are credit-bearing (ENGL 1010, ENGL 1010K, and, for multilingual students whose primary language is not English, ENGL 1009), the consequences of placing into the "wrong" class are not as high stakes as they are at some institutions with non-credit bearing, remedial courses. However, giving students agency in placement decisions is strongly correlated with greater retention and engagement in English courses. Test scores alone are not effective predictors of student success in college; GPA is a better predictor of college student success. Multiple measures placement significantly improves upon both methods of placement. GSP utilizes multiple measures for recommending placement, including GPA, test scores (as available), questions about student experiences with reading and writing, preferred learning environments (less supported vs. more supported), and preferences for course placement based on course descriptions. We have been placing international students through GSP for the last three years. We have revised the instrument extensively based on our use over the three years, a Multiple Measures Placement Reform Project led by Dr. Marva Lucas and hosted by Student Ready Strategies and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and extensive consultation with Erin Whittig, the Placement Coordinator for the University of Arizona.

Rationale/justification for change:

At MTSU, prospective students are placed into English courses based on standardized test scores (e.g., ACT/SAT). However, in addition to extensive evidence that demonstrates test scores alone are not an effective method of placement (Chen, 2016; Rutschow & Mayer, 2018) nor an effective predictor of student success in college (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Scott-Clayton, 2012), faculty and students report dissatisfaction with placement and believe that students are often

misplaced into prescribed courses. ACT and SAT are intended as a measure for college admission rather than course placement. Further, students who start college in prescribed coursework are disproportionately underserved student populations, including underrepresented minorities. To address this gap, we propose expanding our use of Guided-Self Placement (GSP) for incoming first-year students to verify their placement in General Education English courses. Our GSP process increases student agency by including students in the placement process. Rather than simply placing students by test score, our GSP instrument gathers data from students regarding grade history, overall GPA, test scores, past writing experiences, and self-placement. Scholarship on the validity and presence of GSP is becoming robust as there is a national shift towards placement reform (see Balay and Nelson, Crisco et al., and Gere et al.). GSP has been successfully rolled out in large university systems, and it has been used to place international students at MTSU since 2018. The use of multiple measure placement and GSP may change the demographics of students who are placed into prescribed courses and better ensure that students take the courses that they need. In an effort to increase student engagement, retention, and success for students at MTSU, our proposal targets prospective students with the purpose of more effectively and more equitably placing them into General Education English writing courses.

Dissemination of information:

Because this proposed change is focused on General Education English, the colleges and departments most impacted would be the General Education English program, University College, College of Liberal Arts, and advisors who work with first-year students.

Admission and Standards Committee
IMPACT DATA FORM for PROPOSED CHANGES

Department or Program or University Office: _____

Brief Statement of Proposed Change: _____ Date: _____

1. Detailed discussion of how proposed changes may impact students, prospective students, university programs and/or other. *(Use as much space as you need below. You may refer to cover memo and its attachments as needed to avoid repetition.)*

Proposed Effective Date _____

2. Identify the student population(s) that will be affected.

3. Are there plans to make this proposal retroactive? If so, please indicate when (specify the date) and identify student population(s) who will be affected. *(For example, "students admitted under the 2004 catalog or earlier.")*

4. Discuss the specific impact on students. Provide enrollment and/or other relevant **data for the past three years**, including appropriate demographic data (e.g. male, female, minority, part-time, older students etc.) to illustrate the possible impact on specific groups. *(For example, for a proposal to raise the GPA for graduation, provide a breakdown of graduating student GPA by different demographic groups.)* Attach supporting documentation.

Admission and Standards Committee

IMPACT DATA FORM for PROPOSED CHANGES

Department or Program or University Office: General Education English

Brief Statement of Proposed Change:

Replace the use of the WritePlacer test with a program-developed Guided Self Placement (GSP) instrument for students who appeal their placement into General Education English Courses or who do not have current test scores

Date: November 22, 2021

Numbered Questions

1. Detailed discussion of how proposed changes may impact students, prospective students, university programs and/or other. (Use as much space as you need below. You may refer to the cover memo and its attachments as needed to avoid repetition.)

This proposed policy change would impact prospective students who have chosen to verify their placement into General Education English courses or who do not have ACT/SAT test scores from within the last five years (<https://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/university-studies/testing.php>). Instead of taking the WritePlacer exam to identify appropriate placement in a General Education English course (ENGL 1009, 1010K, 1010), students will take a Guided Self-Placement (GSP) survey that uses multiple measures (e.g., previous reading and writing experiences, learning preferences, test scores, GPAs, course choice based on detailed course descriptions) to indicate placement. In addition to impacting prospective students, this proposed policy would require changes to admissions paperwork and procedures as well as advisor training and processes. In Spring 2021, 43 students took the WritePlacer to indicate placement in General Education English writing courses. In Summer/Fall 2021, 110 students were admitted and placed into prescribed courses using WritePlacer. Our GSP survey would replace WritePlacer and offer a more cost effective and student-centered placement process. Because guided self-placement is largely viewed as a more equitable and statistically sound way of placing students into prescribed courses, this proposed policy has the potential to positively impact impressions of the university in the local community and in the national news.

Proposed Effective Date: April 2021

2. Identify the student population(s) that will be affected.

This change will impact students who appeal their placement into General Education English courses (ENGL 1009, ENGL 1010K, ENGL 1010) as well as students who do not have current test scores.

3. Are there plans to make this proposal retroactive? If so, please indicate when (specify the date) and identify the student population(s) who will be affected. (For example, "students admitted under the 2004 catalog or earlier.")

There are no plans to make this proposal retroactive.

4. Discuss the specific impact on students. Provide enrollment and/or other relevant data for the past three years, including appropriate demographic data (e.g. male, female, minority, part-time, older students etc.) to illustrate the possible impact on specific groups. (For example, for a proposal to raise the GPA for graduation, provide a breakdown of graduating student GPA by different demographic groups.) Attach supporting documentation.

For reference, ENGL 1009 is a credit-bearing course designed for multilingual students whose primary language is not English. ENGL 1010 is an expository writing course, required for General Education. ENGL 1010K fulfills the same General Education requirement as ENGL 1010, but it is a supported course with smaller class-sizes, more class time, and more individual interaction with faculty. ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1010K are usually taken by first-year students in the Fall. Enrollment for ENGL1010 and ENGL 1010K have been relatively stable for the last three years, though there was a downturn in Fall 2021 consistent with enrollment overall (Fall 2018: 1,971 students in ENGL 1010 and 452 in ENGL 1010K; Fall 2019: 2,022 students in ENGL 1010 and 468 in ENGL 1010K; Fall 2020: 1,910 students in ENGL 1010 and 452 in ENGL 1010K; Fall 2021: 1,658 students in ENGL 1010 and 451 students in ENGL 1010K). Of this significant enrollment, the GSP would only be given to prospective students who want to verify course placement or who do not have current ACT/SAT scores. In the academic year 2018-2019, 178 students took the Writeplacer for this purpose. In the academic year 2019-2020, there were 125 students; and in academic year 2020-2021, there were 108 students. In fall 2021, 110 students took the Writerplacer, 5% of enrollment in these first-year writing courses. Thus, the impact on students is potentially significant, but only for a relatively small population of students.

In Fall 2021, we requested that all first-year writing students in ENGL 1009, 1010, and 1010K take the GSP to verify our placement tool. There were 936 responses, a response rate of 51% of students enrolled at the beginning of the semester. We learned that of this sample, 16% of students felt that they had been misplaced by their ACT score. The majority of these students (11%) would prefer to be in a more supported class and felt that their placement into ENGL 1010 by ACT score was faulty.

Of our respondents, 158 are currently placed in 1010K, but 198 students would prefer to be placed into a more supported class. If students were placed by GSP rather than ACT score, the demographics of ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1010K would shift. Notably, 32% of students currently placed in ENGL 1010K identify as Black or African American and 46% identify as white. Of the students who self-placed into ENGL 1010K, 27% identify as Black or African American, and 49% identify as white. For self-placement into ENGL 1010 the demographics are much the same as the current demographics of ENGL 1010; there are simply more students who would select a supported course. There are currently 750 students in ENGL 1010, but only 699 would self-place into ENGL 1010. Detailed demographics for the differences in current placement and self-placement by gender, race, and ethnicity are included below.

Current demographics for students placed in ENGL 1010K:

Of our respondents, 158 (17%) are currently placed in 1010K by test scores. These students identify in the following ways: 78 women (49%), 74 men (47%), 3 non-binary (2%), 1 transgender man (1%); 2 American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%), 14 Asian (9%), 51 Black or African-American (32%), 14 Hispanic/Latino (9%), and 73 White (46%).

Demographics for students who self-placed into ENGL 1010K:

Of our respondents, 198 (21%) students self-placed into ENGL 1010K. These students identify in the following ways: 100 women (51%), 87 men (44%), 5 nonbinary (3%), and 2 transgender men (1%); 2 American Indian/Alaskan Native (1%), 15 Asian (9%), 53 Black/African American (27%), 17 Hispanic/Latino (11%), 96 White (49%).

Current demographics for students placed in ENGL 1010:

Of our respondents, 750 (80%) are currently in 1010. These students identify in the following ways: women 381 (51%), men 340 (45%), 16 nonbinary (2%), 3 transgender men (.4%), 3 transgender women (.4%); American Indian or Alaskan Native: 8 (1%), Asian: 44 (6%), Black or African-American: 137 (18%), Hispanic or Latino: 51 (7%), 2 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (.3%), White: 503 (67%).

Demographics for students who self-placed into ENGL 1010:

Of our respondents, 699 (75%) would self-place into ENGL1010. These students identify in the following ways: 346 women (49%); 301 men (43%), 24 nonbinary (3%), 3 transgender women (.4%), 2 transgender men (.3%); American Indian or Alaskan Native: 6 (.9%), Asian: 43 (6%), Black or African-American: 127 (18%), Hispanic or Latino: 47 (7%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 2 (.3%), White: 467 (67%).