Use of College-Ready Scores on High School Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs)
Frequently Asked Questions for Secondary Schools

QUESTIONS

Background
1. What was the legislation that required this change?
2. What actions did Minnesota State take to respond to this legislation?
3. Why did Minnesota State decide to reject the current MCA benchmarks?
4. What actions did the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) take to respond to the 2016 legislation?
5. What decisions were made about how to use the MCA scores for admissions and course placement and why?

Admissions
6. How will MCA scores be used for admissions purposes at Minnesota State universities?
7. At which colleges and universities will MCAs be used for admissions purposes?

Course Placement
8. Which high school MCA scores will be considered?
9. How will MCA scores be used in course placement?
10. Do college-ready MCA benchmark scores exempt students from having to take the Accuplacer for course placement?
11. What are the additional measures that can be used to determine college readiness for course placement purposes for students who have MCA scores within and below the ranges?
12. What happens if a student does not meet the upper ranges of the MCA benchmarks for placement into college-level coursework?
13. At which colleges and universities will MCAs be used for course placement purposes?
14. Are only high school MCA scores considered for course placement?
15. Can students appeal a decision that was made using the MCA scores?
16. How long are the MCA scores valid for course placement?
17. Why are Minnesota State campuses not using MCA Reading scores for writing placement?
18. **Why are high school MCA Science scores not considered?**
19. **Why are there three different areas of score ranges for mathematics (College Algebra, statistics, and Math for Liberal Arts)?**

**Implementation**
20. **When will this change be implemented?**
21. **How can MCA scores in reading and mathematics be reported to Minnesota State colleges and universities?**
22. **Will parents and students have a right to refuse disclosure of this information?**
23. **Do the MCA scores need to be “official”?**
24. **When can we share this with students and families?**
25. **Will MDE still keep the original Career and College Ready (CCR) cut scores of 1058 in Reading and 1152 in Math?**

**Further Details**
26. **How do high school MCA scores in reading and math apply to PSEO and concurrent enrollment student eligibility and course placement as required by this legislation?**
27. **What if students are from out-of-state and do not have MCA scores, can they use a different state’s accountability assessment scores?**
28. **If a student did not take the MCA Reading in 10th grade and/or the MCA Mathematics in 11th grade, what are their options when applying to Minnesota State colleges and universities?**
29. **Is there any requirement connected to grade 7 and grade 8 MCAs?**
30. **Where can we go for more information?**

**ANSWERS**

**Background**

1. **What was the legislation that required this change?**

   Minnesota Statutes 2016, section 136F.302 and 120B.30 Statewide Testing and Reporting System (Subdivision 1, Section (m)), mandate the following provisions:
   - A state college or university must not require an individual to take a developmental, noncredit course in a subject area if the individual has received a college-ready ACT or SAT score in that subject area, or a career- and college-ready Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) benchmark in that subject area, consistent with benchmarks established by the commissioner of education.
   - Only the ACT and SAT scores an individual received and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment benchmarks an individual met in the previous five years are valid for purposes of this section.
• As part of the notification of high school students and their families, the Department of Education is to include a statement that students who receive a college-ready benchmark on the high school MCA are not required to take a developmental, noncredit course at a Minnesota state college or university in the corresponding subject area.
• Each state college and university is required to post notice of the exemption from developmental course taking on its Web site explaining student course placement requirements.
• When deciding if an individual is admitted to or if an individual may enroll in a state college or university, the state college or university must consider the individual's scores on the high school MCA, in addition to other factors determined relevant by the college or university.
• The commissioner of education, in consultation with the chancellor of the Minnesota State colleges and universities, must establish empirically derived benchmarks on the high school tests that reveal a trajectory toward career and college readiness. The chancellor must either approve or reject the empirically derived benchmarks for the high school MCA’s no later than December 31, 2016. If the chancellor rejects the benchmarks, the commissioner must establish revised benchmarks. The revised benchmarks must incorporate the chancellor's suggested revisions.

2. What actions did Minnesota State take to respond to this legislation?

Based on these new statutory mandates, the Minnesota State system office completed the following action steps during fall 2016:
• Conducted a MCA Benchmark Study that examined the relationship between MCA scores and student grades in college-level gateway courses. The study established MCA placement score ranges for mathematics and reading that are an interval around the score that predicts a 50 percent probability earning a grade of A or B in the college level course;
• Obtained SAT recommended college-ready scores from the College Board that included both the old SAT and new SAT scores;
• Vetted both MCA and SAT college-ready scores with appropriate consultation and finalized Minnesota State recommendations; and
• Chancellor Rosenstone responded to Commissioner Cassellius by the statutorily mandated deadline of December 31, 2016 that he rejected the current MCA benchmarks.

3. Why did Minnesota State decide to reject the current MCA benchmarks?

Minnesota State decided to reject the use of the current Minnesota Department of Education proficiency cuts on the MCA-III 10th grade reading and 11th grade mathematics assessments as a single measure for placement into college level reading-intensive and mathematics courses. This decision was based on key factors including: the Department of Education’s MCA proficiency cuts were established by high school teachers on a standard setting panel; the MCA
scores explain only a small fraction of the variance in our students’ success in college-level courses; and using a single data point (MCA score) on a high-stakes test as the basis for placement is inconsistent with Minnesota State efforts to develop and implement multiple measures for course placement.

4. **What actions did the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) take to respond to the 2016 legislation?**

MDE published the Minnesota State course placement information on the MDE website. In addition, MDE will begin reporting information on how MCA scores apply to Minnesota State colleges and universities for course placement purposes in spring of 2017 on the individual student reports for grade 10 MCA Reading and grade 11 MCA Mathematics.

5. **What decisions were made about how to use the MCA scores for admissions and course placement, and why?**

For admissions: Minnesota State universities will decide locally how to incorporate MCA scores into the universities’ admissions criteria.

For course placement: Among other course placement indicators, Minnesota State colleges and universities will use MCA scores for course placement as follows:

- Students with MCA scores at or above the upper end of the identified score range will be able to take appropriate college-level courses.
- Students with MCA scores that fall within the mid-level identified score range will be placed into either college-level or developmental courses based on the consideration of additional college readiness measures.
- Students with MCA scores below the identified score range will need to take the appropriate developmental course unless other course placement measures indicate that the student is prepared to enroll in college-level coursework.

The MCA benchmarks identified for course placement purposes were made based on key factors including: since the MCA Placement Benchmark Study found that MCA scores explain only a small fraction of the variance in student success in college level courses, additional measures of readiness will be used; the MCA placement benchmark ranges represent an interval within which additional measures can be used to increase the accuracy with which we identify college-ready students, maximize their correct placement, and reduce the risk to students of misplacement; and Minnesota State is currently working to develop and implement the use of multiple measures for course placement of all students and the MCA placement benchmark range represents a useful addition to this effort.
6. **How will MCA scores be used for admissions purposes at Minnesota State universities?**

In addition to class rank, ACT scores, or SAT scores and other factors, Minnesota State universities will also consider MCA scores as a part of a student’s college admissions review. How MCA scores are incorporated into admissions criteria and processes will be determined by each university. Check with the university admissions office for details.

7. **At which colleges and universities will MCAs be used for admissions purposes?**

This legislative change is required only for the public colleges and universities of Minnesota State. This system is comprised of 30 two-year colleges and 7 universities. The use of MCAs within admissions is not required of other postsecondary institutions outside of Minnesota State, such as the University of Minnesota campuses and private colleges and universities.

The 30 two-year state colleges within the Minnesota State system have an open admissions policy, which means that all students are admitted if they have a high school diploma or a GED. Students are not required to take a standardized test, such as the ACT or SAT, and students’ high school grades and class rank are not considered. Thus, MCAs are not used for admission purposes at Minnesota State community and technical colleges.

The seven state universities admit first-year students on the basis of their class rank, ACT scores, SAT scores, and/or other factors. Now, the seven state universities will also incorporate the use of MCAs for admissions purposes. The seven state universities include:

- Bemidji State University
- Metropolitan State University
- Minnesota State University Moorhead
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- St. Cloud State University
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- Winona State University

**Course Placement**

8. **Which high school MCA scores will be considered?**

Only the grade 10 MCA Reading and the grade 11 MCA Mathematics scores will be used for purposes of this legislation.

9. **How will MCA scores be used in course placement?**

A student shall be exempted from taking all or portions of the system-endorsed placement instrument (Accuplacer) based on documentation of subject area test scores on the high school
MCA assessments taken within five calendar years, inclusive of the current calendar year, for reading and mathematics:

- **Reading:** A student who presents a MCA Reading assessment score of 1047 or higher shall be placed in courses that designate college-level reading skills as a prerequisite. Additional college readiness measures will be needed for a student who presents a MCA Reading assessment score ranging 1042 - 1046 to determine appropriate course placement. A student who presents a MCA Reading assessment score of 1041 or below shall be placed in courses that designate developmental education level unless additional information indicates differently.

- **College-Algebra:** A student who wants to take College Algebra and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1158 or higher shall be placed in College Algebra. Additional college readiness measures will be needed for a student who presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score ranging 1152 - 1157 to determine if the student can be placed into College Algebra. A student who wants to take College Algebra and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1151 or below shall be placed in courses that designate developmental education level unless additional information indicates differently.

- **Statistics:** A student who wants to take college-level statistics and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1148 or higher shall be placed in an introductory college-level statistics course. Additional college readiness measures will be needed for a student who presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score ranging 1146 - 1147 to determine if the student can be placed into college level statistics. A student who wants to take college-level statistics and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1145 or below shall be placed in courses that designate developmental education level unless additional information indicates differently.

- **Liberal Arts Mathematics:** A student who wants to take Liberal Arts Mathematics and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1150 or higher shall be placed in an introductory college-level liberal arts mathematics course. Additional college readiness measures will be needed for a student who presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score ranging 1146 - 1149 to determine if the student can be placed into Liberal Arts Mathematics. A student who wants to take Liberal Arts Mathematics and presents a MCA Mathematics assessment score of 1145 or below shall be placed in courses that designate developmental education level unless additional information indicates differently.

The table below shows the course type and scores for course placement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Course of Enrollment (or equivalent)</th>
<th>Enrollment in Developmental Course Unless Additional Information Indicates Otherwise</th>
<th>Need More Information on Readiness</th>
<th>Enrollment in College Level Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1041 and below</td>
<td>1042-1046</td>
<td>1047 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FAQ for Secondary Schools

Version 1: May 3, 2017

Page 6 of 11
I. Intended Course of Enrollment (or equivalent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment in Developmental Course Unless Additional Information Indicates Otherwise</th>
<th>Need More Information on Readiness</th>
<th>Enrollment in College Level Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Algebra</td>
<td>1151 and below</td>
<td>1152-1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>1145 and below</td>
<td>1146-1147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Mathematics</td>
<td>1145 and below</td>
<td>1146-1149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Do college-ready MCA benchmark scores exempt students from having to take the Accuplacer for course placement?

Yes. Students who obtained the benchmarks in the upper ranges are not required to take the Accuplacer in reading and mathematics. Students must demonstrate writing skills through another measure of assessment, such as the ACT, SAT, or Accuplacer.

11. What are the additional measures that can be used to determine college readiness for course placement purposes for students?

Campuses can use ACT scores, SAT scores, and Accuplacer scores. Individual campuses may choose to incorporate additional measures not included here.

12. What happens if a student does not meet the upper ranges of the MCA benchmarks for placement into college-level coursework?

Students with high school MCA scores in reading and mathematics that fall within the identified score ranges or below the ranges may also submit ACT or SAT subject area test scores for determining course placement. Students may also take the Accuplacer to demonstrate their readiness for college-level course work. If no other assessments meet the college-ready benchmarks, the student will need to take the appropriate developmental course in reading or mathematics.

13. At which colleges and universities will MCAs be used for course placement purposes?

In addition to ACT and SAT subject area test scores, all colleges and universities of Minnesota State will now also accept high school MCA scores in reading and mathematics for course placement purposes. The use of scores from high school MCAs for course placement is not required of other postsecondary institutions outside of Minnesota State, such as the University of Minnesota campuses and private colleges and universities.

14. Are only high school MCA scores considered for course placement?

FAQ for Secondary Schools

Version 1: May 3, 2017

Page 7 of 11
Minnesota State colleges and universities have a course placement process that includes the evaluation of a few factors for course placement. Students who demonstrate college-ready benchmark scores on the ACT or SAT subject area tests scores are also exempted from taking the Accuplacer course placement assessment and placed into college-level courses in those subject area. Students who do not meet the college readiness benchmarks according to the ACT, SAT, or MCAs will take the Accuplacer assessments to determine appropriate course placement. Many campuses also incorporate additional institutionally-based assessments.

15. Can students appeal a decision that was made using the MCA scores?

Yes. Students should contact the college or university for more information on their appeals process for course placement.

16. How long are the MCA scores valid for course placement?

Legislation requires that a state college or university must not require an individual to take a developmental education course in a subject area if the individual has met a college-ready MCA, ACT, and SAT benchmark in that subject area in the previous five years. For any student enrolling for fall of 2017, grade 10 MCA Reading scores from 2013 or later and grade 11 MCA Mathematics scores from 2014 or later can be considered. MCA Reading scores from 2012 and earlier and MCA Mathematics scores from 2013 and earlier result from different MCA test versions and the Minnesota State college ready benchmarks do not account for those test versions. If students have MCA test scores from these earlier dates, campuses would use additional measures to determine college readiness. Current high school seniors entering fall 2017 can use their MCA scores from their 10th grade reading (2015) and 11th grade mathematics (2016).

17. Why are Minnesota State campuses not using MCA Reading scores for writing placement?

The MCA Benchmark Study concluded that MCA Reading assessment scores were not an appropriate predictor of performance in college writing courses, and thus, Minnesota State will not use MCA scores for writing placements. Students must demonstrate academic readiness in writing with ACT scores, SAT scores, or Accuplacer scores.

18. Why are high school MCA Science scores not considered?

College readiness, as used within the course placement process at Minnesota State colleges and universities, includes reading, writing, and mathematics knowledge and skills. The high school MCA Science assessment, while important for secondary school accountability and other purposes, are not required for course placement purposes at Minnesota State colleges and universities.
19. Why are there three different areas of score ranges for mathematics (College Algebra, statistics, and Math for Liberal Arts)?

Having three different placement ranges for mathematics is consistent with Minnesota State’s move toward differentiating these placements to better align with the program requirements for mathematics.

**Implementation**

20. When will this change be implemented?

Minnesota State campuses will begin incorporating MCA scores in admissions and course placement for students entering the 2017-2018 academic year. As this implementation is now being rolled out in May 2017, it may be the case that some students have already applied for admissions or have taken the Accuplacer for course placement purposes. Students are encouraged to submit MCA scores if they wish to have their admissions or course placement decisions re-evaluated based on the MCA subject area test scores.

Current high school seniors who have MCA scores from grade 10 Reading and/or grade 11 Mathematics can submit their official MCA scores for use in course placement. Students may also submit ACT and SAT subject areas scores for purposes of course placement.

21. How can MCA scores in reading and mathematics be reported to Minnesota State colleges and universities?

Students must request that official scores be sent from the high school to the college/university. Students can accomplish this in two ways: 1) communicate directly with their high school on their own and request MCA scores to be sent to the college/university; or 2) sign a release on the *High School Transcript Release of Information Form* on the Minnesota State online application and send it to the high school for the MCA scores to be released to the college/university.

22. Will parents and students have a right to refuse disclosure of this information?

Yes. A student must request their high school MCA scores in reading and mathematics to be released to Minnesota State colleges and universities.
Once the MCA scores are entered into the Minnesota State student record system and a student transfers or applies to another Minnesota State college or university, the MCA scores can be retrieved for admissions and/or course placement usage.

23. Do the MCA scores need to be “official”?

Yes. Students must request MCA scores to be sent from high schools to the college/university or the scores must be recorded on an official high school transcript.

24. When can this information be shared with students and families?

This legislation is currently in effect for students enrolling for the 2017-2018 academic year so the information can be shared now.

25. Will MDE still keep the original Career and College Ready (CCR) scores of 1058 in Reading and 1152 in Math?

MDE made the decision that they will continue to use the original CCR scores of 1058 in Reading and 1152 in Mathematics as the predictive study that was completed by MDE indicated that students who receive scores at or above these scores are on track to demonstrate career and college readiness in reading and mathematics on a college admissions test at the end of grade 11.

Further Details

26. How do high school MCA scores in reading and math apply to PSEO and concurrent enrollment student eligibility and course placement as required by this legislation?

Within the Minnesota state system of college and universities, student eligibility for PSEO and concurrent enrollment can be found in Minnesota State System Procedure 3.5.1 Part 2 Admissions Requirements for PSEO Students.

- For juniors, class rank in the upper one-third of their class or a score at or above the 70th percentile on a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test
- For seniors, class rank in the upper one-half of their class or a score at or above the 50th percentile on a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test.
- Campuses can choose to use MCA scores as “documentation other than that specified in Part 2, Subpart A1 and Subpart A2 of this procedure of the student's readiness and ability to perform college-level work as determined by the college or university.”

For course placement purposes, the colleges and universities of Minnesota State can use high school MCA scores in reading and mathematics as outlined in the course placement information.
27. What if students are from out-of-state and do not have MCA scores, can they use a different state’s accountability assessment scores?

No. Legislation requires Minnesota State colleges and universities to consider Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. Students who graduated from a high school outside of Minnesota or did not take the high school MCAs in reading and mathematics can submit their ACT or SAT scores or take the Accuplacer for course placement purposes.

28. If a student did not take the MCA Reading in 10th grade and/or the MCA Mathematics in 11th grade, what are their options when applying to Minnesota State colleges and universities?

For admissions, students can submit their high school transcript, ACT scores, and/or SAT scores. For course placement, students can submit ACT scores, SAT scores, and/or take the Accuplacer.

29. Is there any requirement connected to grade 7 and grade 8 MCAs?

No. Only the grade 10 Reading MCA and the grade 11 Mathematics MCA are considerations for course placement and admissions decisions at the colleges and universities of Minnesota State.

30. Where can we go for more information?

MDE website:  
http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/About/mde070432

Minnesota State website:  
http://www.asa.mnscu.edu/studentaffairs/academicreadiness/index.html