

Institution-Set Standards Report on Pass Rates in Basic Skills Classes

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As of fall 2019, pass rates in basic skills classes had fallen below institution-set standards for the prior two fall semesters, as shown in Table 1. While only slightly below the standard, the persistence of the decline in pass rates led AIQ to investigate further and develop this report.

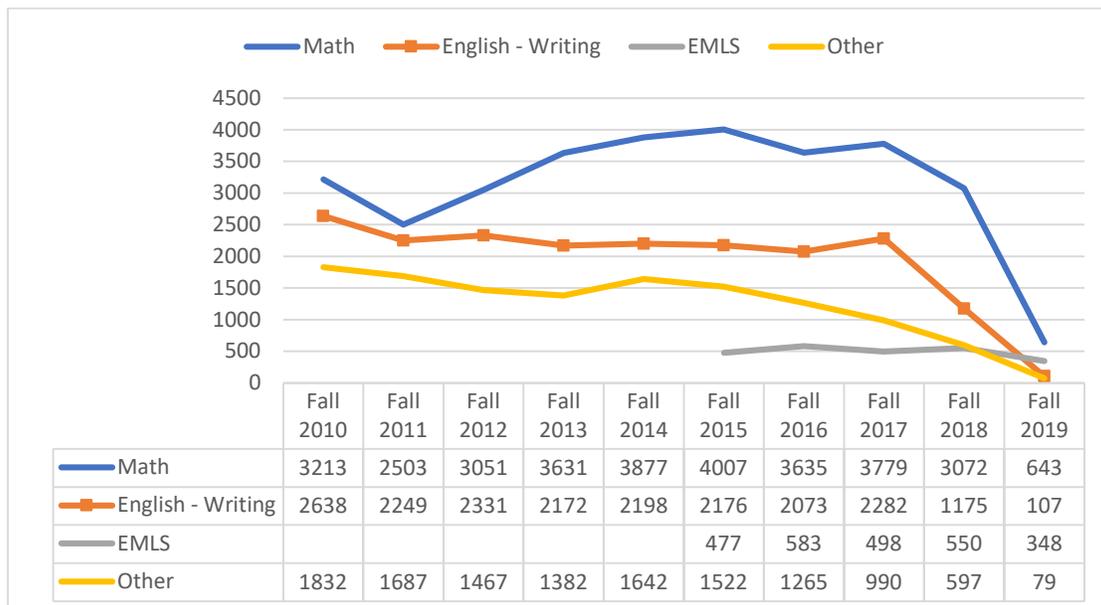
Table 1. Trend in the Basic Skills Success Metric that Lead to AIQ Report

ISS Metric	Source	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	ISS	Goal
Basic Skills Success	Data Mart	62%	55%	55%	54%	52.3%	55%	60%

A reduction in the pass rates of basic skills classes had in fact been anticipated due to a multi-year focus on increasing the use of multiple measures such as high school GPA to place students in math and English coursework. This emphasis had been in place since 2015 and it resulted in fewer students with relatively strong high school performance being placed into basic skills classes. As Table 1 shows, the anticipated reduction in basic skills pass rates has been borne out and, beginning in fall 2017 the pass rate in basic skills dropped below the standard of 55%. The pass rate for basic skills courses from fall 2019, the latest available, is 52.5%, continuing the trend of being below the basic skills ISS.

While pass rates in basic skills classes have dropped, enrollments have dropped even more dramatically. As shown in Figure 1, enrollments in English writing basic skills have dropped 95% from their peak in Fall 2015 while enrollments in basic skills math classes have tumbled 84%. Reading and other basic skills courses have also fallen 95% from their peak in 2014. While English for Multilingual Students (EMLS) has lost the fewest enrollments from its peak in fall 2014 (40%), it is also an area that has recently been characterized by the Chancellor’s Office as “not basic skills” (<https://bit.ly/CCCCO-2019-ESL-Memo>).

Figure 1. Enrollments in Basic Skills Classes by Area



Recommendation

The drop in basic skills sections and enrollments is due mainly to the implementation of AB 705 which gives most incoming students direct access to transfer-level courses in math and English. Most of the remaining basic skills English and math sections offered in fall 2019 were not offered to new students but to students who were repeating the course in hopes of revising a poor grade. As that population of students moves, the effect of AB 705 on scheduling basic skills courses is expected to continue.

Upon review of the evidence, the AIQ committee recommends that the institution-set standard for basic skills be dropped as this area of curriculum is no longer as substantial as it once was and therefore does not require to be called out in a separate standard.

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