



PLACEMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL

Originally drafted September 2024. Updated March 2025.

I. OVERVIEW

- A. In 2024, MUS Board of Regents Policy 301.17 – Math and Writing Course Placement was revised to establish common systemwide guidelines for placement “to enhance implementation of best practices, enhance student ability to pass gateway math and writing in the first year, and create more seamless experiences for students within the system.” Policy 301.17 establishes a steering committee to regularly review and approve campus placement processes, and report on placement to the Board of Regents. The implementation and maintenance of the campus reporting and review process is detailed here.

II. REVIEWING COMMITTEE

- A. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education will designate the Developmental Education Steering Committee who reviews campus placement processes and metrics. After review, the committee will jointly make recommendations on whether campus placement aligns with the guidelines of 301.17 to the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education.
- B. The Developmental Education Steering Committee shall be composed of 6 individuals in campus roles closely involved in placement and/or math or writing instruction across the system.
- C. The Developmental Education Steering Committee shall be representative of diverse roles, regions, and institutional models.
- D. Each institution up for review shall have representation of at least one member on the committee.
- E. Beginning in reporting cycle 2026, the committee should experience a change of membership in at least 2/3 of the committee roster but no more than ½. Upcoming reporting campuses should be considered for new committee member enrollment.

III. CAMPUS REPORTING CYCLE

- A. Campuses reporting on placement will include at minimum two components.



1. A detailed description of placement processes for college math and writing by way of the placement reporting submission form.
 2. Supplementary metrics describe in section 5 of the submission form.
- B. Campuses shall report to the committee on the detailed description of placement processes in the fall immediately following years 3 and 7 of institutional accreditation or if a campus-determined substantive change in placement processes is made in interim years. Accreditation dates in the spring will trigger reporting in the same year's fall. Fall accreditation dates will trigger reporting in the fall of the following year. CAOs will collaborate with relevant stakeholders on their campus including advising, faculty, registrars, accreditation liaison officers, and others identified by the provosts.
- C. Campuses shall provide any institutional placement metrics used to determine appropriate and effective placement aligned with 301.17(D)(2)
- D. CAOs at each institution are responsible for the regular reporting to the Developmental Education Steering Committee. Reports should include details as described in sections IV and V.

2024	2025	2026	2027
University of Montana Missoula College Helena College Montana Tech Highlands College	Great Falls College UM Western Montana State University Gallatin College	MSU Billings City College	MSU Northern

IV. PLACEMENT DESCRIPTION CRITERIA

- A. When reporting on the description of campus placement processes for college math and writing, all campuses shall submit the following five items identified in 301.17 section D:
1. A narrative of campus placement.
 2. A description and explanation of holistic multiple measures used when placing students.



- a) **Holistic Measures:** should take a student-centered approach, communicating often and early about placement, considering students' educational goals and degree paths, and opportunities for students to challenge or improve placement by building skills prior to course taking.
 - b) **Multiple Measures:** using more than one indicator, in combination, to measure expected student performance. These indicators should come from multiple points in time. Examples include but are not limited to, HS GPA, previous course taking, writing samples, and single point assessments
- 3. An explanation of how the placement model sequences into math pathways.
 - 4. A description of support models allowing students to be placed immediately into credit-bearing courses, such as corequisite models or other models, for instances when students are not placed directly into standalone college-level course.
 - a) In rare cases where institutions maintain prerequisite models in addition to credit-bearing courses with support, institutions must also provide explanation of how prerequisite placement is determined over credit-bearing courses with support. Metrics reviewed in section V should support the use of the models submitted.
 - 5. An explanation of how campuses ensure transferability in accepting gateway placement determination within the MUS.

V. METRICS

- A. Campus placement shall be assessed annually using common metrics available in the MUS data warehouse and provided by campuses.
- B. Common system metrics for consideration by the committee include from the MUS Data Dashboard:
 - 1. **Course success rates**
 - a) Campuses should provide course pass rates and number of students passing for all students enrolled in a given term. Course pass rates should be reported for all pre-requisite, co-requisite, and college level or other course types that count towards gateway course completion. In the case of linked courses, campuses should provide pass rates for each individual course. A



course is considered passed when the letter grade is one of the following: A, B, C, or P. Campuses should also provide DFW rates for each course type (pre-req, co-req, and college level courses).

2. Time to gateway course completion

- a) The number of semesters from the time of the students' first college enrollment (first non-dual-enrollment term) to the time the student completes their first math/writing gateway course (100 Level or higher course in the respective area). Only Spring and Fall terms are counted for this metric.

3. Cost to gateway course completion

- a) The total tuition and mandatory fees cost for the student until completion of their first gateway course in math/writing. This is a running total that includes the sum of the tuition and mandatory fees costs until a successful gateway course completion. The cost of the tuition and mandatory fees for the term of successful gateway course completion is included in this total. This total will include any tuition and fee amounts spent on Dual Enrollment courses.
- b) NOTE: The above definition is for total cost of tuition and fees. For cost of math/writing courses only, take the Total Tuition and mandatory fees amount paid by that student and multiple that time the percentage of all their credits taken up to that point that were math/writing. This provides an approximation of cost of tuition and fees for math/writing.

4. Number of math and writing credits attempted and earned to passing gateway math or writing courses.

- a) The total number of math/writing credits taken to successfully complete a respective math/writing gateway course. This total includes any math courses taken as dual enrollment or remediation courses.
- b) NOTE: Statistics courses are treated as math courses in all metrics. One hundred level or higher statistics course is a math gateway course for these metrics.

5. Retention following gateway course completion.

- a) Percentage of new students fall cohort who return for enrollment the following fall after passing a math/writing gateway course during their first year of college enrollment.

6. Repetitive math or writing course-taking for transfer students.



7. Institutional student profile.

- a) To help provide context about the student body that each campus serves, campuses should provide aggregate data on overall enrollment. While institutions have discretion on any additional items, campuses must include student profile data including enrollment by race, gender, Pell status, part-time/full-time enrollment, resident status, institutional GPA, and transfer student enrollment.
- C. Institutional data submissions should demonstrate how campuses regularly assess and determine appropriate placement emphasizing the likelihood of student success and reducing credits and cost to gateway course completion.
 - 1. Institutions may collect and evaluate this information differently based on their placement models but should include at a minimum:
 - a) **Institutional student profile.**
 - (1) To help provide context about the student body that each campus serves, campuses should provide aggregate data on overall enrollment. While institutions have discretion on any additional items, campuses must include student profile data including enrollment by race, gender, Pell status, part-time/full-time enrollment, resident status, institutional GPA, and transfer student enrollment.
 - b) **Metrics and benchmarks**
 - (1) Define and identify the metrics collected to review student outcomes by placement for gateway courses.
 - (2) Data on subsequent course performance is also encouraged if collected.
 - c) **Collection and evaluation**
 - (1) Campuses should be able to describe how placement data is regularly collected, assessed, and influences decision-making in the placement model structure.

VI. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Following the review of campuses reporting on their detailed placement during accreditation years, the steering committee shall provide a joint, written recommendation to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.
- B. At minimum, the recommendation should:



1. Address whether the campus placement meets the requirements of section D in Policy 301.17.
 2. Highlight any strengths or positive outcomes.
 3. Highlight any metrics or practices where there might be opportunities for improvement.
 4. Offer recommendations for how the campus can better align with the requirements of Policy 301.17 and/or incorporate promising practices for placement.
- C. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education shall review committee recommendations and bring them to the campus CAO.

VII. REPORTING TO BOARD OF REGENTS

- A. Policy 301.17 maintains regular reporting on systemwide placement outcomes to the Board of Regents.