

Academic Policy Brief OAA-19-01**Policy for the Use of CUNY's Proficiency Index in Developmental Education Assignments**

September 4, 2019

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this brief is to inform you of how CUNY's new proficiency index will be implemented for spring 2020 admissions. To provide more information about the use of this index, I have enclosed the following:

- **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01:** This is a follow-up to the [December 13, 2018 memorandum](#) that announced the use of a proficiency index and changes in CUNY's developmental education assignment practices. This memorandum gives more information on how the index will be used to place students into the various developmental interventions available to them.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) OAA-19-01:** CUNY Developmental Education Policy Changes. These FAQs bring together responses to many of the questions that CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) has received about the new proficiency index and other aspects of developmental education reform as it has consulted with stakeholders about these plans. The FAQs will be posted online shortly and OAA will continue to update them as we receive additional questions or clarify practices.

Please share this letter and its enclosures with interested faculty and staff. Note that readers will likely want to refer to the FAQ document after they have read the technical guidance memorandum because it contains a great deal of information. For the purposes of implementation, the FAQs are part of official OAA policy regarding the proficiency index and corequisite education.

The launch of the new proficiency index will fulfill one of the major recommendations of the Developmental Education Task Force convened by my predecessor, Dr. Vita Rabinowitz and former Associate University Provost David Crook. The use of this index will also inform our efforts to replace outdated remediation strategies with more effective corequisite math or English courses, or high-quality, targeted interventions before matriculation. As such, I want to thank many of you for your service on that task force, and for your continuing consultation on developmental education reforms since then.

Since the task force issued its recommendations in 2016, OAA staff have been developing the proficiency index as a method for incorporating grades and multiple measures into the new CUNY first admissions system. We are confident that the proficiency index will more accurately assess the developmental needs of our students than placement tests, and that the new targeting guidelines contained in the technical guidance memorandum will ensure that students receive the academic support they need to succeed at CUNY. This change is part of CUNY's comprehensive developmental education reform, which will also change the way colleges provide developmental education.

I would like to highlight the following activities related to CUNY's developmental education reform in fall 2019:

August 2019

- OAA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking associate-granting colleges' requests for a share of \$2 million in funding that the University has once again received from New York City to support continued developmental education reforms for the 2019-20 academic year. These additional resources, along with CUNY's Strong Start to Finish (SSTF) grant funding, will support your college to improve student success in crucial first-year English and math courses.

September 2019

- OAA will release guidance on placement options for students with a High School Equivalency credential or foreign credentials.
- OAA will share more information about how proficiency index results and other placement-related information will be presented in CUNYfirst.
- ASAP and Math Start will launch pilots of a new semester-long Math Start offering at two community colleges (Bronx and Kingsborough). This model will allow students who have deep math needs to participate in Math Start over the course of the semester while also taking some credit courses as non-degree students with support from ASAP. We expect that in the near future there will be opportunities for other associate-granting colleges to adopt this model.
- OAA will review responses to the NYC Developmental Education Reform RFP, make awards, and release funds to successful grants so that colleges can commence the proposed work.
- Colleges will continue their Strong Start to Finish work. They will offer additional sections of existing corequisite courses and continue to develop new courses as planned.

October – December 2019

- OAA will complete the first admissions run through the new proficiency index for spring 2020 applicants and colleges will guide prospective students into appropriate developmental interventions per the **Technical Guidance Memorandum OAA-19-01**.

Our developmental education reforms are critically important to CUNY's goals of improving educational equity and ensuring that students who can benefit from engaging with CUNY's college-level curriculum are placed accordingly. Given CUNY's position in the national higher education landscape as a leading educator of first-generation students, immigrants, and under-represented communities, it is especially important that we embrace evidence-based practices that will allow us to better help them meet their full potential. I am gratified that so many colleagues across our colleges and University offices have done so much in the past three years to get us to this stage. I am also appreciative that the City and private funders have recognized the importance of our collective efforts and chosen to support them.

Feedback on the impact and implementation of this new process is critically important, and I encourage you to reach out to me and my office with any concerns that you and your team may have.

As always, I look forward to the hard, important work ahead.

Sincerely,



José Luis Cruz
Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost