CHAPTER 2

CORE SERVICES

This chapter describes the core SSSP services required by the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012. These services include orientation; assessment and placement; educational planning; and counseling, advising and follow-up services. It also includes information on prerequisites as related to assessment. These services are part of the larger matriculation process which encompasses all of the support that helps individuals become students, helps them navigate and feel at home in the college environment, and reach their educational goals.

Figure 1 below provides an example of a progression of these services as a typical student might experience them. The flow of these services varies by college.

* Core program services for credit and noncredit programs.

** See title 5, § 55532 for complete description of locally determined exemption criteria.
Admissions

Making the admissions process a welcoming, understandable and seamless one is the first essential steps in ensuring that someone becomes a student and continues on to identify and reach his or her goals successfully. Completing an admissions application is generally the first official step in the process for an individual to become a student. However, college staff may also have students complete an application, orientation, assessment and other steps in the process all at the same time. Admissions and records functions were originally included as part of the former Matriculation Program, the precursor to the SSSP. While no longer considered a core service under SSSP, admissions functions remain a fundamental part of the matriculation process. College expenditures for admissions functions are allowed to be included in the required matching funds. Funding is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, “Funding Guidelines.”

Orientation

New students may not recognize that participating in orientation activities can improve their college experience and build their foundation for success. While many colleges have long provided orientation for incoming students, legislation and regulation now provide a consistent definition of orientation and the topics that must be covered to assure that all California Community College students are provided with a similar introduction to college life.

The purpose of orientation, as defined in title 5, section 55502, is to acquaint “students and potential students with, at a minimum, college programs, student support services, facilities and grounds, academic expectations, institutional procedures, and other appropriate information pursuant to title 5, section 55521.” Section 55521 specifies that colleges must provide all students with an orientation on a timely basis that addresses the following topics:

1. Academic expectations, and progress and probation standards pursuant to section 55031.
2. Maintaining registration priority pursuant to section 58108.
3. Prerequisite or co-requisite challenge process pursuant to section 55003.
4. Maintaining Board of Governors Fee Waiver eligibility pursuant to section 58621.
5. Description of available programs, support services, financial aid assistance, and campus facilities, and how they can be accessed.
6. Academic calendar and important timelines.
7. Registration and college fees.
8. Available education planning services.
9. Other issues, policies, and procedures the college determines as necessary to provide a comprehensive orientation to students.

Although colleges are obligated to provide orientation, students in the past were not required to participate. Title 5, section 55530, however, now requires non-exempt, first time students to participate. A first time student is a student who enrolls at the college for the first time,
excluding students who transferred from another institution of higher education and concurrent enrollment students in high school. Any students exempt from orientation must be notified of that fact and informed that they may participate if they choose (section 55532). They must also be informed that colleges may deny priority registration if they do not participate in orientation (section 58108).

Colleges may elect to disseminate any other information deemed appropriate during orientation, including additional information mandated by title 5. For example, colleges may use this opportunity to provide students with information regarding their rights and responsibilities (section 55530), inform all students of SSSP/matriculation policies (section 55531), and ensure that policies are accessible and available to all students during or prior to enrollment. Other mandated information that may be appropriate for orientation includes informing students in writing of district procedures for challenging alleged violations of title 5 regulations governing SSSP (section 55534).

Orientation allows students to make initial contact with college staff, who “put a face” on the institution. It may be delivered in a variety of ways: in person, individually or in groups, through electronic means, all at once or broken up into various modules, and/or provided over a period of time. Through a well-planned and thorough orientation process, students can become familiar with what the college offers and build a foundation for success.

Resources

Chancellor’s Office Admissions and Records website
http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/AdmissionsandRecords.aspx
Chancellor’s Office Effective Practices website
http://counselors.cccco.edu/CounselorResources/EffectivePractices.aspx

Assessment and Placement

Assessment is a holistic process through which each college collects information about students to facilitate their success by ensuring their appropriate placement into math, English, and ESL curricula. Student assessments should reflect a variety of informational sources that create a profile of a student’s academic strengths and weaknesses. This information forms a holistic "portrait" of each student, and should include math, English, ESL placement results; study and learning skills; aptitudes; goals; educational background and performance; and the need for special services.

Assessment is governed by the following title 5 regulations: section 55502 (Definitions), section 55520 (Required Services), section 55522 (Assessment), section 55526 (Accommodations), section 55530 (Student Rights and Responsibilities), section 55531 (Institutional Responsibilities), and section 55532 (exemptions). Assessment is also instrumental in the development of the student’s education plan (as outlined in section 55524). Section 55530 requires non-exempt, first-time students to participate. Pursuant to the Education Code section
78219, the California Community Colleges are currently in the process of developing a common assessment system based on test content specifications and the identified range of CCC student math, English, and ESL competencies.

Colleges must adhere to the following regulations and guidelines when implementing and managing any assessment instrument used for course placement:

- Assessment instruments used in the placement of students must be approved by the CCCCCO (section 55522(a)).
- Colleges must evaluate assessment instruments to meet content validity, cut score validity, minimization of bias, reliability, and disproportionate impact standards provided in the Standards, Policies, and Procedures for the Evaluation of Assessment Instruments Used in the California Community Colleges (section 55522(a)).
  (http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/Matriculation/Assessment/ApprovedGuidelinesMarch2001.pdf)
- Course placement recommendations must be based on multiple measures (sections 55502(i) and 55522(a)). Additional indicators of student readiness for math, English, and ESL course content must be used together with placement test results.
- Placement assessment instruments must be used only for the purpose for which they were developed (section 55522(c)).
- Assessment instruments may not exclude a student from admission to the college, except that an approved test (used with multiple measures) may be used to assist in the admission process for a nursing program (sections 55522(c) and (e)).
- Placement assessment instruments may not exclude a student from a particular course or educational program, except that districts may establish appropriate course or program prerequisites (section 55522(c)). In other words, validated course placement results, including multiple measures, may be used to meet certain prerequisites.
- Assessment procedures and policies, including test preparation (e.g., sample tests), how assessment results are used in the placement process, and student ability to retest, must be clearly communicated to students (section 55522(b)).
- In conducting placement assessment for students with disabilities, necessary accommodations must be provided (section 55526(a)).
- Assessment must be provided to all non-exempt students, and exemption policies may be adopted pursuant to section 55532. Exempted students shall be notified of this status and may be given the opportunity to participate in placement assessment. Students must be made aware that they will lose their enrollment priority status if they do not participate in assessment, orientation, and education planning (section 58108). Therefore, all new students should be encouraged to participate in all of these core services.

Assessments must also be available to exempted students (see section 55532 for exemption criteria). Exempted students must be made aware that they will lose their priority status if they do not participate in assessments (section 58108).
Student assessments should reflect a variety of informational sources that create a profile of student strengths and weaknesses. This information forms a holistic "portrait" of each student, including math, English, ESL placement results; study and learning skills; aptitudes; goals; educational background and performance; and the need for special services. Multiple measures also allow the colleges to consider students’ prior employment or academic experiences, interviews and transcripts.

Two ongoing initiatives that will enhance statewide assessment efforts are the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) and the Common Assessment Initiative (CAI):

- The MMAP is a collaboration between the RP Group and Cal-PASS Plus. Through this effort, a data warehouse and analytical model for effective multiple measures assessment will be developed and tested in pilot colleges throughout the process to refine the analytic tools and user interface, test the tools and models using local college data supplied through the data warehouse, and disseminate final products designed to improve placement. For more information, see the Resources section below.

- Per the Student Success Act (SB 1456), and pursuant to California Education Code, section 78219, the CCCCO is developing a comprehensive, common assessment system, in collaboration with local colleges and the CAI, that promises to improve the accuracy of student placement in math, English and ESL courses, and to reduce unnecessary remediation. The common assessment system will address a broad range of CCC math, English, and ESL competencies and encompass test development, test preparation, test delivery, data collection, and multiple measures, and will use centralized, integrated technology solutions to support assessment and placement.

**Assessment Test Validation Process**

Assessment instruments must be evaluated on a regular basis (at least every six years) to ensure that they meet established criteria for validity and reliability, cultural/linguistic insensitivity and bias, and disproportionate impact. The CCCCO Assessment Workgroup (see Chapter 1) reviews materials submitted by colleges and second-party publishers in April and November of each year and determines the level and effective period of approval for the instrument in one of the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Approval</th>
<th>Effective Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probationary</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional</td>
<td>One year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full</td>
<td>Six years</td>
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The *Standards, Policies, and Procedures for the Evaluation of Assessment Instruments Used in the California Community Colleges* describes the studies that must be completed, documented, and submitted to the CCCCO to receive approval for use of assessment instruments. Among their responsibilities, colleges are required to validate a test’s cut scores to ensure that students receive appropriate levels of course placement. The test evaluation process requires the participation of faculty and staff representing multiple offices and departments of the college: Student Services (e.g., SSSP staff and the assessment unit), research, and basic skills discipline faculty. For guidelines and examples on how to conduct required studies effectively, please see...
the Matriculation Resources and Matriculation Research Monographs located on the CCCCO website on the **Assessment and Placement**¹ pages.

Title 5, section 55522 requires the Chancellor’s Office to maintain a list of instruments approved for use in community colleges. The list is published on the Chancellor's Office’s SSSP website on the **Assessment and Placement**² pages and is updated at the end of each test review period. Section 55522 also gives the Chancellor’s Office latitude to identify other measures of readiness that the colleges may use to assess students.

Below is a list of terms and definitions frequently used in relation to the Assessment Standards:

1) **Bias** refers to any cultural or linguistic partiality, insensitivity, or offensiveness in test content that could negatively impact specific student groups.

2) **Disproportionate impact** is defined in § 55502(e) of the title 5 regulations as “a condition where access to key resources and supports or academic success may be hampered by inequitable practices, policies, and approaches to student support or instructional practices affecting a specific group. For the purpose of assessment, disproportionate impact is when the percentage of persons from a particular racial, ethnic, gender, age, or disability group, who are directed to a particular service or course placement based on an assessment test or other measure is significantly different from the representation of that group in the population of persons being assessed, and that discrepancy is not justified by empirical evidence demonstrating that the assessment test or other measure is a valid and reliable predictor of performance in the relevant educational setting.”

3) **Reliability** refers to the consistency of the measurement each time it is used under the same conditions with the same subjects.

4) **Validity** is the single most important concern when evaluating an assessment instrument. It is not actually the test itself that is validated but the use of the test information. Validity evidence must support the interpretation and intended use of the placement assessment results. Colleges must provide two primary types of validity evidence:
   - **Content-related validity evidence** which addresses the extent to which course prerequisite knowledge and skills are measured by the test for all courses into which the test places students.
   - **Evidence addressing the adequacy of cut scores**, which may be demonstrated by either a judgmental approach (typically used for initial setting of cut scores) or one of the following two empirical approaches:
     - **Criterion-related validity evidence** (which is typically gathered when the test has not yet been used for course placement) addresses the extent to which scores on the placement assessment instrument are related to results of an appropriate criterion measure of student ability (e.g., final grade, midterm scores).

¹ [http://extranet.cccc.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/Assessment.aspx](http://extranet.cccc.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/Assessment.aspx)
² [http://extranet.cccc.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/Assessment.aspx](http://extranet.cccc.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/Assessment.aspx)
grade or test score, and instructor or student ratings of student’s abilities to meet course requirements).

- **Consequential-related validity evidence** (which is gathered after students have been placed into courses; typically 4-5 weeks into the semester) must address both (1) an instructor evaluation of the readiness of individual students to undertake the material of his/her course, and (2) each student’s evaluation of the appropriateness of his/her placement into that course.

**Assessment Resources:**
The Multiple Measures Assessment Project
http://rpgroup.org/projects/multiple-measures-assessment-project
The Common Assessment Initiative
http://ccassess.org/
The California Community College Assessment Association
http://www.cccaa.net
Listserv: contact Mark Samuels at msamuels@swccd.edu
*Use of Multiple Measures in Common Statewide Assessment Exams (2013)*
*A Framework for Evaluating the Technical Quality of Multiple Measures Used in California Community College Placement (2012)*
http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/Matriculation/Assessment/CCCCOMultipleMeasuresFramework2012.pdf
*Assessment Questions and Answers (2005)*
http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/Matriculation/Resources/AssessmentQAMarch2005.pdf
SSSP/Matriculation Resources and Matriculation Research Monographs on CCCCO website.
http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/Resources

**Early Assessment Program**
Implemented jointly in 2004 by the California State University (CSU), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the State Board of Education, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) determines high school students’ readiness to take college-level English and math courses and offers them opportunities to improve skills during their senior year. The Community College Early Assessment Pilot Program (Senate Bill 946, Scott, 2008) enables community colleges, local high schools and the local CSU campus to use the EAP to identify and address students unprepared for college courses. Section 99301 of the Education Code authorizes participating community colleges to use student EAP test results for placement in English and math courses.

The EAP was initially based on the Standards Testing and Reporting (STAR) accountability program for public K-12 schools. AB 484, effective January 1, 2014, eliminated the existing STAR accountability program (which included the California Standards Test (CST) and was the basis of the EAP) and established the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress.
(CAASPP). AB 484 further authorized that, beginning with the 2014–15 school year, the augmented CSTs in English language arts and mathematics are to be replaced by the grade 11 consortium computer-adaptive assessments in English and math for purposes of the EAP. High school juniors who are identified as “college ready” on the EAP are exempt from taking the CSU and participating California Community Colleges (CCC) placement tests for English and math. These students may directly enroll in college-level courses.

Previously, only 11th grade students who were eligible to take the CST for Algebra II or Summative High School Mathematics were eligible to participate in the math portion of the EAP. The new assessment allows for the EAP to be embedded in the exam with no additional questions required. This change will allow all California 11th grade students to participate in both sections of the EAP and receive early signals about their readiness for college level English and math courses.

Colleges accepting EAP results should keep their EAP Participation Surveys updated with the Chancellor’s Office, Student Services and Special Programs Division. Participating colleges designate an EAP Data College Administrator to access or assign access to the CCC EAP Online Databases to access reports and individual student score information.

**Resources**
- Chancellor’s Office EAP website
  [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP.aspx](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP.aspx)
- Participation Survey and College Administrator forms
  [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP/Resources.aspx](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP/Resources.aspx)
- List of community colleges accepting EAP test results
  [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP/AcceptingEAP.aspx](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EAP/AcceptingEAP.aspx)
- A doctoral dissertation conducted at California State University Fresno in 2013 examines the validity of the Early Assessment Program English examination relevant to community college student success.
  [http://search.proquest.com/docview/1417087280](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1417087280)
- An evaluation of the Early Assessment Program was completed in 2012 by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

**Prerequisites and Corequisites**

Title 5, section 55510, which addresses assessment, requires colleges to develop policies for establishing and periodically reviewing prerequisites, and to consider student challenges to prerequisites. Course prerequisites identify existing knowledge essential to succeed in that course. A single test score, or any other single assessment measure, cannot be used as a prerequisite.

Title 5, section 55003 allows colleges to base prerequisites in English, reading, or mathematics on content review or on content review with statistical validation. If a college intends to establish prerequisites by content review only, it must adopt a district board-approved plan that
addresses specific criteria outlined in § 55003. Title 5, section 55003 ties the establishment of prerequisites with the Student Equity Plan to ensure that prerequisite requirements do not have a disproportionate impact on students in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or disability.

The Guidelines for Title 5 Regulations Section 55003: Policies for Prerequisites, Corequisites and Advisories on Recommended Preparation contains detailed information on perquisites and corequisites (see Resources).

Resources

Guidelines for Title 5 Regulations Section 55003: Policies for Prerequisites, Corequisites and Advisories on Recommended Preparation (2012)
http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/Prerequisites/Prerequisites_Guidelines_55003%20Final.pdf
Student Success: The Case for Establishing Prerequisites Through Content Review (2010)
http://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/AppendixD-Resolution%209.11_Content_Review_Paper_0.pdf

Counseling, Advising, and Other Education Planning Services

Student counseling, advising and education planning services are central to SSSP services. Title 5, sections 55523, 55524, and 55525, as well as Education Code section 78212, require colleges to provide counseling and advising services, to create or update a student educational plan for all non-exempt students, and to provide timely follow-up services for at-risk students. Title 5, section 55034 further requires the colleges to provide counseling and other services for students on probation. The ultimate goal of counseling, advising, education planning and follow-up is to support all students in successfully meeting their educational goals.

Resources

Advancing Student Success in the California Community Colleges (2012)
http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/portals/0/executive/studentsuccesstaskforce/sstf_final_report_1-17-12_print.pdf
The Role of Counseling Faculty and Delivery of Counseling Services in the California Community Colleges (2012)
http://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/CounselingS12_0.pdf
Scaling Community College Interventions (2011)
http://asccc.org/node/174955

Student Education Plan

Title 5, section 55520 includes preparation of a Student Education Plan (SEP) as a required service of the colleges’ SSSP. In addition, section 55524 provides detail on expectations for the SEP and also requires colleges to assist students with SEP development. Section 55530 requires
non-exempt, first-time students to participate in the development of an SEP. Nonexempt students are also required by section 55530 to “express at least a broad educational intent upon admission” and to identify a course of study “after completing 15 semester units or 22 quarter units of degree-applicable credit course work, or prior to the end of the third semester or fourth quarter of enrollment.” Colleges, however, have the option to identify shorter timeframes in their policies.

The SEP is valuable for both planning and student progress as it may accomplish the following:

- Consolidates student information, including assessment results, in an electronic form accessible to students, staff and faculty.
- Promotes accountability of students and staff by recording specific objectives and responsibilities.
- Documents the criteria and rationale for establishing course and major recommendations.
- Facilitates referrals to other support services for assignment and follow-up.
- Assists in the tracking of student performance in classes and referrals and in determining which services are beneficial.

Title 5, section 55524 also defines two types of SEPs:

- Abbreviated, which are one to two terms in length and designed to meet immediate scheduling needs or for students for whom a comprehensive plan is not appropriate. For example, abbreviated plans may be completed prior to course enrollment for students who are completing a short-term certificate program or new students who have not declared an educational goal or course of study.
- Comprehensive, which must cover all of the terms needed for students to achieve their course of study. The comprehensive plan addresses the education goal and course of study requirements, “such as the requirements for the major, transfer, certificate, program, applicable course prerequisites or co-requisites, the need for basic skills, assessment for placement results, and the need for referral to other support and instructional services as appropriate. The comprehensive student education plan is tailored to meet the individual needs and interests of the student and may include other elements to satisfy participation requirements for programs such as EOPS, DSPS, CalWORKs, veterans’ education benefits, athletics, and others.”

Noncredit students should have a separate, designated noncredit SEP to address their specific goals. Some colleges may elect to use the same format as the abbreviated credit SEP, or may choose to develop a plan format that better suits noncredit student needs. The noncredit plan should help students in career development and college preparation (CDCP) programs to identify academic and career training pathways, in addition to course completion and progress. The plan should also identify instructional and student support resources that facilitate students’ goal attainment.
SEPs can either be program-specific or campus-wide, as described below. Colleges will need to consider campus and student needs, staff expertise and workload capabilities in choosing which is best for their students. Whether the SEP is developed through a specific program or through the institution as a whole, the SEP must be in electronic format and accessible to all necessary college staff, to avoid confusion for students from having multiple or duplicate SEPs.

**Program-specific.** The SEP can be developed by individual programs (e.g., Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Disabled Students Programs and Services, Financial Aid, Veterans’ Services, etc.) if it contains all of the required title 5 elements. Advantages include the ability to more closely tailor SEPs to address individual needs of students these programs serve and the ability to gather only the information directly needed by the programs’ statutory charge. In addition, program staff are more likely to use the SEP in a comprehensive way since its application is immediately and practically evident. The disadvantage is that the SEP must be modified if a student transitions out of the program.

**Campus-wide.** With this approach, an all-inclusive SEP is developed for each student. The campus-wide approach requires programs and divisions to collaborate to identify common concerns and create a comprehensive SEP. This approach has been successfully employed at many colleges.

Colleges can also implement a hybrid approach and develop a common SEP for the general student population while allowing special programs to develop unique SEPs.

Colleges should also plan to coordinate with the Education Planning Initiative (EPI) once it is complete. More information is available at the EPI website. The Chancellor’s Office is currently leading this effort, which seeks to develop a centralized, integrated technology solution to assist colleges and students with education planning and degree auditing.

When formulating an SEP, some important questions should be considered:
- Does the SEP clearly express what the student needs to be successful?
- Can the information be readily entered into the college’s and the Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (MIS)?
- Does the plan allow for modifications of a student’s objectives?
- How long does it take to complete?
- Does the plan allow for double majors, degrees and certificates or transfer?
- Is the plan available in different languages or are multi-lingual personnel available to assist with development?
- Can the plan be formatted to reflect regulations applicable to specific populations; for example, veterans?
- Does the plan document referrals?
- Can each relevant campus office access and provide input to the SEP (e.g., Financial Aid, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Disabled Students Programs and Counseling)?
The SEP should be a dynamic document reflecting changes in students’ status, academic goals, major, and academic performance.

**Academic Interventions and Student Follow-Up**

Title 5, section 55525 requires colleges to evaluate the academic progress of, and provide support services to, at-risk students. As part of this evaluation, colleges must track academic progress and refer students experiencing academic difficulty to specialized services or curriculum offerings pursuant to title 5, section 55523. Follow-up services, including counseling, shall be targeted to students who are enrolled in basic skills courses (credit or noncredit), have not identified an education goal and course of study, are on academic or progress probation, or are facing dismissal. For noncredit courses, follow-up should be directed to students who are enrolled in basic skills courses or students who have not identified an education goal and course of study.

The SSSP student follow-up process is designed to provide timely intervention and foster student success. Many California community colleges have adopted computerized “early alert” systems that allow instructional faculty to report student difficulties in a consistent and timely manner, so follow-up services can be provided. Students with undeclared educational goals, enrolled in pre-collegiate basic skills courses, on probation, or not making satisfactory progress are referred to services such as tutoring, child care, job counseling or placement, academic and career counseling. Follow-up for noncredit students may also include review and update of existing SEPs, informational sessions on specific career options and skills inventory tests, advice and resources for foreign degree or transcript evaluation, or addressing behavioral issues that interfere with student learning or classroom instruction, course progress (e.g., receipt of “no pass”) and repeatability limits.

**Resources**

- *Education Planning Initiative*
  [http://cccedplan.org/](http://cccedplan.org/)
- *Can Improved Student Services Boost Community College Student Success? (2010)*
- *Promoting Partnerships for Student Success (2009)*
- *Getting Back on Track: Effects of a Community College Program for Probationary Students (2009)*