
The Role of Multiple Measures Placement and Individualized Learning Support in Effective Acceleration

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University of Wisconsin Colleges

- Two-year access institution
- Statewide
- 13 campuses and an online program
- Part of the University of Wisconsin System
- 14,000 students
- Campus size 460 to 2200 students



UW Colleges Writing Program

Three semester sequence of reading-intensive core writing courses:

- a) a developmental writing or a second language writing course
 - b) a credit-bearing, first-semester composition course
 - c) a core transfer research course
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Types of Acceleration in the UW Colleges

Acceleration through the placement process with individualized support

1. Accelerating students from developmental to credit-bearing composition
 2. Reducing developmental reading and writing coursework to a single semester (with a repeat grade option)
 3. Accelerating students from first semester composition to the core research course
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Overview of UW Colleges Writing Program Model

1. Multiple measures placement
 2. Individualized developmental support
 3. Acceleration with writing studio course
 4. Cohesive curricular design approach to writing program development
 5. Reading-intensive writing courses
 6. Faculty development and instructional resources
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1) Multiple Measures Placement

Using multiple measures placement (assessing multiple indicators of college readiness) to identify students who benefit from developmental coursework or acceleration rather than relying on a single standardized placement test score

Components

- University of Wisconsin System Placement Test (WEPT)
 - ACT English and reading scores
 - High school grades
 - Information about previously taken high school, transfer, and dual credit English courses
 - Student questionnaire with a self-assessment
 - An additional developmental education portfolio assessment process
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2) Individualized Developmental Support

Using the placement process to provide students with individualized support based on their learning needs and academic background

Options

- Acceleration without required support coursework
 - Studio writing course
 - Academic reading (core reading course)
 - College reading and study strategies
 - Learning skills
 - English for speakers of other languages courses
 - Campus-based academic support programs
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3) Acceleration with Writing Studio Course

Accelerating students with a corequisite writing studio course

- Provides individualized instruction in a workshop setting
 - Has very small class size (maximum 4 students)
 - Focuses on reading and writing assignments for concurrent courses
 - Enhances students' development as unique college writers
 - Emphasizes individual learning goals
 - Addresses non-cognitive learning issues
 - Offered for variable credit (1, 2, or 3 times a week)
 - Can be taken with all writing program courses
 - Includes a second year course
 - Usually meets in a writing center or computer classroom
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4) Cohesive Curricular Design Approach to Writing Program Development

Using a backward design approach to writing program development that helps underprepared and at-risk students successfully complete the core writing requirement

Program Emphases

1. Supporting the transition to college writing for students who are accelerated or placed into credit-bearing courses
 2. Providing ongoing support to students who begin in developmental courses
 3. Building a cohesive curriculum from developmental and ESOL courses to a two course first-year writing sequence
 4. Emphasizing pedagogical strategies to support students who are at risk of not being retained to higher education
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5) Reading-intensive Writing Courses

Incorporating critical reading throughout the entire writing program

- Critical reading instruction and learning activities
- A variety of different types of source-based writing assignments

Purposes

1. Reduces the number of students who take developmental reading
 2. Addresses barriers to writing program completion identified through program assessment and research
 3. Provides all students with college-level reading experiences
 4. Connects reading to writing for students
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6) Faculty Development and Instructional Resources

Providing professional development activities and resources (informed by placement) to support the teaching of a cohesive curriculum for underprepared students

Components

- Online workshops
 - Face-to-face workshops and seminars
 - Online instructional resources
 - Model course materials
 - Online reading groups
 - New mentoring program with feedback on teaching materials
 - Compensated course redesign work (grant-funded)
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Placement Research & Assessment

1. Analysis of student placement records
 2. Assessment of placement process
 3. Research on student success outcomes in relation to placement
 4. Analysis of student writing in relation to placement across two or more semesters from multiple courses
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Requirements for Accelerating Students in the UW Colleges

- A fully developed campus multiple measures placement process
 - Required recordkeeping and accompanying department-level assessment
 - Use of college readiness benchmarks to place students into degree-credit courses within the context of a student's overall multiple measures placement profile
 - Availability of campus studio writing program
 - Availability of developmental reading course for some students
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Benefits of Using Placement as an Acceleration Tool

- Some students are misplaced into developmental education based on a single standardized test score, and they don't need any support with acceleration.
 - The placement process identifies students who would and would not benefit from acceleration.
 - Campuses can tailor placement to local courses and academic support programs.
 - Students receive a very individualized approach to required or recommended support coursework with acceleration.
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Indicators for Potential Acceleration

- Borderline test scores or low test scores with high grades
 - Timed essay that shows student is ready to learn college-level writing strategies, even if not demonstrating them yet
 - Questionnaire
 - Limited at-risk academic background indicators
 - Strong high school curriculum
 - Self-assessment indicating readiness
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Example of an Accelerated Student

Placement Profile

- ACT English 13/Reading 16
- WEPT developmental reading and writing placement
- US educated multilingual writer
- Good grades in challenging high school college prep courses
- Placement writing sample demonstrated an ability to organize and revise an academic text

Placed in English 101 with an academic reading course

Successfully completed two-course degree-credit composition sequence with high grades

Our Next Steps

1. University of Wisconsin System Acceleration Project
2. University of Wisconsin Developmental Education Research and Development Initiative

Emphases

- New web resources and training for acceleration through placement
 - Researching acceleration and developmental education outcomes for students on 10 campuses
 - Closely analyzing writing from accelerated students in their first year in relation to their placement profiles
 - Assessing instructor and student work in revised courses
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Issues for Further Exploration

National discussions on developmental education need to focus more on the role of placement in writing and reading programs:

- More careful assessment of student readiness for college
 - Limits of standardized test scores
 - More accurate localized and contextual placement
 - Purpose of placement at open-admission institutions compared to more selective institutions
 - Curricular design informed by placement research
 - Importance of faculty development and professional resources in support of program mission, especially for access institutions
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Contact Information

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