



## **Placement by Departmental Exam Policy**

Approved by the University Curriculum Committee 10 May 2019

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### **Introduction and Rationale**

This policy is intended to work in concert with the existing UW System Placement Exam Policy, the Credit by Departmental Exam Policy, policies concerning awarding advanced standing credit (AP, CLEP, IB etc.) and transfer credit.

A gap exists with these policies that is noticeable as the university has moved toward enforcing course requisites. There are instances in which academic preparation (or the way the academic preparation is acquired) is identified as necessary for a student to be successful in a course, but it cannot be specified as a course requisite because it does not fit with any of the ways the university documents course credit that can then be used to meet a course requisite. Examples that have been identified include audition requirements for music courses where the student must demonstrate a level of proficiency with a musical instrument or foreign language courses where it is not uncommon for students to have acquired proficiency to meet the requisites for an advanced course without ever having taken a formal course.

In cases where a student has acquired knowledge, skills or competencies through experiences that are academic in nature and where there is an equivalent UW-Madison course, it is possible to offer credit by departmental exam which can then be used to meet course requisites. However, a student may not need the equivalent course for credit and simply wish to demonstrate competency to take course(s) at a higher level which require that competency. The departmental placement exam is a systematic, documented way that will allow a student to demonstrate the academic knowledge, skills or experience required at a level that replaces the taking of a requisite for-credit course.

The value of a departmental placement exam is that the results of the exam can be entered in SIS and potentially utilized for any course requiring that requisite. Currently, students need to seek instructor permission to enroll and that permission needs to be entered in SIS for each class section for which it is needed.

Consistent with University of Wisconsin policy and federal and state law, students with disabilities

who are eligible for test accommodations on standard class exams are also eligible for accommodations on departmental placement exams unless doing so fundamentally alters the nature of the exam or lowers a program standard. Students or departments can contact the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center ([mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu](mailto:mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu)) for more information about test accommodations.

For the purposes of this policy the word “exam” or “examination” will cover all potential methods of evaluation of student learning and preparedness.

### Eligibility and Limitations

A student must be classified as a degree-seeking undergraduate (i.e. career = UGRD). They must be in good academic standing.

Departmental placement exam results may not be used to fulfill a degree requirement.

Departments may place limitations on the number of times a student may attempt a departmental placement exam.

Credits are not awarded for departmental placement exams.

Fees may not be assessed for departmental placement exams.

### Department Requirements

It is up to each department to determine whether it will offer any placement exams. There is no requirement or expectation that it will be offered but if a departmental placement exam is offered, it must follow these policy guidelines. Generally, departmental placement exams will cover material in a lower level course or at the entry point for a course sequence.

Department faculty will determine the standards, methods, and procedures for evaluation.

Departments may use any evaluation method or combination of methods including:

- Written examination
- Oral examination
- Performance evaluation (practical exam)
- Examination of completed work and/or records presented and defended by the student (portfolio).
- Other methods consistent with evaluation of student learning in the discipline

The content, quality and quantity of material covered in the departmental examination is determined by the department offering the placement exam.

If the department also offers credit by departmental exam, the department must clearly state whether each exam they offer is a departmental placement exam (no credit awarded) or a departmental credit by exam (awards credit).

Other departments may choose to allow course placement using an exam developed by a different unit, but it is their responsibility to make sure that over time the placement exam remains aligned with their reasons for using it.

Departments that use a departmental placement exam scores in course requisites are responsible for

assessing the performance of students who gain entry to a course based on that exam to make sure that they are as successful in the course as students who were eligible for the course based on course work or other requirements. Departments will also be responsible for determining which course requisites will need to be updated to reflect the use of departmental placement exam results and requesting those updates via the course proposal process.

#### Approval to Offer a Placement Exam

Before developing a departmental placement exam, a department must have approval the University Curriculum Committee. The approval process will be handled through the existing course approval governance process. Departmental placement exams will be proposed by the department that offers courses in that disciplinary area. The approval process will require the department to outline and justify the requirements stated above for review and approval. The proposal will then be reviewed by the school or college followed by the University Curriculum Committee.

Once a departmental placement exam is approved it will be listed on a master list of all available placement exams.

Departments will be required to review and assess all placement exam opportunities at least once every 3 years to determine whether the exam is properly placing students.

For departmental placement exams that are not reviewed, approval will expire, and they will be removed from the list of available departmental placement exams.

#### Administration of Exam

Departmental placement exams must be administered and/or supervised by a member of the faculty or academic staff.

The department is responsible for validating the identity of the student prior to administering the exam, by verifying the student's identity (e.g. checking the student's Wiscard, authenticating via UW NetID, etc.).

The department is responsible for determining whether the student is eligible to take the exam before administering the exam. If the department administers an exam to a student, it is assumed that they have verified their eligibility and identity.

When seeking approval to offer a departmental placement exam, the department must submit the following for creation of the appropriate exam information in SIS:

1. A description of the departmental placement exam, not to exceed 30-characters;
2. A score range that will be assigned to students (a minimum and a maximum score is required).

Departments must determine how the departmental examination scores will be used to correspond to course placement (e.g., if the score range is between 1-5, the department must indicate which score must be obtained for placement into specific courses).

Once approval has been granted to administer departmental examinations and the set-up in SIS has been completed, when a department administers a departmental placement examination, results of the departmental placement exam must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar within 7 business days of scoring the exam/evaluation for all students who attempted the placement exam, even if the attempt is not successful. The Office of the Registrar will create an online form for submission of the departmental placement exam results which will required the submission of the following data

elements:

1. Student's name, campus ID number and email address
2. Departmental examination name (from drop-down of approved exams)
3. Student's departmental examination score (from a drop-down of approved score ranges)

Any course requisites build to use the departmental examination score for course enrollment eligibility must specify the score required.