

Evaluation of COM English Placement Methods, 2015-16 through 2019-20

Assembly Bill 705 (Title 5, § 55003 and 55522) requires all California Community Colleges to design placement methods that maximize the probability that students will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math/quantitative reasoning within one year of their first enrollment in the discipline. Colleges are allowed two years to pilot placement methods, starting in fall 2019, and are required to evaluate placement in pre-transfer level courses compared to direct placement in transfer-level courses.

To evaluate the first year of AB705 implementation, this analysis provides data on course success and one-year throughput through transfer-level English for COM students enrolling in their first English course in fall 2019 and tracked through summer 2020. To gauge the initial impact of AB705 against previous placement methods, these outcomes from the fall 2019 cohort are also compared to previous fall cohorts when students were placed via multiple measures (MMAP, fall 2017 and fall 2018), and were placed using placement testing (fall 2015 and 2016).

Students included in this analysis are those whose first enrollment in an English course at COM, including courses in COM's developmental English sequence (ENGL92, 98, 98SL, 120, 120SL, 120AC), in the required transfer-level gateway English course (ENGL150), or in HUM101 (counting in this analysis as a pre-transfer level English course). Students whose initial enrollment was at a higher level than ENGL150 are excluded. Only students whose informed educational goal is AA/AS degree or transfer to a 4-year institution are included.

Key Findings:

- One-year throughput through transfer-level English increased each year, from 39% among students starting English in fall 2015 to 59% in fall 2019.
- High course withdrawal rates in spring 2020 due to the COVID pandemic appear to have had a small negative impact on one-year throughput rates for the fall 2019 cohort.
- One-year throughput increased among all race/ethnic groups, during MMAP and AB705, particularly among Hispanic/Latinx students, though a large throughput gap between White students and Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, and Black/African-American students remained in fall 2019.
- The proportion of students whose initial enrollment was in transfer-level English increased from 34% in fall 2015 to 61% in fall 2019.
- Placement into transfer-level English increased among all race/ethnic groups, particularly Hispanic/Latinx students, though in all years, White students were more likely than Hispanic/Latinx, African-American/Black, and Asian students to begin enrollment in transfer-level English.
- With the exception of students in the lowest high school GPA band (2.1 or lower), students enrolling directly in ENGL150 had the highest overall throughput rates.
- In fall 2019, for students in the lowest high school GPA band, enrollment in HUM101 as a pre-transfer English course yielded the highest course success and one-year throughput rates.

- For students in the 2.2-2.7 GPA band, fall 2019 throughput rates supported the recommended placement into ENGL150 with the corequisite ENGL150C, but not placement into ENGL120.
- For those with no high school GPA information, the highest throughput rates in fall 2019 were in ENGL150 with ENGL150C, followed by ENGL150 alone.
- While HUM101 had high course success rates, one-year throughput was generally lower for students starting in HUM101 than for students taking other pre-transfer English or enrolling in English courses concurrently with HUM101, with the exception of students in the 0.0-2.1 high school GPA band.

Enrollment, Course Success and One-Year Throughput through Transfer-Level English, Fall 2015-2019

Enrollment in ENGL92, ENGL98 and ENGL120 decreased substantially during the MMAP placement period and as AB705 was implemented, while enrollment in HUM101 and ENGL150 increased. The proportion of students whose initial enrollment was in transfer-level English increased from 34% in fall 2015 to 61% in fall 2019. Course success and one-year throughput in ENGL150 decreased as enrollment increased in fall 2018, but did not change significantly in fall 2019. One-year throughput through transfer-level English increased in fall 2016 as the success rate in ENGL150 increased that term, and again in fall 2017 and fall 2018 as MMAP was implemented. In fall 2019, the overall throughput rate rose slightly to 59%. While course success in HUM101 was at or above 70% each year, the one-year throughput rate for those students was 40% or below.

Table 1. Enrollment, Course Success and One-Year Throughput through Transfer English by First English Course at COM, Fall 2015-2019

	Fall 2015			Fall 2016			Fall 2017			Fall 2018			Fall 2019		
	# Enrolled	% Course success	% 1-year through put	# Enrolled	% Course success	% 1-year through put	# Enrolled	% Course success	% 1-year through put	# Enrolled	% Course success	% 1-year through put	# Enrolled	% Course success	% 1-year through put
ENGL62	11	68%	0%	10	68%	0%									
ENGL92	68	59%	1%	59	70%	0%	37	59%	0%	19	61%	4%	1	0%	0%
ENGL98	29	59%	3%	38	63%	7%	25	40%	4%	18	50%	6%	9	50%	0%
ENGL098SL	8	88%	13%	5	100%	0%	15	100%	0%	13	92%	10%	10	60%	0%
ENGL120AC	69	86%	59%	42	81%	63%	25	72%	43%	21	62%	45%	19	79%	42%
ENGL120SL	9	100%	67%	4	40%	60%	11	91%	82%	11	82%	73%	14	71%	50%
ENGL120	95	68%	47%	116	74%	59%	135	62%	48%	87	68%	42%	31	61%	32%
HUM101							21	73%	40%	65	75%	37%	103	70%	36%
ENGL150	147	68%	73%	161	78%	81%	187	78%	82%	246	72%	77%	224	74%	74%
ENGL150/C*													34	64%	79%
Total (Unduplicated)	436	68%	39%	435	74%	49%	452	69%	52%	463	71%	57%	423	71%	59%

Course Success and Throughput by Initial Course and GPA Band

One-year throughput rates by high school GPA band show that with the exception of the lowest GPA band, students most consistently achieved the highest one-year throughput by enrolling directly in ENGL150 (see Table 3 on the following page).

- Students in the 2.8-4.0+ GPA band consistently had the highest throughput rates when placed into ENGL150, which is the recommended placement in COM's AB705 plan.
- For those in the 2.2-2.7 GPA band, the recommended placement is ENGL120 (one level below transfer) or ENGL150 with the corequisite course (ENGL150C). Enrollment in the corequisite course had a higher throughout rate than enrollment in ENGL150 alone, though the group size is small. Just 3 students enrolled in ENGL120, with a throughput rate of 33%. These results support the recommendation for placement into ENGL150C but not ENGL120.
- For students with no GPA information, the largest number placed into ENGL150 in all semesters. Throughput rates were consistently highest for that course. In fall 2019, the 16 students enrolled in ENGL150/C had exceptionally high throughput (94%).
- For students in the lowest GPA band (2.1 or lower), the recommended placement is ENGL120AC. Few students have self-reported a high school GPA of 2.1 or lower, so one-year throughput rates varied greatly, and assessment by specific course patterns is inconclusive. In fall 2019, when AB705 placements were in effect, students enrolled in HUM101 had the highest one-year throughput, 44%, though in fall 2018 it was just 14% (see table on the following page). Though course success was higher for students enrolling in ENGL120AC than for ENGL150 (alone or with the corequisite ENGL150C), throughput was 33% for both ENGL120AC and ENGL150C. Because the number of enrollments was small, it may be prudent to assess the data from the 2020-21 before determining whether to recommend a different placement for students in this GPA band.
- In fall 2019, with the exception of students in the <2.1 GPA band, course throughput for students enrolled in ENGL150C was higher than the course success rate, indicating that students who did not successfully complete ENGL150 that term reenrolled in spring 2019 and successfully completed. There's a similar pattern for ENGL150. In each case, these throughput rates were higher than for courses one level below transfer, even those with high success rates, suggesting that students are more likely to complete transfer English if they repeat ENGL150 than if they start in a one-level-below-transfer course.
- In general, HUM101 had acceptable course success rates (i.e., above COM's institutional set standard of 70%), but relatively low 1-year throughput rates. Additional analysis on HUM101 course-taking patterns and throughput starts on page 7 of this report.

Table 3. Enrollment, Course Success and One-Year Throughput through Transfer English by High School GPA Band and First English Course at COM, Fall Semesters 2017-2019

		Fall 2017				Fall 2018				Fall 2019			
		# Enrolled	# Passed	% Course success	% 1-year through- put	# Enrolled	# Passed	% Course success	% 1-year through- put	# Enrolled	# Passed	% Course success	% 1-year through- put
0.0 – 2.1	ENGL92	5	3	40%	0%	2	0	0%	50%				
	ENGL98	3	1	33%	33%	1	0	0%	0%				
	HUM101	1	0	0%	0%	8	4	50%	14%	9	7	78%	44%
	ENGL120	9	2	22%	25%	13	6	46%	38%				
	ENGL120AC	3	2	67%	0%	5	2	40%	25%	3	2	67%	33%
	ENGL150	2	2	100%	100%	7	3	43%	43%	10	2	20%	30%
	ENGL150/C*									3	1	33%	33%
2.2 – 2.7	ENGL92	7	3	46%	0%	3	3	67%	0%				
	ENGL98	2	1	50%	0%	7	3	43%	0%	2	0	0%	0%
	HUM101	7	6	86%	40%	17	13	76%	13%	17	10	59%	18%
	ENGL120	58	34	59%	40%	40	26	65%	31%	3	2	67%	33%
	ENGL120AC	1	1	100%	0%	8	4	50%	25%	1	1	100%	100%
	ENGL150	11	6	55%	55%	22	13	59%	67%	22	15	75%	68%
	ENGL150/C*									5	3	75%	80%
2.8 – 4.0+	ENGL92	4	3	86%	0%	2	1	67%	0%				
	ENGL98	1	0	0%	0%	3	1	33%	0%	3	1	33%	0%
	HUM101	9	8	89%	56%	28	22	79%	56%	24	20	83%	46%
	ENGL120	42	28	67%	55%	20	16	80%	56%	8	7	88%	25%
	ENGL120AC	9	7	78%	67%	3	3	100%	67%	6	6	100%	50%
	ENGL150	109	86	79%	86%	143	110	77%	83%	91	75	82%	84%
	ENGL150/C*									10	6	60%	70%
No GPA	ENGL92	21	16	62%	0%	12	7	65%	0%	1	0	0%	0%
	ENGL98	19	8	42%	0%	7	5	71%	20%	4	3	100%	0%
	HUM101	4	2	40%	20%	12	10	83%	42%	53	35	66%	36%
	ENGL120	26	20	77%	65%	14	11	79%	58%	20	10	50%	35%
	ENGL120AC	12	8	67%	36%	5	4	80%	80%	9	6	67%	33%
	ENGL150	65	51	78%	80%	74	51	69%	71%	101	70	71%	71%
	ENGL150/C*									16	11	69%	94%

**Students enrolled in both ENGL150 and the corequisite course and are not included in the ENGL150 row. Success metrics reflect the course grade for ENGL150, not for ENGL150C.*

Enrollment and One-Year Throughput by Race/Ethnicity

Between fall 2015 and fall 2019, one-year throughput through transfer-level English improved from 29% to 55% among students identifying as Hispanic/Latinx; from 61% to 72% among White students (Table 4). Though the numbers are small and the pattern is somewhat inconsistent, throughput also increased from 50% to 58% among Asian students, from 6% to 50% among African-American/Black students, and from 35% to 70% for multiracial students. In fall 2019, White students had a significantly higher one-year throughput rate than Hispanic, Black/African-American, or Asian students. Throughput by initial course enrollment is not shown due to small cell sizes.

Table 4. Enrollment and One-Year Throughput through Transfer-Level English by Race/Ethnicity, Fall Semesters 2015-2019

	Fall 2015		Fall 2016		Fall 2017		Fall 2018		Fall 2019	
	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput
Asian	19	50%	23	78%	21	55%	27	57%	23	58%
Black or African American	25	6%	25	22%	17	50%	18	24%	16	50%
Hispanic	149	29%	153	33%	153	38%	169	47%	141	55%
Multi-Racial	28	35%	21	77%	21	57%	23	71%	25	70%
White	156	61%	168	64%	168	67%	163	70%	133	72%

In all years, White students were far more likely than Hispanic/Latinx, African-American/Black, and Asian students to begin enrollment in transfer-level English (see Table 5 on the next page). Between fall 2015 and fall 2019, initial placement into transfer-level English increased from 37% to 48% among Asian students; from 20% to 60% among Hispanic/Latinx students, and from 54% to 72% among White students. Though the numbers are small and the patterns somewhat inconsistent, the numbers also improved for African-American/Black students, from 8% in fall 2015 to 50% in fall 2019, and from 46% to 80% among multiracial students.

Table 5. Enrollment in First English Course at COM by Race/Ethnicity,
Fall Semesters 2015-2019

		Fall 2015		Fall 2016		Fall 2017		Fall 2018		Fall 2019	
		# Enrolled	%	# Enrolled	%	# Enrolled	%	# Enrolled	%	# Enrolled	%
Asian	ENGL150	7	37%	7	30%	10	48%	13	48%	11	48%
	HUM101					1	5%	3	11%	8	35%
	ENGL120	2	11%	11	48%	5	24%	5	19%	2	9%
	ENGL120AC	6	32%	1	4%			3	11%	3	13%
	ENGL98	1	5%	2	9%	2	10%			2	9%
	ENGL92	1	5%	1	4%	3	14%	3	11%		
	ENGL62	2	11%	1	4%						
Black or African American	ENGL150	2	8%	4	16%	6	35%	4	22%	8	50%
	HUM101					4	24%	10	56%	7	44%
	ENGL120	5	20%	3	12%	4	24%	1	6%		
	ENGL120AC	5	20%	6	24%	1	6%	1	6%	1	6%
	ENGL98	3	12%	1	4%	1	6%	1	6%	1	6%
	ENGL92	9	36%	10	40%	2	12%	1	6%	1	6%
	ENGL62	1	4%	1	4%						
Hispanic	ENGL150	30	20%	32	21%	34	22%	82	49%	62	44%
	ENGL150/C*									23	16%
	HUM101					9	6%	20	12%	46	33%
	ENGL120	29	19%	50	33%	70	46%	43	25%	9	6%
	ENGL120AC	33	22%	15	10%	14	9%	12	7%	8	6%
	ENGL98	17	11%	20	13%	11	7%	10	6%	1	1%
	ENGL92	36	24%	30	20%	16	10%	9	5%		
ENGL62	4	3%	6	4%							
Multi-Racial	ENGL150	13	46%	15	71%	12	57%	17	74%	20	80%
	HUM101					1	5%	5	22%	4	16%
	ENGL120	8	29%	4	19%	6	29%	1	4%	3	12%
	ENGL120AC	4	14%					1	4%		
	ENGL98			1	5%	1	5%	1	4%		
	ENGL92	3	11%	1	5%	1	5%				
White	ENGL150	85	54%	93	55%	113	67%	110	67%	90	68%
	ENGL150/C*									6	5%
	HUM101					4	2%	18	11%	24	18%
	ENGL120	44	28%	38	23%	31	18%	28	17%	10	8%
	ENGL120AC	12	8%	18	11%	7	4%	3	2%	4	3%
	ENGL98	5	3%	8	5%	7	4%	5	3%	4	3%
	ENGL92	9	6%	9	5%	8	5%	3	2%		
ENGL62	1	1%	2	1%							

Spring 2020 Withdrawal Rates due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In spring 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to remote instruction, emergency approval was offered to all students wishing to withdraw from their courses and receive a grade of “EW” (early withdrawal). The deadline to withdraw with a “W” grade fell after the date of transition to remote learning (3/16/20), so “W” grades may have increased due to the shutdown as well.

To assess whether course withdrawals impacted the one-year throughput rate for the fall 2019 cohort, the spring 2020 grades in ENGL150 for students in the fall 2019 cohort who did not complete transfer-level English in fall 2019 and enrolled in ENGL150 the following spring are compared to students with the same enrollment pattern in the previous two years. For the fall 2019 cohort, the grade distribution shows just 4% no-pass grades, compared to 14% in spring 2018 and 10% in spring 2017, suggesting that at least some students who would have received a no-pass grade elected to withdraw instead. Withdrawal rates were substantially higher in spring 2020, with 36% of students receiving wither a “W” or “EW” grade. These numbers suggest that approximately 10-20 students who otherwise might have successfully completed ENGL150 elected to withdraw due to the pandemic. Had they successfully completed, the one-year throughput rate might have ranged from 61%-63% rather than 59%.

Table 6. Enrollment and Outcome in ENGL150: Students with initial English enrollment in Fall who didn’t complete transfer-level English in the fall and enrolled in English 150 the following Spring

	Fall 2017 cohort (Spring 2018 enrollment in ENGL150)		Fall 2018 cohort (Spring 2019 enrollment in ENGL150)		Fall 2019 cohort (Spring 2020 enrollment in ENGL150)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
C or higher	89	81%	69	70%	46	58%
Did not pass	11	10%	14	14%	3	4%
W	10	9%	16	16%	16	20%
EW					13	16%
IX					2	3%

Additional Analysis: HUM101 as First English Enrollment, Fall 2019

In Fall 2019, 103 students who had not previously enrolled in English at COM enrolled in HUM101. The large majority enrolled in HUM101 (80%) did not take HUM101 in conjunction with another English course; among this group, the one-year throughput rate was 26%, compared with 65% of students who enrolled in an English course without concurrent HUM101 enrolment.

- There are few students in the lowest GPA band (0.0-2.1). Among them, the highest throughput rate was among the 7 students who enrolled in HUM101 in fall 2019 and continued to transfer English in spring or summer 2020 (43%).

- Among students with no GPA information, those who enrolled in HUM101 and another English course concurrently, or enrolled in English but not HUM101 had higher throughput than those who enrolled in HUM101 only.
- Students in the 2.2-2.7 and 2.8-4.0+ GPA bands had the highest throughput rates when they enrolled in an English course of any level, with or without concurrent enrollment in HUM101.
- In fall 2019, HUM101 as a pre-transfer English course appears to be meeting the intended purpose of AB705 for students in the lowest GPA band, though these results are based on small group sizes. The law permits colleges to pilot innovative curriculum for two years. Students in HUM101 should continue to exhibit throughput rates at or above those of students placing in one-level below transfer (ENGL120 or 120AC) or directly into transfer-level. The two-year timeframe can allow for larger sample sizes for comparison over time.

Table 7. Enrollment Patterns in HUM101 and Other English Courses and One-year Throughput by Course Combination and GPA Band, Fall 2019

Course-taking pattern	GPA band	# Enrolled	% 1-year throughput
ENGL98-150/150C, without concurrent HUM101	0.0 – 2.1	14	31%
	2.2 – 2.7	31	64%
	2.8 – 4.0+	118	71%
	No GPA	157	63%
	Group total	320	65%
HUM101 Only	0.0 – 2.1	7	43%
	2.2 – 2.7	15	7%
	2.8 – 4.0+	19	32%
	No GPA	41	27%
	Group total	82	26%
ENGL150 + HUM101	2.2 – 2.7	1	100%
	2.8 – 4.0+	3	100%
	No GPA	7	86%
	Group total	11	91%
ENGL150/C + HUM101	0.0 – 2.1	1	0%
	No GPA	2	50%
	Group total	3	33%
ENGL120 + HUM101	2.8 – 4.0+	1	100%
	No GPA	2	50%
	Group total	3	67%
ENGL120AC + HUM101	0.0 – 2.1	1	100%
	2.2 – 2.7	1	100%
	Group total	2	100%
ENGL120SL + HUM101	2.8 – 4.0+	1	100%
	Group total	1	100%
ENGL098SL + HUM101	No GPA	1	0%
	Group total	1	0%