



**BASIC SKILLS TESTING FOR COLLEGE
PLACEMENT POLICY**

#4-13

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POLICY

North Island College is committed to helping its students succeed in their coursework. It is also committed to making its courses and programs accessible. Therefore, applicants may use basic skills testing to meet any program and course entry requirements. Basic skills testing includes, but is not limited to, mathematics, reading comprehension and writing skills.

PURPOSE

1. All program areas will use basic skills placement testing as an alternate access method for applicants who are unable to provide documentation of previously met prerequisites as stated in the North Island College credit calendar.
2. Placement testing may only be used for initial admission to the College or program. If a North Island College student has completed a prerequisite course, but has failed to achieve the required prerequisite grade, the student may not immediately use placement testing as a way to meet the prerequisite. A reasonable time for upgrading must have elapsed between the course failure and the placement testing, normally one (1) semester.
3. Placement testing at North Island College is conducted in accordance with the Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement and the Code of Fair Testing Practices (U.S.).
4. The Placement Testing Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the service is carried out in accordance with the above codes. Decisions about test selection and cut-offs are made in consultation with the program areas or relevant Department and according to the following principles:

- Entry level testing at North Island College is administered to "place" applicants, not to screen them out of programs. Therefore, tests chosen must be constructed and data must be available such that applicants who do not meet the entry requirements for a course or program can then be placed in appropriate upgrading courses without the need for further testing;
 - Face validity and predictive validity are the first two criteria against which a test is evaluated for adoption;
 - It must be possible to administer the tests at any North Island College Campus or College Centre; and
 - The Coordinator is responsible for developing and monitoring the operations and standards to ensure quality and consistency of entry level testing across the College region. At times, the Coordinator may call together an Advisory Committee.
5. Normally, test results will be communicated to applicants by faculty in a face-to-face session. Plain language will be used when interpreting the test results. The results will also be available in writing.
 6. Course or program placements may not be overruled except by instructional faculty through a prerequisite waiver, and only after consultation with the assessment faculty.
 7. Notwithstanding the previous clause, when applicants have met the prerequisites through documentation, the results of placement testing may only be used in an advisory capacity; they may not be used to override the documented prerequisites.
 8. The screening, administration, invigilation, marking, interpretation, feedback and storage of placement tests are conducted in accordance with the statements in this policy and in compliance with the Placement Testing Administration Procedures Manual.
 9. Placement testing of individuals with documented disabilities which require accommodations will be conducted by faculty in Services for Students with Disabilities.
 10. Staff who make decisions about accommodations and test modification for individuals with disabilities must be knowledgeable about existing research on the effects of a particular disability on test performance. Those who modify tests must have appropriate psychometric expertise.
 11. Placement testing of individuals with literacy/Adult Basic Education Fundamental or English as a Second Language issues will be conducted by the program faculty unless otherwise directed.
 12. Applicants to North Island College programs who reside outside the College region may write the basic skills tests in their community as per the procedures identified in the Placement Testing Procedures Manual.

GUIDELINES

1. Screening Applicants for Placement Testing

Each Campus or College Centre will make every effort to ensure that applicants are screened for placement testing in accordance with the procedures in the Placement Testing Administration Procedures Manual so that applicants are directed to individual testing if required.

2. Preparing Students for Placement Testing

North Island College will make every effort to prepare applicants for placement testing. North Island College will:

- Provide written and oral information about placement testing to applicants;
- Provide applicants for Adult Basic Education Math with the North Island College Math Review Book, for sale in the College bookstore;
- Provide practice or review material for the English Placement Test as appropriate, for sale in the College bookstore; and
- Encourage applicants to attend Adult Basic Education information sessions or meet with an advisor prior to placement testing.

3. Retests

Applicants are not encouraged to use retesting on a casual basis. Consequently, retests will only be allowed under the following conditions:

- The Assessment faculty determines the applicant has good reason for retesting (i.e. original test not valid because of illness, medication, etc.); and
- Writing Assessment: There is evidence of upgrading, so there is reasonable expectation for a change in the test results and the decision is made in consultation with the Assessment faculty.

OR

A one year time period has elapsed.

- Retests for reading will normally be allowed after a minimum period of three months and only if the Assessment faculty determines there is a reasonable expectation for a change in the test results; and
- Math: One retest is normally allowed in math. That retest must be completed within one (1) month from the date of feedback of the first test. Faculty permission is not required for this.

OR

After one (1) month - there is evidence of upgrading, so there is a reasonable expectation for a change in the test results and the decision is made in consultation

with the Assessment faculty. No further retests will be allowed without an intervening registration in a math upgrading course.

Unless otherwise indicated by the Assessment faculty, the regular assessment fee will be charged for a retest.

4. Shelf-life

- English test results are valid for three (3) years;
- Math test results for placement in courses above the Fundamental level are valid for eighteen (18) months. A decision to retest an applicant who initially placed at the Fundamental level is dependent on the applicant having engaged in formal or informal upgrading since the initial testing; and
- The above guidelines apply to test results from other colleges or other acceptable organizations (e.g. Language Proficiency Index).

5. Test Security and Storage

- Tests and test results are to be kept secure;
- Test results are communicated to applicants in writing using the Educational Testing Summary form. However, the College will retain the actual tests. Applicants may review tests onsite but may not have copies;
- Only by authorization of the Coordinator will actual tests be released to a receiving institution; and
- Hard copies of completed tests are stored for three (3) years and then shredded. Results are also stored electronically in the student records system as per *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* regulations.

6. Communicating Test Results

- Every effort should be made to ensure that feedback sessions take place within a week of the placement test having been completed;
- Test results may only be communicated to individuals outside North Island College or agencies with the applicant's written authorization; and
- Only by authorization of the Coordinator, will actual tests be released to a receiving institution.

7. Handling of Unclear Test Results and Disputes

- When test results are unclear, Assessment faculty will consult with other English/Math/or Adult Basic Education faculty to make an appropriate placement.

Should faculty fail to agree on the placement, the Coordinator, in consultation with the appropriate Chair, will make the final decision.

8. Fees:

- Fees are charged in accordance with North Island College Assessment Fee Policy #4-05.

9. Inter-College Agreements

North Island College will accept placement testing results from other colleges or accredited institutions under the following conditions:

- The reading test is the same as that used at North Island College and has been administered under standardized conditions;
- The writing sample is submitted by the test invigilator, to North Island College for review and confirmation of placement; and
- North Island College math faculty have reviewed the math test and agreed that a placement made on the basis of this test is acceptable.

The following math tests are acceptable:

- Camosun College math placement test;
- Malaspina University College Adult Basic Education math placement test; and
- Continuing Education, School District #72 (Campbell River)

Definitions:

Face or Content Validity: Does the testing instrument reflect the kind of activity for which the individual is being tested? For example, if you want to know whether someone can write an essay, having the individual actually write an essay rather than complete a multiple choice grammar exam would demonstrate better face or content validity. If you want to know whether someone can fix an engine, a paper and pencil test would probably not have sufficient face or content validity. It would be better to have them actually fix an engine.

Predictive Validity: Does the score on the test(s) and subsequent placement predict a person will be successful in the course or program?