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What does research say about using multiple measures for placing students into college?



Selected Evidence-Based Resources*

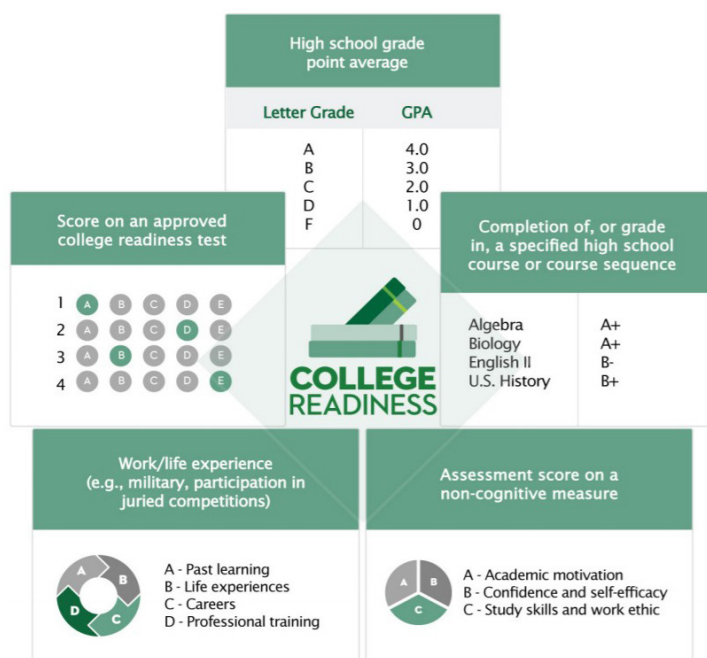
The 2016 What Works Clearinghouse educator's practice guide, [Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education](#) recommends the use of multiple measures for college course placement. Figure 1 provides an overview of different evidence-based measures. The guide also provides multiple measure placement implementation considerations, including reviewing the accuracy of different measures during a pilot period and in the long term, and aligning the measures with state assessments and policies.

Evidence suggests that high school grade point average (GPA) as a placement measure [alone](#) is positively correlated with students passing their college-level courses. However, its effectiveness as a measure may improve [in combination](#) with placement tests (such as ACCUPLACER).

Other measures have been associated with increased accuracy of college course placement, but only in combination with other measures:

- High school [course completion and grades](#), including [honors and advanced courses](#).
- [Years since high school completion](#). As the number of years between high school completion and college matriculation increase, the accuracy of placement tests tends to decrease.
- Whether a student earned a [diploma or a GED](#).
- [Noncognitive measures](#), such as motivation and perseverance.

Figure 1. Types of measures to assess college readiness and place students into courses (from [Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education](#), p. 14).



*Note: All studies cited in this FAQ, with the exception of Hodara & Lewis (2017), have been reviewed by the [What Works Clearinghouse](#). The Hodara & Lewis (2017) study has undergone IES peer review.

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