

University System of Georgia
Changes in Procedure to Improve Completion of the Regents' Skills Requirement
Effective Fall Semester, 2008

These changes are a result of initiatives of the Board of Regents and were designed to speed students' acquisition of the minimum level of reading and writing skills that the Board affirmed are critical outcomes for every graduate from a University System of Georgia institution. Changes in the Regents' Skills courses and other remedial instruction intervention must be at least piloted at each institution by Fall 2008, with full implementation required for Spring 2009¹.

As soon as possible upon entry, students must be conclusively informed of the Regents' Skills Requirement and should be held accountable for taking the appropriate actions.

Effective communication to students about the requirement to take the Regents' Test must be implemented by each institution. Institutions are encouraged to use appropriate incentives for both registering students to take the Regents' Test and for insisting that they take it. Appropriate disincentives for ignoring requirements should also be adopted. These may include - at the institution's discretion - charging a reasonable fee to students who choose not take the Regents' Test when they are required to do so.

Since some students decline to take the Regents' Test in spite of the institution's best efforts, a non-appearance for a scheduled testing time - except for sound medical or other reasons deemed sufficient by the institution - will be treated administratively in the same way as a failure of the test. Institutions are responsible for effectively communicating their procedures.

With few exceptions, all non-exempting students must take the Regents' Test every semester until they pass.

Any student who is not enrolled in Learning Support English or reading must take each part of the Regents' Test not previously passed or exempted in each semester of enrollment in a University System institution (after graduation from high school). Students in Learning Support English or reading must take the Regents' Test in the semester after they have exited LS English or reading (math LS is not relevant here). No differentiation is made for transfer students.

Institutions should implement the core curriculum so that at least the minimum collegiate level of reading and writing ability will be developed and should offer focused instruction for students who need help.

When possible, institutions should require English 1101 (or equivalent) enrollment for those students who have just completed reading and writing Learning Support requirements in order to facilitate their continued progression toward a degree.

Part of English 1101 (or equivalent), as well as other core courses, should be devoted to facilitating and/or demonstrating students' acquisition of the basic reading comprehension and writing skills - at least to the level specified by Board of Regents' Writing and Reading Skills requirement and, in most cases, well beyond. In approaching this goal, it may be appropriate for the institution to develop out-of-class workshops or experiences taught concurrently with English 1101, but not as part of the credit requirements.

Since the Regents' Skills Requirement addresses the minimum levels of collegiate reading and writing skill, the core curriculum will develop that level in the great majority of students. However, there are some cases in which basic skills may be at such a low level that the student needs more help than offered through the core curriculum. So, in addition to the pass-fail status on the Regents' Test, indicators of "low-failure" will be identified for institutional use. These indicate when students' performance is not close to the cutoff point, which in turn will indicate that those students need early intervention in order to augment the core curriculum. The indicators (one for reading and one for writing) are included on students' data records which are returned to institutions after each test administration (a "1" in column 54 of the Regents' Test data record indicates a low-failure for reading and a "1" in column 55 of the Regents' Test data record indicates a low-failure for essay).

Students who perform at a very low level when taking RT for the FIRST time should get immediate assistance. Others, at the discretion of the institution, may retake the RT without such help.

Low-Failure

If the score on the Regents' Test is sufficiently low to be flagged at the low-failure level, the student will be *required* to participate in remediation in the next semester of enrollment. This remediation may be a set of non-credit workshops (or some similar intervention) designed to develop the specific skills necessary or may be the appropriate regular Regents' Skills course.

Institutions may allow low-failure students to take an approved test to confirm the classification made by the first RT administration. The test should be an official administration of the RT if one is available prior to beginning the students' remediation or a locally administered test approved by the Regents' Testing Program Office. Because the low-fail classification has been shown to predict significant difficulty passing the RT, a grade on the confirmatory test that is close to passing should be required before overturning that classification.

Students who do not test and are treated administratively as fails need not be automatically regarded as low-fails.

While the form of the remediation after the first failure is left to the institution, any remediation other than the Regents' Skills course must meet two criteria: (1) the VPAA must describe the intervention and assure the EVC/CAO or designee that it has sufficient academic rigor to meet these needs; and (2) the institution must monitor the impact on future

Regents' Test pass rates, report this effectiveness to the EVC/CAO or designee, and make modifications as necessary to improve effectiveness. [Note: The decision of whether to charge for the workshop, and how much to charge, is regarded in the same way as any other course fee by the campus and needs approval by the President.]

Above Low-Failure

If the student fails the Regents' Test at the first attempt, but scores higher than the low-failure level, informal advising/procedures may be used to determine whether the student should enroll in remediation (such as those mentioned for low-failure students), or whether another attempt of the Regents' Test without remediation is advisable. This is an institutional decision.

Students who perform at a very low level when taking RT for the SECOND time must enroll in the Regents' Skills course in the next semester of attendance. Other students who fail, but not at a low level, must participate in remediation, but the remediation may be the Skills course or another form of remediation.

After the second failure of the Regents' Test, remediation is required before the next attempt of the Regents' Test. This remediation will follow the same parameters as for students classified as low-failure on the first attempt (see above). Students who are flagged as low-failures on the second administration should enroll in the appropriate regular Regents' Skills course in the following semester unless a confirmatory test administration (as described above) indicates convincingly that the low-fail indicator was inaccurate.

Students who fail the RT for the THIRD time must enroll in the appropriate Regents' Skills course in the next semester of attendance. The number of hours completed is not a consideration in determining Skills course enrollment.

After the third and any subsequent failure of the Regents' Test, students must take the regular Regents' Skills course in each semester of enrollment. However, institutions may treat part-time students somewhat differently as described below. When determining the number of failures of the Regents' Test, institutions are not required to count a failure occurring during a semester in which a student is not taking any classes.

Part-time students must take the RT each semester but, at the institution's discretion, need not take required remediation until after earning 20 college-level credit hours.²

A part-time student is defined as a student who takes fewer than 12 hours during his/her first term of enrollment. Part-time students must take the Regents' Test in the first and each subsequent semester but are not subject to mandatory remediation or Regents' Test skills courses requirements until the semester after 20 credit hours have been earned except in the case of part-time students who are flagged as low fails. Such low-fail students are subject to the same requirements as full time students. After 20 hours are earned, all requirements are in

effect. Institutions may choose to apply the RT rules for full time students to part-time students, and institutions may allow part time students a maximum of two semesters before applying the RT rules rather than counting numbers of hours.

Transfer students from non-USG institutions who do not exempt must take the RT in the first semester of enrollment.

Any transfer student who is not specifically excluded through Learning Support status (see above) must take the RT in the first and each subsequent semester until it is passed. No remedial work is required for out-of-system transfers in the initial semester. For subsequent semesters, transfer students should be classified for remediation and Regents' Skills course purposes by how many semesters of coursework they transferred to the USG institution in addition to the one semester of attendance in the USG.

Example: after the first semester, a transfer student has been awarded 13(this is an example) semester hours of transfer credit in addition to the 10 (this is an example) hours he/she earned in the initial semester at a USG institution. At the beginning the student's second semester in the USG, the student would be classified, for remediation and Regents' Skills course purposes, as a third semester student and would therefore need some form of remediation if the RT had not been passed. If this example transfer student was awarded 30 (for example) semester transfer hours, then at the beginning of that student's second semester at a USG institution, that student would be classified as a fourth semester student and would therefore need to enroll in the Regents' Skills course if he/she had not passed the RT in the first semester.

The confirmatory test as described in the section on low-failures may be permitted when out-of-system transfer students are required to enroll in the Skills course in the second semester at a USG institution.

After two terms in a Regents' Skills course, qualifying students should take a section of that course with additional personalized instruction.

For a student who has twice completed the regular Regents' Skills course to the satisfaction of the instructors and institution, but is still unsuccessful on the Regents' Test, a Regents' Skills course section must be offered with more personalized instruction than is afforded in the regular Skills courses. In this more focused course, the primary activity is reading and/or writing under the direct supervision and guidance of the instructor.

After four terms in a Regents' Skills course, qualifying students should take a section of that course with even more personalized instruction.

For a student who has completed the regular Regents' Skills course twice and has twice completed the first level of the more personalized Skills course to the satisfaction of the

instructors and institution, but is still unsuccessful on the Regents' Test, an even more individualized Regents' Skills course section must be offered.

Examples of this are a one-on-one independent study and a lab course in which the primary activity is reading and/or writing under the direct supervision and guidance of an instructor who has background in the specific remedial subject. All students enrolled in this level of Skills course should be encouraged or required to be evaluated at a Regents' Center for Learning Disorder (RCLD) or a similar campus facility for specific reading and writing impediments.

The small number of students who complete the most individualized level of the Skills course and still fail the RT but who the institution believes do have the appropriate level of the Regents' Skills are eligible to be tested in an alternate format.

Each year, each institution is permitted to appeal the results of the Regents' Test for between 1 and 4 students depending on the number of non-exempt students who enroll at the institution. The exact number of allowed appeals for each institution is determined through a formula which sets the maximum number of appeals system-wide at approximately 100. The calculations are distributed by the Regents' Testing Program Office. Which students are allowed to appeal is to be decided by the institution through a process reported to the EVC/CAO or designee. The process must include the provisions that students must have successfully completed each level of the relevant Regents' Skills course and must be viewed by the institution as having the required level of reading and writing skill but unable to demonstrate that skill through the regular method of examination. Students appealing will not be exempted from the skills requirement, but will be able to go through an alternative assessment process designed to measure the same knowledge and skills at the same level as the Regents' Test. The type of the assessment, however, will be designed to differ from that of the RT, as described below. Except in unusual circumstances, each student is allowed only one such appeal. The appeal process will be coordinated by the Regents' Testing Program Office.

Writing Appeals: The alternate assessment for writing for a student who appeals will be a composition developed by the student over three sessions. The writing will be done in a secure setting; students will not be allowed to take materials out of the testing environment but will be allowed to make revisions to the composition during the second and third sessions. The criteria for evaluating these works are established by the Testing Subcommittee of the Academic Committee on English and are based on what a student with the minimum college-level writing skill produces. Students will be required to write compositions of sufficient length and complexity to ensure that they have acquired the level of writing ability established for the Regents' Writing Skill requirement. The drafts produced during each of the sessions will be part of the students' work to be evaluated.

Reading Appeals: The alternate assessment for reading will require a student to read several passages extracted from commonly available reading material (similar to those included in the Regents' Reading Test) and produce written or oral analyses of those passages. The analyses will be student-constructed with little or no prompting so that the student can show his or her

level of understanding of the written material. The resulting work will be compared by USG raters to the work produced by students who have been shown to have the minimum level of reading ability established for the Regents' Reading Skill requirement.

In very rare cases, a waiver of the Regents' Skills Requirement may be granted for serious medical problems that develop while a student is enrolled.

The Board of Regents may allow waivers of the Regents' Skills Requirement in very rare circumstances (estimated at no more than 1-2 a year, System-wide) when, after enrollment, students develop documented medical conditions that make all testing methods inapplicable.

To be eligible for the "medical waiver" a student must prove to the institution's satisfaction that a medical condition with onset after the student's initial enrollment in college resulted in reduced capacity to the point that the student cannot demonstrate the required level of reading and writing skill.

The CAO at the student's institution will provide to the Regents' Testing Program Office a report describing the justifications and documentation for the appeal. The documentation should include a detailed description of the medical condition on which the appeal is based and a statement affirming that the student has made all practical attempts to develop the required level of Regents' Skills through each appropriate level of Skills course at the institution. After the RTP Office assesses the adequacy and completeness of the appeal documentation, it is forwarded to the CAO/EVC or designee for review. The final approval of the waiver is made by the Board's Committee on Organization and Law.

This waiver is restricted to students who have completed all coursework for graduation.

May 20, 2008
Contact: Dr. Leslie Caldwell
Regents' Testing Program
Leslie.Caldwell@usg.edu

¹ There is little 'grand-fathering' needed with this implementation schedule. The exception is that students enrolled prior to Fall 2008 need not have semesters in which they did not take the test administratively counted as failures since they generally would not have known of that procedure.

² Because of the wide variety of start and stop times of summer semesters and mini-semesters, students coming from a non-system institution (including a high school) who enter a USG institution for the first time during the summer semester, may take six semester credit hours or less without having that semester count towards the imposition of remedial work or the Regents' Skills course.