

SMCCCD Basic Skills Definitions

District Research Council (DRC)
&
Decision Support Work & Advisory Group (DSSWAG)

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Executive Summary

Definitions for various data elements, including basic skills can be critically important to accurate measure of success and funding allocations. This document contains the results of work performed by the District Research Council (DRC) and DSSWAG (Decision Support Services Work Advisory Group) to clarify basic skills courses, students, programs and services. The purpose is to achieve reporting consistency and to improve data integrity. DRC reviewed literature and database documentation, as well as various reports and regulations related to basic skills. DRC determined that in order to best frame the issue, it was important to segment the definitions into database definitions for basic skills courses and operational definitions for internal or external entities associated with basic skills, such as students, services or reporting agencies. Both types of definitions are listed in the next section. DRC concluded that except for the basic skills database definitions, all other definitions are fluid, broad and situational. In light of this, DRC makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Database definitions will be reviewed by the district-wide Decision Support Work & Advisory Group (DSSWAG). This group will be responsible for defining and maintaining all non-pre-collegiate and pre-collegiate course attributes (e.g., levels) inside Banner, MIS (Management Information System) and the associated CRCC (Curriculum Reporting for Community Colleges),
- 2) Operational definitions of basic skills for courses, programs, services and various reporting and research purposes will be developed jointly by DRC, and the SMCCCD faculty and staff.

Database Definitions In Use at SMCCCD

SMCCCD uses the following parameters to code the basic skills courses at SMCCCD. All MIS data submissions, internal and external reports (i.e., 320 report) are based on these parameters.

Pre-collegiate Basic Skills Courses are those courses in reading, writing, computation, and English as a Second Language, which are designated by the community college district as not AA/AS degree applicable credit courses pursuant to Section 55002(b) of Title 5. These courses are designated in the MIS data element CB08 as “P” and in the CRCC CR12 as “P.”

Non-pre-collegiate Basic Skills Courses are those courses that do not belong to the category of Pre-collegiate Basic Skills Courses and are not AA/AS degree-applicable or non-credit courses. These may include vocational education courses. They are categorized under TOP (Taxonomy of Program) code 4930.00 and are designated in the MIS data element CB08 as “B” and in the CRCC CR12 as “B.”

Note: Within both types of basic skills courses, there are several levels as defined in MIS or CRCC. Please consult the actual report for details.

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External Operational Definitions

Title 5 defines basic skills courses under section 55502(d); 55502(d) (1) Types of Courses. Non-degree applicable credit courses as: "**Pre-collegiate basic skills courses**" are those courses in reading, writing, computation, and English as a Second Language which are designated by the community college district as non-degree credit courses pursuant to Section 55002(b).

The Statewide Basic Skills Initiative uses the following definition for basic skills courses: Basic skills are those foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, learning skills, study skills, and English as a Second Language which are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work.

The Accountability Reporting for Community College (ARCC) uses the following definition: Courses designed to develop reading or writing skills at or below the level required for enrollment in English courses one level below freshman composition, computational skills required in mathematics courses below Algebra, and ESL courses at levels consistent with those defined for English. (Based on a Basic Skills Study Session for the BOG.) (Page 736)

Internal Operational Definitions

The Internal Operational Definitions are very important and useful for various internal research and reporting purposes local to a college or district. These definitions will be developed jointly between the Canada, CSM and Skyline faculty and staff and DRC as they continue to work on the Basic Skills Initiative.

As an example, below is a typical internal operational definition for Basic Skills Improvement at a local college.

Basic Skills Improvement is defined either by students who have successfully completed a certain level of basic skills course and may have enrolled and completed a higher level basic skills course; or students who have successfully completed the highest level of a basic skills course and may have enrolled and completed a degree applicable or transferrable course. For specific disciplines, such as Math, there may be several sub-levels beyond the basic skills level.

Please Note: Actual work for both database definitions and operational definitions may require consultation of the document called Background of Basic Skills Definitions available from DRC or Office of Vice Chancellor, Educational Services & Planning. This document contains further information on the definitions discussed above, as well as a list of resources.