

# **Request for Renewal of Approval of an Assessment Instrument: School of Continuing Education ESL Placement Test**

**Submitted by Rancho Santiago Community College District for Use at Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College Schools of Continuing Education  
October 2012**

## **Background**

Faculty members in the English as a Second Language Department in the School of Continuing Education developed a test for placement into non-credit curriculum in 1990. In 1999, long after the authors of the original test had moved on, ESL coordinators adapted that test to more accurately address the curriculum of the current ESL program, resulting in a shorter test with fewer questions. The ESL Placement Test, in its current form, has been used continuously from that time forward to place students into ESL coursework in the School of Continuing Education at Santa Ana College (SAC) and Santiago Canyon College (SCC). In 2006, that test was fully approved for use at RSCCD.

The ESL Placement Test includes sixty questions:

1. Part 1 is comprised of two listening sections. The first ten items require students to listen and respond in writing. Students listen and identify a picture in the next four questions.
2. Part 2 is a grammar section containing two types of activities: sentence recognition and sentence completion.
3. Part 3 is the reading passage section in which students read a passage and answer comprehension questions.

The Non-Credit ESL sequence includes six courses:

1. Beginning 1
2. Beginning 2
3. Beginning 3
4. Intermediate 1
5. Intermediate 2
6. Intermediate 3.

In accordance with the “*Standards, Policies and Procedures for the Evaluation of Assessment Instruments Used in the California Community College*” (March 2001 edition) campus responsibility for renewal of a locally-developed test if content of test or course or demographics have not changed includes the following areas and are included in this request: Content Validity, Cut-Score Validation, Disproportionate Impact, and ADA Accommodations. These validation activities were conducted for all courses in the Non-Credit ESL sequence listed above.

## **Content Validity**

In Fall 2011, non-credit ESL faculty (both full- and part-time), facilitated by Karen Dennis (Centennial Education Center/Santa Ana College ESL Coordinator) and Mary Walker (Orange Education Center/Santiago Canyon College ESL Coordinator), convened to address content validity. First they reviewed the prerequisite skills-to-course alignment identified in the initial test assessment activities in 2004-05 and agreed to their currency and appropriateness.

Faculty then assessed these skills in conjunction with the ESL Placement Test items. Grids were developed for each course in the ESL sequence, listing prerequisite skills (language domains) on the vertical axis and ESL Placement Test items on the horizontal axis. Faculty members were asked to identify matches between each test item and the minimum prerequisite skills for the courses they currently teach (or have taught in recent past). These judgments were conducted independently by faculty members from both colleges and aggregated by the RSCCD Research Department. The group reconvened in Spring 2012 to discuss, in small course-specific groups, the aggregate data. In all instances, the faculty concluded that the majority opinion was correct.

Summary tables are included below. A total of 37 prerequisite skills were listed across the ESL sequence of courses.

Skill ID	Language Skills Domain Mastery Considered to be Requisite to Success in Course	Test Item # Addressing Skill
	<b>Beginning 1</b>	
	<i>(this is the lowest level to which there is no floor; no prerequisite skills)</i>	
	<b>Beginning 2</b>	
1	Comprehend a range of high frequency words	1A,2A,1,2,3,4
2	Demonstrate comprehension of simple words in context of common everyday situations	1,2,3,4
	<b>Beginning 3</b>	
3	Comprehend simple conversation with familiar words	3A,4A
4	Produce answers to simple questions and short passages (simple narrative)	5A,7A
5	Recognize present and past continuous in simple sentences and questions	9,11,20
6	Recognize the present and past of the “to be” verb	18
7	Identify simple affirmative and negative sentences in simple present and simple past continuous	7,8,17
8	Recognize the question words: who, where, when, how much, how often	7A,9A
9	Recognize simple word order for statements and questions	9
10	Recognize common irregular verbs	18, 22
	<b>Intermediate 1</b>	
11	Comprehend short, simple, conversations containing some unfamiliar words in a familiar context	6A,8A,9A,10A
12	Read and interpret life skills reading materials	5
13	Recognize simple possessive adjectives and pronouns	6,21,27,31
14	Recognize simple object pronouns	19
15	Recognize adverbs or adverbs of frequency	38
16	Identify modals: have to, hope to, must, can, should	14
17	Identify and use comparative and superlative adjectives	24
18	Review and expand present and past tense questions and answers	12,13,16,20
	<b>Intermediate 2</b>	
19	Demonstrate understanding of simple questions and answers, statements, and face-to-face conversations in standard dialect containing some unfamiliar vocabulary	10A,10
20	Read simplified materials on familiar subjects and begin to read some authentic materials dealing with everyday matters	40
21	Skim for general meaning and scan for specific information in short passages	41,42,43
22	Recognize present perfect and present perfect continuous	25
23	Recognize some common verbs followed by gerunds and infinitives	32
24	Identify and use count/non-count nouns	13,23
	<b>Intermediate 3</b>	
25	Skim for general idea of passage and scan for specific details	45,46
26	Interpret simple authentic materials on familiar topics	44
27	Recognize rhetorical cues signaling chronological order, comparison and contrast, and simple listing	39
28	Identify and use tag questions	33
29	Demonstrate correct use of “either, neither, also, and too”	37
30	Identify past modals	26,29
31	Recognize and use common phrasal verbs	15
32	Demonstrate understanding of meaning of complex sentences of time and reason and clauses with modals	34
	<b>(Referral to Adult Basic Education, HS Subjects, or College Credit Coursework)</b>	
33	Skim for general meaning and scan for specific information in longer passages	48,49
34	Interpret narrative reading and uses critical thinking skills—inference	47,50
35	Recognize and use clause connectors in complex sentences, such as noun and adjective clause	30
36	Recognize direct and indirect speech	28,35
37	Recognize some common idioms and figures of speech to familiar topics	36

## Cut-Score Validity

When the original test was adapted to its current form in 1999, cut-scores were set empirically using the “natural breaks.” Subsequently, placement data was examined annually to assure that cut-scores remained appropriate. In 2001, the ESL Department began coordinating with the RSCCD Research Department to develop a formal plan for ongoing validation of the instrument. Since that time, consequential-related validity evidence has been used routinely to evaluate the ESL Placement Test cut-scores. At the third week of the semester, both faculty and students are asked to rate the appropriateness of placement by the ESL Placement Test. The student survey instrument is administered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese versions, as appropriate.

Faculty members are asked to rate students who were placed into their classes based upon their ESL Placement Test scores according to the following scale:

1. Could have been placed at a higher level
2. Is very well placed. Has a good chance of success
3. Is properly placed
4. Should have been placed in a lower level course
5. Success only with a great deal of effort
6. Should have been placed in a lower level course.

Similarly, students who were placed into their current course based upon their ESL Placement Test scores were asked to answer the following question:

*Which statement below do you think is most true about your placement into this course?*

1. *This course is too difficult for me.*
2. *This course is the right level for me.*
3. *This course is too easy for me.*

Overall, 85% and 86% of Spring 2012 students (SAC and SCC, respectively) responded that they were appropriately placed. 81% (SAC) and 87% (SCC) of instructors, across all levels, rated students as “2” (“is very well placed”) or “3” (“properly placed”). Assessments of placement are comparable at course level and are included below.

<b>Student Ratings of Appropriateness of Placement</b>				
<b>RSCCD School of Continuing Education</b>				
<b>course</b>	<b>student rating of appropriateness of placement, Spring 2012</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>this course is too difficult</b>	<b>this course is the right level</b>	<b>this course is too easy</b>	
<b>Centennial Education Center (CEC)/Santa Ana College</b>				
Beginning ESL 1	9%	85%	6%	158
Beginning ESL 2	7%	86%	7%	128
Beginning ESL 3	8%	82%	10%	103
Intermediate ESL 1	3%	84%	13%	62
Intermediate ESL 2	3%	90%	7%	102
Intermediate ESL 3	8%	77%	15%	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>579</b>

<b>Student Ratings of Appropriateness of Placement</b>				
<b>RSCCD School of Continuing Education</b>				
<b>course</b>	<b>student rating of appropriateness of placement, Spring 2012</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>this course is too difficult</b>	<b>this course is the right level</b>	<b>this course is too easy</b>	
<b>Orange Education Center(OEC)/Santiago Canyon College</b>				
Beginning ESL 1	11%	75%	14%	36
Beginning ESL 2		93%	7%	30
Beginning ESL 3	12%	86%	2%	42
Intermediate ESL 1		100%		26
Intermediate ESL 2	8%	86%	5%	37
Intermediate ESL 3		80%	20%	25
Total	6%	86%	8%	196

<b>Instructor Ratings of Appropriateness of Placement of ESL Placement Test</b>						
<b>RSCCD School of Continuing Education</b>						
<b>course</b>	<b>Instructor Ratings of Appropriateness of Placement, Spring 2012</b>					<b>Total</b>
	<b>could have been placed higher</b>	<b>is very well placed/good chance of success</b>	<b>is properly placed</b>	<b>success only with a great deal of effort</b>	<b>should have been placed at a lower level</b>	
<b>Centennial Education Center (CEC)/Santa Ana College</b>						
Beginning ESL 1	7%	27%	56%	8%	3%	192
Beginning ESL 2	7%	30%	55%	2%	5%	148
Beginning ESL 3	8%	25%	53%	10%	3%	122
Intermediate ESL 1	19%	26%	47%	7%	1%	70
Intermediate ESL 2	11%	31%	52%	5%	1%	112
Intermediate ESL 3	15%	44%	37%		4%	27
Total	10%	28%	53%	6%	3%	671
<b>Orange Education Center(OEC)/Santiago Canyon College</b>						
Beginning ESL 1	6%	32%	57%	4%		47
Beginning ESL 2	5%	47%	42%	3%	3%	38
Beginning ESL 3		33%	54%	5%	7%	57
Intermediate ESL 1		50%	35%	12%	4%	26
Intermediate ESL 2	5%	28%	53%	7%	7%	43
Intermediate ESL 3	9%	44%	41%	6%		34
Total	4%	38%	49%	6%	4%	245

**Disproportionate Impact**

It should be noted that the largest proportions of our colleges’ service areas are Latino (78% in Santa Ana and 38% in Orange). Further, the majority of students enrolled in SAC (85%) and SCC (84%) School of Continuing Education ESL sequences courses are Latino. Example 3, presented in the “*Guide to Assist with the Design and Implementation of Investigations to Evaluate Tests in Consideration of the CCC Assessment Standards*” (March 2001, 4<sup>th</sup> edition) indicates the appropriate use of total average in comparison of ESL populations.

<b>Ethnic Distribution of RSCCD Service Areas and Student Populations, 2012</b>				
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Service Area (census 2010)</b>	<b>Continuing Education Headcount (total)</b>	<b>Continuing Education ESL Program Headcount</b>	<b>Study Sample</b>
<b>Centennial Education Center (CEC)/Santa Ana College</b>				
African-American	1%	1%	0%	0%
Asian	10%	10%	12%	12%
White	9%	3%	1%	1%
Latino	78%	82%	85%	83%
Other	1%	4%	2%	4%
<b>Orange Education Center (OEC)/Santiago Canyon College</b>				
African-American	1%	2%	0%	0%
Asian	11%	7%	7%	12%
White	47%	19%	2%	2%
Latino	38%	56%	84%	81%
Other	3%	16%	7%	5%

For the purposes of this analysis, the six levels of the ESL sequence were collapsed into three levels:

1. Low: Beginning ESL 1 and Beginning ESL 2
2. Medium: Beginning ESL 3 and Intermediate ESL 1
3. High: Intermediate ESL 2 and Intermediate ESL 3.

Tables were developed to compare the placement levels of groups of students by ethnicity, gender, and age. In summary, these tables indicate:

***CEC/Santa Ana College:***

- Students belonging all sub-groups (ethnicity, age, and gender) placed into all levels of ESL coursework exceeding the 80% EEOC guidelines.

***OEC/Santiago Canyon College:***

- Students belonging to all sub-groups (ethnicity, age, and gender) placed into all levels of ESL coursework exceeding the 80% EEOC guidelines except in the three groups noted (EEOC ratios of 72% to 76%).

Rancho Santiago Community College District								
Analysis of Disproportionate Impact								
Continuing Education ESL Placement Test								
placement level	Latino	Gender		Age				Total
		female	male	<30	30-39	40-49	50+	
<b>Centennial Education Center (CEC)/Santa Ana College</b>								
low	55%	50%	54%	55%	51%	49%	53%	52%
medium	28%	29%	29%	28%	33%	28%	25%	29%
high	17%	21%	18%	18%	17%	23%	22%	19%
Total	852	510	532	369	292	257	124	1042
<b>Orange Education Center (OEC)/Santiago Canyon College</b>								
low	41%	30%	43%	42%	30%	40%	26%	36%
medium	34%	32%	34%	28%	35%	36%	31%	33%
high	25%	38%	23%	31%	35%	24%	43%	32%
Total	306	214	176	127	128	100	35	390
*shaded cells indicate distributions slightly below the 80% EEOC Guideline (72%-76%)								

Rancho Santiago Community College District							
% of Students Who Self-Rated Placement "Appropriate"							
Course Placement	Latino	Gender		Age			
		female	male	<30	30-39	40-49	50+
<b>Centennial Education Center (CEC)/Santa Ana College</b>							
low	85%	85%	85%	85%	86%	86%	82%
medium	84%	82%	83%	82%	78%	80%	100%
high	90%	89%	85%	86%	87%	89%	89%
<b>Orange Education Center (OEC)/Santiago Canyon College</b>							
low	82%	93%	77%	81%	83%	87%	100%
medium	93%	92%	90%	88%	90%	95%	88%
high	83%	85%	82%	79%	96%	100%	38%

Further investigation of students' self-ratings of appropriateness of placement indicates no differences when analyzed by ethnicity, age, and gender. The single shaded cell represents a count of only three students, (and another three students reported "too easy" although they were placed into the highest level offered in the ESL Program).

We have concluded that disproportionate impact is not taking place with the ESL Placement Test.

## **Alternative Assessment Procedures**

Alternative assessment procedures are provided at SAC and SCC for persons with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills who cannot take the District placement tests under standard conditions as follows:

- **Accommodations for Hearing Impairment**
  - Signers are provided
  - Instructions are given in writing
- **Accommodations for Visual Impairment**
  - Questions are read to students
  - Visual enlargement equipment is provided
- **Accommodations for Other Physical Impairments**
  - Testing facilities are accessible
  - Accommodations arranged on an individual basis by Testing Coordinator as necessary
- **Accommodations for Learning Disability**
  - Adjustments in allocated time (up to twice the standardized time) can be made

The alternative assessment procedures have been scrutinized by faculty members with expertise and experience working with students and disabilities. Faculty members have determined that the alternative assessment procedures yield test scores with appropriate characteristics based upon the rationale that the accommodations made for placement testing are congruent with the test-taking facilitation and the provision of services for students with disabilities in the instructional setting mandated in Section 56026 of Title V.

Alternative assessment procedures for the ESL Placement test are provided at the School of Continuing Education's Testing Centers (located at the Orange Education Center (SCC) and Centennial Education Center (SAC)) in compliance with District guidelines.



**RSCCD School of Continuing Education  
Request for Renewal of Approval of the ESL Placement Test  
Supporting Data for Content Validity Activities, February 5, 2013**

**Faculty Participation in Content Validity Activities**

In Fall 2011 non-credit ESL faculty (both full- and part-time) convened to address content validity. A 15-member team was assembled (10 from Centennial Education Center/Santa Ana College and 5 from Orange Education Center/Santiago Canyon College). Team members worked independently on course level-specific analyses to identify matches between each test item and the minimum prerequisite skills for the course they currently teach (or have taught in the last year).

In Spring 2012, subsequent to aggregation of their analyses by the RSCCD Research Department, the same team members (n=15) reconvened to discuss the findings in small course-specific groups and concluded that the majority opinion was correct.