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A New Way of Grading

P: Pass

(80% or higher
on all unit exams)

R: Retake

F: Fail

“Wow, It’s Working—the Retake, Pass, Fail Grading System”

T1A AMATYC Salt Lake City November 13, 2003

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Frequently Asked Questions:

How do grades like P and R affect student financial aid and GPA?

These grades, used only in developmental (0-level) classes, do not affect student grade point average or student financial aid. Technically, for students on Financial Aid, students can repeat a developmental class 4 times—for a total of 5 enrollments, and be paid by Financial Aid.

The grade of F does affect financial aid and grade point average as in any class.

What do students do if they received below 80% on a unit exam?

Students can retake a similar exam, and the second grade counts. Some teachers allow multiple retakes, but I personally let the student “re-retake” only one exam, and that last one on the last day of class.

Who administers these retake exams? We have Testing Centers on all 5 campuses (on the smaller ones, Student Services have the student take the exam in a small room). The teacher puts the test there, the student makes an appointment, and the teacher grades it.

How do students do in subsequent classes if they Pass the developmental class?

In 1995 we did our first study.¹ These students had about the same chance of success (about 70%) in Intermediate Algebra or College Algebra as those students not needing developmental mathematics (success defined as “C” or better). The students who attempted to go on to the next math class even though they had a “R” in developmental, or a “D” or “F” in Intermediate, had only about a 25% chance of success in the later class.¹

In 2003 we are doing our 2nd study.² We “beefed up” our objectives, and developmental passers seem to be doing even better in Intermediate Algebra (about 80%).

What are the chances of a student Passing the developmental class? We actually have 3 levels of developmental: Arithmetic (what is number, +, x, divide), Basic Mathematics (fractions, decimals, percents), and Elementary Algebra. Students can “waive” one level up, but not more. Counting students who drop the class after the 10th day, about 60-70% Pass. About 80% of the students in the lowest class are Passing, and then about 80% of them passed the next level. However, only about 40% of the Basic Passing students were able to Pass Elementary Algebra. It is possible to pass Basic Math without the abstract level of thinking for Elementary Algebra, and perhaps that explains it. We are thrilled that our institution is helping us answer these questions.

What kind of college is Metropolitan CC? We are an accredited two-year institution serving a 4-county area. We have over 11,000 students. Mathematics is the single largest prefix offering. Over 90% of students taking our placement exams place developmental. We are on the quarter system (11 week quarters) and students can do the developmental sequence in a year.

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Mathematics classes have a maximum of 30 students, with 25 in developmental classes. Over half of all math classes are taught by full-time faculty, and even the adjuncts are expected to have a Master's degree with at least 18 hours in mathematics. All full-time teachers teach at least one developmental class.

¹ "Developmental Mathematics at Metropolitan Community College: Does it Work?" Summary of Study, Connie Buller, Change in Action, McRel, 1997

¹ Unpublished Institutional research, 2003 Metropolitan CC, Omaha, NE

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