



FAQ: Colorado Academic Standards and Higher Education

How will higher education be affected by the CCSS?

While the standards will be implemented at the K-12 level, they will affect colleges and universities in key areas such as placement and remediation, teacher preparation and credentialing, and design of entry-level courses. The standards will bring some changes in what is taught in high school math and English and in how these subjects are taught. This means that college faculty will want to understand the nature of these changes and will likely need to make adjustments in their entry-level courses. The new standards will also mean changes for teacher preparation programs. Teachers, both prospective and practicing, will need to be educated and prepared to teach the CCSS so that they can best help their students adapt to the new standards. At the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Ian Macgillivray, assistant deputy director for academic affairs, is working with faculty across Colorado to prepare for these changes. He can be reached at ian.macgillivray@dhe.state.co.us.

How are higher education institutions involved in the creation, evaluation and implementation of the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments?

Many colleges and universities have committed to participate in PARCC and Smarter Balanced, help develop the college-ready assessments, and, ultimately, use those assessments as one indicator of students' readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. Colorado is a PARCC state and Colorado faculty are involved in the process.

What is PARCC?

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a multi-state consortium working to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English language arts and mathematics anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. In Colorado, the PARCC English language arts and mathematics assessments have been rolled into the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments. CMAS English language arts and mathematics assessments will be administered for the first time in 2014-2015. The CMAS assessments are not additional assessments. They replace the TCAP assessments. The tests will be piloted in several Colorado districts in spring 2014.

How are the CCSS related to PARCC and Smarter Balanced?

The PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments will be sets of K-12 assessments in English and math that are aligned to measure if students are making progress toward the CCSS learning goals. The assessments will be computer-based and will measure essential skills such as critical thinking, communications, and problem solving to gauge college and career readiness.

What will happen if students do not meet cut scores on PARCC and Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessments?

The K-12 and higher education community are working together to develop supports for students who do not meet cut scores on the 11th grade assessment, focusing on additional supports in the senior year of high school. The early assessment of college readiness in 11th grade presents students with an opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills in English language arts and math.

Will colleges and universities still use the SAT and ACT?

The new assessments brought on by the CCSS will not replace the SAT or ACT. The assessments are designed to be used by colleges and universities for placement in entry-level, credit bearing courses.

How are state education agencies and leaders involved in this process?

State superintendents and other state education officials serve on the Governing Board of the PARCC Consortium and were involved in the process of developing and testing the assessments.

Are sample assessment items available for review?

Yes. PARCC has posted sample assessments on its website, available at: <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>.