

July 2009 Proposed Change to the DTA Math

Background. The current Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) requires students to be “proficient in intermediate algebra.” That requirement was added in 1998 when the Intermediate Algebra course, formerly transferable, was re-designated as pre-college and numbered below 100. In recent years, some community and technical colleges (CTCs) in Washington have developed alternative tracks to help students meet the proficiency. While retaining the traditional algebra/pre-calculus pathway, these colleges have typically developed a parallel route that prepares students for other Quantitative/Symbolic Reasoning (QSR) courses. As these alternative courses became more widespread, some baccalaureate institutions expressed concern that “intermediate algebra,” while required in the DTA, was no longer consistent across community and technical college campuses. Especially worrisome was the concern that the alternative courses covered fewer content areas than expected. For the University of Washington, which requires evidence of intermediate algebra proficiency for admission to the university, the question was particularly significant.

JAOG Review Responding to these concerns, JAOG formed a Math-in-the-DTA Task Force in fall 2008 to investigate the issue and hopefully bring solutions to JAOG for consideration. The task force included mathematics faculty from all higher education sectors, as well as several JAOG members and representatives from other higher education offices and system groups.

Proposed DTA Language Change After considering several alternative solutions, the Math-in-the-DTA Task Force chose to recommend the following:

Remove the current reference to “intermediate algebra proficiency” from the DTA and replace with the following DTA language:

I. Be issued only to students who have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00, as calculated by the degree awarding institution.

II. Be based on 90 quarter hours of transferable credit including:

A. A minimum of 60 quarter hours of general education courses distributed as follows:

1. Basic Requirements

b. Math Skills (5 credits)

College level math course (5 credits) intended for transfer. Excludes professional- technical math courses.

As part of this recommendation, there is a desire to locate with the DTA requirements (perhaps on the ICRC Web site) the College-Readiness Standards developed as part of the Transition Math Project (<http://www.transitionmathproject.org/standards/index.asp>).

Rationale. The task force believes that the proposal:

- Aligns with state and national trends toward higher math standards.
- Capitalizes on the broader array of college-level math courses now available to meet the DTA requirement than when the current DTA language was developed.
- Avoids the need to align the content of intermediate algebra courses, allowing the CTCs to determine the most effective means to remediate adult learners.
- Provides a means to remove the DTA's sole reference to a pre-college requirement, reinforcing the transfer of college-level courses as the DTA's focus.
- Facilitates alignment of pre-college preparation for college-level work in quantitative reasoning, by keeping both the remedial and transferable courses within one discipline.

Concerns. Arguably the greatest negative impact of the proposal will fall on courses in philosophy, computer science, and other non-math disciplines that currently meet the QSR. Though this concern is clearly significant, data suggest that fewer than 11 percent of DTA-completers satisfy the QSR requirement through coursework offered outside mathematics.

In addition, other negative impacts to consider include:

- The impacts of the reduction in course choices for students, particularly those who experience high math anxiety or who request an alternative based on a disability.
- Enrollment and resource shifts toward math and away from other departments.
- A possible need to revise the Pre-Nursing DTA, which requires a statistics course but does not stipulate a MATH prefix.

System review process JAOG accepted the task force's report in July 2009, referring the recommendation to the state's higher education community for a response by spring 2010.

1. System discussion will occur fall and winter 2009-2010. Discussions will begin at fall ATC, IC, and Student Services Commission meetings and conclude at winter meetings 2010. An ITV will be scheduled for full discussion about the change in fall 2009.
2. System feedback will go to JAOG by March 2010. If discussions on the proposal are favorable
3. JAOG will recommend that the academic leadership of the state's public and independent institutions party to DTA agreement approve the proposed changes at an effective date designated by JAOG.
4. Changes will be forwarded to the HECB for Board action on the proposed change.
5. Any college catalog changes would occur no later than the 2011-2012 catalogs.

Hold-harmless period. To allow time for a long-term resolution, the baccalaureate institutions have agreed, through spring 2011, to accept all CTC intermediate algebra courses, regardless of course number or content, as meeting the DTA requirement. If the change is adopted, spring 2011 will be the last time students will have current quantitative reasoning requirements on their transcripts. Student transcripts will show new requirements (college level Math designation) beginning summer 2011.

Community and technical colleges have agreed to try to limit the number of students who transfer — particularly to UW — with an alternative intermediate algebra course (preference for Math 98) and a QSR course other than math.

Send questions, concerns and feedback on this change to:

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