

Frequently Asked Questions: Remediation in Colorado

1. What is remedial education?

Remedial education, also called developmental education, refers to classes intended to bolster the basic skills of new college students so they're adequately prepared for college-level work. These classes are non-credit courses so they are not usually covered by a student's financial aid.

2. How are students placed in remedial classes?

Typically, students who don't reach certain benchmarks on college entrance exams take the Accuplacer, a test which is used to determine whether remedial classes are needed, in which subjects and at which levels. Remedial classes are offered in reading, writing and math.

3. How long must students stay in remedial classes?

It depends on the subject and on a student's performance on the Accuplacer. In Colorado, most students assessed as needing remediation need help in math. Depending on the math Accuplacer result, a student may be assigned to between one and three semesters of remedial math.

4. Can students take other college classes while in remedial classes?

Yes, though their selection may be limited by prerequisite requirements. State policy calls for remedial classes to be completed within a student's first 30 credit hours.

5. How common is it for students to need remedial help?

More than a third of incoming freshmen in Colorado public colleges and universities in 2011-12 were either assessed as needing remediation or chose to enroll in one or more remedial classes. This rate has held steady for at least the past three years.

6. Who pays for remediation?

Students and their families bear the brunt of the costs. For 2011-12, the estimated total cost of remedial instruction is \$58.4 million, with \$39.3 million in student tuition and \$19.1 million in state funding for the institutions providing the remedial courses. By law, two-year colleges provide most remedial courses.

7. How does Colorado's remediation rate compare nationally?

National research reports typically show more than a third of new college students are assigned to remediation in at least one subject, with math the most common remedial need. Colorado's recent advances in data-sharing between K-12 and higher education state agencies provide a more comprehensive accounting than many other states can currently achieve.

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8. What impact does remediation usually have on a student's college career?

Students assigned to remediation are less likely to attain a degree, either at a two-year or four-year institution. The Colorado Community College System has estimated as few as 8 percent of students assigned to the most basic remedial math class will go on to complete their degrees.

9. Is the state doing anything to lessen the need for remediation?

Yes, a number of initiatives are underway at the K-12 and higher education levels. Examples of these include:

- **Early Remediation** – Middle school – GEAR UP, a federally-funded grant program serving low-income students, is piloting the use of “early remediation” in middle and high schools across Colorado. Starting in the eighth-grade, students enroll in self-paced online “remedial” classes created in partnership with Adams State University and overseen by licensed teachers. Upon completion, students receive transcripts from Adams State and can then begin enrolling in college courses as high school sophomores.
- **Concurrent enrollment** – High school – Colorado high schools are making greater use of concurrent enrollment to prepare students whose high school exams show they are likely to need remediation. With this strategy, high school seniors enroll in college remedial courses so they can complete those classes and go straight into college-level work when they arrive on campus. All high school juniors in Colorado complete the ACT exam and many high schools also offer the Accuplacer. Between 2010-11 and 2011-12, concurrent enrollment in remedial courses grew by 39 percent, with the largest such enrollments at Community College of Denver and Community College of Aurora.
- **Remedial policy changes** – Higher education – In February, the state board overseeing the Colorado Community College System approved policy changes designed to shorten the amount of time students spend in remedial courses. Full implementation is set for fall 2014 but campuses already are moving to eliminate some courses, combine others and create new supports for students that accelerate their remedial work. For example, some students assessed as needing remediation will go straight into college-level courses but will also participate in a companion lab class to ensure they're progressing. The overall goal is to reduce time spent in remediation to one semester or less.

To learn more about remedial education in Colorado, view the statewide remedial education policy at <http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Policies/Current/i-part2.pdf>.