



COVID-19 UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The conversation around the use of test scores as a requirement for admissions has occurred nationally for over 15 years with the first institutions moving to a test optional policy, and more recently on the University of Kentucky's campus around 3-4 years ago. There are historic concerns about bias in test design, equity, and access relative standardized exams. Higher performance on exams are typically correlated with socio-economic status as access to tutoring and test prep to increase scores is costly. And while there have been strides in access to tutoring through partnerships between College Board and Khan Academy, these efforts have still not leveled the playing field. Additionally our data, as well as national data supports that the GPA is a better indicator of success than test score. UK has not made the move previously, as the admissions office (from a technological infrastructure) was not in a place to allow for the holistic process necessary on a large scale to occur. However, we are currently implementing technology to support that need. As of the writing of this document, there are 1240+ accredited, 4-year institutions with ACT/SAT optional testing policies for the 2021 admissions cycle (<https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>). To name a few, the University of California system is test blind moving forward, University of Chicago, RIT, University of Cincinnati, University of Wisconsin, Indiana University, and University of Louisville to name a few.

In addition to the foundational arguments above, the current COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on access and implementation of standardized exams. And truly, if the test administrations are not in testing centers with similar environments (quiet environment, consistent and strong wi-fi, similar technology for each individual), but rather online and in home, that is not a standardized exam.

In partnership with IRADS, attached please find the descriptive narrative and accompanying data supportive of this change for UK for the upcoming year. In addition, the Division of Enrollment Management, and Office of Undergraduate Admissions has met with a number of the selective admissions colleges in order to discuss process and application attributes for consideration in a test flexible admissions process. Furthermore, these additional datapoints from the application will be gathered during the upcoming cycle, will inform future decisions on the shape and factors of the holistic process for selective colleges. We are proposing temporary changes for the 20-21 admissions cycle to consider applicant without test scores for upcoming year.

Proposed Temporary Changes to Senate Rule 4.2.1 regarding Freshman Admissions Criteria for Fall 2020

COVID-19 UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- Applicants will select on the application for admission if they wish to have their test scores considered in the admission process.
- Applicants who select they want their application to be considered without test scores will have their file reviewed in a holistic manner. Factors to be considered: Coursework taken above minimum requirements, GPA, activities, leadership/involvement, awards, talents/special abilities, evidence of resilience and grit, as well as other distinguishing characteristics. Based on the data, a student without test scores will be admitted at a 3.0 gpa or better to non-selective colleges. Below that gpa threshold, student will go through a holistic review. For selective colleges, the office of undergraduate admissions will work to provide data to inform the attributes for the holistic process, as well as cumulative, and possibly discipline specific gpa's for admission.
- Applicants who select to have their application reviewed with test scores will be run through our current automatic parameters based upon the established High School Readiness Index (HSRI). Those not meeting automatic parameters will have their file reviewed in the same holistic manner.
- No issues with CPE with test flexible policy; most universities are moving this direction for the upcoming year.
- Students will continue to use assessment tools (ie. ALEKS, ACCUPLACER) to meet course placement requirements. Current CPE guidance is attached as an addendum.

IRAD DATA ANALYSIS: Todd Brann (narrative and data), Anne Marie Kirk, Chance Davenport

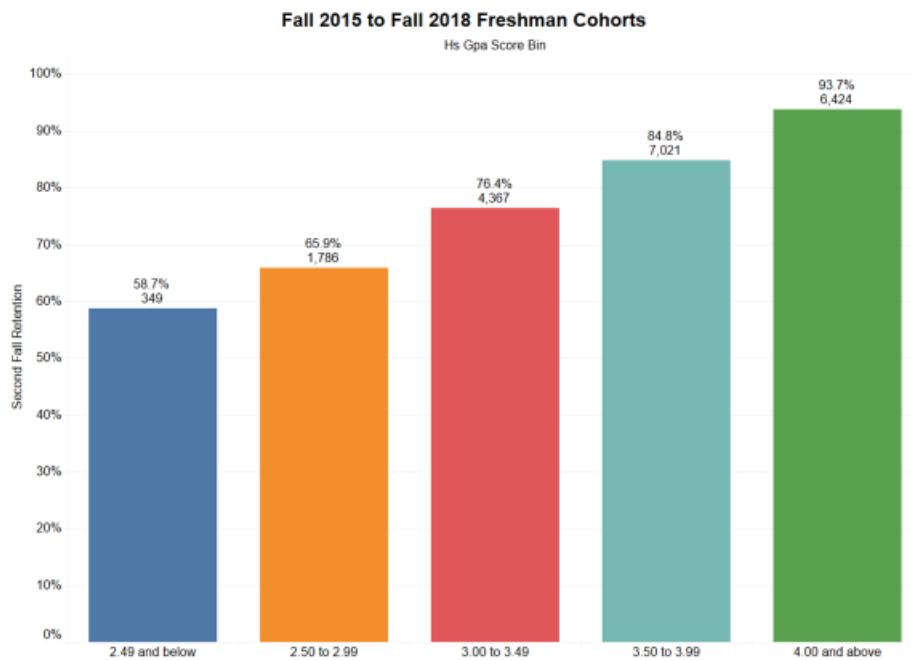
From a student success perspective, even before the semester starts and we have any data at all on the student's performance at UK, the ACT or SAT test score is generally not considered relevant in defining interventions. Utilizing a subset of the Semester Start Independent Variables in a Second Fall Retention logistic regression model (please see below), ACT or SAT test score is not statistically significant (based on a p-value ($Pr > ChiSq$) ≤ 0.05) while the HS GPA remains statistically significant. The attached utilized the Fall 2014 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts and SAT scores have been converted to ACT values based on the concordance tables supplied by the testing companies. HS GPA is the Weighted HS GPA.

Joint Tests			
Effect	DF	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
ACT_SAT	1	0.5294	0.4668
HS_GPA_SCORE	1	452.1849	<.0001
UNMET_NEED	1	395.4715	<.0001
PRIMARY_COLLEGE_1ST_	12	86.1487	<.0001
FAFSA	1	7.2896	0.0069
RESIDENCY	1	8.8684	0.0029
UNMET_NEED*RESIDENCY	1	51.5218	<.0001
IS_HONORS_STUDENT	1	40.4272	<.0001
CAMPUS_HOUSING	2	20.9671	<.0001
LATE_DEPOSIT	1	102.2964	<.0001

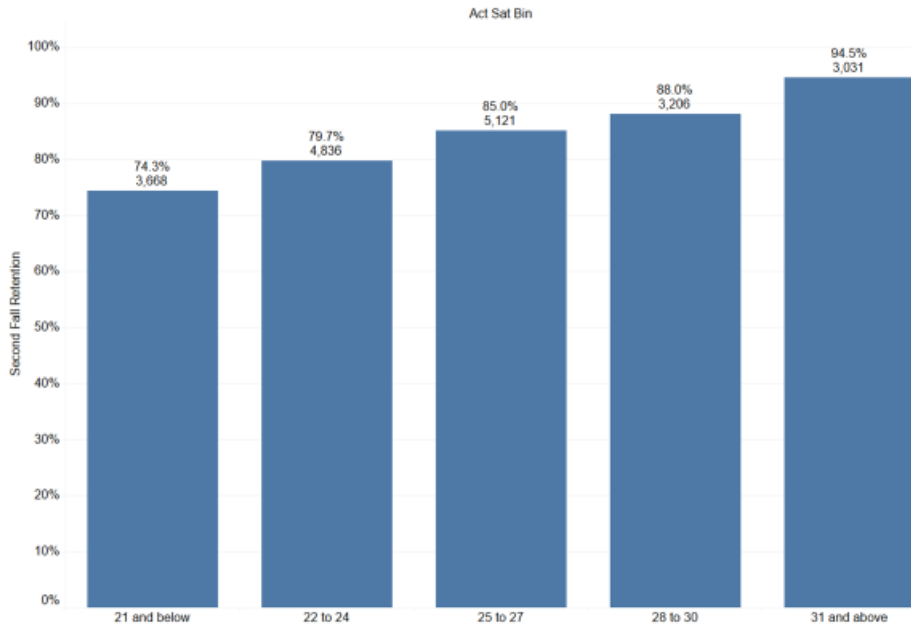
Practically speaking, an automatic Admission decision based on our High School Readiness Index (10 times the HS GPA (capped at 4.5) plus 0.5 times the ACT or SAT test score) at a threshold of 40 results in

an approximate 69% or higher Second Fall Retention (based on historical data, see slide 7 and below). An automatic Admission decision based on a HS GPA of 3.0 and above results in an approximate 74% or higher Second Fall Retention (based on historical data, see slide 8 and below).

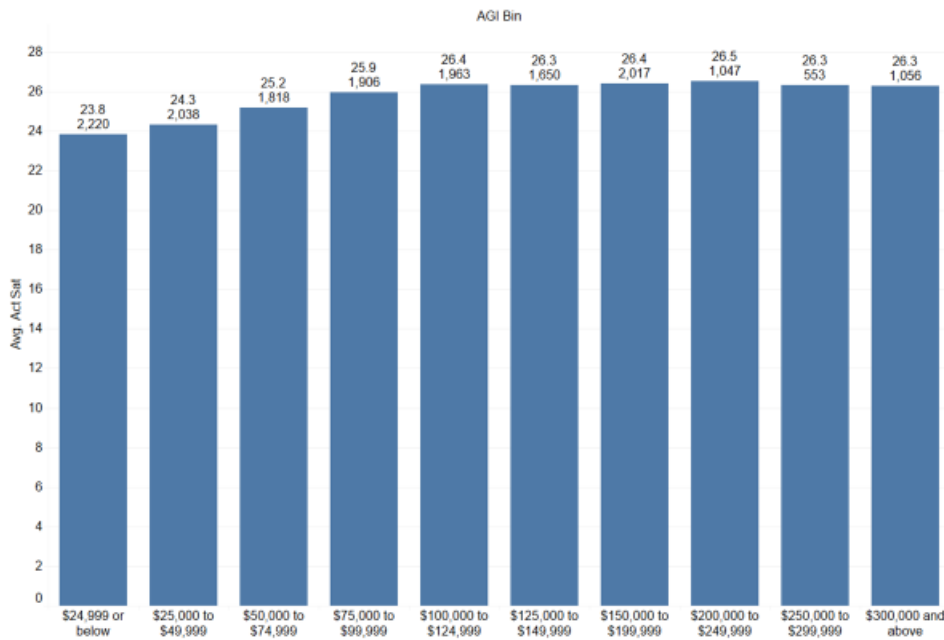
So, even ignoring the impracticality of requiring test scores for Fall 2021 in the current environment, the HS GPA could be utilized for automatic Admission decisions and serve equally as well (if not better depending on the threshold) as a guide for Admitting students who can succeed at UK. For students, not meeting this threshold, they would be evaluated using a predictive model and the standard holistic review.



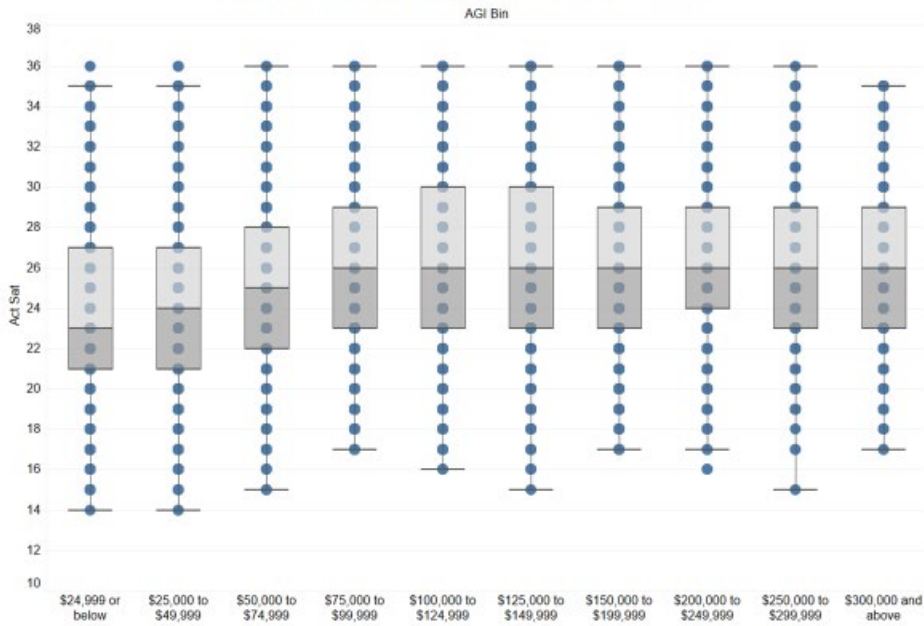
Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts



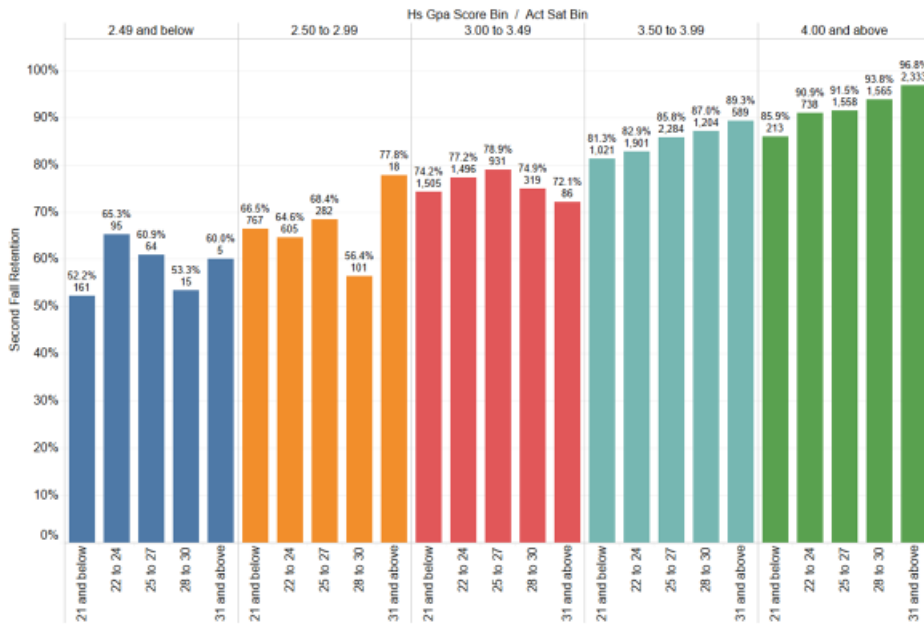
Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts - FAFSA Filers



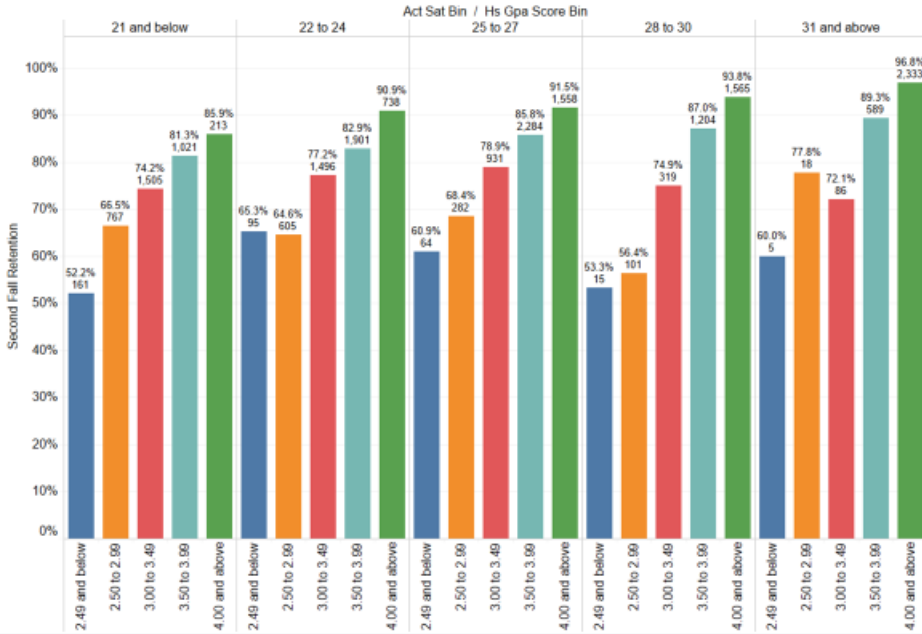
Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts - FAFSA Filers



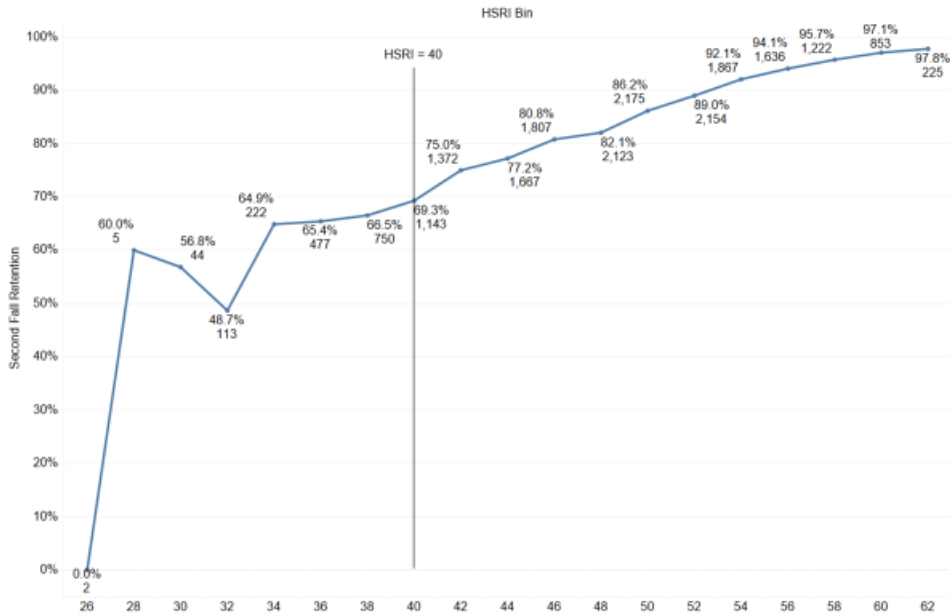
Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts

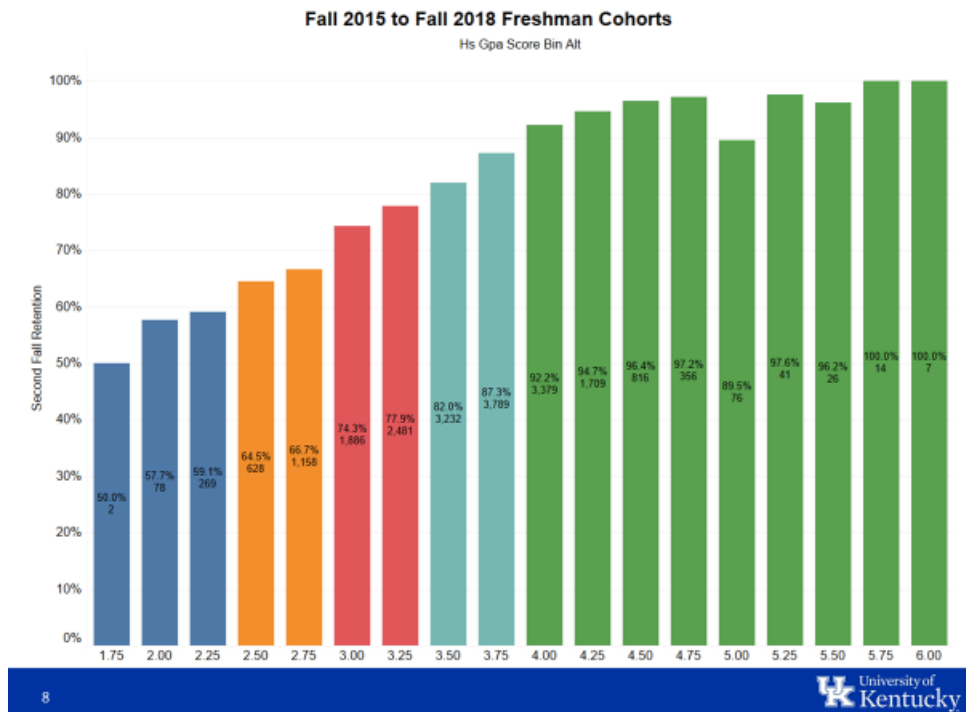


Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts



Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 Freshman Cohorts





Literature Review

Below, is a literature review of some articles which could help inform the decisions. In addition, here is a link to the College Board (SAT) notification asking for flexibility with admissions deadlines due to not being able to deploy exams to be able to meet the needs.

<https://www.collegeboard.org/releases/2020/cb-asks-colleges-show-flexibility-admissions-reduce-stress-students-challenges-universal-access-sat-coronavirus-pandemic>

**“It is finally time to get rid of the SAT and ACT college admissions tests?”
Washington Post, March 19, 2019**

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/03/19/is-it-finally-time-get-rid-sat-act-college-admissions-tests/>
- George Washington U went test-score-optional in 2015, claims it has seen a more diversified pool of applicants
- DePaul is test-optional; claims, along with other critics, that test add very little to no predictive power of college success, and that high school performance is best predictor of college performance.

- “Academic performance, as well as retention and graduation rates are almost identical when comparing test submitters and non-submitters, despite substantial differences in test scores (we collect them after admission is granted for research purposes), and despite the fact that test-optional students tend to be lower-income and from families where parents are not college-educated,” says Boeckenstedt of DePaul.

“Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions” by National Association for College Admission Counseling. 2014

- <https://www.iacac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/H59-Defining-Promise.pdf>
- “With almost 123,000 students at 33 widely differing institutions, the differences between submitters and non-submitters are five one-hundredths of a GPA point, and six-tenths of one percent in graduation rates. By any standard, these are trivial differences.”

“Critics will fight on despite faculty report urging University of California to keep SAT and ACT in admissions” February 4, 2020

- <https://edsources.org/2020/uc-report-upholds-test-scores-in-admissions-while-critics-pledge-to-fight-on/623299>
- Report itself: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/underreview/sttf-report.pdf>
- University of California Task Force review did NOT recommend going test optional.
- HOWEVER, subsequently the UC President recommended going test optional in response to the coronavirus crisis until 2024:
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/11/us/uc-president-suspend-sat-act-for-admissions/index.html>
 - Test will be optional until 2023
 - During 2023 and 2024 admissions cycles, test scores will not be considered at all in admissions decisions
 - In the meantime, UC would come up with "a new test that better aligns with the content UC expects applicants to have learned and with UC's values," UC President Janet Napolitano wrote.

“Predicting College Success: How Do Different High School Assessments Measure Up?”, Policy Analysis for California Education study, March 2019

- https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/R_Kurlaender_Mar-2019.pdf
- HSGPA is a stronger predictor of first-year college GPA and second-year persistence than standardized tests.
- High school GPA as a predictor of college success results in a much higher representation of low income and underrepresented minority students in the top of the UC applicant pool, than do test scores.
- High school GPA on its own is more strongly correlated to second-year persistence rates (.22) than either SBAC (.19) or SAT (.19) on their own.

“NORM-REFERENCED TESTS AND RACE-BLIND ADMISSIONS: The Case for Eliminating the SAT and ACT at the University of California”, published by Center for Studies in Higher Education, UCal Berkely, December 2017

- Of all college admission criteria, scores on nationally normed tests like the SAT and ACT are most affected by the socioeconomic background of the student
- More than a third of the variation in SAT/ACT scores is attributable to differences in socioeconomic circumstance.
- Holistic review has expanded the amount and quality of other applicant information, besides test scores, that UC considers in admissions decisions. After taking that information into account, SAT/ACT scores have become largely redundant and uniquely predict less than 2 percent of the variance in student performance at UC.
- Paper concludes with a discussion of options for replacing or eliminating standardized score requirements, including reviews of test-optional data:
 - “[...] most independent evaluations of test-optional admissions are generally positive (e.g., Bates College, 2004; McDermott, 2008; Bryn Mawr College, 2009). Test-optional colleges report increases in application and enrollment rates for both low income and underrepresented minority students, though the effect appears to be greater under a testblind approach (Espenshade & Chung, 2012). At the same time, test-optional institutions report little if any change in college outcomes such as grades and graduation rates. An added attraction is that test-optional boosts SAT/ACT averages among applicants who do submit scores, a fact that has not gone unnoticed at colleges concerned to improve their institutional ranking.”

“High school GPA 5 times more likely to predict college success than ACT scores”, January 29, 2020

- <https://www.educationdive.com/news/high-school-gpa-5-times-more-likely-to-predict-college-success-than-act-sco/571287/>
- Examined 55,084 students who graduated from Chicago Public Schools between 2006 and 2009 and immediately attended a four-year college.
- The GPA correlation is consistent regardless of which school the student attended, according to the study. Conversely, there was no correlation between ACT score and college graduation rate at some schools, and researchers also found in some schools that higher ACT scores resulted in lower graduation rates.
- Each incremental increase in GPA improved the odds of the student graduating from college.

“Questioning their fairness, a record number of colleges stop requiring the SAT and ACT” Oct 9, 2019

- <https://hechingerreport.org/questioning-their-fairness-a-record-number-of-colleges-stop-requiring-the-sat-and-act/>
- Goal of going test-optional for most institutions is to increase diversity; lower income students average scores are lower, even according to College Board’s own research
- UChicago reported a record number of URM fall enrollments after making tests optional
- [A June analysis by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce](#) suggests that the 200 most selective colleges and universities already look at more than candidates’ standardized test scores alone. It found that, if SAT and ACT results were the sole basis for admission, 53 percent of students who were accepted wouldn’t have gotten in.

“DEFINING ACCESS: How Test-Optional Works” from NACAC : Steven T. Syverson, Valerie W. Franks, William C. Hiss, published 2018

- <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/defining-access-report-2018.pdf>
- Public institutions saw an average 11% increase in applications during the study after adopting test optional policy, but study was not able to separate how much of that was due to TOP alone for public institutions.
- There were 14 of 23 (61%) of the TOP institutions that achieved proportionately greater increases in enrollment of URM students than their TRP Peers; one was essentially the same (within +/- 3%); and eight (35%) fared less well than their TRP Peers. Enrollment of Pell Recipients was more evenly split, with 11 of 22 (50%) of the TOP institutions increasing the proportion of Pell recipients more than their TRP Peers, three enrolling roughly the same proportions and eight (36%) losing ground in comparison with their TRP Peers.
- Summary: Our participating TOP institutions varied in size (~1,500 to ~20,000) and selectivity (with admit rates ranging from ~15% to ~90%). But the experiences of this particular batch of colleges suggests that the adoption of a well-promoted and well-executed test optional admission policy can reasonably lead to an increase in overall applications as well as an increase in the URM representation (both numeric and proportionate) within the freshman class. As such, a TOP policy can provide one tool to assist a college in attracting and enrolling a larger contingent of URM students.



KENTUCKY ACADEMIC READINESS INDICATORS
Academic Year 2020-21

Upon admission to a public postsecondary institution, students scoring at or above the established scores or grades will not be required to complete developmental or corequisite coursework and will be allowed entry into college credit-bearing coursework that counts toward degree credit requirements.¹

Note: Circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have made the administration of the standardized tests listed on the College Readiness Indicators more difficult, and even impossible, in some instances. As such, for AY 2020-21 institutions are permitted to implement their own methodologies for college readiness determination.

Area	ACT Score	SAT Score	KYOTE	GED College Readiness	ALEKS
English (Writing)	English 18 or higher	22 or higher on the Writing and Language Test ²	Writing 6 or higher	Reasoning through the Language Arts 165 or higher	Not applicable as a placement score
Reading	Reading 20 or higher	24 or higher on the Reading Test	Reading 20 or higher	Reasoning through the Language Arts 165 or higher	Not applicable as a placement score
Mathematics (Quantitative Reasoning)	Mathematics 19 or higher	Mathematics 510 ³ or higher	College Readiness Mathematics 22 or higher	Mathematical Reasoning 165 or higher	ALEKS PPL 30
Mathematics (College Algebra)	Mathematics 22 or higher	Mathematics 540 ⁴ or higher	College Algebra 14 or higher	Mathematical Reasoning 175 or higher	ALEKS PPL 46
Mathematics (Calculus)	Mathematics 27 or higher	Mathematics 640 ⁵ or higher	Calculus 15 or higher	Not applicable as a placement score	ALEKS PPL 76

¹ All exam scores remain an indicator of academic readiness for a minimum of twelve (12) months from the date of administration. However, an institution shall not determine academic readiness using scores received from exams taken more than four years prior.

SAT does not disaggregate English and Reading. This score is based on College Board's use of concordance tables between the old SAT and the Redesigned SAT, to provide updated indicators. The English (Writing) and Reading Scores are Test Scores (see here for more detail on the scores provided with the SAT: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/understanding-scores/structure>).

³ This is based on concordance with ACT score of 19.

⁴ This is based on concordance with ACT score of 22.

⁵ This is based on concordance with ACT score of 27.