



Oregon  
University  
System

# **PASS Frequently Asked Questions Second Languages Verification Guidelines**

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-----Articulation Through Standards Meeting -----



# An Introduction to PASS

The Oregon University System (OUS) is developing and field-testing a new approach to undergraduate admissions. This approach uses academic standards, known as *proficiency standards*, that describe the skills and knowledge students must demonstrate to be accepted into any of Oregon's seven public universities. These skills and knowledge are considered to be critical for student success in college. The new system of admission is known as the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System (PASS).

## Background

The Oregon Legislature passed laws in 1991 and 1995 requiring high schools to offer Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery (CIM and CAM). In 1993 the Oregon University System's State Board of Higher Education created the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System (PASS) to keep college admission in step with changes being made in K-12 education to accommodate CIM and CAM.

PASS is based on proficiencies—the knowledge and skills that are critical to success in university study. In 1998, the PASS proficiencies were aligned with the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade benchmarks leading to

the CIM and CAM. Oregon became the first (and only) state in the nation to connect college admission directly with K-12 standards.

The 1998-99 school year was the first year that performance on CIM assessments was used to determine if a student had met the specified CIM standards (statements of expectation for student learning) in English and mathematics. In the fall of 2001, two years after first having the opportunity to demonstrate skills as sophomores for the CIM, students applying to Oregon's seven state universities will have the option of demonstrating proficiency in English and math to meet admission requirements in those subjects. Subsequent freshman in-state applicants will have the option of demonstrating proficiency in the content areas of science (2002), the arts (2003), second languages (2004), and social science (2005).

Beginning with fall term 2005, applicants from Oregon public high schools will be expected to meet proficiency requirements in all six content areas.

The next few pages contain questions frequently asked about PASS. The responses reflect policies and procedures in place for the 1999-2000 academic year.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT PASS

### *What is PASS?*

PASS is the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System being developed by the Oregon University System for the admission of students into undergraduate programs at all of Oregon's seven public universities.

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### *What is a proficiency-based admission system?*

A proficiency-based system requires students to demonstrate that their knowledge and skills in specified areas meet or exceed admission standards. This system links admission directly to a student's demonstrated ability to meet clearly defined performance standards, moving the focus from courses taken to knowledge and skills mastered.

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### *Why are admission procedures changing?*

The Oregon University System (OUS) is changing its admission procedures by implementing PASS for two reasons. First, PASS aligns college admission with the statewide K-12 school improvement plan. Oregon's school-reform legislation requires all secondary schools to offer programs leading to the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery (CIM and CAM). As a result of these requirements, high schools are engaged in large-scale curricular and program redesign. OUS seeks to be a helpful and supportive partner as schools make these significant changes. For example, PASS allows students to use the results from many CIM and CAM assessments to meet proficiency-based college-admission requirements.

Second, grades are an inadequate measuring system. The current admission system of subject area requirements and cumulative grade point average (GPA) does not help students know what knowledge and skills they should be developing to succeed in college, nor does it necessarily encourage them to take the most challenging courses. In some cases, students may choose courses that allow them to obtain the highest grades, rather than those that offer the greatest challenge or greatly increase their skills and knowledge.

Average GPAs for incoming freshmen at the University of Oregon, for example, have risen consistently over the past 30 years, without a corresponding increase in the level of preparation for college. In fact, greater numbers of students need to take remedial courses in college and typically require five to six years to obtain a baccalaureate degree. The GPA require-

ment for admission has risen four times during the past thirty years, from 2.25 in 1968 to the current 3.0. Raising the GPA again would most likely lead to greater grade inflation and compress GPAs into a smaller, higher range.

Also, there is little evidence that grades from the same courses in different high schools (or from different teachers in the same high school) represent comparable levels of student performance. For example, some teachers emphasize writing; others do not. Some use challenging tests and assignments, while others rely on effort, participation, and attendance. As a result, there is tremendous variation in the basic knowledge and skills of those students who meet admission standards. Colleges can make few assumptions about what students know and are able to do, resulting in entry-level courses that often must re-teach significant elements of the high school curriculum.

College remediation rates are currently high, contributing to lower completion rates (completion is defined as a student receiving a degree in six years or less). In an era of rising college costs and increasing scrutiny of university completion rates, it is necessary to find ways to ensure that students are prepared to succeed in college before they are admitted.

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***How will this system operate?***

Proficiencies are grouped into six academic content areas: English, math, science, visual and performing arts, second languages, and social science. Each content area has between four and seven proficiencies. High school students show mastery of these proficiencies through essays, projects, performance tests, exams, quizzes, and classroom assignments. Students receive a summary judgment score for each proficiency. Summary judgment scores are not averaged within or across content areas. A student who is rated as being proficient or above proficient on all PASS proficiencies is eligible for admission to an OUS institution.

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***How is proficiency assessed?***

Two types of assessment determine student's scores on the PASS proficiencies.

Teacher verification

High school teachers score student work by applying criteria that have been developed for each proficiency. A teacher judges a collection of student work to determine if the student is proficient. Teachers use the same criteria statewide. To ensure comparable judgments, teachers attend training sessions at which they cross-score collections of student work to make their judgments more consistent. To help them recognize the required level of mastery, teachers also refer to collections of student work that have been judged to be illustrations of proficient performance.

State and national assessments.

The Oregon Department of Education currently administers multiple-choice tests and performance tasks in English, math, and science, and is planning to do the same in social science. Results from these assessments may be used to demonstrate or contribute substantially to teacher verifications about proficiency in these four content areas. National tests such as the Advanced Placement, SAT-II, ACT, International Baccalaureate, and language proficiency tests will continue to be used; specific scores will contribute to the determination of proficiency in English, math, science, second languages, and social science.

Students receive a summary judgment score for each proficiency in a content area. There are five possible proficiency levels: E (Exemplary); H (High-level mastery of the proficiency); M (Meets the proficiency); W (Working toward the proficiency); and N (Not meeting the proficiency).

Note that levels E and H describe work that exceeds the proficiency requirements required for OUS admission. These higher levels serve three purposes:

1. to motivate students to continue beyond entry-level skills;
2. to give universities better information to place students into appropriate courses; and
3. to be used in some cases by universities to award credit to students who have clearly mastered entry-level course material.

Since the purpose of the PASS performance levels that are above “proficient” is to make determinations within the university, teacher scores at these levels need to be verified externally, generally by a review panel made up of university faculty or that contains university representation. Although teachers can award scores above the “proficient” level without external review, these scores must receive external validation if they are to be used in the placement or credit-awarding process at a university.

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***What role will tests such as the SAT, ACT, AP, or IB play?***

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the ACT will continue to be part of the assessment information required for college admission. These tests serve primarily to help determine student aptitude for college-level coursework, not to deny admission.

While teacher verification is the preferred method of determining student proficiency, achieving certain scores on national tests such as the Advanced Placement (AP) or the International Baccalaureate (IB) will be an acceptable means of meeting some but not all of the PASS proficiency requirements. PASS has a close working relationship with both American College Testing (ACT) and The College Board (SAT) to determine the best use of this type of national test information within a proficiency-based

system. Guidelines that contain information about the scores required on specific tests to meet proficiency have been developed for the 1999 –2000 academic year.

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***What will be the purpose of grades in high school?***

Grades continue to provide useful information about high school performance, study habits, attitude, and other attributes. Even after proficiencies become the primary means of determining admission, grades may be submitted as a source of additional evidence.

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***What is the timeframe for implementing PASS?***

PASS implementation is coordinated with that of CIM and CAM. Proficiency-based admission will be fully in place statewide by fall 2005. This requirement is being phased in beginning in fall 2001, when OUS applicants from Oregon’s public high schools have the option of demonstrating proficiency in English and math. In fall 2002, science becomes an additional option. The visual and performing arts will be added in 2003, second languages in 2004, and social science in fall 2005.

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***How were the CIM, CAM, and PASS standards aligned?***

Staff and faculty worked with ODE and OUS in 1997 to align the PASS criteria (which provide a more detailed description of each proficiency) with the CIM and CAM content standards. The Oregon Parent Teacher Association, ODE and OUS invited public participation in regional meetings. *The Aligned CIM, CAM, and PASS Standards*, was adopted by the State Board of Education in March 1998.

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***How were the knowledge and skills for university success identified?***

The PASS proficiencies were developed by analyzing more than 60 national and state curriculum and standards documents. The educational systems of other countries were also examined. Over a three-year period, approximately 500 faculty members from Oregon universities and educators from community colleges and high schools reviewed and further developed the PASS proficiencies. Using national and state curriculum standards ensures that Oregon’s proficiency-based system will prepare students both for Oregon colleges and universities, and for success at out-of-state institutions.

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***How is this system being field-tested?***

PASS is working closely with teachers and students in the approximately 65 high schools known as the PASS 2001 Partnership Schools. These schools, located throughout the state, enroll 46 percent of the state’s high school students and include a network of small rural schools in eastern Oregon.

Teachers at the 2001 Partnership Schools are learning how to assemble and judge collections of student work. Their schools will provide examples of

how curriculum can be realigned to meet the needs of CIM, CAM, and PASS. They will also demonstrate new ways of teaching that go beyond traditional course titles and credits.

PASS will facilitate a statewide network of teachers who have been certified as reliable scorers and who can train others. PASS is designing materials for use in training teachers to make reliable judgments using the PASS proficiencies. These training materials will eventually be available statewide on the PASS website. Although PASS is assisting schools in the reform process, in a local-control state such as Oregon school districts are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their staff is prepared to implement PASS.

Supplementing the work of PASS teachers is the active involvement of the Admissions Directors from all OUS campuses. They are working with high school counselors, administrators and registrars to develop an application procedure that will serve as an effective and efficient means for transferring the full scope of information available for making admission decisions. Faculty teams on each campus are studying the implications of PASS for undergraduate programs and investigating how PASS information might be used for placement in classes.

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***How will teachers decide what to teach?***

The PASS proficiencies outline a comprehensive and focused course of study for college-bound students. High school departments should consult relevant proficiencies as they conduct periodic curriculum reviews. Some schools may choose to develop more interdisciplinary programs of study by collecting student work across subject areas. In all cases, teachers will want to determine whether what they teach is enabling their students to master the PASS proficiencies. PASS encourages innovative approaches to curriculum and instruction as well as methods for developing in students the work habits related to success in college.

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***What will happen to required courses & high school diplomas?***

The basic requirements for a diploma are set by the State Board of Education, with additions set by local school boards. Currently, not all students who receive diplomas are eligible for college admission, and students without diplomas are accepted if they meet college admission requirements. These policies will continue.

Schools may require whatever courses they wish in whatever sequence they wish for the high school diploma. These requirements will remain the concern of the school district.

***Will this system make it easier or harder for students to be admitted to college?***

The goal is not to make college admission harder, but to ensure that students are better prepared to succeed once they are admitted. For this to happen, students will need to be more knowledgeable and skillful academically than they are currently. This is also the goal of CIM and CAM.

PASS is working with high schools to set standards at a level that is rigorous yet achievable by a great majority of students who currently qualify for college admission. Students who meet the PASS proficiency standards would most likely also be admitted under the current system and are more likely to graduate with a college degree in four years.

***Will this system be equitable for all students?***

PASS is designed to be more equitable than the current OUS admission system. Research evidence suggests that teacher, school and district expectations, assumptions, and requirements influence student achievement. PASS offers clear and consistent standards. A school that adopts the PASS proficiencies as the organizers for its instructional program is assured that its program is as rigorous and demanding as that of any high school in the state.

OUS is committed to examine the performance of all students admitted via proficiency assessments to determine if any requirements have detrimental effects on any student population. A systematic review will examine the effects of PASS on groups from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as on persons with disabilities. The system will be modified as needed to meet the OUS goal of making PASS as equitable as possible while retaining high standards for all students. Students with identified, documented special learning needs will be eligible for accommodations and modifications for any proficiency.

***How will home-schooled students demonstrate proficiency?***

Home-schooled students can be admitted via proficiency if they demonstrate the same levels of performance that are required of other students. High schools, Education Service Districts, and community colleges may be places where these students might have the opportunity to have proficiency verified. Home-schooled students should plan to take national tests, such as the SAT II series in specific subject areas, to demonstrate proficiency in as many areas as possible.

***What about students who are already proficient in the arts or in a second language?***

PASS acknowledges proficiency, regardless of where it has been acquired. A student who has spent time outside the country, or who is a native speaker of a language other than English, could use their skills to demonstrate proficiency. Similarly, a student who develops skills in the visual and performing arts outside of school could be verified as proficient in applicable proficiencies.



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***What will happen to Oregon students who want to go to an out-of-state college?***

PASS is actively working with admissions officers from a number of states and institutions throughout the nation to guarantee that Oregon students will not have any difficulty applying to public or private out-of-state higher education institutions. PASS has received numerous assurances that students with evidence of proficiency on their transcripts will be welcomed to apply at leading institutions such as Stanford University, the University of California system, the University of Florida, the University of Washington, the University of Wisconsin, Brigham Young University, and others.

PASS allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that can showcase their level of skill, motivation, ingenuity, and creativity. Such evidence gives admissions officers better information than that available on a traditional transcript.

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***What about out-of-state students who want to come to Oregon?***

OUS will continue to accept such students based on the courses they have taken and their grade point averages. OUS campus representatives and admissions officers will make high school counselors in those out-of-state schools that send the most students to Oregon more aware of the PASS proficiencies. Most importantly, applicants from out of state will be made aware of the level of knowledge and skill expected of them if they choose to enroll in an Oregon school. They will be subject to the same expectations in university freshman courses as in-state applicants.

Proficiency-based admission is becoming more common throughout the country. Many high schools have initiated new curricular programs, such as Senior Projects or interdisciplinary studies, which may yield proficiency data. Out-of-state students can choose to include their accomplishments on an application to an OUS institution. A number of states, including California, Washington, Wisconsin, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and New York, have projects or pilot programs under way to develop admission methods similar to PASS.

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***How can I best keep informed about developments in PASS?***

The PASS website is frequently updated and contains all PASS documents, training materials, and communications such as newsletters and related resources. Pathways have been created specifically to assist teachers, students, parents, counselors, administrators, admission directors, the media, and other groups. Visit PASS at <http://pass-ous.uoregon.edu> to find the most relevant information.

## Verification Methods

The purpose of proficiency-based admission standards is to ensure that students have the knowledge and skills necessary to do entry-level college coursework. PASS is designed to verify proficiency in ways that allow students to show they have mastered the required content and skills. To that end, PASS has identified a range of verification options teachers or students can use.

The table of **Verification Guidelines** on the opposite page identifies the methods available to verify student proficiency for PASS in English. The preferred method for most proficiencies is teacher verification. This method allows the closest link between instruction and assessment, and can be the most valid way to determine students' actual abilities.

However, a number of tests also provide reliable and valid information about student mastery of content knowledge. In many cases, these tests are closely integrated into the curriculum of Oregon high schools. Examples include Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate.

The assessments that students take to earn their Certificates of Initial Mastery also provide useful information about their mastery of some PASS proficiencies. CIM assessments are the preferred assessment

form in areas for which those scores provide information more easily than does teacher verification.

Given this range of data sources, and to reduce redundancy, PASS provides teachers and students a series of options for most proficiencies, along with the score the student needs for each assessment method to meet required performance levels.

Please note that **only one verification method is necessary for each proficiency.**

*The Verification Guidelines identify the methods available to verify student proficiency for PASS.*

To meet admission requirements in a given subject area, **students must meet required performance levels or achieve prescribed scores for each proficiency.** The Verification Guidelines, in combination with the information on teacher verification provided in

the rest of this booklet, offer a range of options for teachers who are verifying proficiency.

The levels set here are preliminary, but may be used by teachers and students at PASS Partnership high schools during the 1999-2000 school year. (Note: any revisions to this chart will not take effect until the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year.) Subsequent revisions will be based on research about the relationship between these scores and other measures that predict university performance.



## Second Languages Verification Guidelines

PASS Proficiency Standard	Verification Methods and Score Requirements	
	Method of Verification [One Method Required Per Proficiency]	Rating or Score Required to Meet Proficiency
<b>SECOND LANGUAGES</b>		
A: Oral Communication	OUS/COFLT Second Language Proficiency Assessment	4
	ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview IL = Intermediate-Low	Intermediate Low
	Student Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) Test	4
	California Oral Competency Interview	2-low
	Satisfactory performance on Brigham Young Foreign Language Assessment (2 <sup>nd</sup> year level)	S
	AP Foreign Language Test	2
	IB Foreign Language Exam*	3
	CLEP Foreign Language Exam	40
	Satisfactory performance on a college second language departmental challenge exam	S
B: Reading	PASS Teacher Verification	Proficient**
	AP Foreign Language Test	2
	IB Foreign Language Exam*	4
	Satisfactory performance on Brigham Young Foreign Language Assessment	S
	SAT II	470
	National Spanish Exam Level II	Honors
	CLEP Foreign Language Exam	40
	Satisfactory performance on a college second language departmental challenge exam	S
C: Writing	PASS Teacher Verification	Proficient**
	AP Foreign Language Test	2
	Student Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) Test	4
	SAT II	470
	Satisfactory performance on Brigham Young Foreign Language Assessment	S
	IB Foreign Language Exam *	4
	CLEP Foreign Language Exam	40
D: Culture	PASS Teacher Verification	Proficient**

\* A score of 3 or higher on any level of IB exam.

\*\* PASS Proficiency in Second Languages can be verified only by teachers trained as PASS scorers.

Note that in instances where more than one verification method is available, only one verification method needs to be used.