Challenging Your English Composition Placement

Studies have shown that there is generally a strong correlation between students’ English subscores on college entrance exams (ACT or SAT) and their writing ability. However, because these subscores are based on multiple-choice exams, not writing exams, occasionally a weak writer will earn a high English subscore or a strong writer will earn a low English subscore. Therefore, the Department of English and Humanities has developed a procedure that will allow certain students to take a composition course other than the one indicated by the students’ English subscores.

If you feel underprepared for the composition course in which you were placed, you may simply enroll in a lower-level course. For example, if you have an ACT English subscore of 25 but have not written a formal academic paper in three years, you may decide you would be more comfortable in English 1101 than in English 1102. Likewise, if you have an ACT English subscore of 18 but have been out of school for a decade, you may choose to take English 0096, even though you are eligible for English 1101.

If you strongly believe that you are fully prepared to succeed in a higher-level composition course than the one in which you were placed, you may petition for an opportunity to challenge your placement. Challenging the placement may require three steps:

1. Fill out the Request to Take the Writing Placement Exam. You must complete this form without outside help. If you fail to provide any of the information required on the Request to Take the Writing Placement Exam, your request will be rejected.

2. Submit the form (via email or in person) to the SSU Testing Coordinator. The current Testing Coordinator is Denise Gregory (dgregory@shawnee.edu), and her office is in the Student Success Center. The Testing Coordinator will forward your form to the Department of English and Humanities so that the Director of Composition and the Chair of the Department of English and Humanities can determine whether your Request to Take the Writing Placement Test is warranted. If your request is approved, you will be notified as soon as possible, typically within one week of receipt of the request.

3. If your request is approved, you must take the Writing Placement Exam. Contact the Testing Coordinator to set up an appointment to come to campus and take the Writing Placement Exam. Your exam will be read and scored by two or three English faculty members. If the score on your Writing Placement Exam indicates that you are prepared for a more advanced class than the one in which you originally enrolled, the Testing Coordinator will notify you that you have been given permission to register for the more advanced class. If your score on the Writing Placement Exam does not indicate that you are prepared for a more advanced class, you must take the class in which you were placed. You cannot retake the Writing Placement Exam.

Please note: The petition to take the Writing Placement Exam must be received by the Department of English and Humanities before the student begins taking a lower-level course. If the Department receives a request to take the Writing Placement Exam from a student who is currently taking a lower-level course or from a student who has dropped or failed the lower-level course, the request will be denied.
Request to Take the Writing Placement Exam

If you wish to take the Writing Placement Exam, complete this form thoroughly and submit it to Denise Gregory, SSU Testing Coordinator. Ms. Gregory will forward copies of your request to the Director of Composition and the Chair of the Department of English and Humanities. The Director of Composition and the Chair of the Department of English and Humanities will determine whether your request is accepted. Failure to complete any part will result in an automatic refusal of the request.

1. Name:

2. Address:

3. Phone number:

4. Date request submitted:

5. ACT English subscore:
   or
   SAT English subscore:
   or
   COMPASS English subscore:

6. High school GPA:

7. List English classes previously taken in high school or college:

8. Attach a complete, carefully drafted explanation of why you believe you are prepared for a more advanced writing class than your ACT (or SAT or COMPASS) subscore indicates. This explanation must be clear and logical. Your arguments should be supported by concrete examples. You should avoid any errors in Standard American English. In other words, this explanation should demonstrate your strengths as a writer.