

A Career Readiness Task Force composed of experts from Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium member states created The Smarter Balanced Career Readiness Frameworks to provide additional guidance and information to students, parents, teachers, and counselors as they chart a path toward meeting each student's career goals and consider the implications of a student's composite English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics scores on the Smarter Balanced summative assessments. Use of the frameworks is voluntary for states. The frameworks are models that states can alter to meet local needs. The Task Force recommends that each state assemble a committee composed of experts from K–12 and higher education, relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the business community to review and customize these frameworks.

### College and Career Readiness

The Common Core State Standards are designed to provide students with the fundamental English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics skills necessary for success in postsecondary education and occupations that pay family-sustaining wages and offer opportunities for advancement. Smarter Balanced members from K–12 and higher education crafted a [College Content-readiness Policy](#) to define how participating colleges and universities may recognize and use student scores on the Grade 11 end-of-year summative assessments to inform course placement. This policy identifies the performance levels at which students may be exempted from remediation and guaranteed placement into entry-level, transferable credit-bearing courses.

Given the diversity of occupations—and the wide array of ELA and mathematics knowledge and skill required by occupations—it is not possible to draw a bright line between students who are and are not ready for productive careers. Further, recent [research](#) by the National Assessment Governing Board concluded that college and career readiness are not equivalent constructs and that students who are not ready for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses may be ready for postsecondary career education or job training. The Smarter Balanced scores across the performance continuum do provide valuable information about student preparation to meet the ELA and math requirements for postsecondary education and training programs associated with the wide array of occupations. Further, because career readiness is a broad construct that encompasses knowledge, skills, and attributes far beyond ELA and mathematics—including technical knowledge and skills and employability knowledge, skills, and dispositions—the Smarter Balanced assessments are not meant to certify student readiness for the world of work (see the [statement](#) of the Career Ready Partner Council for a complete definition of career readiness).

Given these constraints, the Career Readiness Frameworks seek to inform students, parents and educators about the variety of occupational fields that exist and about how the breadth of occupations potentially available increases as one's level of academic preparation improves. The frameworks are meant to be aspirational and educational in nature, not to suggest that students are locked into a particular occupation or group of occupations based on their assessment performance. As such, the frameworks are best used as a tool to support teacher and school counselor communication with students and parents about assessment results, rather than as a stand-alone set of documents.

## Organization and Limitations of the Career Readiness Frameworks

There are 16 model frameworks, one for each of the 16 Career Clusters® developed by the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc). Many states use these 16 clusters to organize curricula for career and technical education (CTE) programs. Within each career framework, exemplar occupations are displayed in 3 large categories:

- 1) occupations which require a postsecondary degree, and therefore readiness for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing courses in English/composition and mathematics/statistics;
- 2) occupations which require a certificate or occupationally-focused associate degree (commonly referred to as an Associate of Applied Science) that typically do not require entering students to enroll in transferable courses in these subjects at all or as the first course in a math or English sequence; and
- 3) occupations which require on the job training only.

The lists of occupations, and the level of education and training required for each occupation, were drawn from the [O\\*Net](#) database, developed and maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor. This national database is a well-respected source of information on occupations. However, it does have several important limitations. While the database does identify the most common level of education workers in a particular occupation possess, it does not specify the minimum level of education necessary to enter a particular occupation. In addition, the O\*Net database does not include careers that are particular to the military (although civilian occupations that have a military equivalent are included in the database).

The most important limitations of the O\*Net database for this purpose are that it does not account for state and local variation in occupational requirements or education offerings. Requirements for formal apprenticeships in certain occupations vary by state (see [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov)) and so are not captured in the frameworks. Likewise, community college systems in some states offer the Associate of Applied Science, while others do not. There is also variation in the level of English and math required for similar degree programs. As states customize the frameworks, they are encouraged to re-align them to be consistent with local conditions. States also may want to take the

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### *The 16 Career Clusters*

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- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology & Communications
- Business, Management & Administration
- Education & Training
- Finance
- Government & Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

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added step of creating links between occupations and degree or certificate programs offered in the state.

Finally, the model frameworks do not distinguish between high- and low-frequency occupations or identify high-growth or high-demand fields. There is considerable variation in the frequency and demand for occupations by state and region that is not captured in O\*Net. In constructing the frameworks, the Task Force decided to include all occupations listed in O\*Net within each cluster. As states customize the frameworks, they may choose to edit the occupation lists to highlight high-frequency and/or high-demand fields within the state's labor market. This information is typically produced by state governments; in addition, the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce has produced [state-level reports](#) on high-growth/high demand fields that may be a useful reference.

### Recommended Uses for the Frameworks

The Career Readiness Task Force recommends that the frameworks accompany student score reports for Grades 8 and high school; however, states may use them with earlier grades at their option. Use of the frameworks at Grade 8 is important so that students' occupational interests can help to frame their high school academic programs (while Grade 8 end-of-year assessment results typically will arrive too late to inform course taking during Grade 9, Grade 8 interim assessment results can inform 9<sup>th</sup> grade courses because the schedule for the interim assessment is determined locally).

To guard against students concluding that their assessment results lock them into certain occupations or occupational groups, the frameworks are best used as part of a broader program of counseling and information to assist students and parents in understanding and acting upon their assessment results.

As noted above, states are encouraged to customize the frameworks based on career and technical education curricula, the state labor market, the educational offerings of postsecondary institutions, or other factors. States also are encouraged to link from the career frameworks to career guidance resources and services, such as interest inventories, graduation plans, etc. Finally, since most states will display the frameworks on the internet, states may link from the frameworks to the O\*Net [My Next Move](#) web site, which contains a wealth of information on the nature of each occupation, and to information on related postsecondary education and training programs offered within the state.

Because each state may customize the frameworks for the 16 Career Clusters, no attempt has been made to develop a graphic design for the frameworks. Instead, they are presented in simple Microsoft Word documents to facilitate state review and customization. A model layout is provided, also in a simple format, to highlight the content and format decisions that will influence the final design a state may choose. States are encouraged to develop more creative designs. As state designs are finalized, Smarter Balanced will share that information among its member states.