

TO: Chief Executive Officers
Chief Instructional Officers
Chief Student Services Officers
Chief Information Systems Officers
Admissions and Records Officers
Management Information Systems Contacts
Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness Officers

FROM: Renee Craig-Marius, Vice Chancellor, Student Services
Jory Hadsell, Executive in Residence, Strategic Technology Initiatives
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RE: CCCStart: Guidance for Supplemental Data Collection and Local Student Onboarding

Purpose

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office is transitioning colleges and districts from CCCApply to the CCCStart platform through the Reimagine Apply initiative. CCCStart is designed to provide a simpler, more streamlined, and more consistent statewide admissions experience for all prospective students.

As part of this work, the Chancellor's Office and Reimagine Apply Steering Committee have worked with admissions, student services, data, research, technology, regulatory, and other subject-matter experts from the Chancellor's Office, colleges, districts, and system partners to review the information historically collected through CCCApply.

Given the barriers created for prospective students when the admissions application asks an extensive number of questions, a central focus of that review has been what information is truly necessary at the time of admission.

Streamlining of student entry into the system has been achieved by removing or revising questions in the following cases: they were duplicative; the data is no longer meaningfully used; the data is available through other sources or processes; questions are primarily related to post-admission activities; and/or questions did not reliably produce the intended information. The result is an intentionally shorter and more focused student experience.

This memo provides guidance for preserving that approach as colleges transition to CCCStart, particularly when considering supplemental data collection.

Key Principles

These principles should guide local implementation of CCCStart:

1. CCCStart is the statewide admissions platform. Information collected during the admissions process should be limited primarily to what is necessary to admit or process the student, establish the student record, or meet a requirement that must specifically be addressed at admission, such as eligibility for priority registration. Questions regarding citizenship status are no longer included or appropriate for the statewide admissions platform.
2. Admission and onboarding are distinct. Information beyond admission data that helps a college better understand, engage, or support a student is important, but generally should be collected through local onboarding mechanisms.
3. CCCStart Supplemental questions should be limited. Supplemental functionality should address legitimate needs that cannot reasonably be met elsewhere and should not be used to recreate the length or complexity of CCCApply.
4. Residency questions in CCCStart are simplified and sufficient. The streamlined residency questions included in CCCStart provide sufficient information for districts to determine residency for the purpose of calculating enrollment fees, in compliance with Chancellor's Office updated guidance (see *memorandum FS 26-05 CCCStart Transition and Audit Considerations Related to Residency* dated August 27, 2026).

A common statewide admissions experience also provides greater consistency for students moving among California community colleges, while preserving substantial local flexibility in how colleges onboard and serve students after admission.

Admission and Local Onboarding

For purposes of this guidance, admission information is information necessary at the point of admission to:

- determine or process admission;
- create or establish the student record;
- determine eligibility for an admission category; or
- satisfy a legal, regulatory, or institutional requirement that specifically must be addressed at the time of admission.

Onboarding information is information used by a college after admission to better understand, engage, or personalize support for a student. Examples include information used to connect

students to services, identify interests or needs, facilitate outreach and communications, support advising and counseling, or develop a more complete local student profile. Both types of information are important. The distinction is whether the information must be collected as part of admission.

Local student portals, customer relationship management systems (CRMs), student information systems, and other institutional technologies enable colleges and districts to collect onboarding information at the appropriate point in the student journey instead of over-burdening the admission form and delaying student entry to the institution. These approaches can also connect the information collected more directly to the service, outreach, or institutional action it is intended to support.

Guidance for Supplemental Data Collection

Districts' use of supplemental data collection in CCCStart should be minimal. Limit supplemental data collection to exceptional cases rather than using it to expand the core CCCStart question set. The availability of supplemental functionality should not be interpreted as an opportunity to recreate questions previously included in CCCApply. Historical collection of data elements, local interest in the information, or the possibility that information may be useful later does not, by itself, establish a need to collect it during admission.

Before proposing a supplemental question, colleges and districts should determine:

- whether CCCStart or another available source already provides sufficient information;
- whether there is a clear and documented business, regulatory, or institutional need for the information;
- whether the information is necessary at the point of admission; and
- whether the information could reasonably be collected after admission through another institutional process.

The primary test is:

Is this information necessary at the time of admission, or can it reasonably be collected after the student has been admitted?

Information primarily supporting outreach, student engagement, service referrals, program awareness, or further development of a student profile should generally be collected through local onboarding rather than through CCCStart supplemental questions. Examples of onboarding questions may include interest in athletics, clubs, transportation assistance, childcare, housing assistance, counseling, basic-needs services, or similar programs and supports.

Colleges and districts should also avoid asking students for information that has already been collected elsewhere or is available through another reliable data source. Repeated collection increases student burden and can create conflicting or duplicative records.

PROCESS TO PROPOSE SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

To maintain a streamlined and consistent statewide experience, the Chancellor's Office and Reimagine Apply Steering Committee will maintain a supplemental question review process and an Approved Supplemental Question List.

Colleges and districts seeking to use the supplemental collection capability provided by the Chancellor's Office through CCCStart should first review the approved list. If an already-approved question meets the identified need, the standardized question and response options should be used rather than creating a local variation. College or district personnel who have access to the supplemental question management tool can then add the already-approved question to their CCCStart environment.

If no approved question meets the need, a college or district may propose a new question. Requests should include, minimally:

- the proposed question and response options;
- why the information is needed;
- how the information will be used;
- the business process or requirement it supports; and
- why the information must be collected during admission rather than later in the student journey.

The Chancellor's Office will first review requests for duplicate or substantially similar questions. New questions will then proceed through the Reimagine Apply Steering Committee process for review and a recommendation. The college/district will be notified if their request is approved, modified or declined. Approved questions will be available for reuse by other colleges and districts with the same need, and the Approved Supplemental Question List will be reviewed regularly.

MIS REPORTING AND TRANSITION FLEXIBILITY

The Chancellor's Office recognizes that changes to information collected through CCCStart may affect local processes used to populate Management Information Systems (MIS) data element submission.

Colleges and districts should not add supplemental admission questions solely to reproduce historical CCCApply data collection or preserve an existing MIS workflow, unless Chancellor's Office guidance specifically requires that the information be collected from the student at admission.

The Chancellor's Office recognizes the need for flexibility during the implementation, and the Information Services, Technology and Innovation (ISTI) Division MIS Unit will provide additional guidance regarding data elements affected by the transition to CCCStart. This may include

clarification of reporting expectations, acceptable data sources, use of unknown or not-applicable values, revised business rules, implementation timelines, or other adjustments necessary to support colleges during the transition.

Appropriate implementation flexibility will be provided where reporting requirements are affected by information that is no longer collected through the statewide admissions process. This approach is consistent with other CCCStart transition guidance recognizing the fundamental shift in the system-wide admissions experience for students.

MOVING FORWARD

CCCStart represents more than a replacement for CCCApply. It reflects a systemwide effort to simplify how students begin their educational journey with the California Community Colleges and to create greater consistency in that experience across colleges and districts.

Colleges and districts retain significant flexibility to design local onboarding, communications, student services, and engagement processes. That flexibility should be exercised primarily after admission rather than by expanding the statewide admissions instrument. Use of third-party CRM or similar systems for student onboarding should align with and complement the CCCStart principles and guidance as indicated above.

The overall goal is to reduce the burden for prospective students to gain admission by keeping the statewide application succinct and focused, while giving colleges the information and tools needed to effectively serve students.

Additional implementation information regarding the Approved Supplemental Question List, the supplemental-question review process, and CCCStart supplemental data functionality will be distributed as those resources become available. Updates to MIS will be handled through the regularly scheduled MIS webinars and update processes.

cc: Sonya Christian, Chancellor
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