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# Frequently Asked Questions — Retention Management System *Plus*™ (RMS *Plus*)

Noel-Levitz has compiled the following responses to frequently asked questions about the Retention Management System *Plus*. For additional information, call 1-800-876-1117 or e-mail us.

## What assessments comprise the RMS *Plus*, and to which populations are they administered?

The three assessments are as follows:

- The **College Student Inventory**™ (CSI), an online and paper/pencil survey for entering first-year students.
- The **Mid-Year Student Assessment**™, an online post-test to the CSI Form B and Form C for first-year students near mid-year.
- The **Second-Year Student Assessment**™, an online survey for second-year students and transfer students during the first or second term of the second year. This survey is also effectively administered at the end of the first year to facilitate intervention over the summer months.

For campus-specific predictive modeling with additional in-depth analytics, the **Student Retention Predictor**™ provides pinpoint precision in intervention initiatives. Each of these services is managed within the **Retention Data Center**™, our state-of-the art technology platform with filtering and customizing capabilities.

## What is distinctive about these Retention Management System *Plus*™ assessments?

The assessments of the Retention Management System *Plus* delve deeply into the attitudes and motivations that influence not only initial transition to college but also support and inform college completion initiatives.

Importantly, these data include students' *receptivity to assistance* in key areas of support: academic assistance, career counseling, personal counseling, social enrichment, and financial guidance.

In the Mid-Year Student Assessment and Second-Year Student Assessment, students indicate their enrollment intentions for the subsequent term. These data inform your outreach to those who indicate they are not returning or are unsure about returning to your institution.

## Can the assessments and their resulting reports be customized?

Yes, there are several options to customize your surveys and reports:

- Brand the instruments with your campus logo and colors.

- Add campus-specific questions to the end of the inventories.
- Personalize the student reports with locations, names of colleagues in academic support or career counseling, service descriptions, office hours, phone numbers, and Web links to guide students toward services they need.
- Analyze the data and generate reports based on students' needs and levels of receptivity, using filtering and export capabilities in the Retention Data Center.

## What is the best time to administer these surveys?

- The College Student Inventory is administered prior to the start of the first term or during summer or the first few weeks of the first year of college, whereas the Mid-Year Student Assessment is administered toward the end of the first term (before and after the Thanksgiving break) or during the first few weeks of the second term.
- The Second-Year Student Assessment is administered either at the start or a few weeks into the first term of the second year of college; or, it is administered in the second term of the second year of college, to sustain momentum toward graduation. Some campuses choose to administer the assessment to freshmen as they become 'emerging sophomores' near the end of the first year. Service to transfer students is also facilitated by administering the assessment upon entry to your college.

## Are the assessments statistically linked to each other?

Though the three surveys are linked thematically, only the College Student Inventory Form B and Form C and the correlating Mid-Year Student Assessment are linked statistically.

## Where can I learn more about the psychometric research underlying the assessments or the research Noel-Levitz conducts with the aggregate results?

To view our National Reports, including the National Freshman Attitudes Report, the Attitudes and Needs of Freshmen at Mid-Year, and the Attitudes of Second-Year College Students and Transfer Student Addendum, visit:

http://www.noellevitz.com/papers-research-higher-education/student-retention-white-papers-and-trend-reports

To learn more about the reliability and validity of the assessments, visit the research section of the client communities' Web site, or e-mail RMS-research@noellevitz.com to receive the documents by e-mail.

The statistical analysis of persistence and GPA affirm the validity of using CSI-B as a tool for assessing students' risk of dropping out, as well as their risk of earning low GPAs. The scales are reliable, with an average reliability coefficient of 0.79. This score exceeds the minimum threshold recognized by most psychometric standards. Moreover, the data show that Dropout Proneness and Predicted Academic Difficulty stanine scores have significant relationships with their respective criterion variables (persistence and cumulative GPA). The research also shows the scales to hold significantly higher predictive validity, relative to the entire set of data gathered in the CSI-B survey.

Collectively, these findings serve to justify the use of these two predictive scales given their reliability, validity, and added value.

## How is the data used to support student retention?

Prioritizing your students' needs plays a key role in maximizing the effect of your student support and intervention efforts. By identifying which students need help and the type of assistance they need, you can guide them to the precise combination of services necessary to succeed.

The Student Retention Predictor will help you narrow your focus to identify those who are most at risk and why. Making this identification early in the term—or even before students have started classes—can help you get them on the path to success right away, before they develop problems that may cause them to withdraw.

Incorporating this two-tiered retention risk assessment gives you a data-driven process for identifying at-risk students, revealing their risk factors, identifying the receptivity to services, and prioritizing your intervention strategies. This approach is particularly effective because it uses two methods of data analysis to deliver varying levels of student retention factors:

- A predictive model of student retention, using your own enrollment data, identifies observed risk factors—institutionwide characteristics that predict student success. Specifically, with the Student Retention Predictor, a campus-specific predictive model allows you to target students with utmost precision, as each incoming student is given a score of less likely to retain (0) and more likely to retain (1). Data analytics allow you to delve deeply into the findings.
- The College Student Inventory, Mid-Year Student Assessment, and Second-Year Student Assessment identify the leading cognitive and affective indicators that may lead to attrition, as well as receptivity to help, for each student in your incoming class.

Combining the results of both analyses allows you to view student retention factors at a comprehensive level, to focus on the specific factors that are predominant in individual colleges or programs, and to consider each student's detailed results to guide the institution's retention efforts at all levels.

## Are student reports available to students directly upon completion of each survey?

Yes, when setting up your survey administration in the Retention Data Center, you may select the option of the student viewing his or her report immediately upon completion or the option of holding the report for discussion during an advising or mentoring session.

## Is the data available in aggregate form?

Yes, Summary and Planning Reports can be accessed by major, course section, residence hall, or any combination of scales that you choose to filter upon, for specialized outreach and to inform planning. You can also export the data for use by your campus research team.

## How do the results allow me to prioritize my interventions?

The Summary Observations scales of the College Student Inventory indicate level of risk, through the different vantage points of dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, and educational stress. Additionally, students' receptivity to assistance informs high priority interventions as you reach out to your incoming students.

To support the efficiency of this outreach activity, the Integrated Summary Observations with Receptivity Report allows you to filter to the students with strongest needs and their specific areas of receptivity to assistance (career, financial, academic, personal, or social).

E-mail functionality in the data center and additional filtering capabilities further facilitate the ease and effectiveness of your outreach initiatives.

With the Mid-Year Student Assessment and Second-Year Student Assessment, the Summary and Planning Report lists names of students who indicate they are planning to transfer to another college or university to complete a degree, that college is not right for them at this time and they do not plan to continue, or who have expressed indecision about re-enrollment plans for next term.

By reaching out to the students who are undecided or who are not planning to re-enroll, you have an opportunity not only to gain understanding, but also to influence their enrollment decisions.

## How do the results allow me to develop intervention strategies?

By knowing which students are receptive to academic assistance, personal counseling, career counseling, social enrichment, and financial guidance, and through a listing of top recommendations for action, you are able to develop initiatives that address key needs, such as getting help with math skills or talking with a financial aid counselor about managing finances.

Filtering capabilities in the Retention Data Center support this outreach as you identify and reach out to students, connecting them with key support services through timely communications.

## How do I manage implementation and results?

The Retention Data Center is the technology platform or dashboard used to set up your survey administration, set permission rights for colleagues to access results, filter your data, and reach out to students with varying combinations of needs and levels of receptivity to assistance.

This state-of-the-art technology platform helps you to filter your data according to students with particular needs and varying levels of receptivity to assistance to:

- Guide individuals and groups of students with particular needs to key support service offices.
- Engage in one-on-one discussions with students and advisors or freshman seminar course instructors.

- Reach out to the students who think college is not right for them, or who are thinking of transferring or not re-enrolling.
- Provide reports of second-year students' in a given major to academic deans to inform their understanding of students' needs and to connect students with services they need right now.
- Use aggregate data to guide resource planning in tight economic times.

Call 800-876-1117 or contact RMS-tech@noellevitz.com for an overview of this system. Our RMS Tech team is available to assist you with set up or handle the set up for you, and program consultants are available to guide you through interpretation and use of the data for your interventions

## Are others on campus able to view the reports or a subset of them, and use the filtering and e-mail capabilities in the Retention Data Center?

The Retention Data Center is a permission-based, password-protected technology platform, and the coordinator on your campus chooses the appropriate role(s) to limit or expand functionality and access within the system.

## What implementation models are successful?

Common ways these assessments are administered include:

1. In a freshman success course:
    - The College Student Inventory is administered as an assignment early in the term with subsequent assignments centered around interpreting and utilizing the results by encouraging introspection, goal-setting, and connecting students with relevant service areas.
    - The Mid-Year Student Assessment is administered at the end of the term to measure change in student attitude and motivation, and to inform second semester interventions. As you observe movement from the pre- and the post-test, you can see the progress or adjustment to the rigors of college for subpopulations or individual students.
2. During freshman orientation:
    - Utilizing a computer lab, students complete the College Student Inventory and then discuss the results during an individual or group advising session.
    - Note that, if time and lab space is a concern, students can be asked to complete the inventory prior to arriving for orientation.
3. During early registration:
    - Two-year colleges find it helpful and efficient to administer the College Student Inventory with placement and intake exams or during early registration.
    - This information helps to guide conversations that support effective transition to college.

4. During sophomore welcome activities:
    - Utilizing a computer lab, students complete the Second-Year Student Assessment and then discuss the results during an individual or group advising session.
    - Note that, if time and lab space is a concern, students can be asked to complete the inventory prior to arriving for welcome activities.
5. Early in the semester:
    - Either first-term or second-term, and incorporating campus-specific language to customize the student reports, campuses administer the Second-Year Student Assessment to second-year students in order to guide them to key resource areas, including academic assistance, advising, career planning, finances, and personal support.
    - Summary reports by academic major area help deans to reach out to students who are undecided about re-enrollment or who are not planning to re-enroll. Detailed information is included about student academics, student advising, student leadership, student transition, and student finances, informs programming in a given unit and for the class overall.

Campuses experience the greatest response rates when the assessment is required and when the students are in a group such as a class or computer lab.

For one-on-one or small group meetings to interpret and discuss the results, the following individuals may be involved: *academic advisors, professional advisors, college success coaches/mentors, first-year seminar instructors, and student success centers.* Additionally, colleagues leading residence halls, student support services or other special programs, honors programs, and learning communities are often involved.

Increasingly, instructors of online courses find these assessments an effective way to engage students and cultivate a connection that would be difficult to attain otherwise.

## What support materials are available as I begin this early-alert and intervention initiative at my campus?

Campuses using the RMS *Plus* have full access to a client-only Web site. The Web site includes advisor's guides, resource guides, training materials, coordinator's guides, research documents, the Retention Success e-journal, and white papers. Noel-Levitz provides group and individualized telephone support and convenes a User Workshop bi-annually, all at no additional cost.

## Are worksheets and assignments available for me to use to engage students in the process?

Yes, the *Resource Guides* include practical assignments and worksheets, often used in freshman seminar courses, designed to help your students interact with the student report and take advantage of campus services. These popular worksheets include: T*he Individual Game Plan for Success* by Dr. Jane Bishop, the *Integration and Action Plan Worksheet* by Dr. Kevin Nutter, and the *Discoveries Worksheet* by Dr. Lee Rademacher.

## Are onsite workshops or training events related to these services available?

Noel-Levitz offers a variety of onsite workshops including:

- Fostering Student Success Through Early Alert and Intervention With the College Student Inventory
- Strengthening College Completion Initiatives With the Retention Management System *Plus* Assessments (College Student Inventory, Mid-Year Student Assessment, Second-Year Student Assessment)
- Using the Retention Data Center to Jumpstart Retention Strategies

These onsite workshops are $2,700 plus travel/lodging expenses. Call a Retention Solutions program manager for details: 800-876-1117. Note that advisor's guides and resource guides, as well as slides to conduct your own workshop on campus, are available at the client community resource site of MyNoelLevitz.

## What is the investment for the surveys?

Recognizing that response rates are variable, Noel-Levitz charges only for 'completed' inventories.

- The College Student Inventory is $7.55 and the Second-Year Student Assessment is $7.40. The post-test to the CSI, i.e., the Mid-Year Student Assessment, is $3.95.
- A 5 percent service/technology fee is applied for each order.

As you plan your budget, many find our Retention Revenue Estimator to be a helpful resource: https://www.noellevitz.com/student-retention-solutions/retention-revenue-estimator