



# The College Student Inventory

Form C Scale Descriptions

The Retention Management System Plus



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## Form C Scale Interpretation

### The College Student Inventory (CSI)

The College Student Inventory (CSI) is the foundation of the RMS. The inventory is designed especially for non-traditional learners and is comprised of 74 items subsumed in 13 different scales. These scales are organized under three main categories:

1. Academic Motivation
2. General Coping Skills
3. Receptivity to Support Services

The CSI also contains a number of single items reporting such background characteristics as marital status and dependents, hours the student plans to work, and whether or not the student is first-generation in college. With information from this inventory, an advisor is in a position to initiate a meaningful conversation with a student.

Students complete the CSI online before the term begins or early in the term. With the online CSI, the reports are available to the campus coordinator immediately.

### The RMS Coordinator Report

The RMS Coordinator Report is a one-page synopsis of each student's strengths, needs, and background.

The *Summary Observations* provide a preliminary overview of a student's levels of risk and receptivity. This sensitive information helps you prioritize interventions. It is never shared with students, but may be shared with advisors and counselors at the coordinator's discretion. This information includes:

- Overall Risk Index
- Acknowledged Academic Needs Index
- Apprehension Index
- Receptivity Index

*Motivational Assessment* allows advisors to identify areas of strength and challenge for individual students at a glance. The motivational scales are reported in two ways, as a percentile rank and with a bar graph. The scales are presented in three clusters:

- Academic Motivation
- General Coping
- Receptivity

*Student Background* Information provides a context for discussing motivational patterns within the scales. This information focuses on:

- Academics
- Personal Background
- Educational Plans

*Specific Recommendations* for each student provide action steps based on need and receptivity scores. The strength of each recommendation is indicated by its priority score. These statements are useful when encouraging students to commit to goals and as a means of facilitating referrals to support offices.

## The RMS Advisor/Counselor Report

This report parallels the Coordinator Report with one exception; the Advisor/Counselor Report does not include the Summary Observations. Rather, its focus is on the motivational assessment, recommendations, and background information.

## The RMS Student Report

The RMS Student Report contains the same information as the RMS Advisor/Counselor Report; however, it also includes written interpretations that explain the student's score on each scale. The interpretations are written in very clear, non-technical language and are designed to provide students encouragement and guidance.

## The RMS Summary and Planning Report

The RMS Summary and Planning Report is a resource tool to be used for institutional planning. The analysis includes all of the means of the students who completed the CSI, presented in three statistical summaries, including the total sample, males only, and females only. All means are computed from percentile scores. Since these scores are viewed in relation to national norms, the means provide a useful indication of how your students' overall motivational pattern compares with that of a national sample of comparable institutions, broadly defined.

The analysis then provides lists of students that can be extremely useful in identifying students who are most likely to benefit from a given service. These lists are based on students' scores on the four summary indices:

- Overall risk
- Acknowledged academic needs
- Apprehension
- Receptivity

The following lists are provided:

- Students' Scores Across All Summary Indices
- Students with a High Overall Risk Index
- Students with High Acknowledged Academic Needs
- Students with a High Level of Apprehension
- Student who are Highly Receptive to Help
- All students scored for this Summary and Planning Report

Priority scores are determined by a formula weighing a student's need for a particular service with their expressed interest in that service. The priority scores can be extremely useful in identifying students who will most likely benefit from a given service.

## The RMS Summary Observations with Receptivity Report

This report provides an integrated view of your students' scores across the summary scales and the individual receptivity scales. Desire to transfer is indicated for students at four-year institutions only.

Students with percentile scores of 80 and above on one or more of the summary scales and scores of 65 and above on one or more of the receptivity scales are highlighted in the table. For these students, scores of 80 and higher on the desire to transfer are highlighted (four-year institutions only).

Additional analyses are possible with two standard options for this report:

- You can apply different filters to your data by defining the value (scale) and the range of scores from the drop down menu
- You can download the Excel table with your students' scores

In combination, the six facets that comprise the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Retention Management System are used to quickly identify which students are most in need of help, and to describe the general scope of their strengths, challenges, and receptivity to assistance. The inventory and report samples can be viewed at <http://www.RuffaloNL.com/RMSsamples>.

## The RMS Reports

### What are the features of the RMS Reports?

The College Student Inventory (CSI) Form C is a 74-item questionnaire that serves as the foundation of the Retention Management System (RMS). Students will likely have completed the online inventory before or during the first few weeks of classes.

Reports are generated immediately through the Retention Data Center. At the Data Center, you can access PDF's within minutes after they complete the survey. Accessing the Retention Data Center is through our website ([www.RuffaloNL.com](http://www.RuffaloNL.com)) with your email address and password.

The Advisor/Counselor Report and the Student Report convey the student's self-reported information as concisely as possible. The Student Report includes two to three pages of narrative about the student's results not included in the other reports. If your coordinator has given you permission to access these reports electronically, please review the Report Access for Advisors. See Appendix A for an example of the Advisor/Counselor Report and Appendix B for an example of the Student Report.

The following discussion provides a detailed explanation of the more sensitive RMS Coordinator Report. Though the Coordinator Report is comparable to the Advisor/Counselor Report, a key feature of the Coordinator Report is not included in the Advisor/Counselor Report, namely the Summary Observations (overall risk index, acknowledged academic needs index, apprehension index, and receptivity index). See Appendix C for an example of a Coordinator Report.

### Identifying Information (upper right-hand corner)

This section lists the student's name, educational level, gender, age, student ID, and group designation. The date that the report was initially generated from the CSI and the name of your institution are also noted.

### Restricted Report (upper middle of page)

If the student has responded "no" to the last item of the CSI, then a boxed statement appears at the top of the report:

Restricted to Program Coordinator

If you receive or access a Restricted Report by mistake, you should return it promptly to the RMS coordinator.

### Instructions (near the top, stretching across the page)

This section contains a brief set of instructions to guide you in discussing the report with the student. Suggestions for follow-up measures and appropriate use of the report also appear. This section is printed on every report as a reminder of the basic conditions under which the information has been made available.

## Summary Observations (top of left column)

This section presents the results from four summary scales, discussed below. All scores in this section are expressed in terms of stanines, which are normalized standard scores with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.96. The distribution of students falling into the different categories is:

Score	Distribution
9	4%
8	7%
7	12%
6	17%
5	20%
4	17%
3	12%
2	7%
1	4%

The larger the stanine is, the larger the corresponding raw score. For example, a stanine of 9 indicates that the student's raw score was in the top 4 percent of the normative sample, a stanine of 8 indicates that the student's raw score was in the next 7 percent (and the top 11 percent of the sample), and so forth.

### The Overall Risk Index

Overall risk represents a combination of academic, motivational, and demographic factors that may influence a student's likelihood of completing a degree or program of study. The index was developed by comparing students who were academically successful and stayed in school after their first term with those who did not.

### The Acknowledged Academic Needs Index

Academic needs represent those basic challenges that may threaten a student's entire academic experience, if not addressed. A student's scores on scales that highlight specific academic needs and learning attributes, as well as receptivity to help, were included in the development of this index.

### The Apprehension Index

Apprehension represents those areas of potential stress that may converge to overshadow a student's perceived opportunities for a successful college experience. It captures students' challenges across multiple scales and highlights specific areas of intervention. The index focuses on a student's potential misgivings about being in college, such as financial insecurity, career concerns, or weak study skills. Students with a high score on this scale present an overall picture of someone who is uncertain about being in college for all reasons touched on by the CSI-C.

### The Receptivity Index

Receptivity is a strong indicator of a student's willingness to acknowledge and accept support services provided by the institution, regardless of the need. These scores are based on the student's specific desire for help in three primary areas of student support: academic, career, and financial.

The summary observations have been keyed in a way that simplifies their collective interpretation. Thus, high scores on overall risk, acknowledged academic needs, and apprehension indices all indicate high need. High scores on receptivity indicate a strong desire for help. ***The general pattern, then, is for high scores to imply the advisability of intervention.*** In addition to giving referrals to students who score high on these indices, you may want to make a special effort to maintain ongoing contact with them so they will feel comfortable coming to you for advice at critical times during their first term in college.

The summary observations involve sensitive information. Because of their susceptibility to misinterpretation, it is recommended that they not be discussed with students. The fact that they are not printed on the student's or advisor's version of the report is another reason for not mentioning them, as a student may be troubled to learn that some information has been omitted from his/her report. If a student claims his/her RMS Coordinator Report, which will occur very rarely, schedule an individual conference with that student to explain the summary observations and their purpose – namely, to provide priority assistance to those students who may benefit from this.

### Specific Recommendations (bottom of left column)

Selecting support services is a difficult task, especially for adult learners or others with complex circumstances, since many may have complex circumstances. In addition, it may be difficult for them to articulate their specific needs, even to themselves.

The present section helps students make these decisions by presenting a set of recommendations that (a) clarify their needs; (b) relate their needs to specific forms of assistance; and (c) present the issue of assistance as a set of clear alternatives that can be readily evaluated and compared.

### Means of Arriving at Recommendations

To use the recommendations effectively, it is helpful to understand how they are formulated. The CSI's scoring program contains a pool of 14 potential action statements, which are listed in the following section. Each action relates to a particular form of student assistance (e.g., "Get help with reading skills"). A priority score ranging from 0.0 to 10.00 is computed for each potential action based on a comprehensive analysis of the student's needs and desires. A 10.0 indicates a very high-priority recommendation.

Needs are inferred from the student's background data (e.g., academic preparation, work hours) and motivational assessment (e.g., study skills, commitment). The priority score for a given action will increase in direct proportion to the measured need for that action.

These initial, need-based priority scores are then adjusted in two ways.

- The first adjustment takes into account the student's general interest in the broader category to which the action belongs. For instance, the priority scores of all potential actions related to academic support are increased if the student's general receptivity to academic support is high.

- The second adjustment takes into account the student’s desire for the specific assistance in question. If a student expresses a strong desire for help with reading skills, for example, then his or her priority score for this potential action is adjusted upward.

After these computations have been made, the potential actions having the highest priority scores are printed in the form of short, direct recommendations (e.g., “Get help in selecting a career”). Recommendations are printed in order of priority scores, with the strongest recommendations at the top. Priority scores are noted directly after the statement of recommendation. For example, “Get help with math skills 8.0.”

The RMS Coordinator Report, Advisor/Counselor Report, and Student Report rank the seven strongest recommendations in order of importance to the student.

Most priority scores that appear on reports fall in the top end of the distribution, from 6.0 to 10.0. Approximately 70 percent of priority scores are below 7.0. However, even a priority score of 5.0 is worth consideration, since it exceeds 40 percent of all the priority scores in a normal distribution.

Only rarely will an advisor see a priority score of 10.0, since a student must have both the highest possible need and the highest possible desire in order to earn a priority of 10.0.

### Potential Action Statements

The following list contains the 14 potential action statements that form the pool from which recommendations are made in the RMS reports. You’ll notice that they cluster thematically around academics, personal, career, financial, and social areas.

- Get help with math skills.
- Get tutoring in selected areas.
- Get help with test-taking skills.
- Get help with reading skills.
- Get help with study skills.
- Get help with writing skills.
- Get help with computer skills.
- Talk with a financial aid counselor about managing finances.
- Talk with a financial aid counselor about getting a student loan.
- Talk with a financial aid counselor about financial assistance.
- Get information about the qualifications for various careers.
- Get information about the salaries and opportunities for various careers.
- Get help in selecting a career.
- Get information about the advantages and disadvantages of various careers.

## Priority of Recommendations

On the RMS Reports, priority scores of greater than 8.0 are most noteworthy. If a student has multiple recommendations that exceed this level, you may need to focus the student's attention on those recommendations that you believe are the most critical. If the student is concerned about having so many priority recommendations, explain that the high scores are partly due to his/her high level of receptivity. You may also want to explain that 8.0 is a somewhat arbitrary number and that it does not represent a critical dividing point; it is merely a rough boundary line.

Special care should be taken in making final recommendations to students. The printed recommendations should only be considered preliminary, as they are generated by an analytical model that contains a definite margin of error. The model assumes that students are most likely to accept and act upon recommendations that are consistent with their existing motivational framework. Based on this premise, it gives relatively strong weight to the student's general receptivity in the area and to their expressed desire for the specific form of assistance under consideration. While the model appears sound as a general theoretical basis for formulating recommendations, it is not intended to be definitive. There will be individuals who do not fit the model's assumptions.

For this reason, one should never accept recommendations uncritically. The recommendations should be weighed in terms of all the information you have about the student, including transcripts, placement scores, and the student's comments during your conference. After such consideration, you may well decide to place more emphasis on an intermediate recommendation (e.g., one with a priority score of 6.0) than on a strong one (e.g., one with a priority score of 9.0). Given the unique features in every individual case and the fact that printed recommendations are already a select subset from the larger pool of potential actions, such adjustments are quite appropriate.

## Motivational Assessment (middle of left column)

The heart of the CSI Form C consists of the 13 independent motivational scales in this section. The student's standing on each scale is indicated in two ways: as a percentile rank and as a bar graph on a visual profile.

If you are interested in the exact score, you can refer directly to the percentile rank; if you prefer a general and immediate sense of the student's motivational pattern, the visual profile will give you an overview at a glance. A percentile rank indicates the proportion of students in the normative sample who scored below that student.

These scores are organized into three sections: academic motivation, general coping and, receptivity to support services.

## Academic Motivation

- **Study Skills.** This scale measures the way students approach their studies. It assesses strategies deemed necessary to achieve academic success. It can therefore be used to make referrals to services that assist students in improving their study skills.  
A sample item in the scale is, “I have developed a solid system of self-discipline that helps me keep up with my studies.”
- **Reading Habits.** This scale measures the students’ level of interest in reading for enjoyment and information. This scale may be used to assist the student in selecting courses that are compatible with his/her attitudes toward reading. It focuses on attitudes, not reading ability.  
A sample item in the scale is, “I only read serious books and articles when I have to.”
- **Use of Technology.** This scale measures the extent to which students feel comfortable using computers and the Internet. This scale may be used to inform the advisor’s direction to the individual student regarding additional computer skills that will be helpful, or even required, depending on the program of study.  
A sample item in the scale is, “I have a weak understanding of how to use computers.”
- **Verbal Skills.** This scale measures the degree to which students feel capable of doing well in academic areas that heavily emphasize reading, writing, and public speaking. It is not an aptitude assessment, but rather an indication of the student’s level of comfort in these areas. It may be helpful to compare the student’s previous performance in related courses with his/her score on this scale.  
A sample item in this scale is, “I often have difficulty putting my thoughts and ideas into words.”
- **Math Skills.** This scale measures the degree to which students feel capable of doing well in math and related academic areas. It is not an aptitude assessment, but rather an indication of the student’s level of comfort in this general subject area. It may be helpful to compare the student’s previous performance or aptitude scores with his/her score on this scale.  
A sample item is, “Math has always been a challenge for me.”
- **Commitment.** This scale measures the strength of students’ determination to complete a degree or a program of study. Students who score high on this scale generally have a strong interest in completing their studies, no matter what. On the other hand, students who score low on this scale may not have developed an appreciation for the value of a college education at this point. This scale may be used to reinforce higher scores, but also to guide other students to programs, services, and experiences that can help them to develop a greater sense of value associated with their studies.  
A sample question is “I’m prepared to make the sacrifices needed to reach my educational goals.”
- **Attitude Toward Educators.** This scale measures the students’ attitudes toward educators in general, as acquired through their pre-college experiences. This scale is not intended to assess the impact of their current enrollment. An advisor may want to help a low-scoring student clarify how certain isolated incidents from the student’s past experiences may have influenced their attitude toward all educators. Sometimes a low score reflects a degree of self-sufficiency when the student is a high achiever. Other times a low score may indicate

that the student has been treated poorly by one or more teachers as far back as elementary school.

A sample item in the scale is, “Most educators are very caring and dedicated.”

## General Coping

- **Personal Support.** This scale measures students’ satisfaction with the level of encouragement they receive from their families. The factors assessed in this scale are generally commensurate with the student’s ability to adapt to the demands of their courses or program of study. Students scoring low on this scale may benefit from talking with someone who can help them put their circumstances in perspective.  
A sample item in the scale is, “My family encourages me to pursue my education.”
- **Life and Career Planning.** This scale measures the amount of serious thought students have given to their career choice. This scale may be used as a roadmap to guide students through the various stages of a life and planning process.  
A sample item is, “I have a career action plan that guides my studies.”
- **Financial Security.** This scale measures the students’ satisfaction with the financial resources available to them while in college. The scale is not intended to measure the actual level of financial resources that the student has per se; rather, it assesses their feeling of being financially secure. Some students with modest means may feel more secure than do students with much greater means, depending on the individual expectations and lifestyle. With low-scoring students, an advisor can explore their financial needs and refer them to appropriate offices for assistance.  
A sample item in the scale is, “My financial obligations are very distracting.”

## Receptivity to Support Services

- **Receptivity to Academic Assistance.** This scale measures the students’ interest in receiving help with academic skills, including study skills, reading skills, test-taking skills, writing skills, math skills, and computer skills. This scale can assist advisors in deciding whether or not to encourage students to take advantage of specific academic resources.  
A sample item is, “Tutoring would benefit me in one or more of my courses.”
- **Receptivity to Career Planning.** This scale measures the students’ interest in receiving assistance with their occupational choice. It can be used in conjunction with the Life and Career Planning scale to direct the student to support services that may help the student move closer to a decision regarding his/her choice of occupation.  
A sample question is, “I need help selecting a career that is right for me.”
- **Receptivity to Financial Guidance.** This scale measures the students’ desire to discuss ways of increasing their financial resources for college. It can be used in conjunction with the Financial Security scale to direct students to the financial services offered by the institution.  
A sample question is, “I need to learn how to manage my finances, including loan and credit card debt.”

## The Notice Box (top of right column)

*The statement in this box emphasizes the discretionary nature of the report.* It is important to respect the student's right to claim the RMS Coordinator Report and RMS Advisor/Counselor Report at any time. The intent is to accommodate the student who may feel uncomfortable with his/her results and may decide that he/she does not wish to have them filed in an academic office.

## Student Background Information (remainder of right column)

To better understand the student's present motivational pattern, it is often helpful to have an overview of his or her background. For this reason, the report provides information about each student's academic characteristics, personal background, educational plans, hours the student plans to work, and other indications.

### Academic Characteristics

This section presents information about the student's prior educational experiences.

- **Self-Assessment.** The student is asked to classify his/her academic performance ("A" student, "B" student, etc.) based on previous academic indicators. This gives a reasonable indication of the student's actual ability.
- **Preference for Learning.** The student is asked to indicate a preference for completing his/her studies (online, on-campus, etc.). This category can suggest options for advisors when recommending a mode of course delivery for students to consider.
- **Credit for Prior Learning.** The student is asked to indicate the sources of previous credit he/she received toward his/her program of student from traditional (college coursework) to experiential (military service). If no credit is indicated, this is an opportunity for the advisor to probe potential sources of prior-learning credit the student may not have considered.

### Personal Background

This section provides valuable information about the student's personal background (ethnic origin, marital status, dependents, and whether or not he/she a first-generation college student). This information may provide insights into the way a student approaches college.

- **Ethnic Origin.** This question can be a springboard for the advisor to identify broad bases of community support for all ethnic groups.
- **Marital Status.** The student is asked to indicate his/her current marital status (single, married, etc.)
- **Dependents.** The student is asked to indicate whether or not he/she supports dependents in the household.
- **First Generation.** The student is asked to indicate whether or not any member of his/her immediate family has attended college, including the identification of those family members who have attended (spouse, son, daughter, father, mother, sister, brother).

## Educational Plans

This section gives information about the students' plans that may influence their success, especially during the first term. Areas reported on by students are decision to enroll, enrollment status, work plans (status and hours), degree sought, and current academic plans.

- **Decision to Enroll.** The student is asked to indicate when he/she made the decision to enroll at this institution. Research indicates that the closer to the time of actual enrollment that a student makes the decision, the greater the propensity for dropping out.
- **Enrollment Status.** The student is asked to indicate whether he/she enrolled full-time or part-time during the current term. This information should be considered in conjunction with other commitments that absorb the student's time and energies (work, dependents, etc.).
- **Plans to Work.** The student is asked to indicate how many hours per week he/she plans to work at a job while enrolled at the college. Students who work more than 15 hours per week while enrolled as a full-time student are generally at greater risk of attrition and/or performing below their expectations.
- **Degree Sought.** The student is asked to specify the highest degree he/she is planning to pursue. This question should not necessarily be taken at face value. Rather, it reveals something about the stance that the student took at the time the CSI was completed. This information may change many times during the course of the student's enrollment. The student's answer to this question is a valuable point of departure for further discussion.
- **Current Plans.** The student is asked to indicate his/her intentions for subsequent enrollment at the institution (completing this course, completing a degree, or transferring).