

ACADEMIC ACCELERATION

Academic acceleration refers to any one of twenty or more measures that may be used to allow students to progress in their education at a faster than usual rate, or at a younger than usual age. The purpose of acceleration is to allow highly able students access to educational interventions that are appropriately pitched to their abilities, motivation, and readiness as they progress in their education. Academic acceleration has a strong research base, both within and outside of the field of gifted education, as being appropriate and effective in supporting the educational needs of gifted students.

The following are principles and recommendations that should be considered in the implementation of academic acceleration for gifted students:

- A policy on acceleration needs to be developed in all educational jurisdictions at the state and federal levels. The policy may form a part of a broader gifted education policy, or be a stand-alone policy.
- Academic acceleration is a suitable educational intervention for only some gifted students.
- Academic acceleration should be an educational intervention that is readily accessible.
- Multiple different forms of acceleration should be available, including both content-based (e.g., subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, and dual enrolment) and grade-based forms of acceleration (e.g., early entrance to school, whole grade skipping, telescoping, and early entrance to university).
- Multiple information sources should be considered in making decisions about the eligibility of students for acceleration. Such information sources may include psychometrically rigorous assessments of ability and achievement, samples of original work, and information on socio-emotional development.
- The multiple information sources should be “combined” using the “conjunctive” rule (i.e., benchmark scores need to be met from all information sources). The “conjunctive” rule is a combination rule that has been identified to be relevant when decisions are made about the provision of educational interventions that have major consequences of misidentification and involve relatively small numbers of students. Nevertheless, there should also be a recognition that some students who have uneven profiles may be suitable for some forms of acceleration.
- Decisions about acceleration should be made by teams of stakeholders, that include experts in gifted education, and may be informed by guidelines in the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* or the *Integrated Acceleration System*.
- Academic acceleration should only be available to gifted students who wish to be accelerated after they have been provided with information on the possible advantages and disadvantages of academic acceleration.

- Academic acceleration is possible in alternative educational settings, such as home schooling.
- Preparatory arrangements should be provided for all students who are to be accelerated, which may include formal/informal meetings with the receiving educators, part-time experiences in the receiving educational environment (e.g., dual enrolment in advance of full grade acceleration), the development of relationships with mentors in the receiving educational environment, the attendance of workshops on academic skills, and the offering of acceleration on a trial basis for a specified period of time.
- Students who have been accelerated should be formally and regularly monitored to identify any potential issues, address any such issues, and to make decisions on whether further acceleration is appropriate. Ideally, accelerated students should be performing at a high level (that is similar to his/her performance in the original placement) and should at least be maintaining her/her level of socio-emotional development.

Key References

Assouline, S. G., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. E., Lipscomb, J., & Forstadt, L. (2009). *The Iowa Acceleration Scale Manual* (3rd ed.). Great Potential Press.

Assouline, S. G., Colangelo, N., VanTassel-Baska, J., & Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. (2015). *A nation empowered: Evidence trumps the excuses holding back America's brightest students* (Vol. 2). Belin-Blank Center.

Gross, M. U., & Smith, S. R. (2021). Put them together and see how they learn! Ability grouping and acceleration effects on the self-esteem of academically gifted high school students. In S.R. Smith (Ed.), *Handbook of giftedness and talent development in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 377–403). Springer.

Jung, J. Y., Young, M., & Gross, M. U. M. (2015). Early college entrance in Australia. *Roeper Review*, 37(1), 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2014.976323>

Key Resources

The Acceleration Institute at the Belin-Blank Centre at The University of Iowa distributes A Nation Empowered, the Iowa Acceleration Scale and the Integrated Acceleration System (http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/)

(<https://www.accelerationinstitute.org/tools/ias.aspx>)

(<https://accelerationsystem.org/>)

NESA (formerly NSW Board of Studies) Guidelines on Accelerated Progression
(http://www.comprehensivepsychology.com.au/assets/pdf/accelerated_guide.pdf)

NESA pro-forma report on Accelerated progression (<https://ace.nesa.nsw.edu.au/ace-8104>)