

Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
College in High School

Placement Assessment for CHS Calculus: Information for Teachers and Administrators

1. Overview

In order to meet the University of Pittsburgh's standards for students taking calculus, a mathematics placement assessment is required for enrollment in Business Calculus (MATH0120) and Analytic Geometry & Calculus 1 (MATH 0220). Students who do not earn the required minimum score on the placement assessment are not permitted to enroll in the University of Pittsburgh course.

The placement assessment is an online, adaptive test using ALEKS technology (see www.aleks.com). The ALEKS corporation charges a fee of \$20, which includes up to three attempts at the placement assessment, as well as access to the ALEKS Prep and Learning Module which provides students with targeted help on deficiencies identified by the assessment. **ALEKS is not intended to replace high schools' normal placement procedures.** This document should answer most of your questions about the placement assessment. If you have additional questions, please contact CHS at 412-624-6828.

2. FAQ

Who has to take the ALEKS Placement Assessment?

All students who will take the University of Pittsburgh Business Calculus (MATH 0120) or Analytic Geometry & Calculus 1 (MATH 0220) course, either on campus or through CHS, must take the placement assessment. Prospective CHS students must take the placement assessment prior to the CHS registration deadline.

Why is this necessary?

For both on-campus and CHS students, the purpose of the placement assessment is to get students into mathematics courses with the skills to succeed in those courses. The ALEKS assessment package facilitates this by

1. Providing a detailed and accurate assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses, and
2. Providing students with personalized help targeting their specific deficiencies to improve their skills.

How is the placement assessment administered?

Teachers will have their students go to the ALEKS Web site to take the ALEKS placement assessment, which is an un-proctored online test. Teachers will decide how students will take the test (for example, in school or at home) and set a deadline (before Oct. 1, the registration deadline). Detailed instructions for students are provided in a separate document.

How is cheating prevented?

Students cannot share answers since each student gets a unique version of the test. Still, students could

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use unauthorized material or get assistance from others during the assessment. Students should understand that the cheating on the placement assessment will only get them into a class for which they do not have the skills to succeed.

What topics are covered in the assessment?

The placement assessment covers only pre-calculus topics. Specifically,

- Whole numbers, fractions, and decimals
- Percent, proportion, and geometry
- Signed numbers, linear equations, and inequalities
- Lines and systems of linear equations
- Relations and functions
- Integer exponents and factoring
- Quadratic and polynomial functions
- Rational expressions and functions
- Radicals and rational exponents
- Exponentials and logarithms
- Trigonometry (students can earn 0 points here and still qualify for MATH 0120)

How will student assessment scores be verified?

CHS teachers should verify that each student has attained the required assessment score. Each student should print the summary page after completing an assessment, and then submit the printout to the teacher of the CHS course. These pages should be kept on file at the high school.

What are the minimum placement scores?

- For MATH 0120, a minimum placement score of 61 is required.
- For MATH 0220, a minimum placement score of 76 is required.

When should students take the placement assessment?

Scheduling of the placement assessment will be left up to the schools. Schools may choose to set deadlines, but be aware:

- Some students will need several attempts at the assessment and time spent in the ALEKS learning module in order to attain the required score.
- Students have six months of access to assessment and learning module after their initial ALEKS registration.

Students *must* complete a placement assessment with the required minimum score before they will be permitted to enroll in calculus. The enrollment deadline is October 1. *We recommend that you set an ALEKS placement assessment deadline no later than the start of your school year.*

When should students click the “I do not know” button?

Students should never click the “I don’t know” button during any ALEKS assessment unless they really don’t have any idea of how to do the problem. Otherwise, ALEKS will think they don’t know many of the

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topics that they actually do know, and ALEKS will take them way back to make them “learn” the topics.

Who pays for the assessment?

Students will pay a \$20 fee by credit or debit card at the time of initial ALEKS registration. The fee will be waived for students who qualify for free/reduced price lunch or face other financial difficulties. CHS will provide fee waiver applications for those students.

What is included in the \$20 fee?

The fee covers six months of unlimited access to the ALEKS prep and learning module, and up to three attempts at the placement assessment.

Does the prep and learning module really work?

Yes. In fact, we have found that students who require multiple assessment attempts to place into calculus, interspersed with learning module work, do better on average in their calculus courses than students who place into calculus on their first attempt.

Can I take the ALEKS placement assessment in order to see what it is like?

Yes. ALEKS has agreed to provide free teacher accounts (not for students)! If you are interested in seeing what students will be doing on the placement examination, you can do the following steps to take it.

1. Go to www.aleks.com
2. Click SIGN UP NOW!
3. Enter the Course Code **WPQV3-9WKDQ**
4. Confirm your enrollment by clicking “Continue”
5. Create an ALEKS login name
6. For Student ID #, enter a random string of 10 digits.
7. Begin the examination!

You might also choose to answer some questions incorrectly to see what the student’s learning modules will look like.