Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the WSU MPA?**

**A:** The WSU MPA is the ALEKS Placement Assessment which covers material from Basic Math through Precalculus and will take approximately 90 minutes to complete. After the assessment, a targeted Prep and Learning Module is available for you to review and learn material, and to improve placement and eventual course outcomes.

All students are strongly encouraged to spend several hours using the ALEKS Prep and Learning Module. Even if you have achieved placement in your desired course, time spent in ALEKS will better prepare you for your upcoming course and ultimately lead to better grades.

**How long will the assessment take, and what materials will I need?**

**A:** Be sure you are ready to take your exam prior to logging on. Set aside at least a 2-hour block of time in which to complete the assessment. You may finish the assessment in 90 minutes or less, but allow 2 hours. You will need only pencil and paper to work on problems. ALEKS has a built-in calculator available when needed, so you do not need a calculator.

**What happens if I do not complete a placement assessment in the allotted time?**

**A:** You will have to restart the assessment.

**What other special directions do I need to follow when taking the WSU MPA?**

**A:** Solve all problems on the ALEKS Assessment without assistance. This means that you should not use any books or online resources, and you should not get assistance from any other person. Work the problems with pencil and paper. Enter only your final answer into ALEKS. Use a calculator only when the ALEKS calculator is given.

Don't worry if you get a problem that is too difficult. This is normal. Try your best to solve any problems that you think you might be able to solve, and click "I don't know" only if you really don't know how to solve a problem.

At the beginning of the ALEKS assessment, you will go through a brief tutorial that will introduce you to the ALEKS system and interface. You will be shown how to enter different types of answers, how to use the ALEKS calculator, and how to graph something by hand. Although the interface is reasonably intuitive and the tutorial is very helpful, there may be times when you need help using the ALEKS system; in these situations, click on the "Help" button at the top of the screen.

Sometimes you might have to use new tools to submit your answers during the ALEKS Assessment. When this happens, Quick Help will be available, and will show you how to use these tools.
Don't rush through the assessment. Although we prefer that you take the assessment in one sitting, there may be situations in which you must leave your computer. If that is the case, just close the ALEKS window. When you log on again later, ALEKS will bring you to the point at which you left off. However, you must complete the exam within the 24-hour time limit.

**May I practice before going to the WSU MPA?**

A: Yes. You may take a free ALEKS assessment, at any time, to become comfortable with the process. This free assessment is only a tutorial to familiarize yourself with the ALEKS system and your result will not be recorded. To access this go to www.aleks.com and follow these steps:

1. Type “Free Trial” in the search box (top right).
2. Select “Free Trial” for INDEPENDENT USERS (first selection).
3. Click “Begin Trial” in the INDEPENDENT USERS box on the left.
4. Click “TRY ALEKS NOW” in the EXPLORE STUDENT MODULE box on the left.
5. Complete the User agreement and continue.
6. Complete Personal Information, Independent User Type should be “College or K-12 Student (Personal Preparation), Choose your market and select a course.
7. Your Free Trial Account has been created providing you a Login Name and Password. Click “Continue to Free Trial.”
8. Welcome to ALEKS; begin the free trial tutorial and assessment.

Remember that the free assessment does not count as a valid assessment.

**Is the WSU MPA available in Spanish?**

A: Once you are in ALEKS, many topics are available in both English and Spanish. Simply click next to "English" in the main menu and pull down to "Espanol."

**Where do I go to access the WSU MPA?**

A: Click on Take the Assessment (http://www.math.wsu.edu/placement/taketest.php).

**When should I take the WSU MPA?**

A: New freshmen and transfer students should complete their assessments before coming to Summer Alive or any of the other orientation visits during which you will be meeting with an advisor. The sooner you take it, the more opportunity there will be for you to review and re-test if you are not satisfied with your placement.

**Does progress in an ALEKS Prep and Learning Module count towards placement?**

A: No, you must complete a new placement assessment to change your placement result.

**What if my computer crashes while taking the assessment?**

A: If you have computer problems, you should be able to log back into the ALEKS Assessment and resume testing. When you log on again, ALEKS will bring you to the point at which you left off.

**What type of computer do I need to use?**

A: The ALEKS Assessment requires a browser that is Java-enabled, and you must install the ALEKS plug-in described below. The exam may be taken on a PC (Windows) or Mac (OS10 or higher), using any
of the following browsers: Explorer 6.0 or higher, Firefox 1.5 or higher, or Safari. Additional information is online at: http://www.aleks.com/support/system_requirements

**How many questions are on the WSU MPA?**

A: Generally, students are asked 20 to 30 questions. None of the questions are multiple-choice. Students who are unable to answer many of the first questions may end up with a shorter exam.

**Once I answer a question, can I go back and change my answer?**

A: No. Once you submit an answer, you cannot change it. Please keep this in mind while testing.

**How is my score calculated?**

A: There are a number of topics on the ALEKS Placement Assessment. In a relatively short period of time (about 90 minutes to two hours for most students), ALEKS assesses the percentage of the student's current knowledge of topics from the placement tool (how many of the total topics the student already has mastered) by asking a small number of questions, usually 20-30.

ALEKS chooses each question on the basis of a student's answers to all the previous questions. Each student, and therefore each set of assessment questions, is unique. It is impossible to predict the questions that will be asked. By the time a student has completed the assessment, ALEKS has developed a precise picture of his or her knowledge from basic math up through precalculus, and has identified which topics the student has and has not mastered.

An overview of how ALEKS works is available online at: http://www.aleks.com/about_aleks/overview

**Do I need to install any plug-ins prior to taking the WSU MPA?**

A: Yes.

- Close all documents and programs on your computer except your browser.
- Go to the main ALEKS web page at: www.aleks.com
- Press the DOWNLOADS link at the upper right. Follow the instructions to install the necessary software on your computer.
- After installation of the ALEKS plug-in, restart (reboot) your computer.

ALEKS is cross-platform accessible. If there is difficulty installing the plug-in see: http://www.aleks.com/faqs/technical/.

For troubles related to Next Generation Java, see http://www.aleks.com/faqs/technical#Java_Next_Generation
**Is there a fee for taking this assessment?**

**A:** Yes, there is a $45 WSU MPA Package fee that includes: initial WSU MPA, a 6 week preparation and learning module, and up to four re-assessments. Two packages are available: one that runs from March 1 through February 28 of the following year, and a second that runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. The first package is designed for students starting at WSU in a fall semester and the second is designed for students starting at WSU in the Spring semester.

**How many times can I take the WSU MPA?**

**A:** You may retake the placement assessment up to four times. There is generally no benefit to re-taking the assessment immediately after completing a prior attempt. Unlike the SAT or ACT, you cannot improve your results by simply re-taking the assessment without spending time in the Prep and Learning Module to refresh material that you may have forgotten or to learn new material. In fact, you are required to spend 3 hours in the Prep and Learning module before the first re-assessment and an additional 5 hours in the Prep and Learning Module before the second re-assessment. All re-assessments for WSU-Pullman and WSU-Tri Cities students are proctored re-assessments on either the WSU-Pullman or WSU-Tri Cities campus.

**How long are my placement scores valid?**

**A:** Scores are valid for twelve months.

**I took an ALEKS Assessment through another institution. Can I use this score at WSU?**

**A:** Yes, as long as the ALEKS placement tool is the same as that being used here at WSU.

**I just want to repeat my last math course. Do I need to take the WSU MPA?**

**A:** If your last math course was at WSU (and you withdrew, did not pass with a high enough grade, or wish to receive a grade replacement), you generally should still be able to register for that course; however, if too much time has elapsed and the WSU MPA score that got you into that course has expired, you may have to first take the WSU MPA (even if you already took it in the past).

**How can I find out what score I need on the WSU MPA?**

**A:** Review the information on the Math Course Prerequisite (http://www.math.wsu.edu/placement/placementchart.html) page to see what score you need.

**What if I have College Math credits, like AP, IB, or Running Start credits?**

**A:** **Freshman.** All freshman students are encouraged to take the placement assessment and can talk to a math advisor at orientation. Transfer credits will still count, but students need to know whether or not they seem to be prepared for WSU Math.
The purpose of our placement process is to determine, based on your mathematical background and current mathematical ability, which math courses are appropriate for you. Past experience shows that the Math Placement Assessment may be the clearest indicator.

If you have math transfer credits and place below the level you need for a particular math course, please see a math advisor at orientation. Remember, placement is about being successful, not skipping courses. If the placement assessment places you below the level that you want, you need to review or possibly need to take a lower level course, in order to be more successful in your WSU Math course.

**Transfers.** All students who wish to enroll in a WSU Math course at or below the Calculus I level are encouraged to take the WSU ALEKS Math Placement Assessment. In particular, if your math credits were completed more than 18 months ago, we recommend that you take the placement assessment.

**What if I reassess and do worse?**

A: If a previous WSU MPA score resulted in a higher WSU math placement, the system will keep the higher score, unless the score has expired. Assessment scores are valid for one year.

**Where does my score appear?**

A: Your score is automatically added to your WSU student profile which is accessible by your advisor.

**What can I do if my score does not place me where I would like to start?**

A: You have one of two choices.

**Choice 1.** You may review the topics you have forgotten in an attempt to improve your score by using the 6-month Learning Module part of your package. The learning module has to be accessed via the same way you accessed the placement exam, namely through the link [Take the Assessment](http://www.math.wsu.edu/placement/taketest.php).

**Choice 2.** Reconsider your plans and start your math at WSU in a course for which you are prepared as assessed by the WSU MPA.

**What happens if I get a message saying, "Our system does not recognize that you are set up to access the ALEKS system"?**

A: Please do the following:

If you recently confirmed your admission to WSU, please wait for the system to update. It may take up to 1-2 business days.

If you confirmed your admission to WSU more than 1-2 business days ago, please contact us. Please include your WSU ID number so that we can best assist you.