

## WSU Math Placement Assessment – Frequently Asked Questions

- What is the WSU MPA?

**A:** The WSU MPA is the ALEKS Math Placement Assessment which covers material from Basic Math through Pre-calculus. The assessment will take approximately 90 minutes to complete; afterwards a targeted Prep and Learning Module will be 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 after their initial assessment. 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:** The assessment will time out after 24 hours, so be sure you are ready prior to logging on. You may finish the assessment in 90 minutes or less, but we recommend you set aside at least a 2-hour block of time in which to complete the assessment. You will need only pencil and paper to work out problems, ALEKS has a built-in calculator available when needed.

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

**A:** Solve all problems on the ALEKS Assessment on your own. You should not use any books, online resources, or other people for assistance. Work the problems with pencil and paper and enter only your final answer into ALEKS. Use a calculator only when the ALEKS calculator is given.

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 to show you how to use these tools.

Don't worry if you get a problem that seems too difficult- this is normal. Try your best to solve any problems that you think you might be able to solve, and only click "I don't know" if you really don't know how to solve a problem. Once you move on from a question, you cannot go back and change your answer.

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 back in through the WSU Math Placement portal, ALEKS will bring you to the point at which you left off. However, you must complete the assessment within the 24-hour time limit.

- **Is there a fee for taking this assessment?**

**A:** Yes, but it is not due right away. There will be a \$45 fee placed on your MyWSU Student Account, which provides access to the initial WSU MPA, 6-month access to the Prep and Learning Module after the initial assessment, and up to four re-assessments if needed.

There is no deadline on the fee itself, it can be paid through MyWSU under Student Finances.

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

**A:** The ALEKS Assessment may be taken on a PC (Windows7 or higher) or Mac (OS10 or higher), using updated versions of any of the following browsers: Chrome, Edge, Explorer, Firefox, or Safari.

Additional system requirement information can be found through [ALEKS support](#).

- **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](http://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, please visit the ALEKS [Technical support page](#).

For troubles related to Next Generation Java, please visit the ALEKS [Java support page](#).

- **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, it will not count as a valid assessment and your result will not be recorded.

To access the trial go to [www.aleks.com](http://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.

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

**A:** Incoming students should complete their assessments at least one week before coming to an orientation session. The sooner you take it, the more opportunity there will be for you to review and re-assess if you are not satisfied with your placement.

Current students who did not take the ALEKS Assessment before coming to orientation (or who took the assessment over 12 months ago) should take the assessment at least a month before the start date of the course they wish to enroll in using an ALEKS score.

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

**A:** Check your degree requirements, either with your advisor directly or through the [WSU Admissions page](#). Then review the information on the [Math Placement Chart](#) to see what score you need to get into your required Math or Stat class(es).

While the WSU ALEKS Assessment is a math placement assessment, some courses in other departments such as Chemistry or Physics also have ALEKS score prerequisites. These separate requirements may be found in the [WSU Course Catalog](#).

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

**A:** You may be exempt from taking the WSU MPA, depending on your credit or the exam you took. Please review our Math Placement [Exceptions page](#).

The purpose of our placement process is to determine, based on your mathematical background and current mathematical ability, which WSU math courses are appropriate for you. Past experience shows that the Math Placement Assessment may be the clearest indicator. 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 most successful.

- **Can I use ALEKS Assessment scores from another institution for placement at WSU?**

**A:** No. Placement scores of any sort from another institution are not applicable for WSU Math Placement.

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

**A:** It depends. If your last math course was at WSU and you withdrew or did not pass with a high enough grade, you generally should still be able to register for that course. However, if it has been longer than 12 months and the WSU MPA score that got you into that course has expired, you may have to first take the ALEKS assessment. Feel free to [contact the Math Department](#) with specific questions.

- 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."

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

**A:** It depends. If you recently confirmed your admission to WSU, please wait for the system to update. It may take up to 2 business days.

If you confirmed your admission to WSU more than 2 business days ago, please contact the [Crimson Service Desk](#) for assistance.

- Where do I go to access the WSU MPA?

**A:** Click on [Take the Assessment](#) (also on the right side of our main Math Placement page). Read through the information, then select your campus, select Option 1: "For first time access..." and log in with your WSU Network ID and password. You will only be able to access the assessment once you have confirmed your admission to WSU, and the system may take up to 2 business days to update.

- 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 will not be able to return to that question. Please keep this in mind while going through your assessment.

- 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 in again, ALEKS will bring you to the point at which you left off.

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

**A:** You will have to restart the assessment. If you are given a score on your ALEKS homepage, you will need to go through the [Re-assessment process](#).

- 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 based on 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 pre-calculus, and has identified which topics the student has and has not mastered. The poorest topics from a student's assessment may be more heavily covered in the preparation and learning module.

More information about how ALEKS works can be found through the online [ALEKS overview](#).

- Where does my score appear?

**A:** You will see your score on the ALEKS homepage immediately after finishing your assessment. The score should automatically transfer into the MyWSU system the next business day, which will allow you to enroll in classes with that ALEKS score as a prerequisite.

- How long are my placement scores valid?

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

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

**A:** You have two options.

**Choice 1.** You may review the topics you have forgotten (and learn new material) by using the 6-month Learning Module part of your package, and then go through a re-assessment when you have finished the required time.

**Choice 2.** Start your math at WSU in a course more suited to your knowledge, as assessed by the WSU MPA.

- How many times can I take the WSU MPA?

**A:** You may retake the placement assessment up to four times (for a total of 5 assessments). There is generally no benefit to retaking the assessment immediately after completing a prior attempt. Unlike the SAT or ACT, you cannot improve your results by simply retaking the assessment.

You are required to spend 3 hours in the Prep and Learning Module after your initial assessment to refresh material you may have forgotten (or to learn new material) before your first re-assessment, and an additional 5 hours in the Module before the second re-assessment.

The Module can be accessed through the [Take the Assessment](#) link where you accessed the initial assessment, then after selecting your campus select Option 2: "If you are returning..." There will be a link to the Prep and Learning Module on your ALEKS homepage. The ALEKS system will automatically track the time you spend in the Module and the re-assessment will "unlock" when the time requirements have been met.

Further re-assessment information can be found [here](#).

- How long do I have to complete a re-assessment?

**A:** You must access the Prep and Learning Module within 6 months after your initial assessment. You then have 6 months from when you first open the Module to complete your required time before a re-assessment.

The amount of time you have to complete a re-assessment depends on when you sign in for the first time. Any needed re-assessments must be taken during your placement cohort, which you are automatically added to when you sign in to ALEKS.

Students starting in a Fall semester are placed in a package accessible from March 1 to February 28 of the following year, while students starting in a Spring semester are placed in a package accessible from October 1 to September 30 of the following year.

If you do not enter your Learning Module within 6 months after your initial assessment and later wish to reassess for a better score, you will have to start over with the placement process. When you are ready to restart, click on **Take the Assessment**, select your campus and choose “For first time access” to start a new ALEKS package.

- What if I reassess and do worse?

**A:** The system will keep the higher score, unless it has been longer than 12 months and the score has expired.

- 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.