Freshman Transition Program Placement Testing FAQ

Q: I just got offered to participate in the TU FTP! What placement test is required?

A: In order to confirm your admission to the Towson University Freshman Transition Program and determine your math placement, you must take the online ALEKS Practice Placement, Preparation and Learning Assessment (ALEKS PPL) to ensure the best chance of success in an appropriate mathematics course.

Q: I just got offered to participate in the TU FTP! When can I complete placement testing?

A: You will register online for the FTP ALEKS testing date to be held at Towson University beginning in late March and concluding in early April. Register here.

Q: Why do I have to take the ALEKS?

A: In order to confirm your admission in the Towson University Freshman Transition Program, you have to place above Pre-Algebra (MATH 081).

Q: How long does it take to complete ALEKS?

A: ALEKS is an adaptive test of approximately 30 questions. It generally takes approximately 90 minutes to complete, although you have a 24-hour window in which to work.

Q: What topics are covered on ALEKS?

A: Topics, much of the math you learned in high school are:

- Real numbers (including fractions, integers, and percentages)
- Equations and inequalities (including linear equations, linear inequalities, systems of linear equations, and quadratic equations),
- Linear and quadratic functions (including graphs and functions, linear functions, and parabolas), exponents and polynomials (including integer exponents, polynomial arithmetic, factoring, and polynomial equations), rational expressions (including rational equations and rational functions),
- Radical expressions (including higher roots and rational exponents)
- Exponentials and logarithms (including function compositions and inverse functions, properties of logarithms, and logarithmic equations).
- Geometry and trigonometry (including perimeter, area, and volume, coordinate geometry, trigonometric functions, and identities and equations).

Q: What do the questions on ALEKS look like?

A: ALEKS is an open-response test (not multiple choice) of (typically) 30 questions. You work problems out with paper and pencil and then enter your answers. Before the assessment begins, ALEKS provides a short tutorial to make sure you know how to enter answers and how to use the online calculator and graphing tool, which come up for items that allow their use.

Q: Can I review a question after I’ve answered it?

A: Because ALEKS is adaptive, once you submit an answer, you cannot change it. Be sure to carefully check your answer before submitting your response.
Q: How do I interpret my results?
A: When you complete the proctored test, you will immediately meet with the Program Director or Program Advisor to review your score. You can always log back into ALEKS to see your score and learning pie.

Q: I am unhappy with my score. Can I take ALEKS again?
A: Hopefully you did the best you could, so that the learning (review) module that ALEKS constructed for you accurately targets your areas for improvement. In order to take the second proctored assessment, you must have completed your first proctored assessment during the initial testing period to provide time to complete the required 5 hours of review in the learning module.

Q: How is the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) ALEKS different from the Towson University (TU) ALEKS placement test?
A: While the test and content are the same, CCBC requires a proctored assessment in person to place students in the appropriate level of math based on CCBC's math courses, which range from Adult Basic Education through college level math. This is why Freshman Transition Program (FTP) students must meet minimum placement test results to participate in the program. FTP students have to place above Pre-Algebra (MATH 081).

Q: Can I be exempt from taking ALEKS?
A: Students can be exempt if they meet the following criteria:
1) SAT math score of 570 or higher
2) ACT math score of 24 or higher
3) Completion of college math credit with a grade of “C” or better
If you believe you are exempt, please contact the Program Director with proof of exemption.

Q: Do I need to install any software or plug-ins prior to taking the Practice Placement Assessment?
A: No. There are no required plug-ins or applets required with your use of ALEKS PPL. As long as you have access to the internet and are using an updated browser, you should not experience any difficulties taking your placement assessment. For a list of preferred browsers, please review the ALEKS system requirements on the ALEKS support site.

Q: I have documented disabilities and require accommodations. How do I get them?
A: If you are a student with a disability in need of assistive technology, such as a screen reader, ALEKS is accessible via reading and writing software. Students with disabilities who have questions regarding accommodations should contact the Program Director right away so that arrangements can be made.
Note: Extra time accommodations are built into the 24-hour timeframe, since the actual test only takes on average 90 minutes.

Q: What if I missed the deadline to take the placement test?
A: The FTP Program Director or Advisor will reach out to you in advance of the deadline. Failure to comply will result in your offer of participation in the program being rescinded.