Frequently Asked Questions

What is the placement process for entering students?

The South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR) has developed a standardized placement process to ensure entering students are placed into the math, English, and reading courses most appropriate for their ability and background. All degree-seeking students must provide valid ACT or SAT scores or complete the College Board ACCUPLACER or ACT COMPASS examination in the areas of writing skills, mathematics, and reading. Valid scores are those earned by the student within five years of the date of initial enrollment within the regental system. The required scores for math and English courses are set by the SDBOR and a list of the required scores is available at http://public-info.dsu.edu/testing-services/placement-testing-2/#placement-scores.

How do transfer students fit into the placement process?

- Transfer students from other SDBOR Institutions: Students transferring to DSU from one of the other SDBOR institutions can continue in the course sequence where they left off. Differences in remedial course offerings will be matched to DSU’s equivalent courses based on amount of coursework covered at the previous institution.
- Transfer students from Non-Regental Institutions: Students transferring to DSU who have not completed the equivalent of ENGL 101 and MATH 101 with a grade of C or higher or general education math, are subject to the placement requirements outlined for first-time students based on the availability of valid ACT scores.

What if a student has taken the ACT or SAT multiple times?

If students have multiple ACT scores, the highest Math, English, and Reading scores are used for placement purposes. The same rule applies to SAT scores – the highest scores are used for placement.

Are there exceptions to this policy?

Students can request an exception to enroll in a course different than the course indicated by their placement test scores. For more information, contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment at 605-256-5101.

What if students are enrolled in the wrong course?

Unless granted an exception, students are required to enroll in the English, math, and reading courses indicated by their placement scores. Students who are not enrolled in the correct courses will be notified by e-mail and must adjust courses or receive an exception prior to the add/drop date or else be administratively dropped from the incorrect course.

How soon do the required courses need to be completed?

- Students placed in pre-general education courses (ENGL 033 or MATH 095) must enroll in and successfully complete the courses within the first 30 attempted regental credit hours.
- Students placed above the pre-general education courses (MATH 102 or higher and ENGL 101) must complete these courses within the first 48 attempted regental credit hours.

What if the pre-general education courses are not completed in the required time frame?

- Per BOR policy 2:7, students who need ENGL 033 and/or MATH 095 must successfully complete these courses within the first 30 regental credit hours attempted. Students who do not complete the courses within the first 30 credit hours attempted have a CPG1 registration hold (essentially a yellow warning light) placed on their academic record and are monitored very carefully by the Registrar’s Office and/or by Student Development.
- If these courses are not successfully completed within the first 42 regental credit hours attempted, a CPG2 hold is placed on the student’s record (essentially a red stop light) and they can only enroll in pre-general education coursework. The CPG2 hold is only placed on the student’s record at the end of the spring semester; therefore, students who have more than 42 attempted credits at the end of fall will still be able to enroll full time in the spring.
Why would I take the ACCUPLACER or COMPASS placement exams?

You would complete the ACCUPLACER or COMPASS exams for one of these reasons:

- No ACT or SAT scores
- Previous placement scores (ACT, SAT, ACCUPLACER, or COMPASS) are over 5 years old
- Testing into MATH 123 – Calculus (COMPASS only)
- To test into a higher level math or English course than your original placement scores indicated (Challenge exam).

NOTE: Students can challenge their ACT or SAT placement by taking either the ACCUPLACER or COMPASS exam.

How much does the placement test cost?

There is no fee for placement testing at the SDBOR schools if it is required. If it is a challenge exam, the student must pay a $18.00 challenge fee for taking the test.

How long do the tests take?

Although the exams are untimed, most students take 30-45 minutes to complete each test; the questions are adjusted to the ability level indicated by students’ responses to previous questions.

Can I take the tests multiple times?

The ACT and SAT can be taken an unlimited amount of times. Students are only allowed one challenge using either the ACCUPLACER or COMPASS testing system. If the student did not complete the ACT or SAT and used ACCUPLACER or COMPASS scores for his or her original placement, they would still be granted one challenge exam – a maximum of two attempts at the exam. If a student has already enrolled in math, English, or reading and is unsuccessful or withdraws from a course, they may not placement test in that area.

What is the difference between ACCUPLACER and COMPASS testing?

The ACCUPLACER and COMPASS are computer-based placement tests. Both are adaptive exams that allow students to work at their own speed. The tests are untimed and students receive their scores immediately. ACCUPLACER exams can be administered by any qualified proctor through their website and have a set number of questions (20 for English/reading, 12 or 32 for math). COMPASS exams are administered at specific test sites with computers that have the software installed and do not have a set number of questions (usually between 15-50 questions). ACCUPLACER does not allow a calculator other than the one provided in the system for a limited number of questions.

How do students schedule a placement test session?

Students can complete testing during a regularly scheduled registration session at DSU. Individual appointments can be scheduled by contacting the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (OIEA) at 605-256-5101 or by e-mail at assessoffice@dsu.edu. Students can schedule a test at the University Center in Sioux Falls by calling 605-367-5989 or by e-mailing testingcenter@sduniversitycenter.org. Distance students should contact the OIEA at 605-256-5101 or assessoffice@dsu.edu before scheduling a placement exam at another test site.

How do students prepare for the tests?

ACCUPLACER – Sample questions and study apps are available at http://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students.


What if students need accommodations for testing?

Students with disabilities can request accommodations by contacting the ADA Academic Coordinator, Keith Bundy, at 605-256-5121 or by e-mail at keith.bundy@dsu.edu.

Questions?

Students can contact the OIEA at 605-256-5101 or their academic advisors for specific information on the policies developed by the Board of Regents to address the placement process. The OIEA website (http://public-info.dsu.edu/testing-services) contains links to policies and procedures.