Student placement and diagnostic assessment system that improves retention and graduation rates

ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional organizations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.
COMPASS® is a computer-adaptive placement and assessment system that helps you connect incoming students with the appropriate courses and support services they need to achieve academic success. COMPASS helps you:

- Assess students’ skill levels in reading, writing, math, and English as a second language
- Place students in courses that match their educational needs
- Determine students’ advising needs
- Connect students to the resources they need to succeed academically
- Increase student success with improved retention and higher graduation rates

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CUSTOMIZED RESEARCH FROM ACT

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The COMPASS program helps your postsecondary institution evaluate incoming students’ levels in five subject areas:

- Reading
- Writing Skills
- Writing Essay
- Mathematics
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

COMPASS includes placement tests that help you determine into which courses students should be placed, and diagnostic tests that provide more detailed information to pinpoint specific areas where students may need help.

The demographics section of the COMPASS system provides a robust student profile that can be used to determine additional needs, and it offers a rich source of data to help plan for optimal student services. Because it is a computer-adaptive test, COMPASS allows fast, flexible testing and provides instantaneous results.

For non-native English speakers, the COMPASS ESL measures are particularly beneficial for determining appropriate placement in ESL courses.

COMPASS has provided Houston Community College with an effective course placement system that maximizes the chances for student success. COMPASS not only enables us to place students in the right courses, but also provides us with the capability to diagnose what developmental interventions students may need. Our high school “College Connections” team administers COMPASS at our feeder high schools in Houston to improve their “college readiness” and reduce the need for developmental coursework once they arrive on campus.

Robert Castillo
Assistant Director of Admissions
Houston Community College
How Can COMPASS Improve Your Placement and Advising Programs?

**Accurate Course Placement**—COMPASS allows you to determine students’ skill levels and place students in courses that match their educational needs.

**Effective Academic Advising**—COMPASS diagnostics and demographic data provide comprehensive student profiles that you can use to determine if your students have any special advising or support needs.

**Customized Packages**—Test packages with cutoff scores and placement messages can be customized to ensure the results meet the specific needs of your institution.

**Flexible Scheduling**—COMPASS tests are available on demand and can accommodate any academic or student schedule.

**Less Time Testing**—The computer-adaptive test engine reduces testing time, while maintaining the accuracy of your students’ placement results.

**Immediate Feedback**—Students receive their customized score reports within seconds, allowing them to proceed immediately to their advisors or directly to registration.

**Program Evaluation and Planning**—Comprehensive reporting services provide a solid basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your program and identifying opportunities for improvement.

**Outreach to More Students**—Internet delivery allows you to incorporate high school outreach or remote testing of students anywhere in the country.

**Value-added Measurement**—Evaluate the value-added performance gain of your institution’s general education program by linking your students’ COMPASS results with other ACT solutions, such as CAAP.

**Reliability and Validity**—COMPASS was developed by professional psychometricians at ACT. It’s based on input received from postsecondary institutions across the country and has been subjected to thorough validity and reliability studies.

**ACT Support and Service**—If you have any problems or special needs, ACT offers 24/7 technical support, reference materials on our website, and professional consultations. Periodically, ACT conducts regional user conferences.
What Does COMPASS Include?

Student Profiles

COMPASS provides student contact information, detailed demographics, educational plans, and requests from students for specialized help. Up to 40 locally developed questions can also be included. This information is critical for advisors to thoroughly understand students’ needs and provide appropriate advisement.

Areas of Assessment

COMPASS offers test modules in the subject areas most frequently required by postsecondary institutions to evaluate the skill levels of their incoming students.

(1) Reading Placement Test is a multiple-choice test that helps you determine if your students have the reading skills they need to succeed in entry-level college courses, or if they need developmental reading courses or other instructional support. The test includes passages in practical reading, prose fiction, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Reading Diagnostics Tests help you evaluate your students’ specific skills in the areas of:

- Reading Comprehension
- Vocabulary

You will also receive a Reader Profile Report showing a student’s reading activity.

(2) Writing Skills Placement Test is a multiple-choice test that requires students to find and correct errors in essays in the areas of usage and mechanics, including basic grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, and of rhetorical skills, including strategy, organization, and style.

The Writing Skills Diagnostics Tests evaluate students’ skill levels in eight content domains:

- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Capitalization
- Usage
- Verb Formation/Agreement
- Relationships of Clauses
- Shifts in Construction
- Organization
(3) Writing Essay Test (e-Write) directly measures a student’s writing ability. Use e-Write alone or in conjunction with the Writing Skills test to place students in appropriate English courses. E-Write uses a powerful Internet scoring engine to provide an instantaneous evaluation of a student’s writing skills. In addition to a holistic score (on a scale of either 2–8 or 2–12), e-Write provides subscores in the areas of:

- Focus—consistency and clarity in identifying and maintaining the main idea or point of view
- Content—extent to which the topic is addressed by the development of ideas and the specificity of details and examples
- Organization—unity and coherence achieved through logical sequence of ideas
- Style—how effectively the chosen language enhances the writer’s purpose
- Mechanical Conventions—control of mechanics in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

(4) Mathematics Placement Test is a multiple-choice test that evaluates students’ ability levels in terms of basic skills such as performing a sequence of basic operations, application skills such as applying sequences of basic operations to novel settings or in complex ways, and analysis skills such as demonstrating conceptual understanding of principles and relationships for mathematical operations. The Mathematics Placement Test offers up to five content areas:

- Pre-algebra
- Algebra
- College Algebra
- Geometry
- Trigonometry

Students may use calculators that comply with ACT specifications when taking the COMPASS Mathematics Test. See a list of approved calculators at www.act.org/compass/student/calculator.html.

With an annual enrollment of over 120,000 students at 23 campuses, Ivy Tech Community College needs an assessment tool that is dependable, fast, reliable, and most importantly accurate. COMPASS continues to be our assessment of choice because it has a proven record for accurate course placement and offers many outstanding features that are helpful with our early college initiatives such as dual enrollment and high school outreach.

Cherry Kay Smith, Ph.D.
Assistant Vice President of Academic Policy and Assessment
Ivy Tech Community College
Mathematics Diagnostics Tests evaluate students’ skill levels in 15 sub-areas in Pre-algebra and Algebra:

Pre-algebra
- Integers
- Decimals
- Exponents, Square Roots, and Scientific Notation
- Ratios and Proportions
- Fractions
- Percentages
- Averages (Means, Medians, and Modes)

Algebra
- Substituting Values
- Setting Up Equations
- Factoring Polynomials
- Exponents and Radicals
- Basic Operations/Polynomials
- Linear Equations/One Variable
- Linear Equations/Two Variables
- Rational Expressions

(5) English as a Second Language (ESL) tests allow you to assess non-native English speakers’ abilities in four areas and place them in appropriate ESL courses.

- ESL Listening measures students’ ability to understand standard spoken American English.
- ESL Reading measures students’ abilities to comprehend and use standard American English in the areas of referring, such as comprehending explicitly stated material, and reasoning, such as inferential reading.
- ESL Grammar/Usage measures students’ abilities to recognize and apply the mechanics of standard American English in the areas of sentence elements and sentence structure and syntax.
- ESL Essay (ESL e-Write) provides analytic scores in the areas of development, language use, organization, focus, and mechanics, with an overall score based on a weighted composite of the analytic scores.
Welcome to the Accounting Program at Central Community College. Our goal is to help you build new business and computer skills, which will help you succeed in gaining and progressing in your preferred career in the accounting field. Page 42 of the Catalog describes the program and required courses in detail. Mr. Rod Thompson and Ms. Sherri Williams are the Program Advisors for Accounting.

Choice of Programs

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Feasibility for Four-Year Degree (Transfer) Transfer opportunities are available for CCC Accounting graduates. See page 56 of the Catalog to see a list of arts and sciences courses that can be transferred to other institutions.

Assessment Results and Related Recommendations

Mathematics Placement Recommended: Your Algebra score indicates you are eligible to enroll in Math 90 Elementary Algebra. However, with some additional brush up work before the start of the next term, you may develop the necessary skills to be eligible for Math 91 Intermediate Algebra. To work on rebuilding your Elementary Algebra skills, you may use the first four chapters of the Elementary Algebra Textbook by Johnson (available in the Book Store) or use the Elementary Algebra Review program on the computers in the Learning Assistance Center. You may then complete the Placement Test again after you have reviewed these materials. Depending on your Algebra score, you may need to complete additional courses, such as Pre-algebra, before you are eligible for Math 91 Intermediate Algebra. Visit the webpage for additional information on the next course you should take.

Algebra Diagnostic Test Results

Your score on problems involving Setting Up Equations indicates that you need to review additional material before taking this test. To build your skills in this area, study and work through Chapters 6 through 8 in the Elementary Algebra Textbook by Johnson available in the Book Store. Once you feel confident in your abilities, take this test again and review the areas where you did not do as well.

Diagnostic measures provide detailed information about the student’s skills in specific areas along with local resources for skill development.
Robust Reporting for Better Placement and Program Evaluation

Student Advising Reports, which can include customized course placement information and local campus referral messages, are available as soon as testing is finished, allowing immediate advising and registration. COMPASS includes features to assist local staff in uploading results to campus computer systems.

COMPASS also includes the capability to generate reports such as Customized List Reports, mailing labels, and placement reports with recommendations for groups. In addition, ACT can provide the following Research Reports:

- **Entering Student Descriptive Report** describes the characteristics, needs, plans, and skills of entering students.
- **Returning Student Retention Report** identifies the student retention patterns of your institution and the characteristics of students related to those patterns.
- **Course Placement Services** evaluates outcomes of course placement practices on your campus and provides information for setting and refining cut scores.
- Depending on your institution’s needs, other research analyses can be made available for an additional cost.

Fast, Flexible Delivery

COMPASS is designed to provide accurate placement and immediate results. It uses the Internet to achieve both goals. With online delivery, you can test students on your own campus or at off-site locations (where appropriate proctoring is available), such as satellite campuses, area high schools, or ACT authorized sites across the nation.

Need to administer a pencil-and-paper version? ASSET® is available for institutions that prefer this format and want the benefits of improved placement results. See more at www.act.org/asset.
Postsecondary Solutions from ACT

ACT offers a broad menu of enrollment, research, and assessment solutions to help your institution:

- Improve targeted enrollment programs
- Evaluate incoming students to ensure they have the tools to succeed
- Place students in classes that fit their skills and knowledge
- Retain and graduate more students
- Make informed decisions about your academic programs and student services
- Measure learning outcomes for accreditation and institutional effectiveness

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

AIM ACT Information Manager®—Relationship building software that allows users to access a database of detailed student information that can be used to target prospective students. www.act.org/aim/.

ACT Enrollment Information Service (EIS)—Strategic marketing software with research-based information that provides data on PLAN- and ACT-tested students (annually approximately 3.9 million students), your institution’s market share, and enrollment. www.act.org/eis/

Educational Opportunity Service (EOS)—National database of high school students, sophomores through seniors, who are open to college opportunities. EOS contains both PLAN and ACT test data, an accurate measure of a student’s academic abilities, and self-reported demographic information. When the ACT test is administered statewide, you can purchase all in-state search names from one source—eliminating duplicate names. www.act.org/eos/

ACT Predictive Modeling Service—Highly accurate and cost-effective service offers enrollment predictions at a fraction of the cost of other services. ACT Predictive Modeling uses statistical analyses based on student-level variables and is more accurate than predictions based primarily on geodemographic data. www.act.org/predictmodel/

ACT Internet Reporting Option (AIRO)—Secure web-based service that gives you access to student records as soon as they are available. With AIRO, you can download student records quickly and more often—up to three times a week—than CD-ROM reporting. www.act.org/aap/infosys/report.html
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www.act.org/highered