Mathematics Placement Fee FAQ

Beginning in the fall semester of 2017 every entering University at Buffalo student (transfer or freshman) will pay a one-time “Mathematics Placement Fee” of $33. Below are some frequently asked questions:

1. **What does the fee pay for?**
   Each UB student will have access to the ALEKS Placement, Preparation and Learning (ALEKS PPL) software online. It is a placement test to determine readiness for calculus. It also provides a seamless transition from the placement test to and individualized prep and learning module, diagnosing your areas of weakness and letting you practice these areas. Access is via a web browser using your UBIT name and password. Updated information including a link to access the software is always available here:
   
   [http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/math/ug/math-help/aleks.html](http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/math/ug/math-help/aleks.html)

   The fee covers the cost we pay to McGraw Hill and a small amount to administer the program.

2. **When should I take ALEKS?**
   Currently we are requiring ALEKS for students wishing to sign up for a first semester calculus class (Math 121, 131 or 141). A score of 61/100 is required for Math 121 and Math 131 and a score of 76/100 is required for Math 141. Incoming students planning to take one of these courses should take ALEKS over the summer. Students who already know they need to take a lower level math class (ULC 147 or 148) should wait, as the free access to ALEKS is only good for one year.

3. **Is ALEKS used for placement into precalculus (ULC 148) or intermediate algebra (ULC 147)?**
   At this time, we are using ALEKS only for placement into first semester calculus. However, a score substantially below the cutoff is a strong suggestion that ULC 147 or ULC 148 might be more appropriate for you. Talk with an advisor.

4. **This isn’t fair, I’m not planning to take calculus!**
   As this is a placement exam being used as a prerequisite, we could not simply assess a course fee. Some students may use the ALEKS software and decide not to take calculus. Every student has access to ALEKS, we encourage all students to try it. You may score higher than you expect and decide to consider a STEM major!

5. **I earned an “A” in precalculus! Why do I need to take ALEKS?**
   Perhaps you have forgotten the material, or did not have a rigorous precalculus class. If you have truly mastered precalculus, the ALEKS placement test should be easy for you. It may also help diagnose and improve on your areas of weakness

6. **Why are we doing this?**
   The mathematics department piloted the use of ALEKS in 2015-16 and again in 2016-17. We saw a dramatic decline in the percentage of students receive a poor grade (D,F or R) in Math 141. We hope ALEKS will provide more accurate placement then the current system, which uses SAT scores. ALEKS also provides learning modules so students can review areas of weakness before taking calculus. We will continually assess the program and only continue the fee if it is showing demonstrable results.

7. **What do I have to do to transfer my score from ALEKS to UB?**
   Nothing. The Math Department retrieves all scores from ALEKS at least once a day. After you pass ALEKS, you should be able to register yourself within 24 hours.