1. **What is the COMPASS?**

The Computer-Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System/English as a Second Language (COMPASS/ESL) is a comprehensive assessment advising, retention, and outcomes-oriented system of services. ACT developed COMPASS/ESL to help postsecondary institutions expand opportunities and increase the likelihood that entering students would achieve educational success and retention. The COMPASS is a computer-adaptive placement assessment system that provides measures of key skills useful for placing students into courses in the areas of writing, reading, and mathematics. Jefferson College supports the use of the COMPASS for students interested in attending college because it increases the likelihood that entering students would achieve educational success and retention in college credit courses. Student scores on the COMPASS serve as prerequisites for certain courses and are matched with the Jefferson College Advising Chart to determine proper course placement.

2. **Why do I have to take an assessment test?**

*Prospective college students will be asked to report their scores on the ACT for placement into courses. If students have not taken the ACT, then the COMPASS will be required for course placement.* COMPASS/ESL provides measures of key skills useful for placing students into courses in the areas of writing, reading, and mathematics, and if needed, into English as a second language courses.

The three standard COMPASS placement measures, Mathematics, Reading, and Writing Skills, are designed to assist institutions in placing students into appropriate college credit courses or developmental or preparation courses. The three measures result in a total of up to seven possible placement scores (one each in Writing Skills and Reading and up to five in Mathematics including Numerical Skills/Prealgebra, Algebra, College Algebra, Trigonometry, and Geometry). COMPASS also has three measures that are designed to assess the learning needs of students whose first language is not English and to accurately place these students into appropriate ESL or mainstream courses.
3. Where and when can I take the COMPASS? Do I need to make an appointment?

COMPASS is available in the Testing Center at Hillsboro, Arnold, or Northwest. The student does not need to make an appointment to take the test. A student does need to make application to the college and complete their admissions paperwork prior to taking the COMPASS Placement Exam. At point of entry to Testing Center Services, the Testing Supervisor will ask students if they are a college student or a high school dual enrollment student. *Students must present a valid I.D. in the form of a Jefferson College Student I.D., a driver’s license or state issue I.D., military I.D., or passport.*

COMPASS TEST SCHEDULE

In order for a student to take the COMPASS test, he or she must make an application to Jefferson College first. Once the application is made, COMPASS is given on a walk-in basis anytime the Testing Center is open. Be sure to bring a photo I.D.* and allow 2½ hours for the test. Please see the schedule below for the Testing Center Services hours.

**Hillsboro**

ext. 3147/3148/3164 (located in the Library – Room #101)

Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Arnold**

ext. 3592/3593 (Third Floor – Room #310)

Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

(Saturday hours for fall and spring semesters only)

**Northwest**

ext. 3533 (Room #129)

Monday, Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
4. **How long does the COMPASS placement test take?**

The COMPASS is not a timed test, so the length of each assessment and the total exam time varies for each individual. Some students complete the exam in 30 minutes and others may take 2 hours. Since the COMPASS is a computer-adaptive assessment, it randomly assigns questions to students at various levels of difficulty depending on the student’s responses. Correct answers trigger the computer program to generate more difficult questions until the correct course recommendations can be made. Thus, the questions and the amount of time spent taking the test can vary.

5. **When do I find out my scores on the test?**

Immediately after completing the COMPASS test, your scores will be calculated and an individual score report will be printed and given to you before you leave the Testing Center. It is important that this report is kept and brought to campus for advising and orientation sessions.

6. **What is the re-test policy?**

*The Jefferson College COMPASS policy is that all students are permitted to take the test only once.* Permission must be obtained from the Director of Learning Services, Testing Center Services staff, or high school/college advisors or instructors for retakes on the COMPASS.

A COMPASS retake form can be filled out and signed by an educational professional working with the student and presented by the student at the time of testing. COMPASS retake forms can be obtained from Testing Center Services and will be distributed accordingly to each advisor. Students are issued a two-test maximum (within 90 days per ACT guidelines) with regard to the number of times they would be permitted to take the COMPASS. Testing Center Services will be responsible for tracking COMPASS testing and will establish a database that will be used to monitor student-testing patterns. It is not recommended that students automatically test twice but that permission to retake the COMPASS would be based on evidence that the first test administration was not an accurate or valid assessment of the student’s skills. This would be due to computer malfunction in the middle of the test, questions with regard to the identification of the student, student illness prior to or during test administration etc.

*Additional test administrations may be approved if there is a significant time lapse between the original test administration(s) and the student’s current enrollment situation. This would apply in situations where the student’s previous test administration is not indicative of the student’s current knowledge or skill level due to either skill enhancement or deterioration.*
7. **Since the COMPASS is a computer-based test, do I need to know how to use computers first before I take the test?**

No, our Testing Supervisors will assist you in taking the COMPASS and will be there in case you have questions. The COMPASS also has a built in computer help function that assists students in the operation of the computer.

8. **What are the different sections of the COMPASS test and what are some of the areas covered on the test?**

**Mathematics Tests**
The COMPASS Mathematics Tests were developed around five content domains: numerical skills/prealgebra, algebra, college algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.

Personal calculators are **not** permitted. The COMPASS test has a calculator built into the program’s software.

**Numerical Skills/Prealgebra**
Items in the Numerical Skills/Prealgebra placement test range in content from basic arithmetic concepts and skills (integers, fractions, and decimals) to the knowledge and skills considered prerequisites for algebra (exponents, absolute values, percentages).

**Algebra**
The Algebra Placement Test is most appropriate for students who have recently completed a prealgebra or basic algebra course and for students whose current level of performance suggests a lack of readiness for a college-level algebra course. The Algebra Placement Test is composed of items from three curricular areas: elementary algebra, coordinate geometry, and intermediate algebra.

**College Algebra**
The College Algebra Placement Test is most appropriate for students who have recently demonstrated proficiency in intermediate algebra courses. Items in the college algebra item pool test algebra knowledge and skills in a variety of content areas such as functions, operations with matrices, and factorials.

**Geometry**
The Geometry Placement test assessed students’ understanding of concepts in Euclidean geometry and an ability to use spatial/geometric reasoning in problem solving. Scores in this test may provide useful information to supplement scores in the Algebra, college Algebra, and/or Trigonometry placement tests.
**Trigonometry**
The Trigonometry Placement Test assesses students’ understanding of trigonometric concepts and their application in problem solving. Scores into his test may be used in conjunction with scores in the College Algebra Placement Test and other available information to help guide decisions regarding placement into college algebra, trigonometry, calculus, or other college-level courses that require similar mathematical proficiency.

**Reading Test**
The COMPASS Reading Placement Test is designed to determine whether an examinee has the reading skills necessary to succeed in a standard entry-level college course or whether the examinee might benefit from a developmental, or remedial, reading course first. The COMPASS Reading Placement Test consists of a pool of 34 reading passages, each of which is accompanied by up to five reading comprehension items.

Passages are of five types:

1. prose fiction
2. humanities
3. social sciences
4. natural sciences
5. applied vocational/technical

The reading level of all the passages is approximately equal to what a student encounters in the first year of college; much of the excerpted material comes from essays, journals, and magazines commonly used in entry-level college courses.

**Writing Test**
The COMPASS Writing Skills Placement Test is designed to help determine whether a student possesses the writing skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a typical entry-level college composition course. Test results can indicate that a student may benefit from taking a developmental, or remedial, writing course prior to the standard course.

The test simulates an editing task by presenting examinees with a passage on the computer screen and requiring them first to find errors in grammar, usage, and style and then correct the errors by selecting the appropriate text segment from among five alternatives. Items in the Writing Skills Placement Test assess student abilities in the categories of usage/mechanics (punctuation, basic grammar and usage, sentence structure) and rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, style).

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Test**
The purpose of the ACT English as a Second Language (ESL) Placement Test is to help postsecondary institutions accurately place students from a wide range of proficiency
levels into appropriate English as a Second Language classes and to identify students who may be ready for mainstream courses. The ACT ESL Placement Test is composed of three tests – Grammar/Usage, Reading, and Listening. Each test in the assessment spans the levels of English proficiency ranging from beginning to near-native-speaker ability.