

BACKGROUND

This short study on placement of students at the College of Micronesia-FSM is in response to a declining enrollment for the past four years. Sandy Pond Associates has been assisting the college to help determine causes for the decline in enrollment as well as searching for solutions. The college uses an entrance test to determine admission as well as placement into math and English courses. There are questions concerning COMET since parts were developed in-house. One of these questions is do students place about the same using COMET as they do using a standardized placement test such as Accuplacer?

COMET consists of a math section, reading section and an essay. The faculty from the division of math and natural sciences developed the math section in-house. The current reading test used is the Nelson/Denny Standardized Reading Test. The faculty of the Languages and Literature division each year provide sample essay topics and the committee on Recruitment, Admissions, and Retention select the topics from the samples. The essay is graded with an analytic rubric. Essay scorers meet together prior to reading the essays and run a calibration exercise to make sure each scorer is using the rubric in the same way. Two readers then read each essay. If there is a difference of 5 or more in the two scores, then the essay is read by a third reader.

Admission using COMET is determined on the following criteria:

Degree-Level: Essay ≥ 34 AND Comprehension ≥ 23 (9th grade)

ACE: Essay ≥ 28 AND Comprehension ≥ 20 (7th grade)

Certificate-Level: Essay ≥ 20 AND Comprehension ≥ 15 (5th grade)

There are also alternate criteria for students who may have high scores in math, but lower scores in one of the English sections. This alternate criteria is:

From non-admit to certificate level:

1. Comprehension ≥ 26 (10th grade)
2. Essay ≥ 20 AND Comprehension ≥ 14 (4th grade) AND MS ≥ 096

From certificate-level to ACE

1. Comprehension ≥ 26 (10th grade)
2. Essay ≥ 36 AND Comprehension ≥ 17 (6th grade) AND MS ≥ 096

From ACE to degree-level

1. Comprehension ≥ 26 (10th grade)
2. Essay ≥ 28 AND Comprehension ≥ 22 (8th grade) AND MS ≥ 096
3. Essay ≥ 42 AND Comprehension ≥ 17 (6th grade) AND MS ≥ 096

Administration of COMET is as follows:

Nelson/Denny Reading Test – the extended time for ESL students is used for the two parts of this test. Part I is vocabulary and part II is reading comprehension. Both parts are timed at 56 minutes for ESL students versus 35 minutes for regular administration.

Essay is timed at 40 minutes

Math with four sections of ten questions is timed at one hour. Students may use calculators on the math tests.

On the other hand, Accuplacer companion tests are not timed, so each student was allowed as much time as needed to complete each section. Students were also allowed to take a lunch break. The ESL English tests consisted of Reading Skills, Language Use, and Sentence Meaning. The math tests consisted of arithmetic, elementary algebra, and college math.

A SMALL STUDY

Procedure: An announcement recruiting 100 new freshmen to take the Accuplacer tests was posted at National Campus and the Center for Technical Education. Each test taker was offered lunch and a \$20.00 incentive. 100 students registered to take the test and 88 students actually took the tests.

The 88 new freshmen were given the paper based Accuplacer Companion Tests for ESL English and math. 2 of the students were not actually new freshmen, so the comparison is based on 86 students. 81 of the students placed into degree programs at COM-FSM, 4 students placed in Achieving College Excellence (COM-FSM developmental courses) and 1 student was a certificate student as placed by COMET. They took the COM-FSM entrance test (COMET) during the spring 2014 semester of their senior year in high school. The students were divided into 4 groups of twenty-five each. Each group was assigned one test proctor. Each proctor was trained prior to the administration of the tests.

Accuplacer is not timed, so once a student finished one test, they were allowed to go onto the next test. All proctors administered the tests in the same order so the three math tests were arithmetic, elementary algebra, and then college algebra. The ESL tests were reading skills, language use, and sentence meaning. Students were allowed a lunch break if they wanted one.

Results: COMET and Accuplacer are different tests, so the comparison of these two tests is based on placement.

Accuplacer provides a survey of two and four year colleges and universities to help determine placement. The table below is the survey results for the ESL English tests. I averaged the scaled scores of the three ESL tests for Accuplacer placement. The table provides a range of scores at the highest level of placement as 84 – 120 or 85 – 102.

**Survey of ACCUPLACER ESL Tests
Used for Placement into English-As-A-Second Language Courses**

RS = Reading Skills, LU = Language Use, SM = Sentence Meaning Scores

Level 1 (highest)			Level 2			Level 3			Level 4			Other				
RS	LU	SM	RS	LU	SM	RS	LU	SM	RS	LU	SM	RS	LU	SM	Course	
Average of three tests 84 -120			Average of three tests 72 - 83													
Average of three tests 85-102			Average of three tests 66-84			Average of three tests 45-65						Average of 103-120 branch to Sentence Skills test				
116-120	116-120	116-120	101-115	101-105	101-115	81-100	81-100	81-100	55-80	55-80	55-80	20-54	20-54	20-54		
100-120	91-120	100-120	55-99	50-90	60-99											
Composite 311-360			Composite 250-310			Composite 0-249										
Average of RS and LU 89-97			Average of RS and LU 78-88			Average of RS and LU 45-77			Average of RS and LU <= 44 refer to ABE							
94 +			81-93			68-80			55-67			105 + Take Reading Comprehension				
Average 103 - 120			Average 93 - 102			Average 73 - 92			Average 44 - 72			Average 36 - 43				
Avg of 4 ESL tests ≥ 100 and WP ESL = 5			Avg of 4 ESL tests ≥ 100 and WP ESL = 4			Avg of 4 ESL tests ≥ 91 and WP ESL < 4 or not taken			81 ≤ Avg of 4 ESL tests < 91			53 ≤ Avg of 4 ESL < 81 - Level 2 Avg of 4 ESL < 53 - Level 1				
96-120	91-120		71-95	66-90		46-70	41-65		25-45	25-40		20-24	20-24		See advisor	

The entire range of scores of the 86 students on Accuplacer was 38 – 119.

66 of the 86 students achieved an average score of 84-120.

The remaining 22 students placed as follows:

15 in level 2 66 – 84

4 in level 3 45 – 65 (Certificate student scored in this level.)

2 in level 4 with scores of 38

COMET Placement

OVERALL PLACEMENT

COM-FSM placed 81 of the 86 students into degree program.

4 students placed into Achieving College Excellence (ACE)

1 student placed into certificate program

READING PLACEMENT

33 of the 81 students started with college level English reading

46 of the 81 students started with one developmental English reading class.

2 students – Need to consult student services for placement.

WRITING PLACEMENT

49 of the 81 students started with college level writing

30 of the 81 students started with developmental writing

2 students – Need to consult student services for placement.

MATH

Currently the college does not regularly use math scores for entrance into degree program only placement into a math class. The alternate criteria used to move students from non-admit, to certificate or certificate to ACE or ACE to degree program includes a math placement.

The Accuplacer math scores used for comparison placement below are what students need to get into college level math. The table below is a sampling of scores from the Accuplacer survey.

AR	EA	CLM
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60-120	80-120	20-81
69-120	90-120	46-58
76-120	79-120	35-79
41-120	67-120	
65-120	76-120	
	106-120	41-78
	90-120	20-81
	95-120	
	71-120	
		43-69
		53-85

AR – Arithmetic; EA – Elementary Algebra; CLM – College Level Math

There seem to be a wider variety of approaches to using the math scores for placement. Some schools use scores from all three tests, some use scores from two tests, and some use scores from only one of the three math tests. The numbers I am reporting for comparison are based on the use of three scores. The reason for this is that COMET math is divided into four sections. A student must score 7, 7, and 6 to get into college level math.

Accuplacer Results:

33 of the 86 students scored 60 – 120 on the arithmetic.

Only 4 of the 33 scored 80-120 on elementary algebra.

All 33 scored at least 20 on the college level algebra. **Using the first set of scores in the table above only 4 of the 86 would have placed into college level algebra.**

Using 20 does not appear to be reliable since it is the lowest possible scaled score. 55 of the 86 students scored 20 on college level algebra. 2 students scored 91 which was the highest, one scored 75, one scored 57, and the remaining scores were between 21 and 39.

COMET math –

1 student scored into ACE Math which is equal to MS 099.

2 of the ACE students scored into MS 100 or MS 101 so they are included in the numbers below.

1 ACE student doesn't have a math placement available for this report.

13 students scored into MS 095 and MS 096. This would be equal to the Accuplacer arithmetic and elementary algebra.

26 students placed into MS 099

27 students placed into MS 100 college level math

16 students placed into MS 101 Algebra and Trig.

3 students don't have math placements available for this report.

CONCLUSIONS

The COMET reading test placed 79 of the 86 students into degree program compared to 66 of the 86 students using Accuplacer.

The COMET math test seems to place students higher than the Accuplacer test. 43 students placed into college level math compared to 4 students using Accuplacer.

ACUPLACER SCORES												COMET PLACEMENT		
Arithmetic	Scaled sc. Arit.	Elem. Algebra	Scaled sc. E.A.	College Math	Scaled Sc. CLM	Reading Skills	Scaled Sc. Rd sk	Lang. Use	Scaled sc. Lang.	Sent. Meaning	Scaeld sc. Sent. Mn	Eng. Av.		
20	54	10	27	26	75	15	54	17	57	16	55	55.33333333	Certificate	MS 104
10	26	13	34	5	20	10	31	22	78	22	81	63.33333333	ESL 050	cert.
18	46	28	77	10	26	35	120	34	118	35	120	119.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
26	76	27	74	5	20	31	111	34	118	35	120	116.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 101
16	40	25	68	4	20	30	109	35	120	35	120	116.33333333	EN 110	EN 120a MS 100
19	50	22	60	6	20	29	106	34	118	35	120	114.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 096
29	88	24	65	4	20	26	98	34	118	33	117	111	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
28	84	20	54	5	20	26	98	33	116	34	118	110.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
21	58	16	41	10	26	25	94	33	116	34	118	109.33333333	EN 110	EN 120a
19	50	15	39	2	20	26	98	34	118	31	112	109.33333333	EN 110	EN 120a MS 099
4	20	15	39	7	57	26	98	33	116	31	112	108.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 099
28	84	26	71	15	39	26	98	32	114	31	112	108	EN 110	EN 120a MS 101
20	54	22	60	10	26	27	100	31	111	30	110	107	EN 110	EN 120A MS 099
11	28	27	74	6	20	26	98	29	106	30	110	104.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
17	43	25	68	9	23	23	88	31	111	28	104	101	EN 110	EN 120A MS 099
29	84	26	71	15	39	22	85	29	106	30	110	100.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
26	76	22	60	6	20	19	74	32	114	30	110	99.33333333	EN 110	EN 120a MS 101
20	54	30	86	5	20	20	77	29	106	29	107	96.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
27	80	24	65	7	20	20	77	28	102	28	104	94.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
30	93	21	57	5	20	19	74	24	86	27	101	87	EN 110	EN 120A MS 099
14	34	7	23	6	20	15	54	30	109	26	97	86.66666667	EN 110	EN 120A MS 096
11	28	18	47	9	23	8	29	30	109	32	115	84.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 099
21	58	22	60	7	20	21	81	7	29	30	110	73.33333333	EN 110	EN 120A MS 100
13	32	9	25	7	20	11	33	24	86	25	94	71	EN 110	EN 120A MS 101
15	37	19	50	4	20	26	98	33	117	32	115	110	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 096
11	28	24	65	9	23	27	100	33	116	31	112	109.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
24	69	23	63	4	20	27	100	31	111	28	104	105	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
8	23	15	39	5	20	25	94	33	116	28	104	104.66666667	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 099
34	113	26	71	10	26	21	81	31	111	30	110	100.66666667	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
22	62	24	65	11	29	19	74	30	109	33	117	100	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 101
26	76	25	68	10	26	20	77	29	106	33	117	100	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 101
27	80	28	77	8	21	23	88	30	109	25	94	97	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
13	32	14	36	5	20	18	69	29	106	31	112	95.66666667	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
13	32	22	60	7	20	25	94	25	91	27	101	95.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 100
19	50	22	60	7	20	23	88	26	94	27	101	94.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 099
26	76	22	60	8	21	23	88	25	91	27	101	93.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A MS 099

15	37	16	41	4	20	19	74	28	102	28	104	93.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 096
23	65	15	39	5	20	22	85	27	98	23	85	89.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 099
29	88	22	60	7	20	25	94	25	91	22	81	88.66666667	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 099
25	72	22	60	6	20	18	69	24	86	29	107	87.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 101
19	50	16	41	2	20	23	88	20	70	26	97	85	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 101
14	34	9	25	3	20	15	54	27	98	25	94	82	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 099
20	54	28	77	7	20	11	33	28	102	26	97	77.33333333	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 099
30	93	30	86	15	39	9	30	24	86	31	112	76	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 100
24	69	17	44	6	20	6	28	24	86	21	77	63.66666667	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 101
11	28	21	57	5	20	8	29	17	57	20	73	53	ESL 089	EN 120A	MS 099
33	107	26	71	10	26	25	94	33	116	24	89	99.66666667	ESL 089*	EN 120A	MS 101
14	34	18	47	9	23	20	77	30	109	26	97	94.33333333	ESL 089*	EN 120A	MS 100
21	58	19	50	9	23	14	47	25	91	23	85	74.33333333	ESL 089*	EN 120A	MS 100*
14	34	8	24	7	20	18	69	31	111	28	104	94.66666667		EN 120A	MS 099
10	26	18	47	9	23	29	106	29	106	20	73	95	EN 110*	EN 120a*	MS 100
11	28	18	47	5	20	29	106	34	118	33	117	113.66666667	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 100
23	65	17	44	6	20	26	98	30	109	32	115	107.33333333	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 099
16	40	20	54	9	23	21	81	34	118	29	107	102	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 099
8	23	14	36	30	91	23	88	28	102	30	110	100	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 096
22	62	12	32	5	20	22	85	29	106	26	97	96	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 099
15	37	19	50	5	20	23	88	27	98	23	85	90.33333333	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 099
27	80	29	81	10	26	18	69	28	102	23	85	85.33333333	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 101
22	62	17	44	6	20	13	40	22	78	22	81	66.33333333	EN 110	ESL 099	MS 099
29	88	29	81	6	20	23	88	32	114	27	101	101	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 101
21	58	25	68	8	21	21	81	29	106	32	115	100.66666667	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 101
20	54	28	77	13	34	26	98	28	102	27	101	100.33333333	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 100
21	58	22	60	7	20	22	85	27	98	30	110	97.66666667	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 099
24	69	25	68	1	20	19	74	31	111	26	97	94	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 101
24	69	19	50	7	20	18	69	29	106	27	101	92	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 099
10	26	15	39	10	26	19	74	31	111	24	89	91.33333333	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
9	24	22	60	9	23	18	69	29	107	25	94	90	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
24	69	25	68	4	20	26	98	24	86	22	81	88.33333333	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 099
10	26	11	30	3	20	22	85	24	86	24	89	86.66666667	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
23	65	24	65	6	20	20	77	25	91	24	89	85.66666667	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 100
15	37	8	24	8	21	18	69	24	86	26	97	84	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
17	43	15	39	6	20	10	31	27	98	27	101	76.66666667	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 100
15	37	13	34	5	20	15	54	25	91	22	81	75.33333333	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 100
19	50	24	65	5	20	21	81	14	45	20	73	66.33333333	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 099

17	43	13	34	7	20	9	30	15	50	11	34	38	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
9	24	12	32	5	20	9	30	17	57	6	27	38	ESL 089	ESL 099	MS 096
16	40	21	57	9	23	15	54	25	91	27	102	82.33333333		ESL 099	MS 101
27	80	14	36	7	20	27	100	34	118	32	115	111	EN 110	ESL 099*	MS 100
18	46	14	36	5	20	21	81	26	94	31	112	95.66666667	EN 110	ESL 099*	MS 099
7	22	19	50	4	20	15	54	26	94	27	101	83	ESL 089	ESL 099*	MS 099*
16	40	23	62	8	21	18	69	24	86	25	94	83	ESL 089	ESL099	MS 100
10	26	6	22	7	20	18	69	25	91	24	89	83	ESL 089		MS 096
10	26	11	30	5	20	13	40	26	94	23	85	73	ESL 089		MS 095
25	72	24	25	12	31	25	94	25	91	27	101	95.33333333	ESL 091		MS 100
33	107	35	120	30	91	25	94	28	102	28	104	100	ESL 092		
14	34	9	25	7	20	14	47	33	116	28	104	89	ESL 092		MS 092
32	102	21	57	5	20	28	104	33	116	31	112	110.6666667	ESL 092*		MS 101