English Placement Testing

How Placement Is Determined in Composition Courses

UW–Marathon County
A placement team of instructors from the English Department at UW–Marathon meets to review a complete student file to determine which first-year writing course each student should enroll in. The team also makes recommendations for supplemental instruction courses, including the Writing Center tutorial, reading, learning skills, and the multilingual writer's workshop.

The placement team considers the following factors when determining each student's placement:

Writing Sample:
Perhaps the most important facet of composition course placement is the writing sample students complete when taking the WEPT test. The writing sample helps the placement team make judgments about the student's ability to read and interpret a writing prompt on an academic topic, make appropriate choices about audience and purpose, and adhere to the conventions of academic writing (such organizing ideas, formulating a thesis, and writing grammatically and mechanically sound sentences).

WEPT:
The Wisconsin English Placement Test measures reading comprehension, sentence correction, and usage. This test does not necessarily measure the sorts of complex reading and writing skills students are likely to encounter in many of their college courses. As a result, the WEPT is just one of the measurements the placement team considers when placing students into writing and support courses.
**ACT:**
The placement team analyzes each student's ACT reading and English scores in the context of national research that links ACT scores to academic success in reading and writing-intensive courses. Because the ACT assesses a variety of college readiness skills, it can help predict a student's likelihood of success in first-year composition, especially when combined with a writing sample. Students with low ACT reading scores also receive a recommendation to enroll in a reading course.

**High School Grades:**
High school grades are one factor the placement team examines when assigning courses. Because neither grades nor test scores are a perfect prediction of a student's academic abilities or motivation, low high school grades do not necessarily place a student in developmental writing courses or other non-degree credit classes, just as high grades in high school coursework do not guarantee placement in or exemption from English 102.

**High School Curriculum:**
The placement team considers the sorts of courses a student has taken to prepare them for the writing expected in the first-year composition sequence at UW-Marathon County, especially recent courses taken during the senior year of high school. The team also considers significant gaps in a student's education when making placement recommendations.