

Hamilton College Mathematics Placement Exams

Welcome to the Hamilton Community!

In less time than you may believe possible you will be on the Hamilton College campus, talking to a faculty advisor, and planning your college career. As an aid to your advisor, the Hamilton Mathematics Department asks that you fill out a questionnaire, take a short multiple-choice placement exam, and mail the materials back to us at your earliest convenience.

No, you are not required to take a mathematics course while at Hamilton, but over half of Hamilton graduates take one or more math courses while here. Whether or not you take a mathematics course is strictly your decision however, to be made in consultation with your academic advisor. The concern of the Mathematics Department is that IF you choose to take a mathematics course then you choose a course at an appropriate level. Studying mathematics at either a too advanced or a too elementary level is no fun for either the student or the professor. The purpose of the questionnaire and the exam is to help us suggest to you which math courses are appropriate for a person with your background. The results of your Mathematics Placement will also be useful to your faculty advisor in helping you choose among other quantitatively oriented courses.

Thank you for your assistance, and we're looking forward to seeing you in August.

The Hamilton College Mathematics Department.

Instructions

- 1) Please fill out the Questionnaire.
- 2) Please take **one** of the Mathematics Placement Exams.
 - a) IF you HAVE had a year of calculus (AP or non-AP), take Exam I. (25 minutes)
 - b) IF you HAVE NOT had a year of calculus, take Exam II. (40 minutes)

Write your exam answers on the back of the Questionnaire.

You may use a calculator on either exam, but a calculator is neither required nor necessary.

You may not use any reference books.

The exams are for placement advice only; do not guess on questions for which you have no idea of the answer.

- 3) Please mail the Questionnaire/Answer Sheet to:

The Office of the Registrar
Hamilton College
198 College Hill Road
Clinton, NY 13323.

(See reverse for further information.)

About Mathematics Placement, in general: We will make a mathematics placement recommendation based on your Mathematics Placement Exam Score, your AP Calculus Exam Score (if taken), your high school course work, your Math SAT score, your self-assessment of your mathematics preparation, and your career interests.

About the Placement Exams: The Mathematics Placement Exams are collections of questions that have, in the past, correlated with success in various mathematics courses. The exams are not intended to measure the scope of your mathematical knowledge. The sole intent of the exams is to help us advise you as to which math courses you will find interesting and challenging, but not impossible, in the event that you decide to take a mathematics course at Hamilton.

About the Mathematics Department's Advanced Placement Policy: The Mathematics Department awards a credit for first semester Calculus if a student takes Calculus II or Vector Calculus at Hamilton, without taking our Calculus I. No grade is assigned for this extra credit, but it counts as 1 unit towards Hamilton graduation and discipline requirements. No credit will be awarded solely on the basis of the AP exam score.

Frequently Asked Questions

“What if I FAIL the placement exam?”

That’s impossible. The only thing being assessed on these exams is your readiness for a particular level of mathematical study. If you choose to take a mathematics course then it is in your best interest, and in ours, to see that you take a course at an appropriate level.

“Should I STUDY for the exam?”

No. Study what? The Placement Exams are not intended to be an assessment of your mathematical knowledge. The exams are simply collections of questions that we have found to correlate with success in particular mathematics courses.

“I haven’t taken math since my junior year and I’ve forgotten everything I knew. What should I do?”

Take the exam anyway, but then tell us about your background on the attached questionnaire, and attach whatever additional information you would like. We will take that information into account when we give you our placement advice.

“What if I don’t agree with the Math Department’s placement?”

All our recommendation says is that, in the past, students with records similar to yours have generally had good success in the courses we recommend to you. We have no crystal ball that shows us your future, and we are committed to helping you have success in whatever course you choose. If you do disagree with our recommendation, please feel free to get in touch with us and we’ll be happy to discuss why we placed you where we did. In the end the decision is yours. We only give advice.

“I KNOW I will NEVER take a math course at Hamilton, so why should I take a placement exam?”

We hope that part of your Hamilton experience will be to expand your academic horizons. Mathematics offers a range of courses for students with a variety of backgrounds. Don’t close and lock doors until you know what’s on the other side of them.

“I’ve read the whole thing and I still have questions. What should I do?”

Send an email to math@hamilton.edu, or write us at The Department of Mathematics, Hamilton College, 198 College Hill Road, Clinton, NY 13323, and we’ll try to answer your questions.