Placement Testing

The placement test we use is called COMPASS. It is a computerized, adaptive test published by ACT. COMPASS measures students' skills in reading, writing, mathematics. The following information is from ACT's website.

Drawing from a pool of more than 2,400 test items, the computer adaptive format adjusts the difficulty level to the skills of the individual student, eliminating items that are too easy or too difficult and that contribute little to the measurement. The COMPASS placement measures have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education for use in determining student eligibility for Ability-To-Benefit Title IV financial aid funding.

Math assesses basic skills—performing a sequence of basic operations, applying sequences of basic operations to novel settings or in complex ways, and demonstrating conceptual understanding of principles and relationships in mathematical operations. Students are permitted to use approved calculators when completing the COMPASS mathematics placement test. An online calculator is available for those students who wish to access it via Microsoft Windows.

The reading placement test helps determine if students have the skills to succeed in standard entry-level college courses or if they need developmental reading courses or other instructional support. Five types of reading comprehension passages are Practical Reading, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Prose Fiction, and Humanities. Items have multiple-choice response options.

The Writing Skills Placement Test helps institutions determine whether students are ready for entry-level college writing courses or other courses with significant writing loads, or whether students require developmental writing instruction prior to entry into those courses. The assessment asks students to find an correct errors in essays presented on the computer screen. The test items include from the following areas: Punctuation, basic grammar and usage, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and writing style.

You can view sample questions at http://www.act.org/compass/sample/index.html.