

Major Field Assessment for THEC Quality Assurance Funding

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What is Major Field Assessment as it pertains to THEC's Quality Assurance Funding?

In simple terms, Major Field Assessment is assessing your senior students within the major. Specifically, we want to know that a student graduating in a given major has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills associated with a degree in that major. For the most part, Major Field Assessment has been a staple of THEC Quality Assurance Funding. However, many areas also use the Major Field Assessment as part of their regular programmatic assessment of student learning outcomes.

When used to meet Quality Assurance Funding standards, each major area on campus (excluding performance arts and those areas that graduate less than 5 students annually) must submit their assessment results from fall and spring graduating seniors to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) once in every five-year Quality Assurance Funding cycle. There is a process governed by THEC that all areas must adhere to in order to meet those standards. It is a two stage process occurring over two years; the Planning Year and the Assessment Year.

Types of Assessment That Can Be Used

There are two categories of assessments available: standardized assessments and locally-developed assessments. It is up to you to decide what will work best for your major.

Many majors have utilized a variety of available standardized instruments. Often these assessments can serve a dual purpose. For example, Nursing and Architecture both use a national licensing exam as their major field assessment. Additionally, Education and Engineering use a national exam for their assessment. These national tests are centrally scheduled, and it is the department's responsibility to inform students of registration dates.

For other areas, specialty tests are available through organizations such as Educational Testing Service. Given that they can be ordered and administered locally, such instruments offer departments the advantages of minimal time commitment with regard to development and planning in addition to greater flexibility in scheduling.

Another option available to departments, and one that many prefer, is to develop their own assessment tools. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using a locally-developed assessment. One advantage is that it allows for the major field assessment instrument to relate directly to current curricula. However, there are considerable time commitments and planning that must occur if a department is developing or maintaining a locally-developed assessment instrument.

Similar to a locally-developed test, departments may also choose to use a capstone course or a culminating project as an assessment of the major. The greatest benefit to using such an assessment is that it is tied directly to the curriculum. Therefore students are highly motivated to participate and perform.

If a department chooses to use a locally-developed instrument to assess the major, then there are some guidelines prescribed by THEC that must be followed. When reusing an existing instrument, departments are permitted to alter approximately 20% of it between THEC submissions without penalty. This small change ensures continuity and comparability of results while allowing for changes in

curriculum that may occur between assessment submissions. If the changes to an existing instrument exceed 20% or if a department has decided to develop a new local assessment, there are additional guidelines that must be followed. (For more information on what constitutes a “change” contact the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.)

Stage 1: The Planning Year

During the Planning Year for Major Field Assessment, majors will confirm their assessment instrument and will complete the Planning Form (see Appendix D) and return it to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). Ideally it is best to get an early start in the Planning Year (during the summer or early fall). Depending on whether a standardized or locally-developed instrument is used, the department will determine whether any revisions are required. Provided that these revisions don't exceed 20% of the instrument, then the department is set until the Assessment Year (*see Appendix A: Workflow for the Planning Year of Major Field Assessment*).

If the revisions are greater than 20% or if a new locally-developed instrument will be used, then additional steps are required. Another form called the Assessment Development Form (see Appendix E) is used to guide such areas through the process of creation/revision, review and pilot testing. If a new standardized instrument will be used, there is no need to complete the Assessment Planning Form because your scores are still compared to the national norms (*see Appendix B: Steps for New Assessment Development*).

Stage 2: The Assessment Year

During the Assessment Year, your area will administer the assessment instrument to all graduating seniors (if you are using a capstone course/experience, then the “administration” will be incorporated into the course curriculum). At the end the fall and spring terms, you will submit your results to OIRA so that they can be incorporated into the final report to THEC (*see Appendix C: Workflow for the Assessment Year of Major Field Assessment*).

Financial Assistance

OIRA is able to assist with many of the costs that can be associated with construction, maintenance and administration of the Major Field Assessment for Quality Assurance Funding. Outlined below are the covered costs for each Assessment Stage.

During the Planning Year...

1. Consultants for a new locally-developed test: \$500 Total

When departments create a locally-developed assessment, two out-of-state consultants are needed to review it. These reviewers can both be specialists in the discipline, or one can be in the discipline and one can be a measurement specialist.

2. Consultants for a local test revision: Up to \$200

Departments may elect to obtain advice as they revise an assessment (up to 20%). Hiring a consultant is not a requirement, but OIRA will support this cost when requested.

During the Assessment Year...

1. Funding for actual test costs: Varies

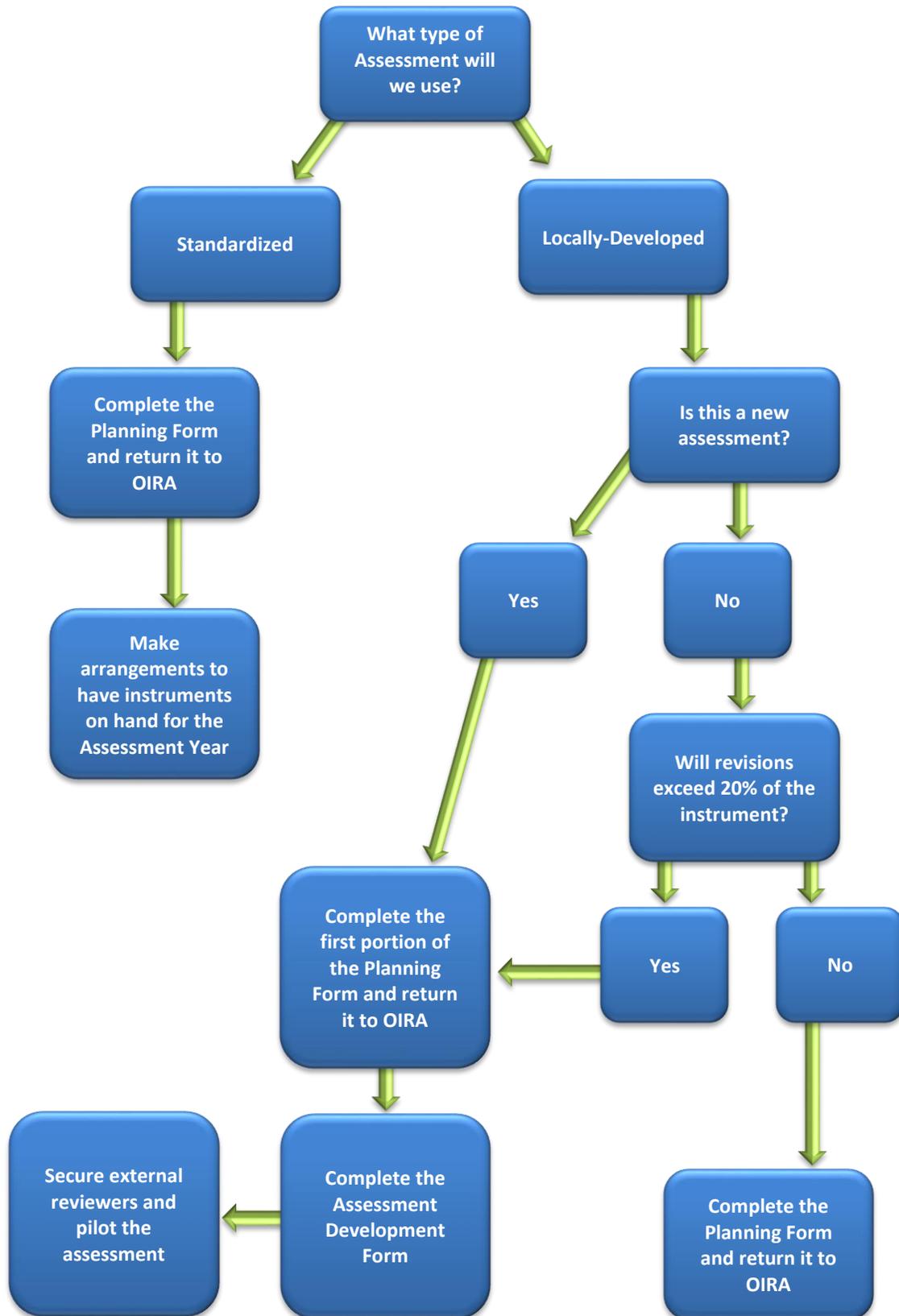
A. Registration fees

If an assessment requires students to pay a registration fee up front, OIRA will fully reimburse those students for these fees. (EXCEPTION: In instances where all graduating or recently graduated students are annually required to take a test in order to receive licensure – such as in Nursing and Architecture – no reimbursement is available.)

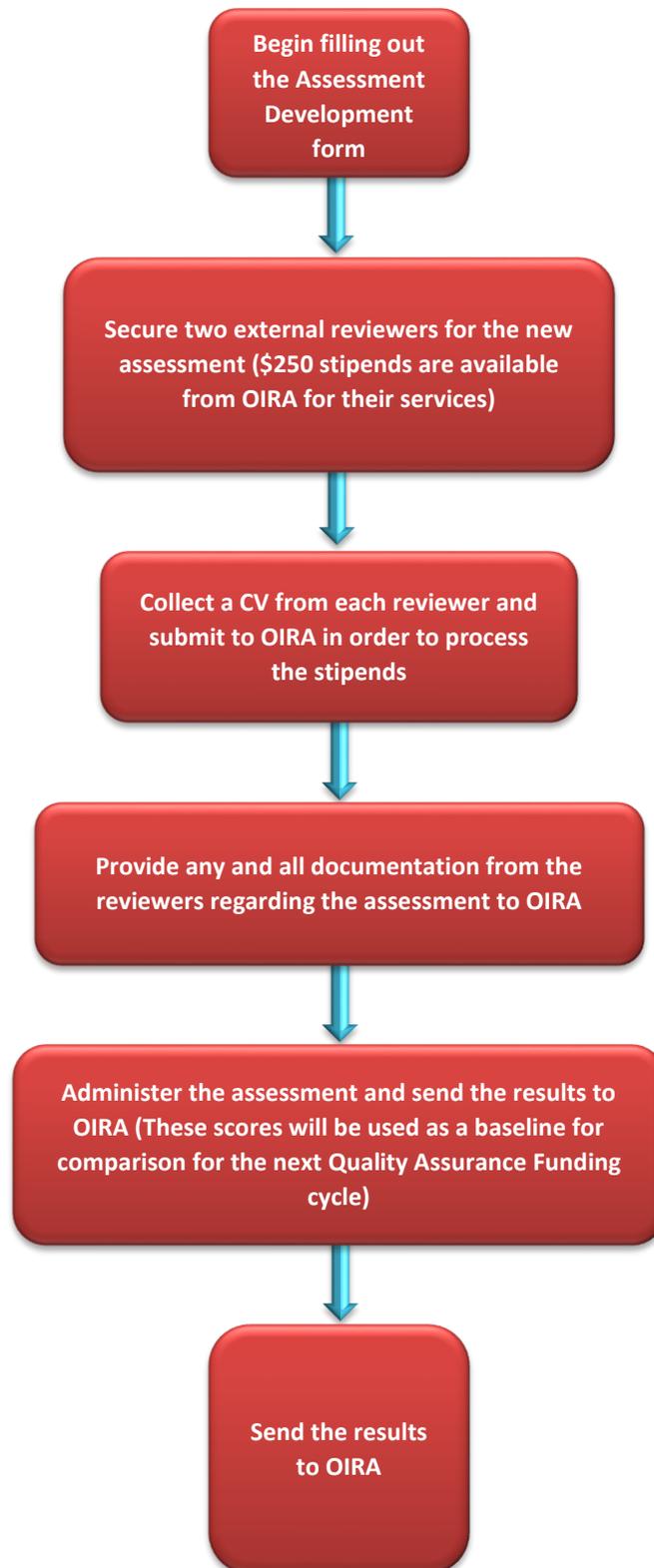
B. Purchase of standardized assessments

Appendices

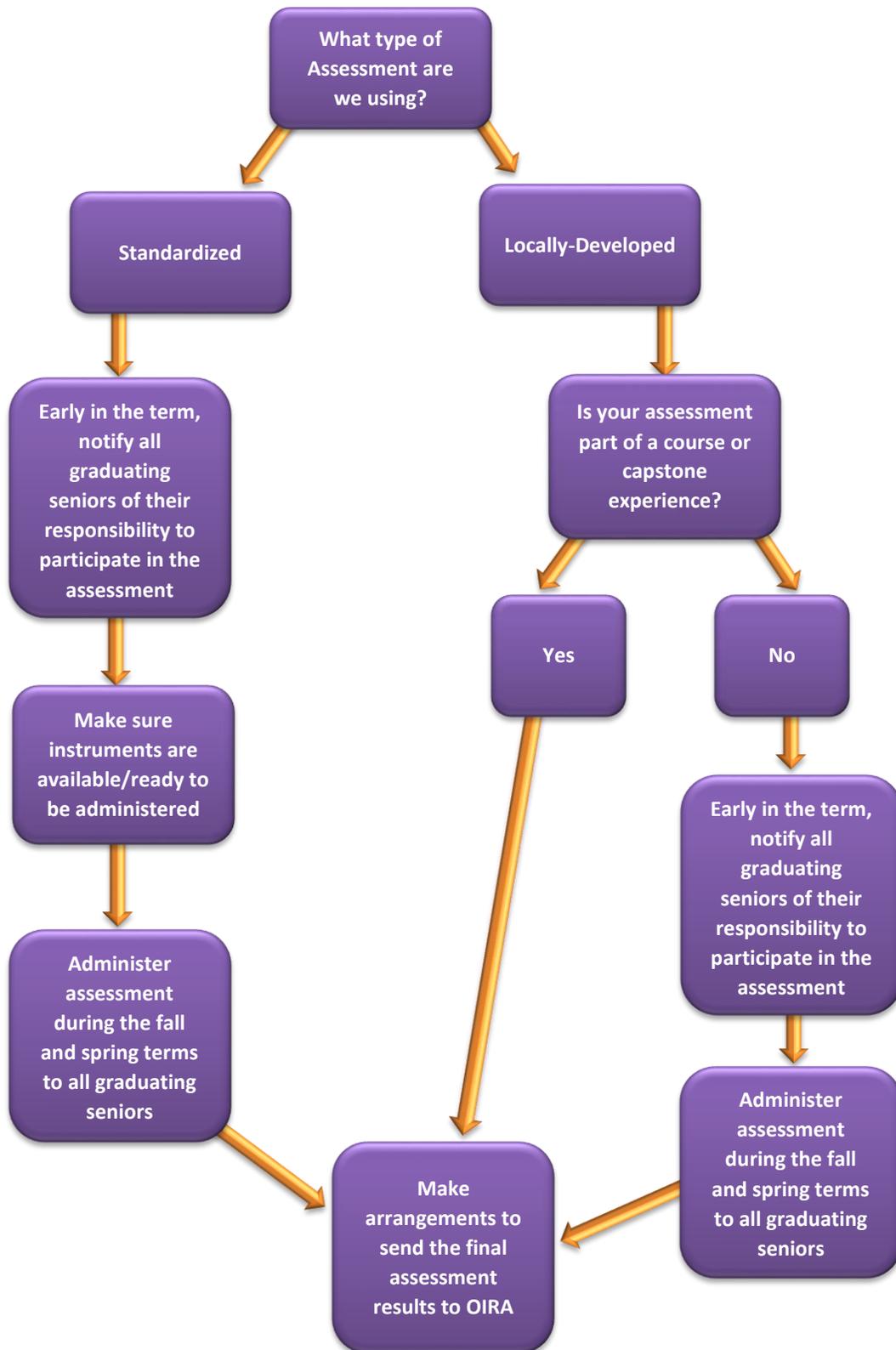
Appendix A: Workflow For The Planning Year of Major Field Assessment



Appendix B: Steps for New Assessment Development



Appendix C: Workflow for the Assessment Year of Major Field Assessment



APPENDIX D: PLANNING FORM for MAJOR FIELD ASSESSMENT

Complete and return to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Program Name: _____

Submission Year: _____

Responsible Parties (i.e., Department Head, Faculty Contact(s), etc.)

| Name | Status (e.g., department head, main contact, cc only, etc.) |
|------|---|
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| | |

1. What type of assessment instrument will be used?

- We will be using a previously-used, locally-developed assessment instrument with up to 20% revisions (Continue to #2)
- We will be using a previously-approved capstone experience or course grade with up to 20% revisions (Continue to #2)
- We will be using a nationally-normed or licensure assessment (Is this the first time to use it? Yes No)

Instrument name: _____ (Continue to #2)

- We will be creating or using a brand new assessment instrument OR will be revising a previously-used assessment instrument by more than 20% (Please do not complete any more of this form and return it now. You will be contacted by OIRA staff to begin the planning process for your new or revised assessment instrument.)

2. What Student Learning Outcomes will this assessment instrument address?

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3. How will the students be notified of their responsibility to participate? (If the assessment instrument is part of the curriculum please indicate this.)

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4. When/how will the assessment instrument be administered/delivered?

| Timeline | Action |
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5. How will the overall results be used?

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(Please add additional sheets as necessary)

APPENDIX E: ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT FORM for MAJOR FIELD ASSESSMENT

2010-15 Quality Assurance Funding Cycle

Institution: THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Academic Program: _____

Check one box to note 2 year process (planning year and testing year)

- Planning Year 2010-11 and Submission Year 2011-12
- Planning Year 2011-12 and Submission Year 2012-13
- Planning Year 2012-13 and Submission Year 2013-14
- Planning Year 2013-14 and Submission Year 2014-15
- Planning Year 2014-15 and Submission Year 2015-16

Responsible Parties (i.e., Department Head, Faculty Contact(s), etc.)

| Name | Status (e.g., department head, main contact, cc only, etc.) |
|------|---|
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What type of assessment is going to suit our needs?

- Multiple choice exam (scoring example: percentage of correct responses)
- Essay/short answer (scoring example: define a rubric and secure evaluators)
- Capstone experience (scoring example: final course/project percentage)
- Other (explain test type and scoring):

What Student Learning Outcomes will this assessment address?

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What steps need to be taken to construct this assessment? *(skip if using a nationally-normed/licensure assessment)*

| Timeline | Action |
|----------|--------|
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Who will review this assessment? *(skip if using a nationally-normed/licensure assessment)*

| Name | Credentials |
|------|-------------|
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What is the plan for piloting this assessment? *(proposed test dates, how to use results, who will be tested, etc.)*

| Timeline | Action |
|----------|--------|
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(Please add additional sheets as necessary)