

DATE: May 15, 2020

SUBJECT: Quality Assurance Funding: 2020-25 Cycle Standards

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

QUALITY ASSURANCE FUNDING OVERVIEW

Tennessee was the first state to utilize quality metrics in state funding; for over 40 years, Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) has provided incentives for all public colleges and universities to measure student learning and institutional effectiveness as part of the continuous improvement process. Institutions may earn an additional 5.45 percent over operating budgets based on performance on metrics particular to their sector and aligned to the Tennessee Higher Education Master Plan.

STANDARDS REVIEW PROCESS

Quality Assurance Funding standards are evaluated every five years to ensure alignment with the public agenda and state high education priorities. The QAF Advisory Committee is comprised of governing board and institutional leadership collaborating with THEC staff to revise the standards that are then approved by the Commission. As a result, each five-year cycle has defining features in addition to the common quality standards. For example, the 2005-10 cycle emphasized solidifying articulation and transfer agreements. In the 2010-15 cycle, traditional productivity measures of retention and persistence to graduation were ceded to the Outcomes Based Funding Formula allowing QAF to focus solely on quality standards. In alignment with the Drive to 55, the 2015-20 QAF cycle allowed institutions to focus on meeting the needs of adult students to increase student success.

2020-25 QUALITY ASSURANCE FUNDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Mark Byrnes
Provost
Middle Tennessee State University

Dr. Linda Martin
Vice President Academic Affairs & Student Success
University of Tennessee

Dr. Philip Cavalier
Provost
University of Tennessee Martin

Dr. David Rudd
President
University of Memphis

Dr. Lana Hamilton
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Tennessee Board of Regents

Dr. Donna Seagle
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Walters State Community College

Dr. Sharon Huo
Associate Provost
Tennessee Technological University

Dr. Chris Whaley
President
Roane State Community College

Dr. David Manderscheid
Provost
University of Tennessee Knoxville

2020-25 HIGHER EDUCATION MASTER PLAN

The state's Higher Education Master Plan provides a strategic vision for the state, highlights promising practices, and serves as the foundation for QAF. In January 2020, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission approved the 2020-25 Tennessee Higher Education Master Plan update that continues the dedication to high quality credentials that prepare graduates for sustainable careers. In addition, the Master Plan update emphasizes the importance of critically examining outcomes to ensure that all students have the tools necessary for success including low-income students and students of color who remain underrepresented in public higher education in Tennessee.

2020-25 QAF CYCLE SHIFTS IN POINTS AMONG STANDARDS

QAF Cycle Revisions Standard	Community College		University	
	2015-20	2020-25	2015-20	2020-25
1. General Education	15	10	15	10
2. Major Field Assessment	15	15	15	15
3. Academic Programs	15	25	25	35
o Specialty Accreditation	5	15	5	15
o Program Evaluation	10	10	20	20
4. Institutional Satisfaction	10	10	10	10
5. Student Equity	-	10	-	10
<i>Adult Learner Success</i>	10	-	10	-
6. Job Placement	10	10	NA	NA
7. Student Access & Success	25	20	25	20
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

MAJOR THEMES OF 2020-25 QAF STANDARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase Points Associated with Accreditation:** The Advisory Committee recommends the points associated with the accreditation portion of the Academic Programs standard be increased from 5 to 15 points to reflect the rigor and institutional resources required to maintain specialty program accreditations. Five points shifted from the General Education and Student Access and Success standard to account for the additional 10 points.
- Focus on Student Equity:** The Advisory Committee recommends 10 points be directed at increasing equity in higher education outcomes through a Student Equity standard. Institutions will select a historically underserved population significant to their mission and work to increase outcomes for that population on qualitative and quantitative metrics. In the Student Access and Success standard, the Advisory Committee recommends one of the four populations selected include either low-income, African American, or Hispanic graduates to address those populations with the largest gaps in postsecondary attainment and success.
- Further Emphasis on Quality:** The mission of QAF is to increase the quality of instruction and services provided to students. Therefore, the Advisory Committee recommends metrics related to focus populations in the Student Equity and Student Access and Success standards be calculated based on graduates percent per 100 FTE growth rather than headcount whenever possible. The shift in methodology seeks to decouple QAF from the number of graduates and focus on how well an institution serves enrolled students.

- **Workforce Alignment:** The Advisory Committee recommends establishing a High-Need Programs focus population aligned to the state's higher education Master Plan to include STEM and Health Professions.

RECOMMENDATION

THEC staff recommends approval of the 2020-25 Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) standards by the Commission and will continue to work with the QAF Advisory Committee to prepare a guidebook to govern practices through the 2020-25 cycle.