



RESEARCH BRIEF

OIR

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Mandatory Placement Testing – Student Survey Results: Fall 2014

This Research Brief presents an overview of the results of the student survey on mandatory placement testing. As part of NOVA’s efforts to increase student success outcomes, NOVA enacted six policy changes in Fall 2014, one of which requires that all first-time in college (FTIC) students complete two placement tests: one for English and one for mathematics.¹ Students are to complete the placement exams before they can register for classes. A survey was conducted to collect feedback on the new policy.

NOVA emailed the survey to 1,078 FTIC students and 93 responded, resulting in a 9 percent response rate. However, the number of respondents varies by question as not all participants answered every question in the survey. For several items, respondents were given the opportunity to provide multiple responses. The total number of responses is divided by the number of respondents to calculate the percentage of respondents. Therefore, percentages do not always add up to 100 percent.

Table 1 presents results from the questions, “Are you aware that placement testing is required for FTIC students before they can register for courses?” and “Do you agree that FTIC students should be required to take math and English placement tests before registering for classes?” The majority of respondents (89 respondents, 97 percent) responded that they were aware that placement testing is required before students can register for classes, while 81 percent of respondents (71 respondents) indicated that they agreed with the mandatory placement testing policy.

Table 1. Awareness of and Agreement with Mandatory Placement Test Policy

Responses	Aware of Mandatory Placement Test Policy?		Agree with Mandatory Placement Test Policy?	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	89	96.7	71	80.7
No	3	3.3	17	19.3
Total Respondents	92	100.0	88	100.0

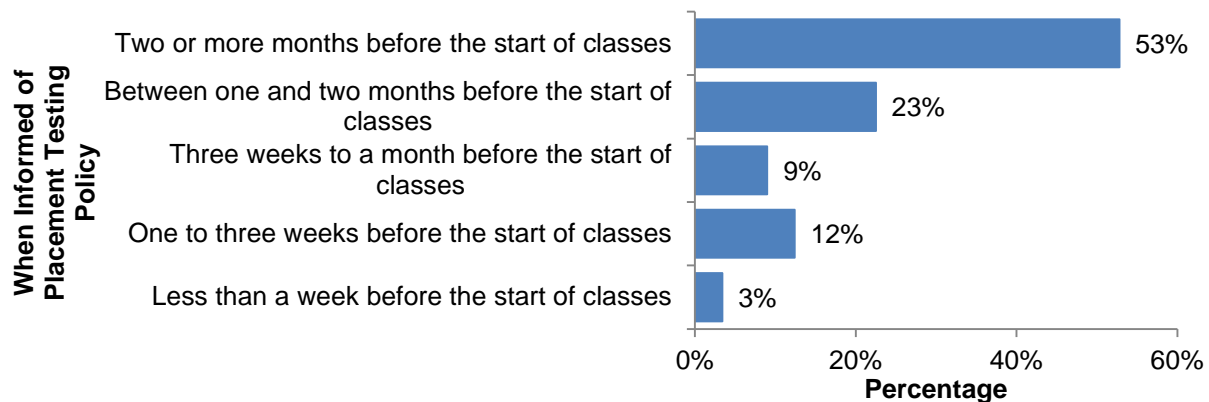
¹ All first-time to college students, namely recent high school graduates or GED recipients, between the ages of 17 and 24 who have never previously attended college (not counting dual enrollment during high school).

If students had been aware of the policy change, they were asked to indicate when they had been informed of the policy change regarding mandatory placement testing (Table 2 and Figure 1). Over half of the respondents who were aware of the policy indicated that they were informed two or more months before the start of classes (47 respondents, 53 percent). Twenty-three percent (20 respondents) were informed between one and two months before the start of classes.

Table 2. When Were You Informed of This Policy?

When Informed of Placement Testing Policy	Responses	
	#	%
Two or more months before the start of classes	47	52.8
Between one and two months before the start of classes	20	22.5
Three weeks to a month before the start of classes	8	9.0
One to three weeks before the start of classes	11	12.4
Less than a week before the start of classes	3	3.4
Total	89	100.0

Figure 1. When Were You Informed of This Policy?



Those respondents who were aware of the policy were also asked how they learned about the policy (Table 3 and Figure 2, next page). Almost half of the first-time in college students who responded learned about the placement testing policy from the NOVA website (40 respondents, 45 percent). Thirty-eight percent (34 respondents) learned about it during Student Orientation, and 27 percent (24 respondents) from email.

Table 3. How Did You Learn About This Policy? Select All That Apply.

Method of Notification	Responses	
	#	%
NOVA website	40	44.9
Student Orientation	34	38.2
Email	24	27.0
Advisor	19	21.3
Friend	18	20.2
NOVA high school outreach representative	14	15.7
NOVA faculty/staff (other than advisor)	12	13.5
Posters/flyers	11	12.4
Other*	2	2.2
Total Respondents	89	

Note: As respondents could choose more than one option, totals will not equal 100 percent.

Figure 2. How Did You Learn About This Policy? (Select All That Apply)

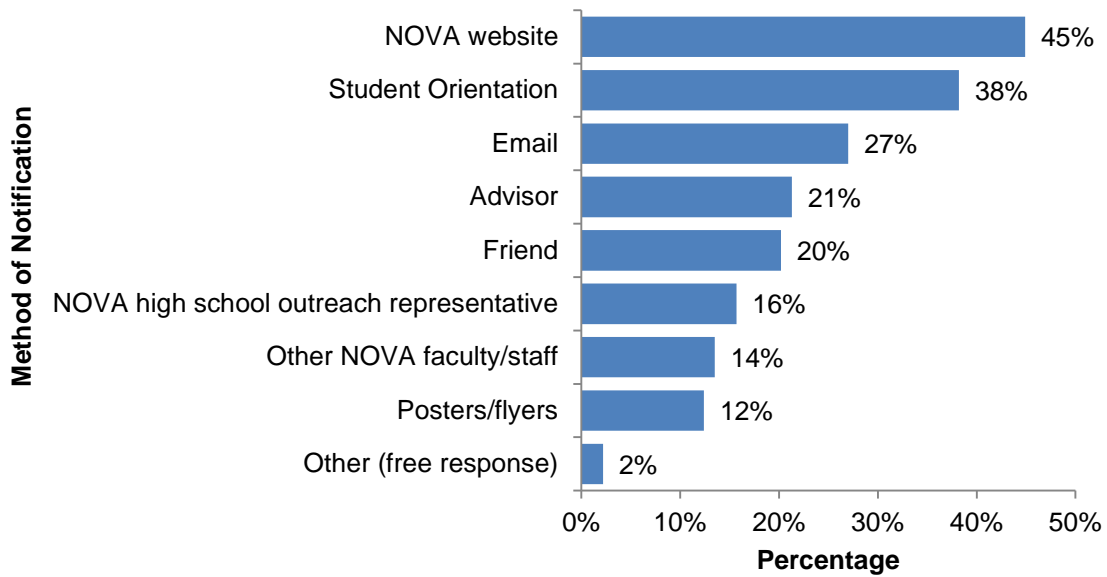


Table 4 and Figure 3 (next page) show the length of time it took respondents to complete the English and math placement tests. Of those respondents who took the English placement test, students most often completed the test in 61 to 90 minutes (31 respondents, 41 percent), followed by 23 percent (17 respondents) who completed the test in 31 to 60 minutes, and 20 percent (15 respondents) who completed the test in 91 to 120 minutes. Of those respondents who took the math placement test, respondents most often completed the test in 61 to 90 minutes (25 respondents, 31 percent), followed by 28 percent (22 respondents) who completed the test in 31 to 60 minutes, and 26 percent (21 respondents) who completed the test in 91 to 120 minutes.

Table 4. Time to Complete English and Math Placement Tests

Time to Complete Test	English Placement Test Responses		Math Placement Test Responses	
	#	%	#	%
30 minutes or less	3	4.0	3	3.8
31-60 minutes	17	22.7	22	27.5
61-90 minutes	31	41.3	25	31.3
91-120 minutes	15	20.0	21	26.3
More than two hours	9	12.2	9	11.3
Total Respondents	75	100.0	80	100.0

Figure 3. Time to Complete English and Math Placement Tests

