

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee
c/o
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Nov. 25, 2009

To: Vancouver Senate
From: Admissions Committee
Re: Report on Review of UBC Undergraduate Admission Policies (approval)

Motion 1: *That the report of the Admissions Committee on “Review of UBC Undergraduate Admission Policies” be received.*

Motion 2: *That the **criteria for including secondary school courses in an admission average** recommended herein be approved.*

Motion 3: *That Senate delegate to the Admissions Committee the authority to grant final approval of courses to be used in the calculation of an admission average and published in the Calendar, with the proviso that all courses so approved meet the criteria specified by Senate.*

NB: Motion 3 requires a vote of two-thirds (2/3) majority to be carried.

At the May 2008 meeting of the Vancouver Senate, the Admissions Committee was directed to undertake a review of UBC’s undergraduate admission policies with a view to determining their effectiveness in meeting goals of TREK 2010 and the UBC Academic Plan and report back to the Senate with recommendations for any necessary changes. The report presented herein is intended to fulfill the reporting responsibility assigned to the Committee.

Prior to undertaking a detailed review of undergraduate admission policies, the Committee first identified relevant policies for examination in light of Senate approved Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC (appendix 1). The policies were then prioritized and assigned to several working groups that were constituted to meet the Committee’s mandate with representation from the Committee, Enrolment Services, the International Student Initiative, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (PAIR), in consultation with representatives of UBC Okanagan where appropriate. The working groups were directed to undertake a detailed analysis of assigned policies and make any necessary recommendations for change. Five broad issues were identified by the Committee and assigned for review by working groups as follows:

1. Working Group 1 – Review of the English Language Admission Standard
2. Working Group 2 – Level and Subject Matter of Secondary School Courses Used for Admission to UBC Vancouver
3. Working Group 3 – Implications of Optional Provincial Examinations and Comparative Standards
4. Working Group 4 – Review of Broad Based Admission Practices
5. Working Group 5 – Assessment and Monitoring of Changes in Admission Policies

1. Working Group 1 – Review of the English Language Admission Standard (ELAS)

Membership:

- Dr. Janet Giltrow, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, UBC-V (Chair)
- Mr. Andrew Arida, Associate Director, Enrolment, Enrolment Services
- Dr. David Fielding, Senator, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC-V
- Dr. Paul Harrison, Joint Faculties Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Dr. Linda Hatt, Associate Dean, Barber School of Arts and Sciences, UBC-O
- Ms. Katriona Macdonald, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration, UBC-V
- Ms. Karen McKellin, Director, International Student Initiative
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Senior Policy Analyst, Enrolment Services

As a starting point, the working group conducted a data-driven analysis of the relationship between first-year student performance at UBC and the various methods by which the ELAS requirement was satisfied. The analysis suggested that some methods of meeting the ELAS requirement are better predictors of a student's academic preparation for university study than others.

The working group first examined the University's TOEFL criteria for satisfying the ELAS and observed that minimum component requirements were often not satisfied in a single sitting of the examination; applicants were permitted to submit multiple test results to cumulatively satisfy minimum component requirements through mixing and matching of component scores. Further analysis indicated that an incremental increase of the overall TOEFL criteria will more accurately identify students able to succeed in UBC's academically rigorous English language environment. The resulting recommendations that: (1) applicants must satisfy minimum component requirements of English Language Proficiency Tests in a single sitting and; (2) the minimum internet-based TOEFL standard for each of the four components (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) be raised by one point thereby increasing the required minimum composite TOEFL score from 86 to 90, were approved by the Vancouver Senate in February 2009 and March 2009 respectively.

Second, analysis of students admitted in 2007 revealed that those who satisfied ELAS on the basis of years of study in English may still be deficient in English language proficiency. Specifically, students can be admitted with English grades as low as 50%. The working group found that performance in secondary school English correlates well to a student's first year sessional average at UBC; students who present a final grade of less than 70% in English 11 or 12 for admission are less likely to succeed than those admitted with secondary school English grades of 70% or above. For example, 30% of first-year UBC students admitted with final English grades between 50-70% do not achieve an acceptable sessional average (i.e., standing of failed or academic probation). The group's recommendation, that applicants following an English language secondary school curriculum be required to present a minimum a final grade of 70% in English 11 or English 12 (including provincial examinations where applicable), was approved by the Vancouver Senate in November 2009.

Following its review of ELAS, the working group was discharged. The Committee will continue to examine issues related to minimum English requirements, specifically the SAT Reasoning Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) as possible alternative measures to satisfy the University's minimum English requirements. This consideration will likely occur within a broader review of admission of students following the American secondary school curriculum. In consultation with Enrolment Services, the Committee will continue to monitor changes in ELAS requirements, specifically the method by which students satisfy ELAS and their corresponding performance at UBC.

2. Working Group 2 – Level and Subject Matter of Secondary School Courses for Admission to UBC-Vancouver

Membership:

- Dr. Peter Marshall, Senator, Faculty of Forestry, UBC-V (Chair)
- Ms. Christine Chen, Student, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Ms. Cheryl Dumaresq, Director, Arts Academic Advising Services, UBC-V
- Dr. David Fielding, Senator, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC-V
- Dr. Janet Giltrow, Associate Dean (Students), Faculty of Arts, UBC-V
- Dr. Paul Harrison, Joint Faculties Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Dr. John LeBlanc, Associate Professor, Faculty of Creative & Critical Studies, UBC-O
- Ms. Sonia Purewal, Student Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Ms. Deborah Robinson, Executive Coordinator, Enrolment Management Strategy
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Senior Policy Analyst, Enrolment Services

Working Group 2 was tasked with reviewing the level and subject matter of secondary school courses used for admission to UBC Vancouver. The Group has examined the myriad ways in which an “admission average” is calculated for secondary school applicants and found significant variation in the number and types of courses that may be considered in the calculation of an admission average for applicant from one secondary school jurisdiction to another. For applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum, only “approved examinable” subjects are considered for admission, limiting the number of eligible courses to 18 for admission to programs at UBC Vancouver while applicants from other educational jurisdictions have much more variation in the number of courses eligible for inclusion in an admission average, as outlined in the table below.

<i>Jurisdiction / Curriculum</i>	<i>Total number of approved courses</i>	<i># of approved social science, business & humanity courses</i>	<i># of fine arts courses included in list</i>
<i>British Columbia</i>	<i>18 (Vancouver) 21 (Okanagan)</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Alberta</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Saskatchewan</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Manitoba</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Ontario</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Nova Scotia</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>International Baccalaureate</i>	<i>25+</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>US¹</i>	<i>30+</i>	<i>9+</i>	<i>0-3</i>
<i>Rest of World¹</i>	<i>28+</i>	<i>7+</i>	<i>0-3</i>

1. Curricula in these jurisdictions are not standardized so the number of approved courses varies; however, the normal minimum number of eligible courses is listed for comparison purposes

To account for this variation, the working group has developed a set of criteria to evaluate secondary school courses to determine their admissibility in the calculation of an admission average. The use of a common set of course selection criteria will result in more equitable admission decisions for applicants from all educational jurisdictions. The Committee has reviewed and recommends to Senate for approval the following criteria for inclusion of a secondary school course in the calculation of an admission average:

Secondary school courses included in an admission average must meet all of the following criteria:

- 1. Offered by a recognized institution. Recognized institutions, for the purpose of UBC admission, include those that are approved by:**
 - a. the Ministry of Education (or equivalent) in the relevant educational jurisdiction. Ministry-approved schools may offer both ministry developed courses and locally developed courses. Locally developed courses that are approved to satisfy graduation requirements may be included in admission averages if they meet the other criteria below or;**
 - b. a UBC-recognized accrediting body or;**
 - c. the Senate Admissions Committee or;**
 - d. a Senate-approved designate (e.g., Deans in cases of admission from non-accredited institutions on 'Deans Discretion').**
- 2. Delivered at the Grade 12 level (or equivalent) or approved for substitution into an admission average by the Senate Admissions Committee;**
- 3. Subject matter is one of the following:**
 - a. Academic in delivery;¹**
 - b. Supportive of broad academic goals and objectives of the University (e.g., the selection of Aboriginal students);**
 - c. Relevant to the selection of qualified students by a particular program or faculty. Inclusion of such courses in an admission average is subject to the approval of the Senate Admissions Committee on course-by-course basis.**
- 4. Grades based on prior learning assessment and/or challenge exams are to be *excluded* from admission averages but may be used to satisfy program pre-requisites. For example, language course grades based on a challenge exam will not be included in admission averages; however, the same language courses may be used to satisfy the language requirements for a degree program at the University.**

Any recommended changes to courses used in the calculation of an admission average and published in the Calendar will require the approval of the Committee. In addition to the above criteria, the Committee will also consider the impact of inclusion or removal of any course on both the school system and on the students therein. As with any significant change to admission criteria, adequate notice of the implementation of approved changes will be given to both students and the educational system, allowing sufficient time to prepare for and adapt to the impact of these changes.

These criteria will also provide the foundation for a review of current secondary school courses used in the calculation of an admission average. Upon approval of the proposed criteria, the

¹ Academic courses are typically those that involve critical or analytical thinking on the part of the student. Examples include mathematics, sciences, and most arts courses (e.g. history, psychology, or economics). Academic courses include some depth and prepare the scholar for further scholarly activities in the same or a related field. Academic courses that may be included in admission averages will often be associated with a particular discipline of study offered by UBC. Non-academic courses are typically those that are based in activities, vocations or applied skills. Non-academic courses also include those that are based in religious or social/political indoctrination (most often seen at religious schools or schools delivering a curriculum that is mandated by a non-democratic state), or activity courses such as physical education, military training, etc. Non-academic courses may sometimes be described as "terminal courses", those that do not prepare students for further scholarly activities in a related subject. Finally, non-academic courses may convey a lot of information but lack depth or the requirement for critical or analytical thinking.

Undergraduate Admissions Office, in consultation with faculties, will be tasked with applying this criteria to BC Grade 12 courses that are currently excluded from the list of approved courses on the basis that they are not examinable but which may meet the course inclusion criteria, new courses, existing courses that are changing or existing courses for which inclusion under the criteria is questionable. Following review, a recommendation to designate a course for use in the calculation of an admission average will be submitted to the Committee for approval.² A similar review will also be undertaken for both Canadian secondary school curricula outside of BC/Yukon and international secondary school curricula.³

In addition to developing the criteria outlined above, the working group also considered the following issues:

- Basing admission averages on five rather than four courses for applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum;
- Raising the minimum average for admission to UBC;
- Removal of 'general' Grade 11 requirements for applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum.

The working group's review is ongoing, as detailed below. Any recommendations for change will be presented to the Committee for further discussion and approval.

Basing Admission Averages on Five Rather Than Four Courses for Applicants Following the BC/Yukon Secondary School Curriculum

As previously mentioned, there is significant jurisdictional variation in the number of courses that may be considered in the calculation of an admission average for admission to direct entry undergraduate programs at UBC Vancouver. For example, the admission average of applicants following the Ontario secondary school curriculum is based on six courses, applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum are required to present four courses and applicants from most other provinces present five courses. This variability results in inequitable evaluation outcomes, particularly where admissibility to programs is based mostly, if not wholly, on an admission average.

The working group's examination of this issue is based on two key "Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC," that of Fairness and Excellence of Fit. Basing an admission average on a common number of courses that have been derived from a common set of criteria will likely result in greater equity in the evaluation process for applicants from educational jurisdictions across the country. Expanding the number of courses used in the calculation of an admission average will also better identify applicants with exposure to a broader range of academic disciplines and who are most likely to succeed. As the list of UBC-approved courses eligible for inclusion in the calculation of an admission average are expected to increase to include more courses that are not provincially examinable, the working group will undertake extensive consultation with the BC secondary school system to ensure that all implications of the

² In 2009/10, the following courses are proposed for review to determine if they meet the proposed criteria and should be included in the calculation of an admission average for applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum: Calculus 12, Communications 12 (currently approved for admission to UBC Okanagan), Comparative Civilizations 12, Economics 12, Foundations of Mathematics 12 (replacing Applications of Mathematics 12), Information and Communications Technology 12, Law 12, Social Justice 12, Sustainable Resources 12, Fine Arts courses, Music courses, Language courses.

³ For applicants following an international secondary school curriculum, the Undergraduate Admissions Office does not maintain a list of courses eligible for inclusion in an admission average; individual courses are assessed at the time that a transcript is evaluated for admission. Upon approval of the proposed criteria, courses presented by international applicants will be reviewed on case-by-case basis, in light of both the criteria and best practices in the field of international credential evaluation.

forthcoming changes are fully considered. The working group's recommendations, once finalized, will be reported to the Committee for further review.

Raising the Minimum Average for Admission to UBC

The working group has reviewed the current minimum secondary school admission average of 67% to determine if it best supports the University's goal to attract and retain the best undergraduate students. An analysis of students admitted to UBC Vancouver between 2005 and 2008 with a final admission average below 70% indicates that overall, 46% of these students had either failed standing or were placed on academic probation after their first year of study. In some programs, all students admitted with a final admission average below 70% had a standing of failed/academic probation after one year of study. The total retention rate for this group after three years of study was also found to be significantly lower, with only 50% proceeding to Year 4 of the program.

The working group recognizes that there may be legitimate reasons for considering a student whose admission average is below the University minimum and such applicants are reviewed by the Committee via its appeal mechanism. Students admitted below 70% who succeed at the University are often enrolled in programs for which the current admission criteria does not include consideration of secondary school courses that may more accurately assess preparation to succeed in a particular program or discipline (i.e., performance in secondary school Music courses is not considered for admission to the Bachelor of Music program). Expanding the number and types of courses for consideration in admission decisions would offset a higher University minimum admission average while also ensuring that students are best prepared to succeed academically in their chosen field of study.

The current practice of allowing students to retain an offer of admission if they do not drop below the University minimum on final grades will be impacted by any change to the University minimum. More students will have their offers revoked as a result of a higher minimum. These numbers will be relatively small, but the impact on the selection of students who are prepared to succeed will be significant. Prior to making any recommendations for change, the working group will consult with faculties at UBC Vancouver, as well as other stakeholder groups; consultation with faculties will include a detailed analysis of the impact of an increased University minimum admission average on each program, on Aboriginal applicants and athletes.

The working group's review of the University minimum average for admission is ongoing and its findings and recommendations on any necessary changes will be reported to the Committee for further consideration.

Removal of 'General' Grade 11 Requirements for Applicants Following the BC/Yukon Secondary School Curriculum

For admission to programs offered at UBC Vancouver, only applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum are required to complete Grade 11 courses to satisfy general undergraduate admission requirements; applicants must complete the following five courses at the Grade 11 level: English 11, Principle of Mathematics 11, Social Studies 11 (or Civic Studies 11 or First Nations 12), at least one approved Science 11 and one approved Language 11. While English 11 and Social Studies 11 (or approved substitute) are also required for secondary school graduation, the remaining three courses are not required for admission to the University for applicants from any other educational jurisdiction.

Some undergraduate programs at UBC Vancouver have no program specific requirements for admission from outside of the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum and rely solely on the University's general admission criteria (English 12 plus three other approved Grade 12 courses). Other programs rely on a combination of the English 12 requirement and program specific requirements. With the exception of Science 11 requirements for a limited number of programs, all program specific requirements are at the Grade 12 level.⁴

The working group's review of general Grade 11 admission requirements for applicants following the BC/Yukon secondary school curriculum is ongoing and its findings and recommendations on any necessary changes will be reported to the Committee for further consideration.

3. Working Group 3 – Implications of Optional Provincial Examinations and Comparative Standards

Membership:

- Dr. Richard Anstee, Joint Faculties Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V (Chair)
- Mr. Andrew Arida, Associate Director, Enrolment, Enrolment Services
- Dr. James Brander, Senator, Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration, UBC-V
- Ms. Tarina Fernando, Student, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Dr. David Fielding, Senator, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC-V
- Mr. William McNulty, Convocation Senator, UBC-V
- Ms. Sonia Purewal, Student Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Senior Policy Analyst, Enrolment Services

Working Group 3 was tasked with reviewing the implications of optional provincial examinations and comparative standards. The main issues considered by the working group are student performance and admission in the absence of standardized tests such as provincial examinations, BC secondary school grading practices and undergraduate admission to UBC and the evaluation and adjustment of secondary school grades from different educational jurisdictions for use in the admissions process.

Implications of Optional Provincial Examinations

With the exception of English 12, Grade 12 Provincial examinations are now optional for BC secondary school students and are not required for admission to UBC. Under this policy, an applicant's most advantageous grade – school final grade, school interim grade or 'blended' grade – is used to make admissions decisions. As a starting hypothesis to guide the working group's examination, it was predicted that school to school admission averages will differ more than in the past as fewer students will write provincial exams in most subjects and the normalizing effect of provincial exams will therefore be reduced. To test this hypothesis and determine the degree to which grades may differ in the absence of provincial examinations, the working group prepared a set of benchmark data against which the admission averages of students admitted under the policy and their performance at UBC was compared.

⁴ The following programs have some Grade 11 requirements of all secondary school applicants: B.Sc. Agroecology (2 of Biology 11, Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), B. Sc. Food, Nutrition and Health (2 of Biology 11, Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), B.Sc. Forest Operations (2 of Biology 11, Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), B.Sc. Forest Resources Management (2 of Biology 11, Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), B.Sc. Forest Sciences (2 of Biology 11, Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), Bachelor of Midwifery (Chemistry 11), B.Sc. Natural Resources Conservation (Biology 11), B.Sc. (Chemistry 11 and Physics 11), B.Sc. Wood Products Processing (Chemistry 11 and Physics 11).

Analysis of the benchmark data revealed that provincial examinations have tended to lower admission averages slightly. For the last few years, most offers of admission have been based on interim grades presented in March and April, before provincial examinations have been written by many applicants. As a result, the impact of making provincial examinations optional may be less of an admission issue than a grading standards issue for which the University may wish to make adjustments.

The benchmark data analysis also revealed that, even in the presence of provincial examinations, there is a significant and persistent difference between some schools with respect to the degree to which grades presented for admission predict performance at UBC. This issue is addressed in greater detail in the following section of the report.

It remains to be seen whether grading standards will change in BC secondary schools in the absence of mandatory provincial examinations and whether variations across secondary schools will become more pronounced. Further analysis, comparing future UBC student performance with the benchmark data will begin in 2010, after the first class of students admitted under optional examinations have completed their first year of study at UBC.

BC Secondary School Grading Practices and Undergraduate Admission to UBC Vancouver

While examining the impact of optional provincial examinations on admission to the University, the working group noted that historically, there has been significant variation between BC secondary schools in the degree to which grades presented for admission predict performance at UBC. The impact of this variation has increased with the discontinuation of provincial examinations as admission requirements.

While BC secondary school grades are generally reliable predictors of first-year performance, analysis of UBC admissions data indicates that there are statistically significant differences across high schools in how course grades translate into performance at UBC. A review of 14,120 BC secondary school students admitted to UBC Vancouver between 2003 and 2007 found a mean admission average of 88.2% while the mean first-year sessional average at UBC was 70.3%. There are, however, large differences across a significant proportion of secondary schools relative to overall norms, with quite a few schools differing from each other by 10 percentage points or more. For example, a student from School A might be predicted to obtain a first-year sessional average 10 percentage points higher than a student from School B with the same admission average and entering the same UBC program.

Large school-to-school differences have also been documented at UBC over a number of years, particularly in the subject areas of Mathematics and Physics, a pattern consistent with the data examined by the working group. This subject specific data had been provided to secondary schools and while it may have had a positive effect on schools, there was no resulting change in grading practices.

BC secondary school grades are valuable predictors of performance at UBC. Historical data indicates that BC secondary school grades show a large correlation with first-year performance at UBC. Data from 2003 to 2005 shows that variation in BC Grade 12 course grades explain 27.8% of the variability in direct-entry BC students' first-year sessional averages at UBC Vancouver. To put this information into context, a 2001 study from the University of California found that a combination of students' high school grade-point averages, scores on the SAT I and scores on the SAT II combined explained only 22.3% of the variance in first-year university performance.

Prior to presenting its findings and recommendations to the Committee, the working group consulted with prospective stakeholders in the BC secondary school system and groups within the University community including:

- Associate Deans
- Strategic Enrolment Management Steering Committee
- Enrolment Management Committee
- Undergraduate Admissions
- Student Recruitment and Advising
- UBC Vancouver Senate (preliminary report in April 2009)
- BC High School Counselor Advisory Committee
- Planning and Institutional Research
- Student Financial Assistance and Awards
- Dr. William McKee, Faculty of Education

The intent of the consultation process was threefold: to get a general sense of how various stakeholders respond to the working group's findings and data analysis, to determine how well stakeholders understand the data and to determine whether additional factors may be at play. In both the consultation phase and the Committee's review of the working group's findings and recommendations, there has been considerable discussion around sharing this data with secondary schools in some manner. Those discussions are ongoing at this time.

Following consultation, the working group considered three options with respect to using this data to impact undergraduate admission decisions: 1) not to use this data in undergraduate admission decisions; 2) adjust admission averages numerically, based on this data; or 3) incorporate grading practices data into broad-based admission (BBA) decisions. These options were discussed at length within the working group, with the Committee and with stakeholders. The first two options were dismissed from consideration; the first option does not align with the "Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC" and the second option is both difficult and costly to implement.

The working group has recommended to the Committee that grading practices data be shared with faculties for inclusion in broad-based admission decisions, specifically data on those BC secondary schools whose grades understate their students' potential to perform well at UBC. As admission averages are mainly based on secondary school grades and the relative importance of admission averages in admission decisions, the working group is of the opinion that its findings on variability in secondary school grading practices should be taken into account and only be used to positively impact admission decisions. In addition to an admission average, broad based admission practices incorporate non-academic criteria; individual faculties may wish to use this information within the context of BBA decisions to include the grading practices data as an additional factor. Given the broad range and number of criteria typically used in broad based admission practices, the effect of incorporating grading practices data will likely be lessened once balanced by all factors taken into consideration in BBA decisions.

For admission purposes, the working recommends that the Committee share with faculties a list of BC secondary schools showing statistically significant differences from the average for the last three years and should include only those schools whose grading practices tend to understate the academic competitiveness of their students in the UBC admission process. Limiting the list to a three-year period may mitigate some year to year variability though any significant change in school grading practices within the past year cannot be taken into immediate consideration. Such

changes will enter into the data in the subsequent year, once the impact of those changes on UBC performance has been noted.

In developing its recommendations to the Committee, the working group carefully considered the alignment of those recommendations with the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC. The applicable principles are:

1. Alignment with UBC's Goals: accounting for variation in school grading practices in admission decisions will encourage the enrolment of top quality students;
2. Evidence Based Policy Review: findings of variation in school grading practices are based on student performance at UBC;
3. Excellence of Fit: accounting for variation in school grading practices in admission decisions will better identify those applicants who are most likely to prosper at UBC;
4. Fairness: recognizing variation in school grading practices will better ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged by such practices;
5. Transparency: the Calendar will indicate which faculties consider variation in school grading practices in broad-based admission decisions.

The Committee has reviewed the working group's findings and recommendations on the issue of BC secondary school grading practices and undergraduate admission to UBC. Consultation, both within and outside of the University, is ongoing; the Provost and Vice-President Academic has met with the Committee to discuss this issue and will investigate whether other Canadian universities have considered similar proposals, specifically the University of Toronto, McGill University and the University of Waterloo. The Committee will further consider the working group's recommendations once the results of the consultation are available.

Interprovincial Grade Adjustment: Converting Canadian Secondary School Grades for Undergraduate Admission

Grading scales and qualitative assessment of student performance can vary significantly between educational jurisdictions. Historically there has been a lack of data upon which to base jurisdictional grade adjustments though it has been recognized that important differences exist in grading scales and practices between some provinces. The difficulty has been in quantifying these differences to ensure that the University admits students who are most likely to succeed.

The working group's initial review focused on applicants following the Alberta secondary school curriculum. As a starting point, the working group considered the differences in Alberta and BC grading practices, specifically differences in indigenous grading scales and relative performance of Albert and BC students admitted on common admission averages.

Comparison of Albert and BC secondary school grading scales shows that a letter grade of 'A' is achieved in Alberta secondary schools at 80%, whereas in BC, an 'A' is achieved at 86%. The working group's analysis of grade distribution, obtained via the BC Ministry of Education and the Government of Alberta Education websites, shows that roughly the same proportion of graduates fall within the 'A' band in both educational jurisdictions. For example, in 2003, 27.6% of Alberta students who took Math 30 (senior year mathematics) achieved an 'A' in the course (final grade between 80% and 100%); in BC, 27.1% of students in Principles of Math 12 achieved an 'A' (final grade between 86% and 100%). While approximately the same percentage of students achieve a

letter grade of 'A' in Math in Alberta as in BC, Alberta students will present lower percentage grades in the course. Such similarities are also observed among other senior year courses presented by Alberta and BC students for admission to UBC. The working group's findings indicated that by failing to consider the details of the indigenous grading scale, the University may be losing a number of strong applicants from Alberta.

The working group next considered how best to calibrate BC and Alberta secondary school grades and how secondary school grades from both jurisdictions predict first-year performance at UBC. An average of the admission average and sessional average were computed for incoming BC high school students from 2003 to 2007 to determine the average grade drop (expressed as x%). The same computation was applied to incoming Alberta students for that period to obtain an average grade drop of y%. This analysis revealed that a BC student admitted with an admission average of 86% can be projected to obtain a first year sessional average of 73.9% at UBC. An Alberta student with the same admission average (86%) can be expected to obtain a first year sessional average of 75.3%. These results show that Alberta students can be expected to do as well at UBC (in terms of first year sessional average) as BC students with an admission average 1.5% to 2.0% higher; an Alberta student with an admission average of 85% is expected to do as well at UBC as BC student with an admission average of 86.5% to 87%. For applicants with an admission average in and around the cut-off (low-mid 80%), the difference between the Alberta and BC grading schemes can play a significant role in determining admissibility. In light of its findings, the working group's recommendation to the Committee was that for entry to the 2010 Winter Session, grades presented for admission by applicants following the Alberta secondary school curriculum be adjusted upward by 2%.

The Committee then considered whether the proposal to adjust grades presented for admission by applicant following the Alberta secondary school curriculum should be expanded to include other jurisdictions. The Committee has reviewed and recommends that Senate approve the proposed policy on Secondary School Grade Adjustments for Undergraduate Admission to the University.⁵ As outlined in the policy, for the calculation of an admission average, grades reported by secondary school applicants following extra-provincial curricula may be adjusted to accurately assess those grades in terms their ability to predict future performance at UBC. Adjustments will be based on a review of academic performance at UBC of students previously admitted from extra-provincial jurisdictions. All grade adjustments approved by the Committee will be reported to Senate for information on an annual basis.

In developing its recommendations to the Committee on the issue grade adjustments for admission to the University, the working group carefully considered the alignment of those recommendations with the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC. The applicable principles are:

1. Alignment with UBC's Goals: the policy on Secondary School Grade Adjustments for Undergraduate Admission to the University will encourage the enrolment of top-quality students;
2. Evidence-Based Policy Review: the policy is based on the knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of educational systems in other jurisdictions and of student performance at UBC;

⁵ This is a joint policy of the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee. The Okanagan Senate will consider this policy for approval at its meeting of December 17, 2009.

3. Excellence of Fit: the policy will better identify those applicants who are most likely to prosper at UBC;
4. Fairness: recognizing differences in grading practices will better ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged by the structure of the educational system followed that provides the basis of admission.
5. Transparency: the following statement will appear in the Calendar: "In calculating an admission average, grades reported for secondary schools not following the *BC/Yukon Secondary School Curriculum* may be adjusted to accurately assess the grades in terms of their ability to predict future performance at the *University*."

4. Working Group 4 – Review of Broad Based Admission Practices

Membership:

- Ms. Katriona MacDonald, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration, UBC-V, (Chair)
- Dr. M. Clifford Fabian, Associate Dean, Faculty of Medicine, UBC-V
- Dr. David Fielding, Senator, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC-V
- Dr. Janet Giltrow, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, UBC-V
- Ms. Karen McKellin, Acting Director, International Student Initiative
- Ms. Sonia Purewal, Student Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Dr. Robert Sparks, Joint Faculties Senator, Faculty of Education, UBC-V
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Senior Policy Analyst, Student Recruitment, Admissions & Awards, Enrolment Services

The use of broad based admission policies at UBC Vancouver has increased significantly over the past 15 years. In 1995, only five programs⁶ evaluated applicants on criteria other than grades and standardized test scores compared to the twenty-two undergraduate and first professional degree programs that employ BBA today.

As a starting point, the working group conducted an environmental scan of all undergraduate and first professional degree programs, during which twenty-four interviews were conducted with faculties, departments, the Office of Enrolment Services, PAIR and the International Student Initiative. In addition, the working group examined admission policies outlined in the UBC Vancouver Calendar 2009/10 and faculty admissions websites, tested online admissions processes and held public consultations with students. Together, these sources provide a reasonably definitive account of the state of broad based admissions policies and practices presently in place at UBC Vancouver.

To date, the working group's review of broad based admission practices has focussed on the following four areas:

- Survey of BBA policies currently in place at UBC Vancouver;
- Transparency of BBA policies and practices;
- BBA and strategies for the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal applicants; and
- Alignment with UBC's goals as outlined in TREK 2010 and the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC.

⁶ Other than those in the Creative and Performing Arts

Survey of BBA Policies Currently In-place at UBC Vancouver

Students admitted under BBA represented 29% of the 6,471 undergraduate and first professional degree new-to-program registrants at UBC Vancouver in the 2008 Winter Session. The faculties surveyed reported that their primary objectives in using BBA include:

1. opportunity to identify candidates with suitable aptitudes for clinical or professional work;
2. ability to better assess relative calibre of undergraduate applicants educated in unfamiliar educational systems (i.e., outside Canada);
3. need to expand access to applicant pools characterized by elevated grade point averages;
4. ability to identify capacity for success in a program with a distinctive curriculum; and
5. opportunity to admit a more diversified student cohort.

Many programs also had a secondary objective of enrolment management to align offers of admission with available seats.

Of the twenty-two programs, just over half (11) have BBA policies that are mandatory for all applicants, whereas just under half (10) of surveyed programs apply BBA only in cases where an applicant falls below the GPA threshold required for admission. For the 2008 Winter Session, sixteen programs admitted at least one registrant on the basis of BBA. Only one program employs an optional BBA policy for applicants. Three programs are considering expanding the criteria under which candidates could be considered under BBA.

BBA criteria and their relative weightings vary widely amongst programs as might be expected given the range and differentiation of degree programs at UBC Vancouver. Commonly used criteria include: relevant field work, community service and volunteerism, awards/honours, engagement in extracurricular activities, reference reports from employers or others who can attest to applicant's suitability for the program, personal statements and evidence of specific attributes (i.e., leadership). A minority of programs report that their faculty admissions committees make small changes to the criteria weightings as often as every one to two years. While some of these adjustments are informed by statistical analyses, there is no formal methodology employed for assigning weightings; rather the experience and wisdom of the faculty admissions committees or single assessor is typically the basis for such decisions.

The scoring of applicant files varies considerably among faculties. A majority of programs (thirteen) use a single assessor to review and determine admissibility of all applicant files. Of all twenty-two programs, only twelve⁷ programs provide written scoring or assessment guidelines to reviewers. Reviewers are typically admissions advisors or faculty with experience in admissions. Reviewers may also be paid reviewers (or readers) from outside the faculty who receive training while some faculties employ and train graduate students from other faculties to assess candidates for admission.

Currently, seven programs employ a BBA interview component to short list candidates and two faculties require participation in a group exercise. For example, the School of Social Work's interview requires applicants to work in small groups on a case study. The group then presents its conclusions, if any, to the interviewers. Interviewers typically undergo prior training but the length and effectiveness of such training varies. Interviews and group exercises are perceived by the

⁷ This statistic does not include data for the Bachelor of Environmental Design (B. En. D.) program.

faculties to be very useful in identifying candidates who they believe will not succeed in the program or in clinical or professional practice.

Five³ of the twenty-two programs have conducted at least one evidence-based review of their broad based admission criteria and two³ programs have initial evidence-based reviews forthcoming. The remaining fifteen³ programs have not yet conducted an evidence-based review of their BBA criteria. There is no uniform standard for the type of or frequency of reviews.

Following its survey of BBA practices currently in place at UBC Vancouver, the working group has identified two issues for the Committee's review: (1) development of clear guidelines and training for faculty and staff appointed to review applicant files and; (2) development of an evidence-based mechanism for the review of BBA practices.

Transparency of BBA Policies and Practices

The working group's survey of the Calendar and faculty websites indicates that many faculties reveal BBA information selectively and sometimes with only limited detail, as outlined in the table below. It is noteworthy that a number of programs do not state the existence of their BBA policies at all while others refer prospective applicants to a faculty website for further detail. Such references, while helpful, limit the Calendar's usefulness in outlining BBA policies. This may be of concern given that the Calendar is the University's official publication with regards to admission criteria and academic policies.

While faculty websites often provide more detail than Calendar entries they do not typically provide detail on weightings assigned to evaluation criteria; most programs withhold the evaluation mechanisms used to assess an applicant. Some faculties expressed the view that this information is proprietary and confidential and would alter applicant behaviour prior to the time of admission. In addition, the information contained on faculty websites may be in flux or change for every admissions cycle. Eighteen of twenty-two programs have faculty websites which contain information that is not wholly consistent with the corresponding Calendar entry.

Disclosure of broad based admissions policies in the Calendar and on faculty websites

<i>Of twenty-two programs, how many disclose:</i>	Existence of BBA	Accurate GPA cut-off	BBA materials or criteria	Evaluation criteria	
				Weights assigned to materials or criteria	Evaluation mechanism
Calendar	19	5	16	1	16
Faculty admissions website	15	5	13	1	13

With respect to the transparency of BBA policies and practices, the working group has identified the following issues for further review and discussion: (1) the level of detail on BBA policies and practices disclosed to prospective applicants and mechanisms by which it can effectively be communicated to applicants; (2) transparency of evaluation mechanisms and criteria weighting and; (3) resolution of inconsistencies between BBA information articulated in the Calendar and on faculty websites.

Broad-based Admission and Strategies for Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Applicants

Broad based admission allows for a fuller assessment of a candidate's aptitudes and competencies and is conducive to increased Aboriginal recruitment. Until recently, Aboriginal direct entry applicants to most programs completed a separate Aboriginal supplemental application form that accompanied their applications to the University; this practice has gradually been replaced in favour of program-specific broad based admissions supplemental forms which include an Aboriginal path of entry. Four direct entry programs continue to use the separate application approach. An interview with UBC's Aboriginal Student Recruiter and Advisor, suggests that the integrated, program-specific approach is preferable for its seamless inclusion of the Aboriginal component: some Aboriginal applicant perceive the separate Aboriginal supplemental application as a barrier to admission.

The number of faculties which include an Aboriginal path of entry in their existing broad based admissions processes is indicative of the University's commitment to increase enrolment of Aboriginal students. By designing an Aboriginal path of entry which complements admission to the program in question, a faculty is better placed to identify suitable candidates who will succeed in the program.

Alignment with UBC's goals as outlined in TREK 2010 and the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC

As part of its review, the working group has also considered whether current BBA policies and practices meet the goals of TREK 2010. The increased use of BBA in faculty admission policies over the past ten years support the University's goal to ensure that qualified students with a variety of backgrounds and experiences have access to UBC.

The working group has also considered the alignment of current BBA policies and practices with the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC. The applicable principles are:

Evidence-Based Policy Review

As noted above, programs vary with regard to conducting periodic evidence-based BBA policy reviews. Given the increasing use of BBA policies in the selection of students to UBC, it is important that faculties clearly articulate the basis for and outcome desired in introducing BBA, followed by periodic review to ensure that the goals cited are indeed being met. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that the criteria used to identify an expanded profile of candidates under BBA are in fact resulting in such candidates being admitted.

Excellence of Fit

A number of programs have introduced BBA policies with the specific aim of improving student qualitative classroom and post-graduation performance beyond that which can be identified solely through a GPA only basis. While faculties may articulate outcomes and the reasons why the chosen admissions criteria are expected to result in the selection of students suited to the program, it should be beholden on faculties to ensure (using evidence-based review process) that the candidates admitted under their respective BBA policies are achieving the goals identified by the program.

Fairness

Some faculties assign the review of all files to one person. The use of a single reviewer to read all files with no review by a second reviewer ensures that the judgment applied to all applicants provides a consistent approach. It may, however, be perceived as unfair because it could result in personal bias on the part of the one reviewer influencing the admissions decisions. It is important to note that some cases of single reviewers involve faculty members and admissions advisors with substantial accumulated experience in assessing eligibility of applicants for admission.

The absence of written guidelines identifying the attributes sought by the Faculty could also give rise to the introduction of personal bias or inconsistent scoring of candidate files. In order to fairly assess non-academic criteria which, by definition, are not linked to academic performance, it is important that reviewers be blind to an applicant's academic scores when assessing non-academic performance.

Issues of fairness may arise with regard to application fees for programs which select finalists for an interview. Interviews and group exercises involve additional financial expenditure and accordingly such programs have the highest application fees on campus. Since all applicants receive a review of their written applications in the first stage, finalists participating in the interview stage are effectively subsidized by those whose files were deemed insufficiently competitive to receive an interview invitation. A two-part fee structure, with the second part paid upon acceptance of an invitation to interview, may be a more fair approach.

Fairness in addressing extenuating circumstances and socio-economic inequities is of note. Some undergraduate programs take into consideration extenuating circumstances while professional programs generally do not unless the applicant's exceptional experience helps to satisfy admissions criteria (e.g., in a letter of intent, explaining what skills and attributes the candidate acquired as a result of the exceptional experience and how these skills and attributes make the candidate suitable for the program of study and/or clinical practice). Socio-economic inequities can advantage some applicants. For example, some applicants have access to financial resources that enables a breadth of extracurricular pursuits and/or the opportunity to engage in a wide range of school, community and volunteer activities. Similarly, applicants educated at non-Canadian private high schools following Western curricula may be more easily able to fulfill undergraduate BBA criteria while those from non-Canadian high schools following indigenous curricula may be less able to do so.

Finally, a majority of faculties do not ask applicants to report socio-economic or extenuating circumstances which may have affected the student's application credentials. While some (but not all) faculties will consider such circumstances in evaluating an applicant, the onus is on the applicant to volunteer this information and identify its relevance to his/her application. The working group also heard concerns from a number of admissions administrators who feel that BBA rewards those with a propensity for self-promotion and penalizes those who, for reasons of culture or character, may be more modest in their self assessment.

Integrity

There is a natural tendency on the part of faculties to attempt to quantify subjective experiences, e.g., measuring the number of hours of volunteer work. Such quantification may miss the quality of the experience, e.g., the quality of experience of a hospital

volunteer who spent part of his or her volunteer time studying versus that of a volunteer who was thoroughly engaged.

Transparency

The principle of transparency is to ensure that applicants have a clear understanding of admission requirements. It is noteworthy that most programs do not reveal detailed evaluation mechanisms and criteria weights as relates to BBA. For example, among the seven programs with interviews for finalists, the weighting of the interview varies from 15% to 100% yet only one program discloses its interview weight to applicants.

The principle of transparency may be undermined by conflicting information recorded in the Calendar versus on faculty websites: eighteen programs have at least one current conflict between their Calendar entries and their admissions websites. Most programs publish only a minimum GPA needed for entrance as opposed to the competitive GPA needed for entrance. Some programs provide scores or general discussion of the applicant's standing to unsuccessful applicants upon request.

Timeliness

The introduction of BBA increases the complexity of the admissions process and for many faculties, entails logistical coordination with Enrolment Services, potentially delaying admission decisions. It should be incumbent on faculties employing BBA to employ practices and provide sufficient resources to ensure that the extra work entailed in reviewing applications under BBA does not undermine the veracity of the admissions process and experience of the applicant by unduly delaying admission offers.

Duplication and additional effort required of applicants seeking admission to a multiple programs (e.g., Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce) may be burdensome and cumbersome for applicants. Systems for capturing BBA application information should be designed to minimize this.

Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness in broad based admissions means considering a more holistic set of criteria for a candidate rather than focusing solely on his or her grades. Faculties using broad based admission report a reduction of appeals and inquiries by potential appellants. BBA allows applicants to introduce facts previously considered only at the appeal level; such cases are then adjudicated as part of the regular admissions process. However, BBA does introduce some challenges with respect to comprehensiveness. Faculties using BBA only for marginal candidates may inadvertently cause the association of BBA with second-tier academic performance, potentially leading to pejorative perceptions of undergraduate BBA by some.

Commitment

The faculties interviewed by the working group demonstrated strong commitment to their BBA criteria. For example, some faculties report rejecting applicants with the high academic scores on the basis of weak scores on non-academic criteria. The working group did not uncover evidence that faculties make exceptions to their BBA guidelines.

The working group's review of BBA policies and practices is ongoing. The resulting recommendation to the Committee will likely be in the form of a set of general principles or best practices guidelines for faculties currently employing or planning to adopt a BBA policies.

5. Working Group 5 – Assessment and Monitoring of Changes in Admission Policies

Membership:

- Dr. David Fielding, Senator, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC-V (Chair)
- Mr. Andrew Arida, Associate Director, Enrolment, Enrolment Services
- Dr. Bruce Dunwoody, Associate Dean, Faculty of Applied Science, UBC-V
- Ms. Sonia Purewal, Student Senator, Faculty of Science, UBC-V
- Dr. Thomas Ross, Senator, Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration, UBC-V
- Dr. Robert Sparks, Joint Faculties Senator, Faculty of Education, UBC-V
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Senior Policy Analyst, Enrolment Services

Policies and procedures related to admissions and enrolment benefit from ongoing review to ensure that they continue to support the mission and strategic objectives of the University and remain current and valid in light of a changing educational environment. The working group considered a range of issues including possible mechanisms to monitor the impact of changes in admission policy and/or procedure, what measures appropriately determine whether an admission policy is achieving the goals of the University, enrolment and admission issues specific to particular applicant groups and the efficacy of current admission policies in meeting the goals of the University with respect to those applicant groups and the efficacy of broad-based admission processes in identifying the best students.

Rather than articulating mechanisms to monitor and assess individual recommendations for change resulting from the Committee's review of undergraduate admissions policies, it was determined that in addition to any necessary changes in admission policies, working groups 1 through 4 also recommend appropriate monitoring and assessment measures. Given the subject matter expertise of each working group, it is best equipped to identify appropriate measures for the oversight of policy and procedural changes resulting from the current review. Upon the Committee's approval of the working group's recommendations, the group was discharged.

As many of the changes resulting from the Committee's review have only recently been implemented, it will continue to monitor the implementation and efficacy of changes in admission policies on an ongoing basis. Where changes were recommended on the basis of historical data, the Committee will undertake an analysis of data collected following implementation and thereafter as required.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. David Fielding
Chair, Admissions Committee

