

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA | OKANAGAN



OKANAGAN SENATE SECRETARIAT

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17 December 2009

To: Okanagan Senate

From: Admissions and Awards Committee

Subject: Criteria for Including Secondary School Courses in UBC Admission Averages (approval)

Background

In November 2008, the Okanagan Senate approved *Principles for Effective Undergraduate Admission to UBC*, a set of principals designed to guide future undergraduate admission policy development. Over the past year a series of working groups charged with developing admissions policy in different areas were struck with membership from both campuses. This fall Working Group 2 (Level and Subject Matter of Secondary School Courses used for Admission to UBC) submitted and received approval for the enclosed *Criteria for Including Secondary Courses in Admissions Averages* by both the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee. This document is now before each Senate for approval. If approved, the criteria will form part of a larger admissions policy that will be developed in the future.

In Brief

The Working Group recommends that a set of criteria be established for the inclusion of a course in the calculation of an admission average and that these criteria be applied across all educational curricula. Use of a common set of course selection criteria is aimed at producing more equitable admission decisions for applicants across different educational jurisdictions, consistent with the *Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission*.

If these criteria are approved, a broader list of “UBC-approved” courses may result for BC secondary school applicants, expanding the number and types of courses that they can explore in secondary school and have considered for admission to UBC.

The Admissions and Awards Committee is pleased to recommend the following to Senate:

Motion: That Senate approve the Criteria for Including Secondary School Courses in UBC Admission Averages as enclosed;

and

Motion: That Senate delegate to the Admissions and Awards 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 (2/3 majority required).

For the Committee
Dr. Sharon McCoubrey
Chair, Admissions and Awards Committee

CRITERIA FOR INCLUDING SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES IN UBC ADMISSION AVERAGES

Submitted by Working Group #2 (Level and Subject Matter of Secondary School Courses used for Admission to UBC) - November 2009

Working Group Chair: Dr. Peter Marshall, Senator, Associate Dean, Faculty of Forestry

Working Group Members:

- Ms. Christine Chen, Enrolment Services Student Advisory Committee Member
- Ms. Cheryl Dumaresq, Director, Arts Academic Advising Services
- Dr. Janet Giltrow, Senator, Associate Dean (Students), Faculty of Arts
- Dr. Paul Harrison, Senator, Associate Dean, Faculty of Science
- Dr. John Leblanc, Professor, Critical Studies
- Ms. Sonia Purwal, Student Senator, Faculty of Science
- Ms. Deborah Robinson, Executive Coordinator, Strategic Enrolment Management
- Ms. Rosalie Vlaar, Sr. Policy Analyst, Undergraduate Admissions

BACKGROUND

There is currently significant disparity between the number and types of courses that may be considered in the calculation of an admission average from one secondary school educational jurisdiction to another. Within BC, only “approved examinable” subjects are currently considered for admission, limiting the number and types of courses included to only 18 courses on the UBC Vancouver campus and 21 on the UBC Okanagan campus. A significantly larger number of subjects are eligible for inclusion in an admission average for applicants from other provinces and countries.

The Working Group anticipates that, if these criteria are approved, a broader list of “UBC-approved” courses may result for BC secondary school applicants, expanding the number and types of courses that they can explore in secondary school and have considered for admission to UBC.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSE IN A UBC ADMISSION AVERAGE

The Working Group that examined issues associated with the level and subject matter of Canadian secondary school courses used for admission to UBC recommends that a set of criteria be established for the inclusion of a course in the calculation of an admission average and that these criteria be applied across all educational curricula. Use of a common set of course selection criteria is aimed at producing more equitable admission decisions for applicants across different educational jurisdictions, consistent with the Principles of Effective Undergraduate Admission. The recommended criteria are outlined below.

Secondary school courses included in admission averages 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. Dean's in cases of admission from non-accredited institutions on Dean's 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 Delivery¹
 - 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 admission averages is subject to approval of the Senate Admissions Committee on a 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 the approval of courses used in the admission selection process and published in the Calendar must be submitted to the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee, and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee for approval. The committees are encouraged to 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, significant lead time on the implementation of approved changes should be provided to both students and the education system, allowing them to prepare for and adapt to the impact of these changes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITERIA

The Working Group recommends that the criteria for inclusion of a secondary school course in an admission average, once approved, provide the foundation for a review of secondary school courses being used for admission. The Group recommends that this review proceed in the manner outlined below.

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.

BC High School Course Inclusion Review

It is recommended that the Admissions Office, in consultation with the Faculties, be tasked with applying the approved criteria to BC Grade 12 courses that are:

- a) excluded from the current list of approved courses on the basis that they are not examinable, but which may meet the course inclusion criteria; or
- b) new courses; or
- c) existing courses that are changing; or
- d) existing courses for which inclusion under the criteria is questionable

On the basis of these assessments, the Admissions Office shall be responsible for bringing forward recommendations to the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee, and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee.

The following BC high school courses are proposed for review in 2009/10, to determine if they meet the above criteria and should be included in admission averages for BC high school applicants:

- Calculus 12
- Communications 12 (currently approved for admission to the UBC Okanagan campus)
- 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 12 courses
- Music 12 courses
- Language 12 courses

The provincially prescribed curriculum for these courses is available on the Ministry of Education website at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm>.

Canadian High School Course Inclusion Review

For courses from outside of BC, it is recommended that the Undergraduate Admissions Office be tasked with determining if a high school course meets the above criteria. Courses from other Canadian provinces are typically reviewed in advance of each new admission cycle. The list of approved courses for each province should be reviewed in light of the BC course review to be conducted in 2009/10. Some courses may be recommended for addition or removal as a result. On the basis of these assessments, the Admissions Office shall be responsible for bringing forward recommendations to the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee, and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee.

International High School Course Inclusion Review

Lists of “approved” high school courses from other countries around the world are not maintained by Undergraduate Admissions as such a task is unsustainable. Individual courses are assessed at the time that a transcript is reviewed for admission by an Admissions Advisor. This is consistent with current practice for applicants from outside of Canada and is in the best interest of assessing applications in a timely fashion.

Moving forward, it is recommended that Admissions Advisors review international high school courses on a case-by-case basis in light of both the approved course inclusion criteria, above, and best-practices in the field of international credential evaluation.

A holistic review of US high school admission policies and practices, including the use of standardized tests and the selection of US courses to meet program-specific requirements, is recommended as a task for the Undergraduate Admissions Office in collaboration with the Vancouver Senate Admissions Committee, and the Okanagan Senate Admissions and Awards Committee. This would follow-up on the revised American Secondary School Curriculum admission policies approved by the Vancouver Senate in 2006 and implemented in the 2007 admission cycle.