

**Memo from Nick Heath
Director of Admissions
Simon Fraser University**

To: Senate

Date: September 6, 1994

Subject: Admission - Diverse Qualifications

At its meeting of 24 June 1994, the Senate Undergraduate Admissions Board accepted the report of its ad hoc sub-committee and approved a proposal contained within that report. An abridged version of the report is attached, entitled, 'Diverse Qualifications Admission Policy'. This action gives rise to the following motion:

Motion

That Senate approve the proposed policy on admission based on diverse qualifications, as described in the attached paper 'Diverse Qualifications Admission Policy'.

Background and Purpose

With the increasing emphasis on high academic grades to gain general admission to the University, there has been considerable discussion at SUAB as to desirability of our current policies, which call for selection based on academic ranking only.

Many other universities have admission policies which use broader criteria, and report that this is both beneficial to the institution and is seen to be fairer by the public.

Within this University, admission to certain programs, notably the Professional Development Program in the Faculty of Education, is based already on multiple criteria, such as relevant experience and personal qualities.

The purpose of the proposed policy is:

- to admit students who will contribute strongly to the University through activities outside the classroom.
- to encourage achievement through recognition of excellence in academic and non-academic fields.
- to respond to the reported decline in interest in extra-curricular activities in schools and colleges, resulting from increased competition for admission.

SUAB held meetings on 22 February, 14 March and 29 March. At the last of these, a three person sub-committee was struck, which presented its report on 24 June 1994.

Implementation

If approved, considerable lead time might be required for full implementation. Admission materials for the academic year 1994-95 are already printed and distributed. The earliest feasible semester for starting is 96-1.

nh Aug. 94



Diverse Qualifications Admission Policy

Report of the Sub-Committee

At its meeting of 29 March 1994, SUAB considered paper SUAB 255, Modified Admission Policy, - Proposal for Discussion, and a motion was approved to pursue the development of a model for modified admission. SUAB established a sub-committee, consisting of Roland Case (Associate Professor, Faculty of Education), Trevor Lord (Student Representative, Faculty of Education) and Nick Heath (Director of Admissions) to develop this proposal and report back.

Policy statement and principles

The sub-committee agreed on the following policy statement:

Simon Fraser University seeks to admit not only applicants who are academically very well-qualified but also those who meet minimum admission standards and have

- demonstrated commitment and/or excellence in other endeavours
- and/or • presented a clear and valid reason for attending Simon Fraser University
- and/or • have succeeded in their studies in spite of difficult circumstances.

The sub-committee agreed on the following:

1. Name

The name of the policy shall be the Diverse Qualifications Admission Policy.

2. Respect existing determination of admission proportions

Senate has approved admission targets for each semester, broken down into three broad groups and into Science and non-Science faculties. These targets and the resulting mix should not be changed as a result of this policy, which must provide an opportunity for prospective new students regardless of origin, goals or age group.

3. Recognize and respect the trimester nature of admissions

There are three main admission/registration cycles, for Spring, Summer and Fall.

Summer Session, starting July, is less significant and can be included with Summer semester admissions. The policy must provide an opportunity for prospective new students regardless of the semester in which they start.

4. Two methods of determining admission shall be used

Two types of qualifications shall be used to determine admission. 'Straight' academic qualifications, (i.e. the gpa or percent average based on the secondary or post-secondary record) and Diverse Qualifications. (Currently, only academic qualifications are used and qualified applicants are ranked in descending gpa. Offers are made in descending rank order until all places are filled.)

5. Academic qualifications alone shall be used for most decisions

Initially, it is recommended that 90% of admission decisions be based on academic criteria alone, leaving the remaining 10% to be determined under the Diverse Qualifications policy. These proportions might be changed in time, based on experience and could vary by basis of admission, faculty or program.

For 93/94, this would give the following totals:

Admitted on Academic qualifications alone	4500 new students
Admitted under Diverse Qualifications	500 new students

6. The Diverse Qualifications policy shall recognize three other forms of qualification

The three other forms of qualification shall be:

- sense of purpose in attending university (and Simon Fraser University in particular);
- demonstrated excellence in a field (academic, social, athletic, artistic, professional);
- success in studies in the face of difficult circumstances (physical, psychological, social or economic).

7. The Diverse Qualifications policy shall be applied only if the candidate meets the published admission requirements

An applicant whose gpa is below the published minimum, who lacks the required English test score, who has insufficient credit for admission or in any other way has failed to meet the minimum requirements shall be ineligible for consideration under the Diverse Qualifications policy. Consequently, only those who are otherwise 'turnaways' from the University shall be considered.

8. Under the Diverse Qualifications policy, both academic qualifications and other qualifications are to be considered, with appropriate weighting

The relative weights should permit selection of an applicant who has minimum acceptable grades but excellent other qualifications or profound special circumstances over an applicant who has grades which are at the 'cut-off' margin but who has few or no other attributes.

9. Applicant information shall be voluntary and self-reported

Applicants may choose whether or not they wish to provide detailed personal information for consideration under the Diverse Qualifications policy. A Personal Information Profile shall be developed to provide the following information:

- a 300 word statement of the reasons for wishing to attend Simon Fraser University;
- a summary of notable activities and achievements;
- a summary with supporting information of any difficult circumstances;
- the names and addresses of two persons who could verify the information;

No letters of reference shall be requested. Confidential or open references are a source of much additional work in schools, universities and colleges and are believed to not provide sufficient valid information to justify the additional effort involved. Documentation must be provided to support claims of exceptional situations.

10. Appeals

The Senate Appeals Board shall continue to hear admissions appeals where there are significant special circumstances. The Diverse Qualifications policy is not intended to replace appeals to the Senate Appeals Board. Disputes resulting from judgments involved in scoring the personal data of candidates shall not be considered grounds for appeal.

11. Scholarships

The use of applicant information for adjudicating entrance scholarships should be explored. It is worth noting that, in 1994, all essays and other materials are being scored and evaluated only by members of the selection committees. (Typically, applicants for entrance scholarships submit a 1 page resume, a 1000 word autobiographical essay and 2 letters of reference.)

12. Scoring

A systematic scoring method should be used to generate consistent ranking of candidates. A suggested format is given in Appendix 1.

13. Interviews

Although interviews with candidates can offer further valid information, it is not proposed to conduct applicant interviews. Issues surrounding interviews include time and cost considerations, consistency of evaluation, fairness in access to interviews and the keeping of interview notes which are later translated into some type of score. These notes could be subject to external scrutiny under Freedom of Information laws and extensive training might be required before interviewers could properly discharge their responsibilities.

Procedure

All applicants shall be invited to submit a Personal Information Profile with their applications. It shall be made clear to applicants that reference will be made to the Personal Information Profile only for determining admission cases, under the Diverse Qualifications policy, unless the University should decide to also use the Personal Information Profile for scholarship evaluation. Further, applicants shall be advised that admission under the Diverse Qualifications policy is limited to 10% of admissions. Applicants who feel that their applications might be marginal should submit a Personal Information Profile. University staff may offer general advice on the desirability of submitting a Personal Information Profile, but will not give specific advice prior to a formal assessment of admissibility.

Applicants must submit the Personal Information Profile by the deadline for submitting an application for admission. The University will not accept late submissions or changes. Sufficient copies must be provided for the use of the selection committee.

The Personal Information Profile is recorded as a received admission document. It shall be received by the Office of the Registrar and filed temporarily. Every Personal Information Profile shall be destroyed according to the Registrar's document retention schedule. Currently, this schedule requires destruction after three semesters, but consideration should be given to destruction after the start of each semester, once all admission decisions have been made.

A suggested Personal Information Profile is attached as Appendix 1. It is derived from forms developed by Queen's University and the University of Guelph.

Applications shall be assessed, as at present, on academic grades, and offers made to fill 90% of the target. Normally, this will be achieved by:

30 June	Fall applications
31 October	Spring applications
28 February	Summer applications

At that time, determination will be made of the admission gpa (sometimes referred to as the 'cut-off gpa') for that semester, even though not all decisions will have been made.

All applicants whose applications are complete and who are technically admissible, but who have not been selected because their admission gpa falls below the 'cut-off gpa', (i.e. currently coded as 'DL' - Deferred Limited Enrolment) shall compete for the remaining 10% of places. This pool of applicants is the total number of DL applicants and it shall include both those who have and have not submitted a Personal Information Profile.

Normally, scoring, ranking and selection of applicants must take place within approx. 2-3 weeks to enable reasonable registration prospects for those selected and offered admission. Registration typically begins about 10 days following the above dates and new students register in order of their registration priority, based on gpa and credit hours completed, except that new level 1 admissions will register first, starting 94-3. Therefore it is likely that those admitted under the Diverse Qualifications policy will suffer some loss of registration priority as a result of the delayed admission offer, but it is not easy to correct this unless all offers are processed earlier or if scoring for all Personal Information Profiles is done on receipt. In the latter event, a much larger number of Profiles must be scored, because the initial admission decision will not yet be determined.

Adjudication of applications

The sub-committee briefly discussed a number of possible ways of evaluating applications. No firm recommendation was made. Once the Director of Admissions has determined the number of offers to be made under Diverse Qualifications policy for a particular admission group and has determined the admission gpa for the semester, the following must happen in the time frame indicated:

- 1) The Personal Information Profile must be scored for all Deferred Limited Enrolment applicants - (time required 2 weeks);
- 2) The range of gpas must be matched with the range of Diverse Qualifications points and relative weightings determined - (time required 1 day);
- 3) The Deferred Limited Enrolment applicants must be re-ranked using the combined GPA/Diverse Qualifications factor - (time required 1 day);
- 4) The Director of Admissions must make sufficient offers to fill the remaining 10% of places - (time required 1 week);
- 5) Admissions staff must be able to notify candidates of their status and their relative ranking, because there will be many inquiries from anxious applicants.

Who should be involved?

The following principles apply:

- Profiles must be scored impartially and consistently
- Profiles must be scored quickly and to a tight deadline
- Faculties and departments must have input to the process, e.g. through an adjudication committee
- Strict confidentiality must be maintained
- Costs should be minimized

Scoring the Personal Information Profile

The Personal Information Profile may be scored by either:

- a) a trained admission officer in the Office of the Registrar; or
- b) members of the Diverse Qualifications Policy selection committee; or
- c) representatives of each Faculty.

Of these options, a) is preferred. Unless the job of scoring is a paid, part-of load priority function, it is unlikely that deadlines can be kept.

Adjudication of re-ranked candidates

A small adjudication committee, consisting of representatives from each faculty and from the student body, is suggested. If the Personal Information Profile scoring and the required weighting and re-ranking have taken place prior to the meeting of the committee, the time spent on adjudication can be minimized and the committee can focus on marginal cases, exceptions and a review of the outcomes.

The resulting score and the academic average shall be combined to produce a composite score, on which the candidates shall be ranked in descending order. These rankings, together with the applicant's academic intentions shall be reviewed and adjudicated by a Diverse Qualifications Policy selection committee, consisting of representatives from the Faculties, Senate and from students. The sub-committee will make sufficient offers to fill the target with registered students (yield ratios vary by faculty and Basis of Admission so this factor will depend on the category of the applicant - in the case of BC Gr 12 graduates, yields of 30% to 45% are common, requiring more than double the number of offers to be made, than there are places to fill).

Hardship cases

Applicants who appear to have significant special circumstances and who are not selected may be advised to submit appeals to the Senate Appeals Board. Selection decisions under the Diverse Qualifications Policy shall not be determined solely on the basis of hardship.

Scoring Scheme - General

The range of possible Personal Information Profile scores is 0 - 17. A high score is considered to be 9 or higher and a low score is 3 or less. When combined with the admission gpa to give a composite admission index, the resulting index should provide a ranking in which the applicant with a Personal Information Profile score of 9 is preferred over a candidate with a Personal Information Profile score of 3 even though their admission gpas are at extremes of the DL range. Since the DL range is variable in breadth, the relative weighting of the Personal Information Profile versus the admission gpa must be determined by the Diverse Qualifications Policy selection committee for each category and Basis of Admission.

An applicant who submits no Personal Information Profile shall receive a score of 0 on the Personal Information Profile. This is combined with the admission gpa to give a composite admission index.

Feasibility

If the proposal is approved by SUAB and receives Senate approval in early Fall 1994, all application forms and liaison/admission information for the 1994/95 admission cycle (95-1, 95-2 and 95-3) will already be printed and distributed. Hence the suggested implementation date is January 1996.

The sub-committee did not attempt to estimate the costs of implementation. If the PIP is scored by an admission officer, this will require approx. 0.5 additional professional staff positions (\$20,000). To handle the substantial increase in paper and documents in the Office of the Registrar, plus the added complexity of two evaluation processes rather than one, an additional clerical position is indicated (\$25,000). Additional printing, paper and distribution costs are inevitable, in the order of \$10,000 p.a. A more detailed estimate of costs should be made before a decision is made to implement the policy.

Scoring the Personal Information Profile

An applicant who submits a Personal Information Profile shall receive 3 sub-scores, as follows, which are summed to give the Personal Information Profile score, and which is later combined with the admission gpa to give a composite admission index.

The "other qualifications" sub-score (a total possible score of 17) will be based on:

sense of purpose	2
demonstrated excellence	10
difficult circumstances	5

Sense of purpose

Assessment of Sense of Purpose is derived from comments in "statement of reasons" and, if relevant, in "additional information" sections. Two considerations determine the Sense of Purpose rating:

- quality of the reasons;
- quality of the writing.

The proposed rating scale for Sense of Purpose is as follows:¹

+ 2	Impressive	Statement is well written and applicant clearly demonstrates either:	
		a)	rich understanding of the point of university study;
		b)	passion for, or sustained interest in, a field or discipline;
and/or		c)	compelling reasons for attending Simon Fraser University specifically.
and/or			
0	Not notable	This is the default rating. Applicant provides minimally competent reason(s) with no glaring stylistic flaws.	

¹ Applicants who fall between these levels may be rated +1 or -1.

- 2 Discouraging** No "statement of reasons" is provided or statement is either:
a) poorly written or otherwise sloppily prepared;
and/or b) shows a lack of understanding of the point of university study;
and/or c) otherwise raises doubt that applicant is well-suited for university study.

Demonstrated excellence

Assessment of Demonstrated Excellence is derived from comments in "summary of activity" and, if relevant, "additional information" sections. Three considerations determine the Demonstrated Excellence rating:

- sphere of activity or performance (i.e., international/ national/ provincial/ community/ intra-community or -institution);²
- independent recognition of excellence or contribution (e.g., awards, rankings, elected to office, formal review);
- degree (frequency, duration and intensity) of involvement.

The proposed rating scale for Demonstrated Excellence is as follows:³

- + 10 Outstanding** Activities or achievements must:
a) be at international or national level;
and b) have been recognized by at least one outstanding award/ position/ rating, or by a few highly regarded awards/ positions/ ratings;
and c) reflect a significant amount of involvement at, or in direct preparation for, the international or national level.
- + 8 Highly commendable** Activities or achievements must:
a) include some that are at the provincial level or higher;
b) have been recognized by at least one outstanding award/ position/ rating, or by a few highly regarded awards/ positions/ ratings;
and c) reflect a significant amount of involvement at, or in direct preparation for, the provincial level or higher.
- + 6 Commendable** Activities or achievements must:
a) have been recognized in a several ways by awards/ positions/ ratings;
and b) reflect a significant amount of involvement (i.e., numerous activities/ performances than span at least a few years).
- + 4 Moderate** Activities or achievements must:
a) have been recognized by at least one award/ position/ rating;
and b) reflect more than passing or occasional involvement in, at least, a few organized activities/ performances.

² The sphere of activity is relative to the regular locus of activity. A person who moves from Canada to Zaire to work for a development agency which operates out of a regional capital is working at the "provincial" level. If the person became head of a pan-African organization, or regularly consulted in various countries, she would be operating at the international level. A Canadian musician who competes in a festival in the United States is operating at the international level.

³ Applicants who fall between these levels may be rated 9, 7, 5, 3, or 1.

- + 2 Minimal** Activities or achievements include either
- a) participation in a few organized activities/ performances, but without distinction or serious involvement; or
 - b) a few informal activities/ interests that do not extend beyond the level of casual hobby or recreational involvement.

- 0 Not notable** No "summary of activities" provided or, at best, token involvement in one or two activities.

Note that this sub-score depends both on the frequency and duration of the activity, and the level and the degree of recognition received.

Difficult circumstances

Assessment of Difficult Circumstances is derived from comments in "summary of difficulty" section, accompanying documentation and, if relevant, "additional information" section.

Three considerations determine the Difficult Circumstances rating:

- severity (intensity and duration) of the difficult circumstances which may be physical, psychological, social or economic in nature;
- nexus between the difficulty and the applicant's performance in areas that Simon Fraser University uses as criteria for admission;
- adequacy and reliability of the evidence in support of both the severity of the difficulty and the nexus.

Compelling evidence will be required of the connection between the circumstances cited and the academic performance of the student.

The proposed rating scale for Difficult Circumstances is as follows:⁴

- + 5 Profound** The applicant provides compelling evidence that:
- a) the difficult circumstances are particularly severe both in intensity of hardship and in duration, although the difficulty need not be permanent (e.g., legal blindness, confined to a wheelchair, had chronic health problems that kept applicant from school for extended periods of time, was in a long-term severely abusive situation); and
 - b) that the difficult circumstances adversely affected to a significant degree the applicant's performance on criteria that Simon Fraser University uses to determine admissibility.
- + 3 Serious** The applicant provides plausible evidence that:
- a) the difficult circumstances are severe in intensity of hardship and/ or in duration (e.g., considerable, but not total, impairment of a sense, confined to a wheelchair for a considerable period of time, had a health problems that kept applicant from school for an extended time, was in a long-term difficult situation); and
 - b) the difficult circumstances adversely affected, at least to a modest degree, the applicant's performance on criteria that Simon Fraser University uses to determine admissibility.

⁴ Applicants who fall between these levels may be rated 4, 2, or 0.5.

- + 1 Notable** The applicant provides plausible evidence that:
- a) the difficult circumstances are unusual in nature and are (or were) somewhat debilitating; and
 - b) the difficult circumstances adversely affected, at least to a modest degree, the applicant's performance on criteria that Simon Fraser University uses to determine admissibility.
- 0 Not notable** No "statement of difficulty" is provided or, if provided, either:
- a) the difficult circumstances are not unusual in nature or are not particularly debilitating (e.g., are the type of obstacles that most of us are likely to encounter from time to time); and/or
 - b) there is no evidence that the difficult circumstances adversely affected (to a non-trivial degree) the applicant's performance on criteria that Simon Fraser University uses to determine admissibility; and/ or
 - c) because of significant concerns about the reliability of the evidence, there are reasonable grounds to distrust the alleged severity of the difficult circumstances and/or the nexus.

Determining the Diverse Qualifications score

As indicated above the Diverse Qualifications score is a combination of the applicant's GPA and "other qualifications" rating.

The recommended formula for deciding the relative weighting of GPA and "other qualifications" rating is to determine a multiplier factor (within each BOA group) such that:

$$[\text{minimum university admission GPA}] + [\text{score of 9 on "other qualifications" rating}] = [\text{lowest GPA for the BOA group}] + [\text{score of 2 on "other qualifications" rating}]$$

Put another way, the recommended policy is:

Within each BOA group, multiply the "other qualifications" rating so that applicants with the equivalent of *highly commendable* "other qualifications" (but with minimum university admission GPA) would be accepted over *minimal* "other qualifications" applicants who fall just short of the admission 'cut-off gpa'.

Personal Information Profile - (Draft)

Appendix 1

Surname (Last or family name)

Given names

Semester you wish to enter

Application submitted previously / attached (indicate which)

Diverse Qualifications Policy

Each semester, Simon Fraser University receives many more applications than can be accepted. Academic performance is the main criterion for admission and is used exclusively in 90% of cases. However, we recognize that some candidates have other attributes and achievements which should be recognized in determining admission. Accordingly, Simon Fraser University seeks to admit not only applicants who are academically very well-qualified but also those who meet minimum admission standards and have:

- demonstrated commitment and/or excellence in other endeavours
- and/or • presented a clear and valid reason for attending Simon Fraser University
- and/or • have succeeded in their studies in spite of difficult circumstances.

We invite you to provide any additional information that could help us make a fair admission decision. We guarantee to respect your personal privacy, as required by law, and we shall destroy all copies of the Profile after admission decisions for the semester have been made, whether or not you are admitted to the University.

INSTRUCTIONS

You are advised to submit a Personal Information Profile if you have concern that you will not be selected for admission, based on your academic record alone. University staff will be able to advise you in general of the grade range in which the Personal Information Profile has been relevant in past semesters, but cannot predict future demand for admission, so you will have to judge whether completing this Profile to support your application is worthwhile.

What you write and how the information is presented may affect our admission decision, so we urge you to review this Personal Information Profile carefully before responding. The Profile must be completed neatly and legibly. You should answer all parts without assistance from others. You may respond on a separate sheet but, if so, you must clearly identify and number the points you wish to make, as shown on this Profile and you must limit the length of each response to the number of words indicated on the Profile. The Profile must be received by the University by the application deadline for the semester for which you are applying. (Applicants for Summer Session must meet the Summer Semester deadline.)

Please list two people who could verify the information you have submitted. One should be an educator (e.g. teacher, counsellor, college or university instructor or administrator) who knows you well. The other reference could be someone from your community such as a group leader, coach or individual who is aware of your personal situation. Letters of recommendation may be submitted along with your Student Profile Form, but are not required. Any letters submitted should support the statements you have made in your Profile and should not be general character references.

Please note that Personal Information Profiles submitted without n copies or after the deadline date cannot be considered

Referee (Educator)		Referee (Personal)	
a. Name: _____		b. Name: _____	
Position: _____		Position: _____	
Address: _____		Address: _____	
Telephone: _____		Telephone: _____	

RETURN THIS PROFILE AND n COPIES OF IT, PLUS ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO:

ADMISSIONS, OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

**Simon Fraser University
BURNABY, BC V5A 1S6**

Please do not submit the Profile by FAX.

PLEASE TYPE (OR NEATLY PRINT) YOUR RESPONSES

All information and documentation submitted will be held in confidence and used solely for determining admissibility.

1. Why do you wish to study at Simon Fraser University? You should comment on your choice of program or specialization and why you believe you will achieve academic success. Do you have plans for a career after receiving an academic credential?

(300 words maximum)

2. List your most significant interests and activities. For example, you may wish to include clubs or organizations, athletics, community or volunteer work, career or professional work and any other skills development or activity in which you have been involved. Indicate the level (e.g. national or local) of activity and of commitment, if possible. Indicate whether or how these activities have contributed to your personal growth. Does the activity give you an opportunity to show leadership? If so, please describe how.

Activity	Nature / Level of Involvement	Time Commitment (Hrs/wk)	Time Period (Calendar Years)
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3. List and describe any awards, honours or recognition that you have received, for either academic endeavours or other activities.

Award or Distinction	Granting Body /Organization	Reason Granted	Calendar Year
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(150 words maximum)

4. Have other factors, such as health problems, disabilities, economic or social conditions affected your academic performance? If so, explain the situation and provide supporting documentation and the name and address of a professional person who can verify the information, such as a physician. Indicate when this condition started and ended or state if it is continuing.

(150 words maximum)

Verification: (to be completed by a qualified professional practitioner, e.g. physician)

Signature of Professional	Date
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If there are other factors which you consider to be highly significant, please indicate :

(150 words maximum)

I DECLARE THAT ALL THE INFORMATION THAT I HAVE PROVIDED IS ACCURATE AND WAS PREPARED ENTIRELY BY ME. I understand that any misrepresentation may result in cancellation of my admission or registration status.

Signature	Date
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Freedom of information and protection of privacy

The information on this form is collected under the authority of the University Act (R.S.B.C. 1979, c.419), and is collected to enable evaluation those applicants who wish to be considered under the University's Diverse Qualifications Admission Policy. The information may be used to evaluate and to verify non-academic factors which will be used to determine your ranking for admission. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, contact the Director of Admissions, Office of the Registrar, (604) 291-3224.