

# **An Overview of Admissions Practices at BC Post-Secondary Institutions**



# An Overview of Admissions Practices at BC Post-Secondary Institutions

*Prepared for BCCAT by Nick Heath, Nicholas Heath Consulting Services Inc.*

*March 2011*

©Copyright 2011 by the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer.  
BCCAT is the official mark of the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer,  
as published by the Registrar of trade-marks of the Canadian Intellectual Property Office.

The *Overview of Admissions Practices* is also available on the BCCAT website ([bccat.ca](http://bccat.ca)).

## **BC Council on Admissions and Transfer**

709 – 555 Seymour Street. Vancouver BC V6B 3H6 Canada  
[bccat.ca](http://bccat.ca) | [admin@bccat.ca](mailto:admin@bccat.ca) | t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576

*prepared for and funded by*

**BCCAT** BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL  
ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER



# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary   | 7  |
| 1. Purpose of this Overview                                   | 8  |
| 1.1 Background  | 8  |
| 1.2 Document Structure  | 8  |
| 1.3 Method  | 9  |
| 1.4 Purpose of Admissions                                     | 9  |
| 2. Context  | 10 |
| 2.1 British Columbia is the Focus                             | 10 |
| 2.2 Trends in Admission-Related Practice                      | 10 |
| 2.3 Many Variables in the Equation                            | 11 |
| 3. Organizing Admissions                                      | 12 |
| 3.1 Admission to What?  | 12 |
| 3.2 Central or Distributed Admission Units?                   | 12 |
| 4. Admission Processes  | 15 |
| 4.1 Application Forms   | 15 |
| 4.2 Application Timing  | 20 |
| 4.3 Application Acknowledgment                                | 22 |
| 5. Fees and Deposits  | 24 |
| 5.1 Application Fees  | 24 |
| 5.2 Enrolment Deposits  | 26 |
| 6. Creating the Student Record                                | 28 |
| 6.1 Items Often Requested From Applicants                     | 28 |
| 6.2 Authentication  | 31 |
| 6.3 Receiving Documents                                       | 35 |
| 7. Admission Policy   | 39 |
| 7.1 Need for Admission Policy                                 | 39 |
| 7.2 Creating Admission Policy                                 | 39 |
| 7.3 The Impact of Admission Policy                            | 41 |
| 8. Admission Criteria and Candidate Selection                 | 46 |
| 8.1 Evidence-Based Criteria                                   | 46 |
| 8.2 How Admission Decisions are Made                          | 47 |
| 9. Language and Other Competencies                            | 52 |
| 9.1 Tests Required  | 52 |
| 10. Communicating with Applicants and Others                  | 54 |
| 10.1 General Principles                                       | 54 |
| 10.2 Contents of the Offer of Admission                       | 54 |
| 10.3 Privacy Considerations for Applicants and their Families | 56 |
| 10.4 Communicating with Secondary Schools                     | 57 |
| 10.5 Denying Admission  | 57 |
| 11. Timeliness in Admissions.                                 | 59 |
| 11.1 How Long Should the Decision Take?                       | 59 |

|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| 12.  | Disputes   | 61 |
| 12.1 | Appeals  | 61 |
| 12.2 | Complaints   | 61 |
| 13.  | Transfer Credit  | 62 |
| 13.1 | Is Transfer Credit an Admission Function?                            | 62 |
| 13.2 | Documentation Required for Determining Transfer Credit               | 64 |
| 13.3 | Evaluation of Unarticulated Transfer Credit                          | 64 |
| 14.  | Specific Admission Types   | 66 |
| 14.1 | Conditional Admission  | 66 |
| 14.2 | Applicants Who Have Had Previous Unsuccessful Post-Secondary Careers | 68 |
| 14.3 | Probationary Admission   | 69 |
| 14.4 | Unsolicited Offers of Admission                                      | 69 |
| 14.5 | Re-admission   | 70 |
| 14.6 | Differences Between International and Domestic Admissions            | 71 |
| 15.  | Resource Needs for Successful Admissions                             | 73 |
| 15.1 | Monitoring Effectiveness   | 73 |
| 15.2 | Technology - Admission System or Student System?                     | 73 |
| 16.  | Alignment of Admission Methods                                       | 75 |
| 16.1 | Is Alignment Desirable or Achievable?                                | 75 |
| 17.  | Appendices   | 76 |
| 17.1 | Abbreviations and Acronyms Used                                      | 76 |
| 17.2 | References   | 77 |

# Executive Summary

Each year, the public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia admit large numbers of new students to their various programs. Each institution has autonomy in making choices in the selection of its students and, as a result, a variety of methods and processes are used.

A survey conducted by the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) in 2008/09<sup>1</sup> had revealed that secondary school counsellors believed that there were too many different admissions practices in use to be able to provide students with sound advice. In addition, the survey showed that even within post-secondary institutions, admission methods often were not well understood.

This overview started from the premise that best practices in admissions could be described and presented for institutions to adopt, as appropriate, but evolved into a non-prescriptive form because of wide variability of circumstances among institutions and programs.

The document begins by describing the context, and then examines the organization, process and policy with respect to admissions. Although many different aspects of admissions are discussed, the report is not meant to be an exhaustive account of admissions processes and practices. The relative merits of various approaches to admissions are examined in broad terms, with a view to making general comparisons and noting adherence to key principles of fairness, transparency and efficiency.

The wide range of programs and institutions in British Columbia is matched by the variety of admission methods and processes. Although from the outside there might appear to be merit in the alignment of admission practices, this might be neither desirable nor achievable as, even within institutions, different programs may employ different admission methods, for valid reasons.

This overview could be of assistance to those who do not regularly work in the admission field yet would benefit from an understanding of process and the implications to their institutions of the different admission methods that can be employed. Also, those who are already familiar with admission work might use this overview to gain perspective when reviewing their own operations.

*This overview could be of assistance to those who do not regularly work in the admission field yet would benefit from an understanding of process and the implications to their institutions of the different admission methods that can be employed.*

*Also, those who are already familiar with admission work might use this overview to gain perspective when reviewing their own operations.*

<sup>1</sup> See [bccat.ca/pubs/admissionsscan09.pdf](http://bccat.ca/pubs/admissionsscan09.pdf)

# 1. Purpose of this Overview

This overview is aimed at post-secondary personnel and others who are interested in the practices of admitting students to post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Some parts may also apply to the other jurisdictions of Canada and to other countries.

The document is aimed at addressing a number of admissions issues common across institutions, although the report is not meant to be an exhaustive review of these issues. Suggested ‘Practices to Consider’ are noted in many sections of the report, but often there will be a range of acceptable options and many variables, so this overview avoids prescribed solutions. Programs and institutions vary widely and what works in one situation may not work in another.

Alignment of institutional practice (see Section 16, *Alignment of Institutional Admission Methods*) is not a specific goal, but could be an unintended outcome if an institution examines and chooses to amend its practices in light of those of other institutions. It is hoped that discussion and internal review of admission issues will lead to a greater understanding of the process for the benefit of students and institutions.

*It is hoped that discussion and internal review of admissions issues will lead to a greater understanding of the process for the benefit of students and institutions.*

## 1.1 Background

In past years the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) received recommendations from its Task Force on Standards and Processes, examining administrative standards and processes that affect students who transfer from colleges and are admitted to research universities. However the mandate of the Council is broader and includes all types of admission, whether direct from secondary school or by transfer to and from a wide range of BC post-secondary institutions.

In 2008-09, BCCAT surveyed post-secondary and secondary personnel to assess whether there is a perceived need and support for system-wide work on admissions processes and practices for the benefit of students. The resulting report included a number of recommendations on how institutions could work either alone or as a group to address some of the perceived barriers. One of the conclusions flowing from the report is for BCCAT to take the lead role, working with the BC Registrars’ Association (BCRA), in developing a set of best practice admission guidelines, since similar guidance had proved useful in the transfer policy and process arena. The best practice document evolved into an overview of admissions practices at BC post-secondary institutions, because both programs and institutions were found to be too variable to warrant generalization or prescriptive comment.

## 1.2 Document Structure

The admission process is broken down into its various aspects or categories. Each of these is discussed in general terms and issues are identified. In some cases, examples are given and suggestions are offered.

Most sections end with two short subsections, “Issues and Challenges” and “Practices to Consider”. As summaries of the previous discussions, these sub-sections might appear redundant to some readers, but they are included as a brief recap of salient points arising from each section.



## 1.3 Method

The available literature on admission practices was reviewed and an outline of topics was presented to a small advisory panel consisting of admissions experts from a broad range of British Columbia institutions. The following constituted the advisory sub-committee:

- **Andrew Arida** *Associate Director, Enrolment, University of British Columbia*
- **Zena Mitchell** *Director, Admissions and Records, Kwantlen Polytechnic University*
- **Sandra North** *Associate Registrar, Vancouver Community College*
- **Therese Paradis** *Associate Registrar, Langara College*

On the recommendation of the BCCAT Admissions Committee, a draft of the document was also reviewed by senior registrarial staff at three institutions:

- **Nicole Greengoe** *Director, Student Services and Registrar, Camosun College*
- **Fred Jacklin** *Registrar and Director of Enrolment Services, Vancouver Island University*
- **Kate Ross** *Registrar and Executive Director, Student Enrolment, Simon Fraser University*

This overview was prepared with the generous assistance of the panel members, reviewers and the staff of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer.

## 1.4 Purpose of Admissions

The admission function is central to the health of any institution that is dependent on a flow of students.

Admission processes are a major component of enrolment management (see Section 2.2, *Trends in Admission-Related Practice and Literature*). They regulate the intake to ensure that each institution has:

a) quantity of students

- to help achieve optimal enrolment for each program, faculty, campus or year level; and
- to maintain, sustain (or generate) planned enrolment over a multi-year period.

b) quality of students

- to sustain enrolment, a high proportion of new enrollees must be:
  - suitably prepared and motivated (to perform well enough to succeed); and
  - sufficiently satisfied (to want to stay to completion).

This is so that retention is strong and does not undermine future enrolment or lead to compromises in program standards. This means achieving a good institutional fit and coordinating efforts within the institution to achieve satisfactory rates of retention.

c) economic sustainability

- to generate revenues from several sources that arise from both entering and returning students to meet the targets in the institution's budget plan.

d) fulfillment of its access mandate

- to provide educational opportunities for the populations that are important to the institution's goals.

Admission, together with recruitment and other outreach activities, requires working in the best interests of both the applicant and the institution. When there is a conflict between these interests, considerable judgment and experience is required to choose the right course.

## 2. Context

*“At our college, we don’t do admissions – everything is open entry.”*

In spite of the above statement, every educational institution performs some sort of admission process although it might be subsumed within the “registration” process. An admission process does not necessarily select or screen applicants, although many do so. It joins an individual to the educational institution and usually to a specific program, optimizes the filling of each program from the applicant pool, creates the starting data for the student record and establishes the start point and general requirements for reaching the student’s end goal.

### 2.1 British Columbia is the Focus

This overview refers mainly to post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, Canada. Conditions in other jurisdictions may be different enough that other processes and rules might apply. However, observations are not restricted to any particular form of admission or institution and may apply more broadly.

#### 2.1.1 Entry to Programs Accessible by School-Leavers or Adult Learners

Discussion about admission is restricted in this paper to entry into post-secondary vocational, developmental, trades and general academic programs including first undergraduate degrees. It does not discuss admission to graduate programs nor to most professional programs such as law schools. However, those applying for admission may be of any age or background, not only recent secondary school-leavers. They may also enter at various points along the path to credential completion, such as by transfer from another post-secondary institution or as mature learners.

#### 2.1.2 Student Sources

Students who apply to the institution may be Canadian or may be nationals of other countries. The admission of international students is seen as being more competitive among institutions because the potential revenue from such students is higher, it is unregulated, and the students themselves are more mobile than their domestic counterparts. Often, admission of international students is more resource-intensive than for their domestic counterparts, but otherwise the processes are mostly similar. (See Section 14.6, *Differences Between International and Domestic Admissions.*)

#### 2.1.3 Type of Institution and Program

Admission is almost always to a program rather than to an institution and entry is usually more competitive to some programs than to others. Some programs have open entry policies. Institutions may be public or private and some differences in student admission will flow from the ownership and governance structure of the institution.

### 2.2 Trends in Admission-Related Practice

Recent trends have emphasized the role of admissions as one component of an integrated, institution-wide effort – Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) – stressing the broader, critical nature of student flows, retention, resources and revenues in an increasingly competitive environment (Bontrager, 2008). While such models have definite application in Canadian post-secondary institutions, a narrower view of admission will be pursued here in the interest of brevity.

This is not intended to downplay the importance of SEM; it has largely replaced the older view of admissions as the ‘neck’ in the ‘admission funnel’ where recruitment tops up the funnel and once admitted no students leave until their programs are completed.

### 2.2.1 Admission Does Not Include Recruitment

Following from the previous point, this overview is not about recruitment of students or the marketing of institutions’ programs to the public. It assumes that the tuition fees are not adjusted on an individual student basis and that admissibility is determined independently from financial need. It assumes the individual has decided to apply for admission, but does not assume that s/he will attend, even if admitted. Despite this restriction, it is clear that admission processes can strongly affect overall enrolment goals. Institutions can increase yields of desired students by paying close attention to admission processes and to student service in general.

Admission and recruitment are sometimes conflated but are usually organized as separate, albeit mutually dependent, activities. Recruiters need to know the characteristics of successful students in a program, where they may be located, how to translate prospects’ aspirations into program outcomes and in general who will be admissible. Admission staff are responsible for cementing relationships with the institution that were begun by recruiters; optimizing the intake of each program; and evaluating, checking and recording many details.

### 2.2.2 Start and End Points of Admission

The admission process starts when an individual submits an application for admission to study at that institution. The process ends when the applicant has received a final evaluation of admission from the institution and, if the applicant is admitted and accepts the offer, is ready to enrol in courses.

## 2.3 Many Variables in the Equation

The institutional context plays a huge role in all aspects of admission. The following highlights the two major admission approaches related to the nature of the institution’s mandate.

| Institution’s primary mandate is access-based   | Institution’s primary mandate is merit-based   |
|---|--|
| Tends towards liberal and open processes.   | Tends towards regulated, controlled processes.   |
| Open admission.   | Selective admission.   |
| Institution has adequate capacity to meet demand and no qualified applicant is turned away. | Qualified applicants are often turned away due to lack of capacity.                                      |
| Little competition for applicants.  | Strong competition among institutions for some applicants.   |
| Applicants are admitted to a general program and are free to choose programs later.         | Applicants are selected into programs and may not readily switch programs.                               |
| Rolling admission with no set dates.  | Fixed admission process dates.   |
| Continuous entry to program – may start any time.   | Fixed start dates (sessions or terms).   |
| Applicants choose what information to submit.   | Applicants are required to submit specific information concerning previous education and qualifications. |
| Documents and references are not verified or audited.                                       | Verification is part of the admission process.   |

Many institutions and programs occupy the middle ground, sharing the attributes of both of the above archetypes. These differences and others will strongly influence how institutions handle admission matters.

# 3. Organizing Admissions

## 3.1 Admission to What?

There are various models: for longer programs many institutions admit new direct-entry students into a general program only, making necessary a further application and another, internal admission process to select for specific programs.

In institutions that have broad ranges of programs (e.g., not only academic programs, but developmental, technical and vocational) an overall general entry process is unlikely to work well.

Institutions that view themselves to be in strong competition for students are not likely to adopt the general model either, because well-qualified applicants will usually prefer to enter knowing that they are secure in their chosen programs.

Transfer students are normally selected directly to a program.

### Comparison of General and Specific Program Admission

| General Admissions   | Admissions to Specific Program   |
|--|--|
| Easier to achieve general enrolment targets; harder to achieve program specific enrolment targets. | More difficult to achieve general enrolment targets; easier to achieve program specific enrolment targets. |
| Admission criteria are typically less specific.  | Admission criteria are typically more specific.  |
| Typically more student mobility within the institution.  | Typically less student mobility within the institution.  |
| May encourage program breadth.   | May encourage program specialization.  |
| Better suited for applicants who do not yet have specific educational goals.                       | Better suited for applicants with specific educational goals.  |
| Issues of access to specific programs may arise in later years.                                    | Issues of access to specific program arise at point of entry.  |
| Programs must be broadly similar.  | Programs can be completely different.  |
| Impractical for entry beyond first year and for programs shorter than one year.                    | Works for entry at all levels.   |

The entry structure is highly dependent on the characteristics of the program and institution, their perceived positions in the educational marketplace and the degree of program flexibility offered to students.

## 3.2 Central or Distributed Admission Units?

Decisions may be made centrally (e.g., in a Registrar's Office) or in various departmental, faculty or program units. Other related processing can also be split up or centralized. Where applicants might be applying to more than one program within an institution, and admissions are not centralized, coordination is required, if entry targets are to be met in all programs and to minimize duplication of effort and applicant confusion. Complex student information systems require subject expertise and consistent application of rules to be effective.

For these reasons, completely decentralized admission processes do not make good sense in complex institutions. On the other hand, different priorities can justify some applications being handled in separate units.

For example, international exchange students may be processed by a unit that does no other admission work because these applications are sufficiently different from other admissions and have little impact on program entry targets.

Nevertheless, several institutions delegate all admission functions to the program level, suggesting that there might be dozens of units performing very similar functions across the institution, sometimes for the same applicants. While there might be both specific needs for special candidate selection and resource imbalances between programs, the reasons for separating admission functions by program need to be well understood to ensure that it is not merely duplicating effort.

At institutions in England, UK, a government review of admissions at colleges and universities has found that “*Decentralised admissions can make it more difficult to ensure consistent standards across a university or college, and uniformity of training and knowledge among staff.*” (Schwartz, 2004).

## Issues and Challenges

*If an institution duplicates similar services across several different units, it probably increases its administrative costs.*

*Applicants who apply to more than one program may be subject to higher application fees and do not have a central contact point. Communications are duplicated. Applicants may become confused.*

## Practices to Consider

*In the interests of efficiency, admission processes are usually shared between a centralized unit responsible for much of the overall process and other units at the program level. The optimum balance is highly dependent on the characteristics of the institution, but as a rule the fewer the number of decision makers and players involved, the better the outcomes.*

### 3.2.1 Multiple Masters

Centralized admission offices typically report to the head of Student Services, Registrar or similar unit, yet there are often many other masters to be served:

- program heads and program selection committees;
- governing bodies;
- policy committees;
- appeal committees;
- recruitment units;
- records and registration units; and
- applicants (as customers of the service).

Program heads, often faculty deans, have strong interests in the health of their units, which depend on meeting intake targets and maintaining acceptable proficiency standards of entrants. Admission policy is approved by Education Councils or Senates, and is developed through admission policy committees. Exceptions are often handled through an independent appeals body. Student recruiters have invested time and effort in nurturing relationships with prospective students (or prospects) in expectation of a quick, efficient and courteous response from the institution when those prospects apply for admission. The entire institution depends on a rich record of accurate and detailed data about each new student before course enrolment and the start of the education process. Finally, in service units, the student's satisfaction is paramount.

### 3.2.2 Who Should Make an Admission Decision?

Some decisions involve little or no subjectivity, such as when required courses or specific minimum performance standards are checked against a list of requirements. In such cases, it does not much matter who makes the decision, as long as the person is sufficiently trained and understands the limits of discretion that they may use. Junior staff is frequently assigned to this task. In some cases, too, a computer is programmed to make some assessments and hence an admission decision is made without human intervention.

Non-standard records such as foreign transcripts require more judgment and are therefore usually evaluated by more senior and more highly trained personnel.

Auditions, interviews and evaluation of applicant essays are the most subjective evaluations. Although training of evaluators is still necessary, maturity of judgment and freedom from bias become more important. Consequently, many institutions utilize evaluation by committee to allow for different inputs and to reduce the effect of bias. However, this adds much logistical cost and complexity, especially if committee size grows beyond two or three individuals.

Evaluation is the first stage of admission – it might result in a ranked list from which offers are made. In all cases, good training and clear, comprehensive policy is necessary to decide admission applications.

Any person making an admission decision should be free of bias or direct family connection to the applicant. In a small town, it is likely the admission decision-maker would be familiar with many applicants, but for the applications of relatives, an independent person should be assigned to make the decision.

### 3.2.3 Training

It is essential that all those involved in admissions receive adequate training and periodic retraining, as needed. Trainees should include all staff and faculty who are involved in admission decisions, either at a unit level or at an institution level (e.g., if they sit on an admission committee). Training needs to relate to the tasks assigned and might be very basic, covering mostly matters of disclosure and confidentiality, or might be extensive, dealing with complex evaluation techniques. Documentation of all training content is necessary to achieve consistency and accountability.

## Practices to Consider

*Provided that the admission policies are clear, standard admission decisions may be made at a junior staff level, but where considerable judgment is required, individual professional decision-makers or very small committees are both acceptable.*

*The student information system should record the name of the person making the decision.*

# 4. Admission Processes

## 4.1 Application Forms

Online interactive application forms are the standard method of applying for admission and are preferred by applicants and institutions, although printable web forms are also useful for institutions or programs with lower volumes of applicants. Electronic applications reduce handling costs and ease the burden of paper on applicants and on units such as secondary school counselling and career offices that assist with applications to numerous institutions. The use of online forms assumes that every potential applicant has reasonable access to the internet. Some institutions continue to print blank forms for mailing to or pick-up by applicants in special circumstances.

Use of an online application form suggests that this form be shared by units within an institution that would otherwise produce separate application forms for the institution's various programs. Because most institutions use a shared student information system, rather than an information system for each unit or program, each separate application form needs to provide consistent data to that information system. The cost and complexity of linking several forms to the main information system suggest that maintaining one shared interactive form is the best solution. Since different units will have varying needs for information, this further suggests the use of supplementary contingent forms, visible only to applicants whose responses indicate a particular program. For example, if an applicant selects a physical education program, that applicant would be asked for details of their first aid certification, but other applicants would not see that question.

Application forms for the upcoming session should be available at all times of the year. These will require maintenance at least annually to ensure relevance, as conditions and programs change.

Only information that is needed to make an admission decision and create the basic student record should be required on the application form and this will vary somewhat by program. (See Section 6.1, *Items Often Requested from Applicants*.)

### Issues and Challenges

*Some institutions have a proliferation of different, inconsistent forms, have forms that are out of date or sometimes have no forms available at all at certain times of the year. All of these can impede an efficient admissions process.*

### Practices to Consider

*An online application form that serves multiple programs, yet adapts to the specific needs of each program, will reward the institution with consistent, reliable data across programs.*

*Forms should be available year-round for ease of distribution, the saving of labour and the convenience of applicants.*



### 4.1.1 Applicant Data

Accuracy in the collection and recording of information is very important. It starts with good form design. Internal editing within a form can help to ensure all required fields are completed. The applicant should be required to review what is being submitted before it is transmitted. Most obvious typographical errors can thereby be avoided. If applicants are supposed to give full addresses rather than abbreviations, this needs to be clearly set out. For example, should applicants give their city as:

Pr. Rupert or Prince Rupert?  
North Vancouver, N Vancouver, or N. Van?

Carefully designed drop down menus are a good way to capture accurate, consistent data. Providing examples for users to view can also be an effective way to improve compliance with instructions. Regardless of who is performing the data entry, accuracy is not guaranteed. Applicants frequently make errors in submitting the most basic of bio-data and even skilled, professional data-entry staff has significant error rates.

The implications of bad data at the start of the process are profound: communication with the applicant might be impossible due to a bad email or postal address. The institution must ensure maximum accuracy of this basic information by:

- monitoring returned mail;
- monitoring and flagging bounced email;
- investigating and correcting improbable birth dates; and
- investigating and remedying all address errors.

Address verification software is available that helps to reduce the incidence of bad postal addresses, although testing must be done to ensure that its accuracy is satisfactory and the cost is justified. Such software is used successfully by the Post-Secondary Application Service of BC (PASBC), the provincial admission service (see Section 4.1.4, *Application Centres*). Email addresses should be requested twice and verification techniques used to ensure validity, as far as reasonably possible.

To an extent, a quick review of applicant data using simple spreadsheet tools can be effective in minimizing bad data. With filtering tools, it is easy to perform consistency checks of all kinds. The same tools may also have the flexibility to be used for detecting other process issues such as missing communications, complete applications that are missing evaluations and so on.

Some institutions perform the main admission data edit when their applicants “roll over” and become actual students. This practice might result in part from older information systems that often had separate admission and records systems. Although it is more effort to perform this data edit for the larger number of applicants compared with enrolled new students only, the cost of doing this editing early will be justified.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*If no corrective processes are in place, contact can be lost with the applicant, negating related (e.g. recruiting) effort.*

*Inaccurate or inconsistent data can make reporting and analysis difficult.*

*Some institutions expend effort only after admission to edit the data to avoid ongoing issues as students enter their programs.*



## Practices to Consider

*A combination of internal edits and audits; applicant self-review; and clear guidelines, instructions and examples provides the best chance that the data submitted by the applicant will be accurate and complete.*

*Processes should be in place to check application data for consistency and accuracy on a regular basis.*

*Early editing of data for accuracy and consistency is usually worthwhile, particularly for applicant-entered data.*

*Action should be taken to determine the causes of returned mail and email.*

*Institutions should verify key data.*

### 4.1.2 Applying to More than One Program

It is common for an applicant to apply to more than one program at the same institution for the following reasons:

- uncertainty about acceptance to the primary choice; and
- uncertainty about program choice (applicant chooses to leave more options open).

Institutions benefit from knowing the primary choice of the applicant to gauge demand for programs.

Institutions need to specify how they will process applications to multiple programs. For example, it can be confusing to a student if each program application is treated discretely: if an offer arrives for a less-desired program before outcomes are known for other programs, it can create a dilemma – should the applicant accept or turn down the offer? Does acceptance of one offer preclude later acceptance of another? Will the institution make another offer if the applicant has already accepted the first offer?

Some institutions choose to handle multiple applications in a strictly sequential manner, starting with the applicant's first choice. This can save resources and can be to the applicant's benefit, too. Handling of documentation and similar work such as calculation of admission averages, checking that language requirements are met, etc. will be more efficiently handled once, centrally, rather than multiple times. However, some applicants who are borderline cases for admission to their first program choice will not have the benefit of receiving an offer of admission to an alternate program until the first program decisions have been finalized, possibly after considerable delay. For this reason, some institutions process multiple program applications simultaneously, so that the applicant receives all possible offers of admission as early as possible. The implication of this process is that substantial numbers of applicants who have accepted offers in one program can be expected to request program changes as subsequent offers are received before their admission is settled.

Hence, even if application decisions are decentralized, it is suggested that applicants to an institution be permitted several choices of program on the same application, on the understanding that these will be considered either sequentially or will receive parallel consideration.

The maximum number of applications to the same institution for the same session can be determined by the institution. There seems to be merit in limiting the number to two or three separate programs. Some institutions are able to minimize multiple applications in a number of ways by:

- undertaking to transfer the application to another program if the applicant wishes;
- making an offer of admission to a program that an applicant has not selected (unsolicited offer); or
- offering students program flexibility, so the specifics of the offer are less important.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*If an applicant who has applied to two programs at the same institution for the same session is treated separately by independent units, s/he can be faced with unreasonable costs and choices, such as payment and forfeiture of an admission deposit in order to accept a subsequent, more desirable offer from another program at the same institution.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Many institutions will enable applicants to select more than one program and will make offers of admission that are in the best interests of those applicants, allowing program flexibility if this results in applicants each receiving more than one offer.*

#### **4.1.3 Tiered or Nested Applications**

Some institutions require two levels of application to be submitted at the same time in order to be admitted to a selective program, even though the applicant might want admission to only that one program. A candidate must apply for 'general' entry and be admitted to the institution's general program. In addition, a separate letter may be required by the specific chosen program to facilitate the applicant's selection, using different criteria. The two processes might both take significant lead time but could be conducted simultaneously.

This two-step process can be confusing for applicants, especially if fees and supporting documents are processed independently by each unit and not shared. It is particularly inefficient if communication with the applicant is not carefully controlled because a candidate might be carefully selected by a unit, only to be denied admission because of a more fundamental deficiency that the selecting unit was unaware of and was handled in another unit. It is partly for these reasons, among others, that some professional schools have entire admission processes within themselves and do not share the admission process with a central unit, such as might be located within a student services/registrar's unit.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*An applicant receives decisions out of sequence, and concludes incorrectly that the first decision received is the critical decision. Separate and unrelated application fees are assessed and a single institution demands that applicants submit multiple copies of documents.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*For entry to a selective program, the application process for external candidates should be integrated with the general admission application and either handled within the unit that selects the candidates or processed sequentially by the institution. Most institutions charge an integrated application fee for admission to general and specific programs and are able to share admission documents among the decision-making units.*

### **4.1.4 Application Centres**

In some jurisdictions in Canada (e.g., BC, Alberta, and Ontario), institutions may share common application forms. This is possible because institutions have agreed upon common sets of data and their formats for applicants (i.e., name, address, educational history, etc.).

BC has had a centralized application service, PASBC, for a number of years. PASBC has served as a conduit for applicants and has bridged the gap for many institutions to online applications, when their own systems were under development. In recent years, several institutions have opted to no longer rely on PASBC services for the bulk of their applications. The application centre model shows that institutions may readily share common application forms, with their various institutional and program needs being taken care of with supplementary application forms.

In Alberta, a centralized application service, the Alberta Post-secondary Application System (APAS), offers institutions value-added services including centralized application fee payment. Ontario has had a long and successful history of application centres that cover admission to universities (Ontario Universities' Application Centre - OUAC), colleges (The Ontario College Application Service – OCAS), medical schools (The Ontario Medical Schools Application Service - OMSAS) and other professional schools.

The pros and cons of centralized application services are beyond the scope of this overview, but one advantage to the applicant is time saving if applying to more than one institution. In addition, if the bulk of applications are processed using a common form, vital overall demand statistics can be generated that can aid in educational planning. Other methods of collecting such data are more prone to errors of duplication.

## 4.2 Application Timing

Depending on the program and institution, new student intakes can occur at any interval:

- year or session;
- term or semester;
- monthly;
- weekly; or
- continuous.

In any case, the timing of the admission cycle will need some definition. Critical dates will take into account the resources of the institution, the nature of the process and the needs of applicants. It is generally accepted that applicants to full-time programs in Canada expect to know the institution and program they will attend three to six months ahead of the session start date, so that they may make suitable preparations. In part, this time frame is also dictated by the enrolment dates of the institution, especially if new students must select courses in competition with continuing students. Enrolment in courses often occurs three or four months before the session start date. In addition, the timing of offers will depend on the date that acceptable performance data (i.e., grades or test scores) become available for candidates.

While institutions often compete against one another to be the “first offer in the door” with an offer of admission, it is unclear if it is of any advantage to either institution or applicant if an offer of admission is made earlier than eight months ahead of the session start date. This assumes that the ‘early decision’ process, common in the United States, is not operative.

The critical timing of an admission offer is that it be made at a predictable time and not so late that it creates anxiety or the need for an applicant to make difficult choices. For a September, Fall term start, the most frequent start date, this indicates that an applicant should receive an admission offer between March and May. To achieve this, the institution works backwards to set an application date that is dependent on the time required for processing and decision making.

It is common to set an application deadline, but perhaps none is needed if admission to a program is unrestricted. In situations where selections are usually made among qualified applicants, an institution might choose to make all offers of admission on a set date or, as is more common, may use a rolling admission offer date, making an offer as soon as a determination of admissibility has been made. Another form of rolling offer is to make offers to the most qualified candidates first and continue to do so until all places are filled. Both fixed offer dates and rolling offers have pros and cons, but generally some form of rolling process is chosen, so that applicants may receive their offers as early as possible. Timing of the offer can be a factor in an applicant’s decision to attend: in any case, applicants always want to receive favourable decisions as early as possible.

Past agreements among institutions within a jurisdiction to embargo some types of offers until a certain date, in the interests of reducing pressure on institutions and reducing anxiety among applicants, have mostly fallen into disuse. This is because of the significant impact of institutions outside the jurisdiction, such as those in other provinces, which are not party to these agreements.

### 4.2.1 Very Early Applications

Educational folklore has tales of parents making applications on the birth of their child, but this is not a reality (except possibly for day-care!). Program, process and requirement changes are often unpredictable and prudence suggests setting limits to the earliest application acceptance dates. Most institutions will not accept an application that is received more than about one year ahead. Recruitment activity, on the other hand, is routinely conducted months or years before the application date.

## Practices to Consider

*It is prudent to discourage applications that are submitted more than one cycle in advance, unless measures are taken to keep the information updated in the intervening period.*

### 4.2.2 Setting Application Deadlines

Most institutions set application deadlines so that staff has sufficient time to process applications before critical dates and to allow applicants sufficient time to submit required documents. Often, deadlines are extended because spaces remain unfilled in some programs. A deadline is not always needed, but if none is set the implication is that the institution is at fault if a large rush of applications arrives for processing at the last minute, but resources do not permit the rush to be processed in time. Experience shows that applicants tend to procrastinate or respond to deadlines as if they were triggers for action. Because of this, institutions might consider a routine silent extension of an application deadline for a few days, to allow for those who act at the last minute. Deadlines are needed if meaningful ranking of applicants is part of the admission selection process.

Many deadlines at educational institutions are in effect recommended submission dates and relatively few institutions will return an application unprocessed to a late applicant. Where late applications are accepted, the applicant should be warned of possible negative consequences of a late decision, although a late application is not the only reason for a late decision. It can be useful to indicate on the application form that late applications may be accepted at the discretion of the institution to give some justification for processing the late application for one applicant but returning or not processing another's. The applicant should be warned that, if admitted, their choice of program or courses could be restricted.

## Issues and Challenges

*An applicant is permitted to apply late and is therefore admitted later than other new students, but is not advised of the likely consequences. As a result, all desired courses are already filled and the first term is spent taking an unsatisfactory course mix.*

## Practices to Consider

*For programs involving selection and fixed sessions, an application deadline normally is desirable. For other programs, it will depend on the anticipated time needed to reach a decision and the resource implications of late processing.*

*Provision of good information to applicants seems to be the solution for the wide variation of timelines across and within institutions. Since this information will change frequently (e.g., as programs fill), a display of frequent status updates on the institutions' public web sites is suggested.*

### 4.2.3 Setting Deadlines for Admission Materials

As will be discussed below, most institutions receive some candidate information separately from the application itself. The items might be application fees, resumés, transcripts, reference letters and the like, and they will arrive over a period of weeks or months or perhaps never. The most common practice is to set a deadline for their receipt and to suspend or cancel an application that has items missing after the deadline. If no deadline is set, an application can remain unresolved for an extended period, which can have negative consequences for the applicant and the institution.

Some institutions and programs will only accept complete applications that include the required fees and documents in one package. This circumvents many of the tracking and matching issues that may arise if these component pieces arrive separately at the institution, but the process requires that the applicant handles all the necessary documents. For competitive-entry programs, it is generally advisable for document security reasons to have transcripts, letters of reference and test scores submitted by their originators, and not via the applicant.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

*Sometimes the information item required is not essential or is useful only for a later purpose and is not needed for admission itself. This can lead to unnecessary delays in making decisions (See Section 6.1.1, “Prior Educational History - Requesting, and Receiving Documents.”)*

#### **Practices to Consider**

*If an item of information is essential to the application before a decision can be made, a deadline for submission should be set.*

## 4.3 Application Acknowledgment

Whether the application is submitted electronically or on paper, it must be promptly acknowledged and the applicant must be advised that, if no acknowledgement is received within a certain number of days, further contact is requested to determine the reason.

The chief reason that this simple process can break down is the time it might take to generate an acknowledgement. If the application form is on paper, it must be entered into the student information system and name-searched for possible duplicates. This is prone to volume-related backlogs at busy times. Even if both the application form and the acknowledgement are electronic, there can be process reasons why the application cannot be acknowledged instantly, including the need for significant manual intervention, acceptance of fees, etc. An automated application acknowledgement is standard practice at many institutions, but, even so, delays are possible for a variety of reasons.

Some institutions have instituted holiday closures which effectively halt manual procedures in application processing for two weeks or longer from late December into early January. This coincides for some institutions with an annual surge in application activity, especially as many applicants have additional free time, hence increasing their opportunity. Consequently, applications are prone to long backups, causing applicant anxiety and leading to the submission of duplicate applications.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*If applications sit unprocessed, they are not readily searchable and even the most basic inquiry, such as; “Did you receive my application?” cannot be answered, resulting in applicant frustration or duplicate applications.*

*If, in frustration, applicants submit multiple applications, the institution must decide which application to process and which to discard. It is not obvious that the first application received best represents the applicant’s wishes – some applicants change their minds frequently and it is more likely that the last application is the best one to process.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Acknowledgement of an application within three days of receipt is a worthwhile goal. To achieve this, institutions would need to anticipate and plan for expected volumes and regularly monitor unacknowledged applications, paying particular attention to weekends and holiday closures.*

# 5. Fees and Deposits

## 5.1 Application Fees

Application fees are widespread but not universal. At one time uncommon in British Columbia, application fees have become widespread as a result of uncertainty over admission prospects of individual applicants and the resulting large increase in applications submitted to create backup plans for applicants. Another reason for the widespread use of application fees is that they represent an unregulated source of revenue.

Institutions need to be aware that the application fee is a tax deductible expense for the applicant; hence, an official receipt should be produced, even if the applicant is not admitted or does not attend. This provision is sometimes overlooked by institutions, where application fees are sometimes treated in a casual fashion. This is not in the interests of applicants.

In most cases the application fee is intended to:

- reflect the actual cost of processing an application, although that will vary considerably depending on the complexity of the applicant's background (e.g., complex transfer credit evaluation, audition etc.);
- deter frivolous applications, if possible; and
- not deter genuine applications from lower income applicants.

Whether multiple program applications are accepted on the same form can affect application fees, the way that they are collected and the resulting revenue. Applicants who apply for more than one program at an institution might be required to pay multiple fees, either per application or separate fees to each program. More complex evaluation processes such as auditions, might give rise to supplementary application fees to defray their cost.

Preference for certain types of applicants may be expressed through the level of the application fee. Hence, a different application fee is often levied for applicants from the home province (preferred in order to reflect the chief funding source of the institution), transfer students (more work to process) and international applicants (goal of cost recovery without subsidy). The resulting fee schedule can easily become complex. It is obvious that the schedule will be better if it is simple, readily understandable and fair.

The period for which the application fee is valid will depend on the admission cycle of the institution. Some institutions set a fee for an academic session that spans a year and a reapplication within the session does not lead to a further fee. Other institutions have a term or semester-based application cycle. Any unresolved applications lapse and must be resubmitted with a new fee if they are to be held over for the next term. Often delays in documentation or travel arrangements are beyond the control of the applicant. It is in the interest of the institution to show flexibility in assessing re-application fees.

### 5.1.1 Unpaid Application Fees

If an application fee is unpaid, there are several possible consequences. Some institutions will reject the application and send it back to the applicant as incomplete. This is really only possible if the applications are paper-based and payment by cheque or money order is standard. It does not address the issue of receiving a promise of payment that is later refused by the applicant's bank. Many institutions avoid most of these pitfalls by requiring payment online with the application itself. This forces an applicant to use some form of internet financial transaction that might be resisted by some cautious applicants.



A more common approach for non-payment is firstly to request payment and to hold any admission offer until payment is received. In some cases further file processing can be suspended too.

Another approach is to cancel applications that are not paid by a specified deadline. Customers expect reminders before such action is taken, so cancellation should not be undertaken until a mechanism is in place to warn of the consequences of non-payment. However, cancellation can help to control the needless expenditure of resources on spurious or abandoned applications.

Unfortunately for applicants who apply to several institutions, practices vary widely and the applicant can be legitimately unaware of when payment is due or whether it has been paid in full and of the consequences of non-payment.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Application fees are sometimes inadequately documented at the individual applicant level. Applicants should receive application fee receipts promptly and routinely.*

*At some institutions, the schedule of application fees is excessively complex. Also, there is little consistency between institutions on the consequences of non- or late-payment.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*The application fee process should ideally be uncomplicated and immediately apparent to the applicant when applying*

*The application fee should cover more than one program at the same institution for the same session.*

*Deadlines for payment and the consequences of non-payment of application fees should be clearly stated.*

*Institutions or programs that charge a supplemental application fee should consider recasting this fee as an integrated application fee, so that the applicant makes one transaction and receives one receipt rather than multiple payments for the same basic purpose.*

*Institutions that charge a separate application fee per term or semester should use flexibility when assessing fees for students who are unable to complete the application process within the time limits of that term.*

## 5.2 Enrolment Deposits

When an institution makes an offer of admission to a program that will turn away qualified applicants, it is reasonable to expect the applicant who is offered a place in the program to make a decision and a commitment well before course enrolment time. For those who do not make this commitment, their places are forfeited, allowing further offers to be made by the institution and reducing another applicant's wait.

Deposit timing and the accompanying amount of financial commitment give rise to some issues. If an applicant applies to several institutions, it is in her/his interest to have all offers in hand before being required to make a financial commitment, but an institution might wish to finesse the applicant's decision by requiring a deposit before all offers are received by the applicant. This can be further complicated by the conditional nature of some offers – they depend on information such as final marks that will not be known for a long time.

To be effective, admission deposits should be substantial. Many private institutions require full tuition in advance as a form of deposit. However, many public institutions require fairly small deposits to secure a place and the loss of a deposit is not seen as much of a deterrent, encouraging some applicants to hold more than one seat at different institutions. This creates problems for institutions trying to manage enrolment in a timely and efficient manner and for applicants on hold or on waitlists (whose admissibility is dependent upon the action of those already admitted). By the same token, deposits once made should not be readily refunded, since their value is to forge a commitment from the student to enable the institution to properly plan its intake and advise other candidates that they will or will not be admitted. Leniency with refunds can therefore work to make admission to an institution less accessible for other applicants.

Ideally, the deposit cements a contract between the applicant and the institution and is best made when the offer of admission is unconditional. If there are significant conditions on the offer and the applicant pays a deposit but fails to meet the conditions, the deposit should be refunded without question (it might be better if the deposit had never been required in that situation). The difficulty that arises is that most institutions do not permit further progress in the enrolment procedure if the admission deposit is unpaid, yet many new students are expected to enrol while they are still holding conditional admission offers. (See Section 14.1, *Conditional Admission*.)

In institutions that have small but over-subscribed programs, a large deposit that must be submitted several months in advance can work to the advantage of all concerned because of the high degree of predictability it provides to the institution, the applicant and those still hoping to be admitted, who benefit from cancellations due to non-payment of the deposit earlier in the cycle.

**Scenario:** At College 'J', a large increase in the admission deposit to a Nursing program was met with scepticism by some faculty and staff who believed that it would be unpopular among newly-entering students and would deter needy applicants. The college experienced the opposite effect – students found that the offers were made earlier, fewer last-minute offers were made because of the greater commitment of those paying the increased deposits and the neediest of students had sufficient lead time to arrange their financial assistance and to change their employment situations. In this case, earlier and stronger commitment improved rather than hampered access.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Small deposits often appear to have little effect on hedging behaviour among some applicants, who may hold multiple seats or postpone their decisions to attend until a late date.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Institutions should consider regularly reviewing admission deposits and related deadlines to ensure that these fully support the institution's goals*

*Institutions should consider the applicant's point of view and allow for some flexibility in admission deposit deadlines. An institution should provide reminders before expiring offers.*

*Deposits should be substantial enough to deter holding multiple seats, and refunds should be offered only under limited circumstances.*

*Deposits should not be required until the offer of admission is unconditional.*

# 6. Creating the Student Record

## 6.1 Items Often Requested from Applicants

Many institutions capture sufficient data at the time of application for admission that they can build the student record almost entirely from this base. In some cases, they supplement the admission data later for a variety of other needs.

Hence, it is sometimes hard to determine how much information is strictly needed to process an application. However, it is generally considered to be acceptable and convenient for both the applicant and the institution to collect information at the time of application that will be needed when the student registers in courses, is assessed tuition fees and so on. An example might be the voluntary collection of the Social Insurance Number, which will play no part in the admission decision, but could be useful to both parties when tuition fee receipts are issued for Income Tax purposes.

Although a Canadian Social Insurance Number (SIN) can be helpful in matching individuals and is required to produce tax receipts, it is not acceptable to require it from applicants (although as future students, they will expect to have the SIN on their Canada Revenue Agency tuition fee documents). Other information of dubious utility should not be requested. For example, it is not acceptable to request the applicant's place of birth.

Institutions need to be aware of the reason for collecting each piece of information and each should have an identified purpose. If some information will not be used in the admission process, but will be used later in some other process, a decision must be taken as to whether it is justifiable to collect that information from all applicants in all cases (such as if the student is not admitted or chooses to not attend). The principles and legal privacy regimen of personal information require that only necessary personal information is collected and stored.

For a discussion and recommendations on the type of information required for the student record, see the Canadian transcript guide (ARUCC, 2003 - see Section 17.2, *References*).

If the admission model is merit-based, institutions will generally accept the information provided by applicants as true and complete but require a declaration that this is so. Other institutions that employ an access-based model might not care whether the information is complete, allowing the applicant to select what is considered to be relevant. However, a declaration that the information provided is true is necessary in all cases.

Some institutions that do not require much documentation from an applicant at the time of admission may require documentary supporting evidence to be shown prior to enrolment. In this case, the consequences of non-compliance with the request to provide documentation should be determined in advance.

### 6.1.1 Prior Education History - Requesting and Receiving Documents

An applicant's prior educational history is often relevant and useful:

- to ensure minimum academic entry requirements are met (student is adequately prepared);
- to ensure the student receives credit or standing for prior achievement (to make efficient use of the resources of both the student and the institution);
- if entry is competitive, to rank or rate the application; and
- in some cases, to determine if any further evidence of residency is needed.

The most common process is for the institution to require the applicant to order an official transcript of record to be submitted by each institution previously attended (privacy concerns do not generally permit the release of these records without the individual's expressed consent). Alternatives are for the institution to temporarily or permanently accept the applicant's version of this history – self-reported grades – or allow the applicant to submit his or her own copies of the records (a risky proposition unless further verification is undertaken).

Institutions should require that each applicant vouches that the stated educational history is true and complete, and advise her/him that it may be verified as necessary and that falsification or omission can have serious consequences for the applicant. Some institutions require the individual's entire educational history, while others are less specific.

Occasionally, an applicant will be unable to order the record from the previous institution. Among the reasons for this will be:

- institution and the record no longer exist;
- financial reasons (e.g. applicant owes money to her/his previous institution); and
- political reasons (applicant is not welcome at the previous institution or former country).

Admission staff will need to exercise discretion in these cases.

It is sometimes difficult to determine how much of a record is needed for an admission decision to be made. For example, an applicant might have attended two years at two different colleges but the admission requirements may be based on the most recent academic year only. Transfer credit could flow from both colleges. If only the second year transcript arrives, an admission decision could be made but the transfer credit would be incomplete. Many institutions would delay making the admission decision until the other transcript had been received. At that point, the application can be assessed for both admission and transfer credit rather than needing re-processing after admission. These situations can lead to frustration among applicants. In this example, the applicant might know that nothing would be transferable from the first college; hence the requested transcript would be seen as an irrelevant or simply a bureaucratic request. One possible way around this might be to ask the applicant if s/he considered that the work taken at that institution was transferable. However, this would not work for institutions whose policies require a cumulative admission average, since it could provide the applicants with the means to edit their own records.

**Scenario:** *One university asked applicants an open-ended question about their activities during an intervening period if the educational history suggested a gap existed of six months or longer. The purpose of this was to reduce the incidence of unreported attendance at post-secondary institutions that the applicant felt could jeopardize her/his chances of admission. The importance of such gaps will depend on the admission criteria used by the institution, but sometimes are perceived as irrelevant by the applicant.*

## **Issues and Challenges**

*It is fairly common for applicants to be selective about reporting which institutions they attended, even if the institution requires to be advised of all post-secondary institutions attended. Even so, few institutions have procedures for detecting this behaviour, with the result that selections are not as fair or accurate as they might be.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*The applicant should be required to certify that the information submitted is true and to acknowledge that falsification has consequences. Some institutions will also add the need for completeness to this declaration.*

*Many institutions claim the right to check with other institutions to verify an applicant's educational history. A consistency check and explanation for obvious educational gaps is also reasonable and should be within the justifiable demands of the admitting institution. Any educational history that is required should be directly related to the admission decision or to potential transfer credit.*

### **6.1.2 Prior Work History or Experience**

Many of the same reasons for requesting an educational history apply to the applicant's work history. For some programs, the work history is an important admission criterion. In a few cases, it influences the outcome of an assessment of prior learning (PLA). Often, this takes the open-ended form of a personal resumé. Depending on the type of program sought and its entry requirements, this can be relevant and justified or not. The right to verify information in the resumé is important. However, completeness of the employment record is unlikely to be as important as the educational history, and applicants are much more likely to be selective about their employment experiences.

### **6.1.3 Applicant Statements**

Applicant statements are usually taken at face value and their contents are not verified. They are expected to be subjective. They can be useful in identifying applicants that might require special consideration.

### **6.1.4 Reference Letters**

Many institutions require letters of reference for admission to selected programs. In some cases, the qualifications of referees are clearly outlined (e.g., must not be related, and must be an educator or professional). References are usually more helpful in selection when they follow a prescribed format that addresses specific key characteristics of applicants. It is prudent for such letters to be received directly from the referee, not via the applicant.

## 6.2 Authentication

### 6.2.1 Authenticating Identity

It is usually assumed that there is little or no incentive for an applicant to impersonate another individual, because the credential earned at the institution will be in the name of that other individual. Hence, many institutions are more concerned about changes of identity after admission than verifying applicants' identities. Most institutions:

- request and accept the applicant's identity as given on the application (often this identity is 'as stated on the birth certificate or passport');
- require a signed statement verifying the applicant's identity; or
- make no further check of identity (i.e., no verification).

It is recommended that institutions state on the application that they reserve the right to examine source identification documents.

While some applicants might not like their own middle names, or might prefer that their grades from secondary school or college be better than they are, few will see any advantage in giving false identification or information when applying to enrol at a post-secondary institution. However, since it is not standard practice to check, other institutions and agencies should not rely on post-secondary records to establish identity. For example, it is unwise to use a secondary or post-secondary educational record to verify the name, date of birth or citizenship of any applicant.

In exceptional situations, it would be reasonable to permit an applicant (who might subsequently be a student) to use an alias.

**Scenario:** *An applicant who was an immigrant from Russia had serious concerns about being traced by a criminal gang and possibly murdered. She was permitted to attend a Canadian university under an assumed name and her real name was not stored on the computer system as a former or other name.*

Frequently, an applicant's name will not match the name stored by the secondary school or education ministry because different criteria were used for initial enrolment, usually at the time of kindergarten entry. In the absence of other identifiers, such as a Provincial Education Number (PEN), this can cause problems with data matching.

In addition to name, identity normally includes the date of birth, gender, citizenship and country of residence and, to assist with matching records and government reporting, student numbers from previous institutions and PEN.

A preferred given name is a useful field within a student information system. This allows for the applicant or student to be addressed in their accustomed manner (e.g., 'Bob') but the institution's formal documentation (e.g., Wilhelm Roberto Alphonse) remains consistent with official records and identification documents, such as the passport. In addition, it is common for students of Asian descent to adopt and use a westernized name that is not documented in an official fashion, but is the name normally used at the institution.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Requiring proof of identity from each applicant is sometimes done, yet this practice is excessive.*

*Even if preferred names are collected, institutions can be slow or inconsistent in using them for day-to-day communication with their students, such as on class lists.*

*Other institutions and agencies should be cautious about using educational records as a primary means of establishing personal identity.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Institutions should claim the right to examine source documents to establish the identity of applicants/ students but should normally accept the information as submitted by the applicant, checking only in situations where there are concerns about its accuracy.*

*Preferred or informal names should be collected and used for day-to-day communications by the institution.*

### **6.2.2 Authenticating Citizenship or Residency Status**

Most institutions will not require proof of residency from applicants or new enrollees, but, because tuition fees are often higher for non-residents (i.e., international students), there is a consequent temptation to misrepresent this information. Some institutions therefore have procedures that attempt to find anomalies that might suggest that an applicant is improperly claiming domestic residency status.

For example, an applicant claiming Canadian residency who has never attended a school or college in Canada could be asked for documentation to show citizenship or residency, but other applicants who had claimed attendance at a school in Canada would not be asked for such evidence, in the interests of efficiency. This is a rather weak check, since there is nothing to suggest that student who had attended another Canadian educational establishment did so as a legitimate domestic student rather than as an international student, such as one in an exchange program.

A balance must be struck between efficiency and thoroughness. It is inevitable that a few applicants will attend with falsified background information, with a resultant loss of potential revenue to the institution and inappropriate use of public funds.



**Scenario:** *At Institution 'X', all Canadian students who requested a formal confirmation of enrolment to be submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada had their citizenship record checked by the institution on the assumption that a Canadian resident would not normally be required to submit this document. However, this is ineffective if a multi-year student permit is issued or if an individual chooses not to request a study permit.*

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Students whose residency does not qualify them for a tuition subsidy may be attending, but the institution does not receive full tuition revenue from them. Such misrepresentation will always be a serious breach of the institution's student conduct rules and processes will be required to detect and deal with incidents.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Institutions should claim the right to examine source documents to establish the residency of applicants and students.*

*Based on local experience, procedures should be developed to determine which applicants should be required to submit proof of residency before further processing is done or before course enrolment.*

*Occasionally, sample audits might be conducted to determine whether procedures are sufficient.*

### **6.2.3 Authenticating Applicant Statements**

The content of an applicant statement can be verified to some extent by one or more letters of reference but few institutions will attempt this in a methodical fashion.

### **6.2.4 Authenticating Reference Letters**

If any weight is put on letters of reference submitted on behalf of an applicant (whether sent directly to the institution or submitted by the applicant), institutions should consider a means of verifying these, perhaps on a random basis, or at least acknowledging them. The difficulty of verifying such letters and the exaggerations that they often contain has led to many institutions discontinuing to require them. Ideally, each reference letter should be acknowledged in writing or by telephone, to thank the referee for making the effort to recommend the (named) candidate. A surprising number of such referees will have no knowledge of having written the claimed reference letter and will be quick to advise of this!

## 6.2.5 Verifying Applicant Information

If official transcripts are required and are received directly from their sources, institutions should have little need to verify transcripts of academic records from known institutions. If there is doubt about the authenticity of a document, a copy can be made and sent with an explanatory letter to the issuing institution at an address that is independently verified. This might be done via email. Some institutions will often do this for an English language transcript that has been translated, ostensibly at the issuing institution. The difficulties with this procedure are:

- little or no incentive for the issuing institution to respond if the document is indeed authentic;
- unclear whose responsibility it might be to respond;
- presumption of English communication skills at the issuing institution might be misplaced;
- issuing institution might be willing to respond but have insufficient time and resources to do so, especially if the volume of requests is substantial; and
- under Canadian privacy laws, the 'issuing' institution might feel that they have no right to comment on the record of a former student without that student's written permission to do so and might not accept that the institution requesting verification has received that permission, even if the application form clearly states that the institution claims the right to verify attendance at another institution.

Institutions may choose to accept the educational records and references directly from the applicant and their procedures may require this, in order to minimize handling costs in receiving and matching documents. This is an efficient and acceptable practice if the documentation does not play a significant role in the admission decision. However, if that is so, it is questionable why these documents are considered to be useful.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*A common mistake in admissions is to put weight on documents such as references that are never or rarely verified, yet are treated as authentic.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Supporting documents should be sent from the sending institutions, testing agencies and referees directly to the institution.*

*Institutions should be aware of any unverified information and, if it is of concern to the institution, should consider verifying a proportion of data received directly as well as all references and all documents received indirectly (e.g., from applicants), if relevant to the admission decision.*

## 6.3 Receiving Documents

Contemporary student information systems have provision for online check lists, visible only to the applicant and to authorized staff. Such lists are very useful to show what is needed, what has been received and when. Receipt of a document on the list should be duly recorded so that its status changes to 'received'. When no documents remain requested or required, the application file status will usually change either automatically or by staff action, from 'incomplete' to 'complete' and a review for admission is triggered. A similar paper-based system can also be effective, but is invisible to the applicant.

Much depends in such a system on accurate recording of information. In the absence of such an online system, a manual list is made up and physically checked each time that a document is received and added to a physical file.

The person responsible for receiving and entering documents to an information system needs to be well-trained and to understand the implications of entering a document incorrectly. For example, if a high school transcript was requested but instead, an adult graduation diploma and transcript were received, which is generally considered to be equivalent, does this fulfill the original request? It depends on the data the applicant provided that made up the educational history. If the incoming document is recorded as 'received', but it is not accepted as the requested high school transcript, the student's application might never achieve 'complete' status and a potential student is needlessly lost.

Errors are possible with both physical and virtual check lists, although handling a physical file makes it more likely that the error will be detected. The most frustrating error type for an applicant occurs when s/he is required to submit a document that does not exist, and thus cannot be provided, or when a document that is known to have been submitted is not properly received and is presumed to be 'lost'. Unless the applicant can persuade a staff person to change the requested item, s/he remains in admission limbo.

Electronic documents now constitute the majority of the data received by many institutions. Secondary school records from BC and some other Canadian provinces are rarely received in paper format. The accurate matching of these records to the applicant files and the need to check that the records are complete have largely replaced concerns of previous decades over entering large amounts of data and handling volumes of paper documents.

With the increased use of computer-based admission systems comes the ability to query and seek out anomalous data. Where feasible, flexible data queries can identify likely problem situations so they may be remedied. Institutions that have records imaging systems to store and display admission documents have additional powerful tools for checking on the accuracy of the application status of any applicant and these tools are especially useful if admission functions are performed in more than one unit by sharing virtual information and documents.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*If a document is requested or received incorrectly, an application can stall, perhaps without the applicant's knowledge.*

*Small errors of categorization are soon magnified into 'lost' or 'missing' documents.*

## Practices to Consider

*Procedures, such as data queries, can be developed for early detection of stalled applications and process impasses.*

*The usual source of problems can be insufficient staff training, so better training is the first action recommended. (See Section 3.2.3, Training.)*

*If admission functions are performed in more than one unit, information and document sharing would be needed to serve their separate needs. A document imaging system provides the best solution for viewing admission documents at different locations.*

### 6.3.1 Translation of Documents

Institutions will receive source documents in various languages, but should be expected to comprehend only those that are in the official language of their jurisdiction. Larger institutions with national profiles should definitely be capable of reading and recording documents in both French and English.

Where translations are required, it is common practice for this to be done at the applicant's expense by a certified translator or recognized agency. Both the original and translated version of the document should be requested by the institution.

Sometimes, for example for a transfer credit evaluation, course outlines or descriptions are requested that might be much longer than most certificates and academic records, running perhaps dozens of pages. If these are in a language that is not normally used at the institution, it would be reasonable for the applicant to provide an uncertified translation, saving the applicant considerable expense. This is acceptable because the document would not directly affect the admission decision and also perhaps because the terminology might be relatively technical, and therefore not within the normal range of the average translator. It is often useful to have resources within an institution for rapid translation of documents in languages that are frequently encountered. This can assist significantly in the admission of applicants with international educational histories.

## Issues and Challenges

*Institutions that recruit nationally might lack staff resources that permit receiving documents in Canada's official national languages.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Certified translations should be requested from applicants for documents in languages other than English that are critical to the admission process. Normally these will not be received with the original document because they will come from different sources.*

### **6.3.2 Handling Irreplaceable Documents**

Applicants are normally expected to provide documents to the institution by ordering them from the source institution and arranging for them to be sent to the institution they are applying to. The assumptions are that these documents are infinitely reproducible and once they are received, they become the property of the receiving institution, not the applicant. Some institutions explicitly state this, and never transfer a received transcript to an applicant.

Typically, admission documents will not be kept for long, especially if the applicant does not attend or is not admitted. It would be normal to shred and dispose of many paper admission documents one year after the admission session date, except for enrolled students and exceptional cases.

A difficulty arises when a document that is required for admission is either irreplaceable or difficult to replace. This might be something other than a transcript and might include identification documents such as a passport. Also, applicants may choose to apply to more than one institution and therefore be unable to satisfy more than one request for an original document.

Procedures can be set up which allow for a document to be received, recorded, examined, verified and returned or held for pickup. These procedures can work but are very labour-intensive and prone to error. To maintain a promised standard of service, staffing levels are required that are much higher than normally provided. This might be acceptable to the institution if the process helps with a specific admission goal, such as the international student target, but institutions should explore ways of achieving their goals more efficiently. One possible solution might be to break a primary rule requiring only original documents for consideration of certain admission cases and allow photo-copies of these documents for an interim period. At a later date, perhaps after admission and clearance of immigration study permit procedures, the student can present the documents in their original form for verification on the clear understanding that any resulting inconsistencies could result in sanctions that could range from reprimand to discontinuance.

It might seem excessive to emphasize verification of data and documents, especially if the pervading climate is to open the institution's doors widely and welcome the world, but misrepresentation is widespread and serious, involving not only petty players but also organized crime on a large scale. The extent of document fraud is not clearly known. Ignoring it is to place one's institution at a greater risk of loss of reputation - a priceless commodity in the education field.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*An institution that uses ad hoc procedures to review and return important documents to applicants will risk losing important documents and absorb large amounts of staffing resources.*

*Identity theft is regrettably common, and the return of an important document to an unauthorized person is not a responsible action.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Institutions should determine which documents required for admission cannot be readily replaced by the applicant and develop an efficient procedure for viewing and verifying such documents that satisfies the needs of the applicant and the institution. The procedure must be secure and not place the institution at risk of a claim by the applicant for loss.*

*Interim use of unofficial copies of irreplaceable documents is suggested, until originals can be viewed.*

# 7. Admission Policy

## 7.1 Need for Admission Policy

Institutions must establish admission policies. Like all policies, they will be set by the institution's governing body responsible for such policies, be subject to interpretation by responsible staff and have a review mechanism. Most institutions will approve admission policy at the level of education council or academic senate but will have a committee for developing and reviewing details.

## 7.2 Creating Admission Policy

Creating admission policy for a new institution or even for a new program within an institution can be a daunting task. It is advisable to adopt or at least review the policy framework of another similar institution or program as a starting point. Regular policy review is also necessary. Education systems are constantly changing, making guiding principles especially useful. Often, institutions are presented with applicant characteristics that were not anticipated when the admission policies were first drafted, giving additional value to general statements of principle.

A tiered structure of policy works best. At each level or tier, the interpretation of a policy can be assigned to a responsible body.

Examples of general principles: (linked to local policies)

*Students admitted from jurisdictions outside British Columbia shall be expected to have successfully completed secondary school education to a standard not lower than the standard applicable to BC secondary school graduates in a program that includes an equivalent or greater breadth of subject matter.*

*Transfer students shall have successfully completed the equivalent of 24 credits of transferable credit at a standard not lower than that ....*

Example of a general principle (linked to external policies)

*Students admitted from jurisdictions outside British Columbia shall be expected to have successfully completed secondary school education and be admissible into a corresponding program in a leading technical institute in the local jurisdiction.*

Admission staff will need to know the limits of their use of discretion and personal judgment, which should be apparent from the tier or level of each particular policy. This will require constant awareness by admission supervisory staff of how day-to-day decisions are being made, and it suggests a clear means of reporting precedents as well as good communication among staff.

Admission policies are not restricted to setting minimum entrance requirements and equivalencies to local standards: many other issues also arise (e.g., 'shelf life' of test scores or credit earned – some institutions disallow scores or credit earned more than a stipulated time earlier or earned while the student was discontinued from a program).

Teaching and program administration staff are directly involved with the daily progress of students and are often involved in their selection. Therefore admission staff must understand their needs and be in regular communication with them.

A close working relationship is needed between the admission committee and the manager of the admission process. The committee needs to know on a regular basis how policy is being interpreted and where difficulties have arisen. Occasionally, guidance from the committee will be needed, although it is not suggested that individual cases be referred routinely to an institution-wide admission policy committee. The admission committee should be receptive and responsive to the input and feedback of the admission manager.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Admission policy sometimes appears to be set in a vacuum, with little relation to reality or experience.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Tiered policies, based on agreed principles as established by the institution, should form the basis for admission to all programs.*

*The limits of discretion and personal judgment should be apparent from the tier or level of each particular policy.*

*A new institution or program should examine the requirements of similar institutions for guidance.*

### **7.2.1 Publicizing Admission Policy**

Summarized admission policy rubric is dull fare, but should be available on demand to applicants. This is a good use of a web document, linked from an attractive, enticing recruitment page. While many institutions follow this practice, the level of detail is often inconsistent, and maintenance of minor detail can become a time-consuming chore. Publication of policy details is therefore best limited to application situations that are encountered frequently, leaving generalized principles to cover more unusual cases.

In addition, to effectively communicate with staff, an online reference (intranet) is suggested for details of admission types, precedents and examples.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Admission requirements can quickly become outdated. While the Internet allows for changes to be displayed very rapidly, deciding how to change a policy and how to describe or specify it is usually much more time-consuming.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*The institution's web site should set out for applicants the admission policy for each program at a general level, giving details if particular situations are frequently encountered or where a particular educational background is encouraged for recruitment reasons.*

*An online reference (intranet) may be helpful for more detailed admission rules, precedents and examples for ready lookup by staff.*



## 7.3 The Impact of Admission Policy

An institution with a high profile in the community and few obvious competitors can strongly influence student choices at the ‘feeder’ or partner institutions, whether these are secondary schools or other post-secondary institutions. These impacts need to be understood and discussed with the partner institutions before implementation of policy changes.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*An institution can unintentionally affect the curriculum, staffing and operational costs of a school system or a feeder institution through its admission policies.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*An institution should consider the impact of policy change on its educational partners. The admission committee needs to receive feedback from the community it serves to ensure that policies remain fair and realistic.*

*Often post-secondary institutions formally include secondary school representatives in consultative roles, who sometimes may also be part of institutional governance. Significant post-secondary feeder institutions might also be added.*

### **7.3.1 Admission Changes Require Good Research**

Successful admission policy requires a set of guiding principles. This may mean adherence to a particular set of values or insistence on decisions that are data-driven. Policy changes need to develop within a framework. It is unfortunately rather common for institutions to consider changes in an ad hoc manner, sometimes approving and implementing admission requirements without sufficient modeling or analysis. A particular set of courses might seem to be desirable, but if they are made a requirement, the eligible pool of applicants could be reduced below the threshold required to fill the program.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Institutions, even those that have reputations for strong research, often implement policy changes without determining whether sufficient applicants will choose to meet a new requirement or will no longer consider that program because they are now ineligible.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Before implementation, an admission requirement change requires careful modeling and analysis to determine the likely choices of applicants in response to the change.*

*There is rarely any substitute for good research. Whether this is market research or analysis of applicant data from previous years, institutions might be wise to determine the cost of performing adequate research and budget for it.*

### **7.3.2 Admission Requirements – Firm or Soft?**

Institutions sometimes publish admission requirements that are routinely waived. Usually, this is a result of the requirement being out of date, inappropriate, or, more often, because the program cannot be filled from the applicant pool if the requirement remains in place. In addition, individual cases may arise that warrant genuine exceptions.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*If an admission requirement is routinely waived, that policy may require review because published admission requirements strongly affect the behaviour of applicants, who will choose not to apply if they do not meet a stated requirement.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*If an admission requirement (such as a course or performance standard) is necessary, the rationale should be clear and well understood.*

*A review is suggested of any requirement that is routinely or frequently waived.*

### 7.3.3 Lead-time Required to Change Policy

Significant lead-time is usually needed if an admission requirement is changed, both for partner institutions and future applicants, unless the change relaxes requirements. To determine appropriate lead time, broad external consultation might be needed.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

*Policy changes are announced that allow insufficient lead time for effective action by other educational partners, such as changing the frequency of their course offerings.*

#### **Practices to Consider**

*Implementation should be determined in consultation with the educational partners of the institution.*

*The institution should estimate how long it will take for future applicants to reasonably meet the new requirement.*

### 7.3.4 Stability of Admission Requirements

The more that admission requirements remain stable and predictable, the more likely it is that educational partners and the public will accept them and build behaviours around them. In addition, if an institution is changing policies but is trying to accommodate applicants who might not have had an opportunity to meet a new requirement, it is quite common to apply two or more sets of admission requirements simultaneously, depending on the applicant's characteristics (e.g., year of graduation). This creates significant additional work for admission staff, can confuse applicants and staff and makes automation more difficult to achieve.

Another aspect of stability is that admission policy is often changed for reasons that are transitory. There are many instances when a short-term issue gives rise to a policy change but then evaporates and the resulting policy becomes redundant. Sunset clauses with mandatory review periods are helpful in such cases. If a new policy is set for an initial period of, say, five years, and is to be reviewed after the first two years, the impact of the change may be analyzed using admission data. If not renewed, the policy automatically lapses after the initial period.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

*While 'grandfathering' can be an effective solution when admission requirements change, alternatives might be better, particularly if the change is deemed to be important.*

## Practices to Consider

*Institutions and applicants benefit from stable requirements. Usually, changes should apply to all applicants, to keep the requirements as simple and consistent as possible.*

*New policies may have sunset clauses and mandatory review periods to ensure that policies are relevant to future, often unpredictable conditions.*

### 7.3.5 Consistency of Policy

Every effort needs to be made to ensure that admission rules are consistently applied. However, it is sometimes difficult to make the rules internally consistent, so that standards remain level across different jurisdictions, in spite of differences in educational systems and use of different evaluation standards and methods. For example, if a student in one part of Canada may use a Grade 12 environmental conservation course to fulfill an admission requirement, then a BC student or a student from South Africa should also be permitted to use a similar course, if it is of comparable quality or rigour. Too often, this is not permitted.

Even within a single jurisdiction, a course might be accepted for admission (e.g., a course that has a Provincial examination) while another is not accepted, with little underlying rationale.

Prior academic merit can be a proxy for potential success. A relatively fair way to achieve consistency of admission requirements is to use the institution's internal statistical record of academic performance of previously admitted students, provided that there are sufficient data to analyze. Ideally, the probability of success of each applicant could be determined statistically and offers made such that at the margin, all new students have the same minimum probability, regardless of their backgrounds. However, this is usually impractical and is not known to be done anywhere, but some institutions use such performance data to assist in marginal decisions where discretion may also be used.

Institutions that have policies that specifically favour local students can be less concerned about the policy inconsistencies that arise between local and external applicant types.

## Issues and Challenges

*Evidence that exists within the institution might not be adequately analyzed or used. This likely results from insufficient resources needed to conduct analysis, the inadequacy of sample sizes or inconsistencies within the data.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Consistency across different jurisdictions is an important principle, as is the manner in which consistency may be measured. Both merit stating publicly. Often the fairest way to achieve this is to use the institution's academic performance data of previously admitted students, provided that sufficient relevant evidence is available.*

### **7.3.6 Restrictive Policies**

Occasionally, when an institution has many more applicants for a program than it has spaces, there is a temptation to introduce spurious requirements that serve more to reduce the applicant pool to a manageable level rather than to directly improve the selection of applicants. If guiding principles are used, this is less likely to happen.

Spurious requirements help in part to control the costs of admission processing by deterring some applicants, and in part they send a message of selectivity or exclusiveness that might encourage applications from those who might otherwise not apply. Heavy application fees, unreasonable deadlines and unusual documentation requirements can serve similar purposes.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Spurious requirements can evolve that reduce the applicant pool to a level that is desired, but the requirements do not serve to fairly select applicants based on evidence or reason.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Admission requirements should follow the established guiding principles, such as being realistic, geared specifically to known criteria for success in the program and not discouraging applicants from any quarter.*

*If there are an excessive number of applicants to consider, the size of the active applicant pool might be controlled randomly such as by lottery. (See Section 8.2.2, Random Selection).*

# 8. Admission Criteria and Candidate Selection

Assuming that for some programs at least, there will be more qualified applicants than places, some selection process is needed. The method and process varies by institution and program.

## 8.1 Evidence-Based Criteria

One basis for admitting students will be evidence of successful performance of students with similar backgrounds. However, at most institutions, insufficient research is conducted to make this analysis effective. In addition, the characteristics of 'successful performance' might be unclear or in dispute.

In order to make admission criteria evidence-based, many details must be collected for later analysis that give good data on the characteristics of students and their performances before and after admission. Collection of such data might go beyond the data that are strictly needed to make an admission decision (e.g., a transfer student might be admitted provided that s/he is in good academic standing – according to policy), but it might be beneficial to record the cumulative or admission grade point average of that student for subsequent analysis, even if the data are not used for admission itself.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Often little or no research is conducted to provide the necessary evidence.*

*Agreement may be lacking on what constitutes success.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Admission criteria should be evidence-based.*

### 8.1.1 Legal Environment

Some attention is needed to ensure that the admission process is legally compliant. Canadian law stipulates that unfair discrimination is unacceptable. Specifically, the following should not be among the admission criteria to public institutions:

- age exceeding middle age;
- race, place of birth, nationality;
- gender, sexual orientation;
- religion, political belief;
- disability; and
- wealth, social status, social class, caste, etc.

Human rights legislation and precedents will continue to evolve, so institutions might be well-advised to review their criteria for possible unfair selection practices from time to time. For example, it might be evident that applicants from small towns are less likely to succeed in a program than applicants from large cities, but if criteria were developed to select on that basis, the result could be considered to be unfair. Many institutions publicize a non-discrimination statement concerning admissions.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Bias, whether conscious or unconscious, can creep into admission selection processes unnoticed.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*The institution may adopt and publicize a non-discrimination statement concerning admission, even if it is redundant, in a strict legal sense.*

*A periodic audit of admission outcomes can be an effective way of highlighting areas where bias could be an issue, and can be investigated further if a problem is detected.*

## **8.2 How Admission Decisions are Made**

### **8.2.1 Ranked versus unranked applicant pools**

The basic selection process does not rank candidates, but simply sorts them into two groups in which the applicant either:

- fulfils the minimum admission standards (as determined by the institution's published admission policy); or
- does not fulfil the above.

Selection of applicants into qualified and not currently qualified pools should be made on defensible grounds that are clearly publicized and relatively objective. If the program is not expected to fill, this level of sorting is usually sufficient.

If a program is likely to fill, so that all qualified applicants cannot be admitted, institutions often rank the qualified applicants to create an order or sequence. This ranking could be made in many different ways, including combinations of:

- date of application;
- standardized test score;
- academic admission average (GPA); and
- interview, audition, skill test or personal profile score.

Ranking of candidates should also be conducted on defensible grounds that are clearly publicized.

Many institutions use a combination of methods for different programs or for different populations of applicants. For example, a university might first sort its secondary school applicants into those who are minimally qualified and those who do not meet the minimum requirements. Then, the qualified group is ranked to make selections in a descending order. Meanwhile, transfer applicants to the same institution might be sorted into qualified and not currently qualified, but are not ranked. The need for ranking depends on whether the institution expects to deny admission to any qualified applicants. In this example, the university expects to be able to admit all qualified transfer applicants but not all qualified applicants from secondary schools.

### **8.2.2 Random Selection**

Instead of ranking, some institutions use a random process to make admission offers from the pool of qualified applicants. The reasons for this might be:

- absence of evidence to show which candidates are more likely to succeed;
- to minimize cost and time expended in selecting applicants;
- to avoid use of overly-subjective methods of ranking (e.g., interviews);
- to treat applicants in a non-judgmental manner; and
- to better meet a mandate for equitable access.

Some people dislike random selection because it is seen as reducing the incentives implicit in competitive ranking. In some other jurisdictions, random selection is used to reduce the number of qualified candidates to a number that is manageable for the purpose of final selection, such as via an interview. This differs from the method used in some British Columbia institutions because personal qualities are assessed, even if not for all qualified applicants.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

*If any applicant is accepted from outside the qualified pool (presumably because of special circumstances), it is unfair not to also consider all those within the qualified applicant pool, who may have equal or more compelling circumstances.*

#### **Practices to Consider**

*Selection of applicants should be made on defensible grounds that are clearly publicized and are relatively objective.*

*To ensure fairness or the perception of fairness, an admission unit could invite applicants to personally scrutinize the random selection process, provided that applicant confidentiality is maintained.*



## 8.2.3 Objective Admission Criteria

An objective criterion is empirical and measurable. However, even objective criteria can be very imperfect measures of applicants. Pros and Cons of objective criteria are found below.

| Criterion                                    | Pro  | Con  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Academic merit (or proxy) (e.g., GPA)</b> | Applicants will almost all have evaluations of previous learning that can be calculated by admission staff to give an admission GPA. | Applicants likely took different subjects in different jurisdictions and were evaluated differently.<br><br>Must be calculated for each applicant separately because different institutions use different rules. |
| <b>Admission test score</b>                  | Single normalized reference test – same for all.   | Test conditions adequately controlled?<br>Cultural bias in test?<br>Test available and fair for various disabilities?  |
| <b>Aptitude test</b>                         | Single normalized reference test – same for all.   | Does evidence show that the selected characteristics yield higher success rates?   |
| <b>Date of application</b>                   | Simple. Encourages timeliness. ‘First come, first served’ principle well accepted.   | Creates a surge of applications on the opening day (if any), reducing the spread of applicants.<br><br>Less qualified applicants may be admitted instead of more qualified applicants.                           |

Criteria that are more subjective are:

| Criterion  | Pro  | Con  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Application essay or letter</b>                                   | Can be scored. Gives some insight as to communication ability, motivation.   | Authenticity can be suspect unless written under secure conditions.<br><br>Coaching will affect results greatly.<br><br>Scoring likely to be unreliable.   |
| <b>Letters of recommendation or references</b>                       | Can be scored. Can give relative impression of applicant versus others.  | Unreliable and unless acknowledged carefully, authenticity is suspect. Too dependent on the veracity and skill of the author.                              |
| <b>Resumé</b>  | Can be scored. Gives some insight as to communication ability, motivation and experience.                          | Unreliable and unless corroborated carefully, contents are suspect.  |
| <b>Interview</b>   | Can be scored. Gives some insight as to communication ability, motivation, knowledge and experience.               | Time-consuming and requires careful method to achieve consistency.<br><br>Does evidence show that the selected characteristics yield higher success rates? |
| <b>Audition/portfolio review (in-person or videotape/image file)</b> | Can be scored. Gives good view of a range of specific skills. Useful for performance arts and similar disciplines. | Time-consuming and requires careful method to achieve consistency.<br><br>Content can be affected by technical quality.                                    |

## 8.2.4 Holistic Evaluation versus Hurdle-Clearing Approach

Evaluations are of two main kinds.

- **Hurdle clearing** relies on a binary yes/no response to the question “*does the applicant meet this specified condition?*” The questions are posed in sequence until all admission hurdles are cleared and the applicant enters the pool of qualified applicants. This is the most common form of evaluation.
- **Holistic evaluation** relies on judgment to weigh many attributes of a candidate, strong points in some areas offsetting other weaker aspects, to give an overall impression and, perhaps, a ranking.

Some institutions use terms such as ‘broadly-based’ admission to describe a hybrid of these methods, in which the basic admission criteria are checked by hurdle-clearing but ranking within the qualified pool or a subset of the qualified pool is done by an overall evaluation of many different qualities.

The additional effort and cost of conducting a holistic review of candidates can be justified by:

- improved selection of students (e.g., institution’s view that the community benefits from greater diversity);
- other criteria failing to provide a clear rationale for selecting students;
- other entry criteria not being sufficiently fine-grained to allow selection of the correct number of applicants, when the intake is relatively small;
- applicants being so diverse that a single criterion is ineffective; and
- its popularity among the applicants themselves, who like the notion that their individual worth is being considered rather than simply a series of their educational scores.

The overall merit of the holistic method should stand or fall by evidence of increased success in the program, if such evidence exists and if consensus can be reached on what constitutes success.

## 8.2.5 Wait Listing

Some institutions with programs that have limited entry and an excess of qualified applicants will give explicit preference to candidates who have applied previously but were not selected or will place the applicant on a waiting list to start the program at an unknown future date, without any need to re-apply. The expectation is that a qualified applicant who persists (and in some cases who continues to apply for admission to the program) will eventually be able to start the program. Presumably, the candidate will apply knowing that there is a finite chance of success, which is to some extent known by the weight given to the prior application and the number of places available. In the meantime, the wait-listed candidate is able to work, travel or study in another program, as each chooses.

This approach seems best suited to programs that draw candidates from a limited area and who are unlikely to move away from the institution to seek a similar place at another. It implies a preference for candidates who are not wishing to enter a post-secondary program directly from secondary school, but are probably working. If few or no first-time applicants are admitted to the program, it seems to impose the burden on the applicant of a needless application fee, although in some cases, no subsequent fee is required by the institution. However, in many other respects, wait listing appears to offer a well-established, orderly and ‘altogether Canadian’ admission queue that rewards persistence and patience. The most motivated (or location-bound) applicants will self-select. In a well-run wait list process, applicants receive clear information about the likely wait period and their positions on the list. They may also benefit from guidance concerning the most suitable activities they might pursue while waiting for an opportunity to start their programs.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*The reputation of a program or institution can be affected negatively if in the public's perception, apparently highly qualified candidates are not selected in favour of those who appear to have weaker qualifications for the program.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Wait lists seem to work best when applicants receive good estimates of their predicted start dates, do not need to re-activate their applications and remain in frequent contact with the institution.*

*Applicants may also benefit from guidance concerning the suitable activities they might pursue while waiting for an opportunity to start their programs.*

Each method of evaluation has its pros and cons, proponents and detractors. An institution might employ many of these methods for different programs and situations.

Evidence of success is the best measure for judging the effectiveness of any method of selecting applicants, but such evidence is rarely used. Success need not be solely related to grades at set student career intervals, and institutions should in addition analyze retention and program completion (graduation) rates and satisfaction surveys.

# 9. Language and Other Competencies

Language competency issues are among the thorniest topics in admissions. Institutions have expectations about the ability of students to communicate in the chosen language medium and should ask sufficient questions on the application for admission to determine whether further evidence is needed of communication competency. Since citizenship or residency implies little about language ability, it should not be used as a criterion in this context.

Some institutions request the applicant's native or first language, but this information can be misleading. Most ask the applicant to state the primary language used in the home, school and workplace or community. Criteria must be developed to evaluate responses, and some applicants will have to be asked to submit further information.

Institutions that offer language training are able to tailor admission offers with required language courses to optimize student success. This effectively controls for the otherwise undesirable situation in which a new student is unable to perform to her or his potential because of limited familiarity with the language, either oral or written.

Some institutions also have specific requirements for skills in quantitative analysis, but mostly these are program-specific, are set at the level of course prerequisite or are required for credential completion rather than potentially blocking entry to a program or institution.

Testing of applicants is often entrusted to private testing agencies, but some institutions conduct their own tests for applicants in the local area. Typical English competency tests that are widely available in other countries and have reasonable reliability and test security are TOEFL, TSE and IELTS. Other useful tests, such as CAEL and MELAB, may have less consistent security, but could be used in the absence of other tests. (See Section 17.1, *Abbreviations and Acronyms Used*, for full name and brief description of each test.)

## 9.1 Tests Required

Typically, institutions request test scores that are normally available and are used in the applicant's home jurisdiction. For example, for applicants who are attending US secondary schools, it is normal that they should take and submit the SAT Reasoning Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) scores, but it would be unusual to request the same test scores from applicants from a Canadian school.

Several institutions in BC require that applicants take the Language Proficiency Index (LPI) testing. It is best used in the most populated areas of BC because test locations are limited and many students choose to make multiple attempts, making testing by special arrangement at a remote site a difficult or disadvantaging prospect.

BC institutions seem to be more inclined than those in other jurisdictions to impose admission tests. Widespread use of these tests for admission is questionable, but many institutions will use the same tests as placement or streaming tests, affecting what courses a student may take or the level at which they may start, rather than influencing the decision to be admitted. For an admission test to be practical and reasonable, it must be readily available at the student's location. A placement test need not meet so stringent a criterion, and might also be deferred until the student is in the local area of the institution. Placement tests usually make better sense than admission tests, provided that the institution has the resources to assist those students whose test performances show a need for remediation of skill or knowledge gaps.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Some applicants have more opportunity to take a test than others, skewing the outcomes.*

*Tests that are not sufficiently reliable might be used for admission decisions.*

*Many test agencies caution institutions not to apply fixed cut-off scores, but this practice is widespread, even though the variance of error of many tests suggests that hard cut-off scores are not warranted.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Any admission test should be readily available at the student's location.*

# 10. Communicating with Applicants and Others

## 10.1 General Principles

All applications for admission should be acknowledged quickly and clearly (see Section 4.3, *Application Acknowledgment*). As soon as possible after this acknowledgment, the institution should clearly request whatever further information is needed to make a decision, with deadlines for each item or an overall deadline. The applicant should be advised of the approximate schedule that the process will follow. Email is a suitable format for updates throughout the admission process, but it is common practice to send the results of the evaluation (and/or offer of admission) via hardcopy in the mail.

As items are received, the applicant should be kept informed. A self-service web-deployed, confidential information page is often used for this purpose. The investment in configuring a student information system to track items so that applicants may view the progress daily is considerable but worthwhile. Essentially, the Student Information System (SIS) becomes a 24 hour/7 day indefatigable admission robot.

The institution should apply technology that is appropriate to the communication model. Ideally, institutions should allocate staff to manage telephone inquiries from applicants regarding the status of their applications. Also, it is very helpful for the institution to recognize that applicants are much influenced by personal assistance and human contact, and efforts to match applicants with recruiters or other knowledgeable staff or trained students within an institution will usually be rewarding in terms of applicant yields. Such staff assignments are, however, far from trivial and could absorb considerable resources.

If an application is still incomplete when a deadline is approaching, an automated reminder is in order. If the application is cancelled, a further notice is needed.

Some institutions utilize customer relations software packages that enable them to record and analyze all contacts with their applicants and students. In addition, selected individuals might be offered enhanced services using service indicators, set by the institution on the basis of selection criteria such as test scores.

## 10.2 Contents of the Offer of Admission

An offer of admission can be made by email or via an online portal. In most cases, a hardcopy offer of admission should follow in the mail. It must specify the terms of the offer and what steps must be taken to accept it. Some institutions for some programs might not require formal acceptance, but will assume that the applicant will accept or will use statistics from previous intakes to estimate the probability of attendance. When spaces are limited and the goal is to fill every available seat, the formal acceptance of an offer becomes important. Past experience will guide the admission manager in judging when a program is full and no further offers can be made.

The offer of admission should contain all the information that the student needs in order to make her/his decision. An offer should be written and comprehensive and include:

- admission conditions if any;
- transfer credit if any;
- housing if any;
- financial awards or scholarships if any; and
- whether a response is required and by what date.

It must also be welcoming and have a positive tone. For these reasons, some institutions split the contents into a general welcoming letter, and a series of qualifying subsequent explanatory statements that are not merely 'fine print' but are clear and comprehensive. A holistic approach to communicating admissibility to the student is strongly suggested.

## 10.2.1 International Admission Offers

Special attention is needed in preparing the admission offers for international students to comply with the Study Permit requirements of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Many institutions use different letter formats for international students because the specification is more comprehensive and the additional information is unnecessary and possibly confusing for domestic admissions.

Specifically, CIC (2010)<sup>2</sup> requires:

- a (hard copy) letter on the institution's letterhead, including full mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail and Web site addresses;
- full name of student as shown in the student's identity document;
- student's full mailing address;
- name of contact at institution - telephone and fax numbers, web site and e-mail address, institution's full mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail and Web site addresses and name of contact (even if the information is already included in the letterhead);
- type of institution: public or private, university, college, community college, or technical college;
- full or part-time studies;
- field or program of study;
- level of study (e.g., post-secondary or bachelor's degree);
- year of study (e.g., 2nd or 3rd year of a bachelor's degree);
- conditions of acceptance;
- estimated tuition fee (total fees required, including tuition and board);
- whether the fees are prepaid;
- scholarship/teaching assistantship/other financial aid awarded;
- length of program (the date a program begins and estimated completion date);
- expiry date of offer; and
- last day to register.

### Issues and Challenges

*When an applicant has applied for two different programs, the admission letter might not clearly explain what is being offered, or how the applicant might change to the preferred program after admission to the offered program.*

### Practices to Consider

*An admission offer should be in a signed letter, although email pre-notification is also useful.*

*Conditions and terms should be specific for the applicant's benefit.*

*For Canadian applicants, the admission letter might be in two parts, with the fine details in the latter part, but for international applicants, care is needed to meet federal government requirements to facilitate the applicant's receipt of a Study Permit.*

<sup>2</sup> CIC requirements change often and sometimes without notice. Check for updates on the CIC website: [www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/index.asp)

## 10.3 Privacy Considerations for Applicants and their Families

Provincial privacy laws govern what information can be given to whom. Other laws such as provincial school acts stipulate the rights of a legal guardian or parent to be informed about aspects of their minor child's education and welfare.

Applicants to post-secondary institutions are often legal minors, aged 17 or 18 years. In spite of not yet being legal adults, it is standard practice to treat them as adults and not to disclose information to the applicant's parent or legal guardian unless that person has been specifically granted information access by the applicant. It is not known if any post-secondary institution applies different disclosure rules to legal minors. What might make some sense from a legal point of view might well prove to be impractical.

Applicants should be given the opportunity to name one or two individuals who may receive their private information. This permission should be time-limited and/or specific to the information being requested (i.e., permission is granted for a parent to be informed of admission status but not of the courses the student plans to take). It is not reasonable that a parent or sibling who assists in the admission process should also be able to receive course grade information many years later, simply because permission was granted at the time of application but never revoked. Most institutions enable students to make changes to the name of the designated person throughout their careers at the institution.

The name of the person or persons named by the applicant should be easily accessible on the SIS so that any inquiry is dealt with quickly and efficiently. Staff who release information will need to ensure that the person to whom they are speaking can properly identify both themselves and the applicant.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Those named by the 17 year old applicant to receive admission information could remain authorized, through inaction, to obtain detailed financial and grade information for the same individual as a 25 year old graduate student.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Applicants should be able to name a person to whom confidential admission information may be given but this should be time-limited and purpose-specific. If s/he becomes a student, permission to release information may be re-requested and renewed from time to time.*

*Applicant records should be kept for no longer than seven years and then destroyed unless the applicant has attended the institution.*



## 10.4 Communicating with Secondary Schools

It is standard practice for school counsellors and others to assist applicants to attend another school. Post-secondary institutions generally exchange confidential applicant information, in the applicant's interest. The institution's confidentiality policy should explicitly allow for this, should a dispute ever occur over the release of confidential applicant information. Most post-secondary institutions treat applicants as adults, because a large proportion is over the age of 18. This simplifies the administration of privacy matters but policy needs to be explicit and recognize that the institution is aware of conflicting legal requirements with respect to the legal guardians of minors. Secondary schools operate under a different set of rules, requiring that the legal guardian be kept advised and take key decisions for students who are almost all legal minors.

Most schools appreciate receiving summarized information about the post-secondary application status of their students. If this information is clear and concise, they are often able to assist with missing data or explanations of anomalies to assist both the student and the post-secondary institution.

## 10.5 Denying Admission

Applicants who are denied admission deserve to know this information early, although this can be difficult for institutions if the applicant is qualified (i.e., technically admissible) but not initially selected. The reasons for denial should be clearly stated if possible, so that the applicant may undertake additional preparatory work before re-applying. Some institutions prefer the term 'not selected' to 'denied'. Also, some have such a wide range of programs that every applicant can be offered admission of some sort, even if it is not currently the chosen program.

Every applicant who has paid an application fee has a right to receive a letter formally stating the final decision on her/his application and, preferably, advice on what steps might be taken to become admissible in future. A decision to deny admission should be both encouraging and respectfully worded. Ideally it will offer useful suggestions to the applicant for future success, if re-applying.

Applicants who have not paid an application fee will probably already have had their applications cancelled. Institutions might wish to advise of this by email. Some applications remain valid yet unresolved for a long time, but must eventually be concluded – the applicant might have been asked for certain documents or information but these did not arrive. A document or materials deadline is necessary to give definition to when a final decision can be rendered. This need not be early in the process. If an institution is comfortable to admit some candidates after classes have started for a session, then perhaps the document deadline should be set after the end of the course change period, if any. Regardless of the date, the final decision must be transmitted to the applicant well in advance of the application deadline for the next term or session.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*An incomplete application could remain unresolved so the applicant never receives a decision. Even if the applicant receives a decision, it does not explain why the applicant was not selected. While this might not be practical if multiple factors and judgments are involved, often it is something simple such as insufficient credit or failure to graduate.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Denial of admission should be sent to unsuccessful applicants in writing and include those whose applications remain incomplete.*

*Letters declining admission should be respectful but be careful to point out that there might be more than one reason for an applicant's non-selection.*

# 11. Timeliness in Admissions

## 11.1 How Long Should the Decision Take?

It is difficult to generalize on the time needed to process a decision, as selection methods and applicant types vary greatly. The decision might be contingent on responses to offers made earlier – is there still room and can additional offers be made? Often transfer credit evaluations take much additional time, especially those that are referred outside the admission unit to an academic department, when response times may be both variable and uncontrollable.

In many institutions, an applicant needs a decision by the first available course selection dates for their first term. Otherwise, enrolment success could be negatively affected if there is an open, priority-based enrolment system. An applicant who is admitted too late for priority course selection will not have positive feelings towards the institution and will have more difficulty in the critical first session at the new institution.

There are three possible results of an admission evaluation:

- offer of admission;
- denial of admission; or
- placement “on hold” or on a wait list.

The last category is an interim measure used while the enrolment process is still in progress. Typically, students are placed on hold in a rolling admission process when the final competitive admissions criteria required to achieve desired enrolment are in flux; typically, once an institution has a more comprehensive view of its total admitted (or perhaps already registered) pool, applicants are taken off “hold” and given one of the other two decisions. Similarly, institutions that manage wait lists work their way down a list until all available seats are filled and, at that point, all applicants should have received a definite answer.

Monitoring is needed on a regular basis to determine how long decisions are taking. Knowledge of the actual time compared with what is desirable can be the evidence required to justify adjustments to staffing and, if historical patterns are documented, to anticipate seasonal peaks and staff appropriately for them.

If an institution is effectively managing the receipt of its applications, fees and supporting documents, the time required to make a decision on a complete application will depend on its complexity and who makes the decision. In most cases, institutions will be able to make simple decisions within two weeks of the receipt of the last item required, but some applicants to competitive programs may have to wait considerably longer, if their applications are waiting on the confirmation decisions of those admitted earlier.

Delays in processing create additional work because frustrated applicants telephone or take other measures to obtain answers concerning their admission status. Staff time taken in responding to such queries might be better spent on the processing itself, suggesting that applicants should be encouraged not to call too soon to make such inquiries, that specific staff might be best assigned to such status calls and that SIS-based self-help information should be the first line of response and therefore should be as comprehensive as feasible.

Although many admission decisions are in effect made by a computer program, it does not always mean that those decisions are timely. Institutions may choose to run such selection programs infrequently, particularly for small programs. This suggests that careful attention is paid to the timing of admission processing jobs, whether submitted manually or automatically on a pre-determined schedule.

## **Practices to Consider**

*If an institution is effectively managing the receipt of its applications, fees and supporting documents, the time required to make a decision on a complete application will depend on its complexity and who makes the decision. In most cases, decisions should be made within two weeks of the receipt of the last item required.*

# 12. Disputes

## 12.1 Appeals

Both an admission decision and a transfer credit evaluation should be subject to review on appeal. The principles of appeals are:

- grounds for appeal should be both specific and limited;
- decisions should be made independently, not by the original decision-making unit; and
- the general outcomes of appeals and their rationales should be known both to those who manage admissions and who set admission policy (e.g., admission manager, admission committee).

An appeal process should be carefully set up to avoid large amounts of unnecessary work. An institution might decide that a dispute with an admission policy *per se* is not grounds for appeal, but improper interpretation of a policy by an employee could constitute grounds.

Transfer credit appeals are often not permitted by institutions because the authority to determine the credit rests in an academic department, and few individuals have the technical competence to decide equivalencies within disciplines. This suggests that faculty and possibly also students should be involved in appeals. The successful hearing of a transfer credit appeal need not deal only with the specifics of a course equivalency but could be viewed from the point of view of a parallel discipline, so as to establish a broad principle of equivalency, possibly resulting in the award of unspecified credit where discipline-specific credit had been requested but denied.

Administrative tribunal training can be helpful for those dealing with various forms of appeals and adjudication. This would also be a reason to encourage participation in the appeal process by unpaid volunteers, such as students or members of the public.

It is a principle of most appeals that the appellant can be represented and/or appear in person. In institutions that allow for in-person appeals, it is clearly a popular option. However, this is onerous in practice and many institutions permit only written appeals.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Appeals can become mere reviews of decisions, conducted by the original decision-makers or their supervisors, without independent review. Appeals can be open-ended and can involve significant amounts of staff and volunteer time.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*An independent, well managed appeal process that reports to a senior body of the institution is an asset to an institution and can reduce pressures otherwise exerted on staff and administrative personnel.*

## 12.2 Complaints

In addition to an appeal process, a complaint procedure is also fairly standard, but with varying degrees of formality. The two processes of appeal and complaint deal with separate issues and should not be merged. Complaints are often related to perceptions of poor and disrespectful service or breaches of process. It is usually appropriate for these to be dealt with by senior admission personnel.

# 13. Transfer Credit

## 13.1 Is Transfer Credit an Admission Function?

Admission and transfer credit are not always closely linked. Many institutions save resources by processing transfer credit requests only after an applicant has confirmed their intention to enrol.

For an applicant who has post-secondary experience, the transfer credit that they will receive is a vital part of the admission offer that is needed before an admission decision can be accepted. However, if there are clearly published transfer credit agreements between the sending and receiving institutions, as there are in BC and some other jurisdictions in Canada, the need is reduced for case-by-case transfer credit determination at the time of admission, so long as the credit is on the student's record when it is time to register in courses. It is a benefit to both the applicant and the institution when transfer credit is determined as much as possible according to pre-arranged and published transfer agreements because it provides up-front certainty to students and avoids unnecessary repetitive work by institutions.

Transfer credit is part of the admission process because it:

- affects the student's time to program completion;
- affects the cost of the educational program;
- is often needed to enrol in courses at the appropriate level; and
- avoids duplication of work already completed.

Some institutions automatically consider every applicant for transfer credit whereas others expect the applicant to initiate a request for transfer credit before consideration is given. Some institutions will not consider a request for transfer credit if it is received after the student is enrolled.

If necessary, to save time, an interim assessment of transfer credit may be made that sets a lower limit on what the applicant might finally receive. When transfer credit is delayed, a student might be required to re-take a course unnecessarily because, if lacking, it blocks subsequent progress. A student could receive that transfer credit while s/he is part-way through an identical course, but it can be too late to drop it for a refund and too late to enrol in a substitute course.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Transfer credit is determined at some date after a student must decide whether to attend, making that decision more difficult.*

*A late decision on transfer credit can lead to disruption of a student's progress or her/his course schedule might need widespread change.*

*If students must request transfer credit but do not, some students will needlessly repeat course work, wasting educational resources.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Generally it is in the interest of the applicant to have transfer credit determined in detail at the time of admission.*

*Transfer credit should be considered automatically for each applicant.*

*Transfer credit should be determined as much as possible according to pre-arranged and published transfer agreements to provide upfront certainty to students and avoid unnecessary work by institutions.*

### 13.1.1 Must a Student Accept Transfer Credit?

Some institutions do not permit a student to refuse earned transfer credit. This position might be taken to preserve scarce educational resources and to provide a more level standard of preparation among students in a course, which otherwise might consist of many students who had previously passed the equivalent course but were re-taking it to improve a mark or for some similar reason. The rule for transfer credit should parallel the institution's policy on repeating courses. Some limit might be appropriate. However, it should be legitimate for any student to repeat a course if s/he does not feel suitably qualified to take a subsequent course in the sequence, either because the material did not adequately match the content or the standard of the so-called equivalent course or because the material had been forgotten or was outdated.

**Scenario:** *If a student had received transfer credit, such as credit for an International Baccalaureate course taken at secondary school, University 'R' would not at one time permit the student to (re)-take the equivalent course for credit on the grounds that the student was unfairly advantaged relative to other students in the course. The student was not offered an option to forfeit or decline transfer credit in any course. In some cases, this led to students entering subsequent courses for which they were inadequately prepared but they had no recourse to repeat the prerequisite.*

#### Issues and Challenges

*An overly-rigid transfer credit policy can cause hardship to a student who legitimately is concerned about being under-prepared and can demonstrate that the transfer course taken did not adequately cover the material in the receiving institution's course.*

#### Practices to Consider

*Most institutions will allow a student to forfeit transfer credit or to repeat a course for which credit has already been received through transfer in accord with the institution's internal policy on course duplication or repetition.*

## 13.2 Documentation Required for Determining Transfer Credit

For courses that are not already articulated, the onus is normally placed on the applicant to provide an official full curriculum or course outline from the sending institution, as taught at the time when the student completed the course. However, the student's task requires that s/he writes to the former institution, usually to an academic department, and requests an outline that is often not in electronic form and might be lengthy or even unavailable. The standard outcome if the student is unable to provide the outline is that no credit is awarded, although some institutions will permit an unspecified credit to be applied, which is a reasonable remedy.

A few institutions will spare the applicant this work by using a brief calendar description of the course often from a current version of the course rather than from when the student took it. This is expedient but not advisable if a faculty member in an academic department is expected to make a thoughtful evaluation of that course.

At some times of the year, colleges or universities have reduced staff and are slow to respond to such requests from former students. For these reasons and because the time of those who make transfer credit determinations is also at a premium, it is easy to see why there are often major differences in the time required to determine transfer credit for previously articulated courses compared with those that are determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **Practices to Consider**

*Potential transfer students should be advised clearly of the documentation required to establish transfer credit for unarticulated courses. The time required to collect such documentation suggests that these applicants must start the application process earlier than most others.*

## 13.3 Evaluation of Unarticulated Transfer Credit

Delays in the evaluation of course-by-course transfer credit are a source of great frustration to some applicants.

It is standard practice for the outline of an unarticulated course to be evaluated for possible equivalency by a subject expert. This is a task commonly assigned to individual instructors in a teaching unit. Experience across and within several institutions has been varied - some units render decisions quickly and efficiently while others are the opposite.

Some units have responded to the inconsistency and slowness of evaluations by delegating this function to a non-instructional staff member. Where this has been done, no loss of evaluative quality has been reported, while decision response improved substantially. Delegation of these duties can be accompanied by regular reviews by those instructors who otherwise would have made the decisions on course equivalency.



**Scenario:** *At University 'B', course-by-course evaluations are routinely made by the senior academic advisors in the student advising centre, who are or were themselves instructors. These advisers provide rapid turnaround and are able to consult faculty colleagues as needed for specific details of course equivalencies. This process was chosen in response to an inability on the part of academic departments to make timely evaluations, which are most commonly needed during the Summer term when faculty are normally engaged in research tasks.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*To avoid delays in course-by-course transfer evaluations, institutions should consider the assignment of advising staff with instructional experience or experienced departmental staff with discipline knowledge to provide rapid transfer credit evaluations for unarticulated external courses.*

# 14. Specific Admission Types

## 14.1 Conditional Admission

Conditional admission (also known as provisional admission) is frequently used to give an applicant a decision early enough to enable preparation for entry and registration in courses without waiting for final results from current or previous schooling.

### 14.1.1 Secondary School Graduates

The conditions for a conditional or provisional offer of admission should be clearly specified, preferably in the admission offer letter. Typically a secondary school graduate will be expected to:

- successfully complete current courses, particularly those specifically required for admission;
- graduate; and
- maintain a specified minimum admission average, which is either the minimum average published in the admission requirements or another specified minimum.

In the past, some institutions have not clearly stated the final average required, suggesting instead that it will be subject to supply of and demand for spaces. This introduces a great deal of uncertainty in the new student's mind. Can s/he afford to drop other offers until admission to the first choice of institution or program is confirmed unconditionally?

### 14.1.2 Transfer Students

Transfer students also receive conditional admission offers. Their current courses at the sending institution are known but grades in them will not be available for some time after they should be registered in courses at the receiving institution. Most receiving institutions offer conditions such as:

- must successfully complete all (transferable) courses currently in progress; and
- must maintain a minimum admission average, which is usually the threshold admission average for transfers to that program.

Typically, transfer credit is awarded at the same time, ahead of final grades being received, based on the assumption that the student will achieve at least the minimum passing grade required for transfer. In both cases, it is usually necessary for the application to be reviewed after the final grades are received to update the record and the admission average, to check that the transfer credit is still valid and to change the admission status to clear or unconditional admission.

Increasingly, offers that at one time were made conditionally are being made unconditionally. The reasons for this are to make the offers more attractive from a competitive point of view and to reduce handling the applications again, when the net result is usually unchanged. The downside is that some students might no longer meet course prerequisites and will therefore be under-prepared, admission averages might be no longer based on final marks and are therefore unlikely to be as reliable for subsequent statistical use and some less deserving students may be occupying spaces for which there are more deserving candidates. However, from the point of view of the applicant, there are significant advantages to receiving an unconditional offer. The institutions benefit too: by reducing uncertainty, there is less hedging behaviour by applicants who have been known to hold onto places at more than one institution until all admission conditions have been removed from their preferred offers.

It appears that some institutions that make conditional offers do not routinely follow up on these applications with a review to determine if the conditions have been met. While this is expedient, it is likely to eventually undermine the purpose of making a conditional offer, as applicants will learn over time that the conditions are hollow.

**Scenario:** *Because Institution 'F' had made all of its admission offers to BC secondary school applicants unconditionally, it chose not to enter their final grades to the student information system. Consequently there was no easy way to determine if any individual student had graduated from secondary school. Also, institutional analysis based on secondary school marks of entering students became less reliable because the data were incomplete and inconsistent with previous years.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Any conditions on offers should be explicit and applicants with conditional offers need to be clearly advised of the conditions of their admission.*

*After final marks are received, any change in admission status or transfer credit should be quickly communicated to the student.*

*When unconditional offers are made before all relevant supporting materials have been received, institutions should decide how to collect and record the final data both for the creation of individual student records and for subsequent institutional analysis.*

### **14.1.3 Withdrawing Conditional Admission Offers**

An institution will typically process the final grades for all admitted and registered new students as well as active applicants who are not yet admitted. If it seems that the applicant has not met the admission conditions, the case is reviewed on an individual basis, if time permits. Data might be incomplete. If it is clear that the applicant has not fulfilled the conditions set, the institution can withdraw the admission offer, cancel any course registration and give a refund of deposits paid. For some BC universities, this was the practice each August when provincial exam results were known, due to secondary school course failure or withdrawal and consequent failure to meet graduation requirements. This in turn required urgent communication with the applicant. In recent years, the incidence of such actions has been much reduced, partly as a result of lessened reliance on provincial examination results.

A conditional admission might be routinely confirmed even if the stated admission requirements have not been fully met. For example, a conditional offer based on interim grades might state *“maintain a minimum graduation average of 78%”*. The final averages of many conditionally admitted students might be lower than this. To discontinue these students will result in a program that is not full. Hence offers are often confirmed to a lower average, say 75%. The question then arises about how to treat other applicants with averages of 75% or better who never received offers. Should they now be admitted even if there are insufficient spaces?

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Final marks are ignored and the student never hears formally if their admission conditions have been removed or still apply.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*A formal letter granting clear (unconditional) admission should be sent to the new student unless the conditional offer is withdrawn.*

## **14.2 Applicants Who Have Had Previous Unsuccessful Post-Secondary Careers**

There are many applicants who have attended other post-secondary institutions but who have not performed satisfactorily there. It is a widespread practice among post-secondary institutions to decline to offer admission to a student asked to withdraw from her/his previous institution or program.

Merit-based admission models need to take into account the lapse of time since the applicant previously engaged in post-secondary education, changes in maturity and motivation and success in other endeavours. Some institutions feel that they should not take chances on unknown or hard-to-determine factors, so will offer admission based only on a successful recent record from another recognized post-secondary institution. This can best work to the applicant's benefit if the studies taken to prove their ability are also transferable to their chosen program. Admission policies that emphasize the most recent work in determining an admission average are also helpful for this purpose.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Poor admission decisions have the potential to place burdens on instructional and counselling staff when these resources could be spent on maximizing retention and learning among current students.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*In considering admission for students who were required to withdraw from another post-secondary institution, the students' most recent work should carry the most weight.*

*Some institutions encourage applications from previously unsuccessful students who have gone on to attend elsewhere and have achieved satisfactory results.*

## 14.3 Probationary Admission

Some institutions offer a more limited form of admission for applicants who might be considered to be at a higher risk of not succeeding. This usually would be reserved for those who are being readmitted after a period of academic discontinuance, but could also be used in the case of a new student with an unsatisfactory record at another institution. Typically the student is offered enrolment in only one session, term or semester. Performance in that session is reviewed at the end and, if satisfactory, the student is given unconditional admission. If the student has not fulfilled the terms of the probationary period, there is no need to initiate discontinuance procedures (which might be cumbersome at some institutions) because the student is automatically barred from future enrolment.

Some would argue that a short-term trial period imposes an unfair performance goal for a new student, especially one who has had previous difficulty maintaining academic standing. On the other hand, it can be argued that such a student deserves a chance and otherwise the institution might simply choose to follow its policies more rigidly and not admit the applicant. There is a strong case to be made for mandatory counselling of these students.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*The applicant is under intense pressure to perform and risks not making the required personal adjustments, so her/his previous weak performance is more likely to be repeated.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*Students admitted on a probationary basis should be given clear expectations and understand the consequences of an unsuccessful outcome.*

*Mandatory counselling and testing might be justifiable to maximise the success of probationary students. Additional support and reduced course loads might also be recommended, if this does not create other hurdles such as ineligibility for financial assistance.*

## 14.4 Unsolicited Offers of Admission

If an institution has candidates for a program who will not be offered admission but who are eligible for another program and that program is not full, it is tempting to offer admission to that other program even though the applicant has not requested it. Hence, the offer is unsolicited and involves an unrequested switch of program.

There might be practical reasons for bringing to an applicant's attention the other program. It might be new or recently expanded. It might offer another route to the program originally sought, such as entering a general program in order to apply again after a year for entry to the more specialized program or taking a semester of upgrading work to fulfill missing program requirements.

If an institution plans to make such offers, this should be explained to applicants when they apply for admission, and preferably the applicant should choose whether or not to be considered for other programs. In addition, the alternate admission offer must be clear in stating that admission to the primary program could not be offered and explaining what the process is to achieve entry to the primary program choice should the applicant still want to pursue it. A further explanation is likely also in order – that acceptance of this unsolicited offer does not affect their chance of receiving a later offer of admission to the preferred or chosen program.

### **Issues and Challenges**

*An unsolicited offer can create a serious problem if the applicant is unaware that the program is quite different from the program applied for, perhaps being in a different city, leading to a different credential and offering little prospect of internal transfer to the desired program.*

### **Practices to Consider**

*If an admission offer is made for a program or campus location that the applicant did not select, the institution should draw attention to the difference in the program or location from that requested and explain why this offer is being made as well as what steps could lead the applicant to the chosen program, if s/he still wishes to pursue it. Unsolicited offers can be helpful to applicants provided that they are clear.*

## **14.5 Re-admission**

Most institutions will set a time limit on how long an individual, who is not continuously enrolled, may be considered to be an active student. For example, a student who has not completed her/his program and who does not enrol for an entire session might not be eligible to automatically enrol in the subsequent session. Such former students are usually required to apply for re-admission, if they wish to resume their programs or switch to another one.

Procedures for applying for re-admission will vary but are often similar to applying for first-time admission. The purpose is to update and evaluate the record, especially if the student has taken further relevant course work in the intervening time.

Normally, if a former student was in good academic and financial standing when s/he left and no further studies have been undertaken, re-admission is automatic. The most difficult cases involve those who were not performing well when they left or were required to discontinue their programs. These students, if readmitted, will require special attention. For them, the issue is often not whether they meet the admission requirements of the intended program, but whether they have done what was requested in their specific case to gain re-admission. Specific attention should be paid to the nature of advice given to these former students. Preferably, a summary of an exit interview with a counselor will be documented and retained, for the purpose of assessing any subsequent application for re-admission.

Some institutions limit the re-admission of such students to their former faculty or program, which can serve to negate a well-founded and desired switch of program that would clearly be in the student's best interest.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Students who perform poorly and are required to discontinue might be required only to sit out for a session, creating little incentive for necessary change in motivation or skills, and offering no stimulus to reconsider whether s/he made the right program choice.*

*Re-admission may be granted only to the same faculty or program in which the student was previously unsuccessful, even when a program change would clearly be a better plan.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Applicants for re-admission who previously performed poorly might be subject to mandatory counselling, testing and course load restrictions, as suggested for those who attended other institutions. (See Section 14.2, Applicants Who Have Had Previous Unsuccessful Post-Secondary Careers.)*

*Close attention should be paid to the nature of advice given to former students who were required to discontinue in a program. If available, a counsellor's exit interview with the student may be used to assess a subsequent application for re-admission.*

## **14.6 Differences Between International and Domestic Admissions**

Most of the differences between international and domestic admissions relate to:

- increased lead time to obtain government documentation to enter Canada, after admission;
- different education year cycles affecting timing of school results;
- establishing and verifying the documentation of applicants;
- communicating quickly with applicants;
- role of education agents;
- generally higher costs incurred by studying in another country; and
- greater dependence on institution for housing, cultural orientation, health care insurance and other services.

Other common issues also apply to some Canadian applicants, who might have educational records from outside Canada. These include:

- establishing appropriate admission standards and equivalencies; and
- demonstrating language proficiency.

International applicants often use paid agents to assist with overseas admission and some institutions deal with such agents in order to recruit more widely and to expedite processing. The institution needs to determine what privacy rules apply and specifically whether Canadian privacy legislation governs their activities when agents are involved. There are many cautions to be heeded when using agents, leading some institutions to deal directly with applicants.

## **Issues and Challenges**

*Institutions sometimes lack the knowledge to set up an effective admission process for a country or type of student from within a country, even if the institution has expended resources to recruit such students.*

*International admissions often need extra handling and understanding, using more flexibility and a greater range of services than are employed in most domestic admission cases.*

## **Practices to Consider**

*Before embarking on recruitment activities in an unfamiliar territory, admission and recruitment staff might jointly develop guidelines to assist with applicant characteristics, offer timing, communication and documentation, so that recruitment expenditures are made efficiently.*

*The privacy regimen for international students should comply with Canadian law and be well understood by staff.*



# 15. Resource Needs for Successful Admissions

To determine appropriate resources, much depends on the nature of the institution and the processes it has chosen. Typically, admission is a seasonal activity, with the bulk of activity occurring prior to the first course registration opportunity for the new academic year. This implies that for a September start, and a May or June registration period, the most intense activity will occur in February to May. Other programs and jurisdictions may have different cycles (typically US institutions make decisions and have offers confirmed between December and April for Fall entry). A continuous entry program will also have peaks of activity that are specific to the field. Institutions that offer trimester or other forms of multiple entries per year will find that there are few quiet periods and admissions is a year-round activity.

## 15.1 Monitoring Effectiveness

It is helpful to survey applicants on a regular basis, perhaps annually, to determine the effectiveness of the admission process. It is not sufficient to survey new enrolled students, because these students are not properly representative of the applicant pool. Specifically, they are a select subset of all applicants because they all:

- received admission offers;
- accepted those offers; and
- enrolled in courses.

By the time the survey is administered, enrolled students will probably also have conflated several related processes making their comments on the admission process less accurate and useful. It is often more useful to have the opinions of applicants who were not offered admission or who were admitted but who chose not to attend. Perhaps more may be learned from these than from the students who are now attending the institution.

## 15.2 Technology - Admission System or Student System?

The current standard process is to conduct all admission activity on an integrated student information system – the same system that tracks and records the courses, grades and activities of students. Modern systems are web-based, offering enormous access with good security. Some institutions still use a separate admission system and roll the data from the admission system to the main record system only when a student has been admitted and accepted an offer. Integrated systems are generally more efficient because:

- they avoid the need to search more than one database for existing records and prevent the creation of duplicate records, the nemesis of large records systems; and
- economies of scale arise when using the same computer application for several related functions.

### **Practices to Consider**

*Admission processes are housed within an integrated student information system. Secure access is available to all who need it, regardless of location or time.*

### 15.2.1 Tracking Applicant Numbers

A strength of information databases is their ability to generate reports of all kinds. In admissions, reports of applicants, complete applications, admitted candidates and so on are needed frequently and sometimes at short notice for measuring progress towards enrolment goals and determining what actions need to be taken to achieve those goals. Predictive models are useful, which build in the probabilities that can be calculated from the application data of previous admission cycles. Such predictive models will generally be modeled on separate data systems, suggesting that a ready means of exporting data from the student information system could be a useful asset.

#### **Practices to Consider**

*The information system is capable of generating flexible reports and exporting data to other applications for modeling and statistical purposes.*

### 15.2.2 Other Applicant Data

The collection of large amounts of personal data about applicants, when aggregated, can be a rich source of information to the institution, yet often these data are overlooked. Geographic analysis will reveal the most likely areas or schools for student recruitment or, conversely, areas of underrepresentation by students, and demographic data of all types can be used to prepare profiles of potentially successful students. Time analysis can reveal patterns of application and response.

### 15.2.3 Retention Schedule of Admission Data

Many admission records will be created for individuals who do not become students at the institution. They might not complete the admission process, might be declined an admission offer or, if admitted, might choose not to attend. These records must not be retained permanently, but it is reasonable to retain them for a period, if there is an accounting reason to keep a financial record or if there is a strong possibility of re-application within the foreseeable future.

Since most applicants will have made a financial transaction, it is common to keep electronic applicant records for seven years, in keeping with good accounting practice. Paper records should be destroyed sooner than this.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

*Some institutions do not purge records of applicants who never registered or attended. The institution is then vulnerable to an allegation of a breach of privacy laws. Retaining irrelevant personal information should be viewed as a liability.*

#### **Practices to Consider**

*Policies and schedules of data retention are needed to limit risks that result from the unauthorized and unnecessary retention of confidential personal data.*

# 16. Alignment of Admission Methods

## 16.1 Is Alignment Desirable or Achievable?

It may be perceived by some secondary school staff and other members of the public that the differences of method and approach in admissions among institutions and programs are arbitrary and only confuse applicants, but, for the most part, the processes fit local conditions and make operational sense.

Hence, although it is tempting to suggest that some practices are better than others and some among them might even merit being raised to 'best practice' status, the range of conditions and options among British Columbia's public post-secondary institutions makes this impractical. Indeed, some situations are specific to one institution and warrant their own solutions which would not work at another institution.

From time to time, admission to public post-secondary institutions is a controversial topic, usually when there is a public perception that deserving, motivated students are unable to achieve the education they are seeking because of intake limits or overcrowding and reduced course availability. Market forces do not generally apply to these situations because the institutions have many fixed resources and operate under the regulation of the Province, so they are not free to open, expand, reduce or close programs at will.

Expansion of British Columbia's post-secondary system has largely succeeded in providing a broad range of learning opportunities, shifting some attention away from admission issues that were often newsworthy when post-secondary spaces were more scarce. One fortuitous effect of this has been an increased motivation at some institutions to improve admission processes in response to the need to provide good service to all applicants and thereby achieve the institutions' enrolment goals.

# 17. Appendices

## 17.1 Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>AACRAO</b> | American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.   |
| <b>ACT</b>    | American College Testing - standardized test for high school achievement and college admissions in the United States produced by ACT, Inc.   |
| <b>APAS</b>   | Alberta Post-secondary Application System – operates ApplyAlberta, an online application and transcript service.   |
| <b>ARUCC</b>  | Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada.  |
| <b>BCCAT</b>  | British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer.   |
| <b>BCRA</b>   | British Columbia Registrars’ Association   |
| <b>CAEL</b>   | Canadian Academic English Language Assessment – a standardized test of English in use for academic purposes.   |
| <b>CIC</b>    | Citizenship and Immigration Canada. - department of the federal government of Canada.  |
| <b>IELTS</b>  | International English Language Testing System. IELTS offers language tests, jointly managed by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL). |
| <b>LPI</b>    | Language Proficiency Index. A standardized test of writing and reading comprehension offered by the University of British Columbia’s Applied Research and Evaluation Services.                               |
| <b>MELAB</b>  | Michigan English Language Assessment Battery- a standardized test of understanding and writing English for adults whose first language is not English.   |
| <b>OCAS</b>   | The Ontario College Application Service - processes college applications for Ontario Colleges.   |
| <b>OMSAS</b>  | The Ontario Medical Schools Application Service - centralized application service for applying to the medical schools of Ontario universities.   |
| <b>OUAC</b>   | Ontario Universities’ Application Centre - central bureau for processing of applications for admission to Ontario universities.  |
| <b>PASBC</b>  | Post-Secondary Application Service of British Columbia.  |
| <b>SAT</b>    | SAT Reasoning Test - a standardized test for college admissions in the United States, owned, published and developed by the College Board.   |
| <b>TOEFL</b>  | Test of English of a Foreign Language – a standardized test of <u>English</u> in an academic setting, owned and administered by <u>Educational Testing Service</u> (ETS), Princeton, New Jersey.             |
| <b>TSE</b>    | Test of Spoken English- an assessment of the ability of non-native speakers to communicate in spoken English.  |

## 17.2 References

ARUCC (2003). *National Transcript Guide*. Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada.  
[www.arucc.ca/documents/transe.pdf](http://www.arucc.ca/documents/transe.pdf)

Bontrager, B. (Editor) (2008) *SEM and Institutional Success. Integrating Enrollment, Finance and Student Access*, AACRAO Publications

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010) *Letter of Acceptance*  
[www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/accllet-e.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/accllet-e.pdf)

Lauren, B. (Editor) (2008) *The College Admissions Officer's Guide*  
AACRAO Publications

Schwartz, S. (2004). *Fair Admissions to higher education: Recommendations for good practice*  
(Original Schwartz Report)  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz\\_report\\_2004.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz_report_2004.pdf)

Schwartz, S. (2004). *Fair Admissions to higher education: Recommendations for good practice*  
*Draft recommendations - Analysis of responses to the consultation document* June 2004  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz\\_report\\_2004.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz_report_2004.pdf)

Schwartz, S. (2008). *Fair Admissions to higher education: a review of the implementation of the Schwartz Report principles three years on*. Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University and Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University

Report 1 - Executive Summary and Conclusions  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz\\_Report\\_Review\\_Report\\_1\\_Final10.12.08.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_1_Final10.12.08.pdf)

Report 2 - Research Findings  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz\\_Report\\_Review\\_Report\\_2\\_Final10.12.08.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_2_Final10.12.08.pdf)

Report 3 - Themes and good practice case studies  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz\\_Report\\_Review\\_Report\\_3\\_Final10.12.08.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_3_Final10.12.08.pdf)

Sigler, W. (2007) *Managing for Outcomes. Shifting from Process-Centric to Result-Oriented Operations*  
AACRAO Publications

Swanson, R.M. and Weese, F.A. (1997) *Becoming a Leader in Enrollment Services*  
AACRAO Publications

Westman, C.E. and Bouman, P. (2007) *The SEM Imperative: Taking Enrollment Management Online*  
AACRAO Publications







Your guide through post-secondary education.

709 – 555 Seymour Street  
Vancouver BC Canada V6B 3H6  
bccat.ca | admin@bccat.ca  
t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576