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Bologna and the World Beyond: The Impact of International
Practices on U.S. Graduate Education

A View of International Admissions from One Graduate
Admissions Office

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OVERHEARD AT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GRADUATE ADMISSIONS PROFESSIONALS (NAGAP) ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN 1996

- We never admit three-year degree recipients – no exceptions
- If students from India are unable to provide their diplomas within X amount of time, we terminate them from the program
- TOEFL – no exceptions
- ALL international students must take the GRE
 - *Were these admissions officers really communicating with their faculty admissions committees?*
 - *More flexibility needed to cope with the major changes to come in international admissions as a result of the Bologna Process, new competition from abroad, major changes in higher education in China and Russia, and new visa policies that would come within the next 10 years?*

UCLA

- Graduate student body of approximately 10,000 with 19% international enrollment for Fall 2007
- 20,000 applications a year, 30+% are international
- 6% increase in international graduate enrollment for Fall 2007
- Hindered by non-waiveable non-resident tuition (NRT) that must be paid from student support funding
- No NRT break for TA's or RA's
- Consequently international students are clustered primarily in areas where grant support exists (e.g., sciences, engineering, economics, mathematics)
- Social sciences and humanities would like more international students but cannot afford them
- Beginning in Fall 2007 NRT is waived for three years after doctoral advancement to candidacy

UCLA

- As part of the Pacific Rim, most international applicants from Asian countries
- Just beginning to see Bologna degrees among applicant pool
- Long history of a case-by-case exception process for three-year degrees
- Academic Senate currently reviewing a UC system wide report somewhat critical of UC's efforts to promote undergraduate and graduate student abroad. For example, in 2006 only 21% of UC's undergrads studied abroad compared to 53% at Duke, 37% at University of Virginia
- **Go Global UCLA** initiative launched by our Executive Vice Chancellor – to create a consolidated home/portal for all initiatives to promote international education and exchange
- No joint degree programs with universities outside of U.S., one cooperative degree program with National University of Singapore

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDY

- Competition from Europe – national efforts to recruit and the **Bologna Process** are showing success
- Since 1999 Europe has awarded more Ph.D.s in science and engineering than has the U.S.
- Competition from within China is greater, due to huge growth in its own higher education
- Australia, another competitor, is reaching its capacity to absorb many more international students

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDY

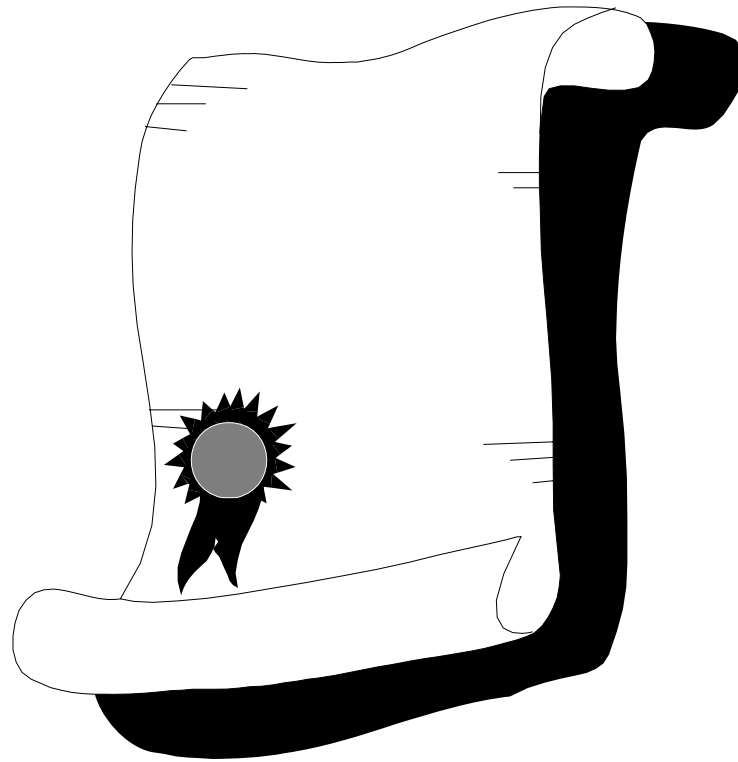
- NAFSA, CGS, and other groups are lobbying for changes in federal policy to make U.S. more competitive, e.g., to allow student visa applicants at the outset to indicate plans to stay in U.S. once study is complete, to ease rules on work, etc.
- U.K. is increasing its security oversight of student visas in 4I areas in science and technology: the Academic and Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is part of an international effort “to stop the spread of knowledge and skills that could be used in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,” a government web site explains
- 2007 Banff Principles on Graduate Education – nine principles to guide our future and collective and collaborative work to advance and improve graduate education – search for best practices
 - “Respect and learn from the differences in programs and their modes of delivery directed towards our common goal” – the first principle and highly relevant to any discussion of Bologna and other changes

COMMON BASELINE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE ADMISSION TO U.S. UNIVERSITIES

- Receipt of a degree that is “equivalent” to a U.S. baccalaureate degree
- Grade/scholarship standard equivalence to junior-senior average of 3.00 at U.S. university
- Acceptable English skills certified through:
 - Test of English as a Foreign Language (**TOEFL**)
 - International English Language Testing System (**IELTS**)
 - **Other** testing, interviews, etc.
- Graduate Record Examination (**GRE**) and Subject Tests, et al

WHAT IS THE MISSION?

- To admit students who can successfully complete their graduate/professional program and contribute to the scholarship and/or practice in their field



THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

- 46 countries have joined since 1999
- Ministers of Education meet every two years to review progress – last meeting in London, 2007
- 2010 deadline for completion – progress is uneven across Europe
- Common and transparent European higher education structure
- Credits transferable across borders
- More degree programs conducted in English – causing some U.S. universities to re-examine their ESL entrance requirements
- Most countries: three-year Bachelor's and two-year Master's
- A few countries: four-year Bachelor's and one-year Master's
- More emphasis on graduate education – second/third cycles – master's and doctoral
- Three/two/three cycles are appealing to international students compared to times-to-degree in U.S.
- One goal: to make EU “the most favored destination of students, scholars and researchers from other world regions” (*World Education Services, July 2005*)

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- Small number of applicants with European degrees compared to those with Asian degrees
- Handle all three-year degrees, including Bologna degrees, through case-by-case exception process
- Departmental faculty review for appropriate background in the discipline
- Recommendations for exceptions from faculty more common in areas such as engineering and the arts (especially for practice-based master's and doctoral degrees)
- Holistic review of the total admissions portfolio, including other degrees, letters of recommendation, professional work, publications, etc.
- Focus more on qualitative rather than quantitative/numeric criteria

SOME EXCEPTION REQUESTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ADMITS AT UCLA

- Three-year conservatory degree holders (recommended for admission to MM and DMA programs)
- MDs without bachelor's degrees (usually recommended for admission to MPH program; often are Asian physicians coming to study HIV/AIDS)
- JDs/SJDs without bachelor's degrees (recommended for admission to various programs)
- Requests for three-year degree holders who have executive work experience, recommended for admission to various MBA programs

BOLOGNA: WHAT OTHER INSTITUTIONS ARE DOING

CGS 2006 SURVEY

- 12% consider it a major issue
- 56% have an institution-wide policy that would allow them to consider any three-year degrees
- 55% of largest institutions have held discussions with graduate faculty on Bologna (perhaps because more experience with Bologna degrees in larger applicants pools)
- 18% continue to accept only four-year degrees
- 4% grant provisional acceptance and require additional coursework
- Trend from 2005 to 2006 is toward more discussion, more acceptance, less attached conditions

**BOLOGNA:
WHAT ONE INSTITUTION HAS DONE**

**The Bologna Process: An Institutional
Perspective**

**Myron A. Thompson
Executive Director of the Graduate School
University at Buffalo/State University of New
York**

Presented at the 2006 NAGAP conference –
presentation available at www.nagap.org

BOLOGNA: WHAT ONE INSTITUTION HAS DONE

- One of the few universities that have conducted a thorough review of the Bologna process – the result is an institutional policy of acceptance of the three-year degree
- **“If we acknowledge that the similarities of content, outcomes and intent of the Bologna bachelor’s degree outweigh the dissimilarities of the length of program, and if we recognize that ‘general education’ is a component of the secondary school curricula throughout most of Europe, then the 3-year Bologna bachelor’s degree should be deemed sufficient for consideration for admission to graduate study in the U.S.”**

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

- World Education Services – deems most but not all Bologna three-year degrees to be “functionally equivalent” to U.S. bachelor’s degrees
- Some other schools/universities that accept unconditionally:
 - The University of Chicago Graduate School of Business
 - Carnegie Mellon University
 - Columbia University Graduate School of Business
 - North Carolina State University
 - Purdue University
 - University of California, Berkeley
 - Wake Forest University Graduate School of Management
 - Wharton School/University of Pennsylvania

ESL – UCLA

- TOEFL minimums
 - P&PT-560
 - CBT-220
 - IBT-87 (25 on Writing, 24 on Speaking, 19 on Reading, 17 on Listening - suggested)
- IELTS minimum – 7.0 overall band score
- ESLPE proficiency exam administered on arrival
- Test of Proficiency (TOP) in English to be a T.A. administered on arrival or later (local test – replaced TSE/SPEAK)
- Exceptions to TOEFL/IELTS
 - Very few requested or approved – approved in cases where scores are very close
 - Applicants to a dual-MBA program with National University of Singapore exempted on case-by-case basis if successfully interviewed by faculty

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM (IELTS)

- Created by Cambridge University ESL faculty
- Has speaking component with face-to-face interview
- IELTS is standard English examination in many countries, rather than TOEFL
- www.ielts.org for U.S. institutions that accept IELTS, and their score minimums
- Accepted at all UC campuses for undergraduate admission and eight out of 10 for graduate admission
- Available in countries where TOEFL is not (e.g., Iran)
- Can provide a competitive advantage – for example, if a Chinese applicant to your university also is applying to a European university, he can take one English test rather than two

**“We tend to value what we measure
rather than measure what we value.”**

**Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Vice Chancellor Graduate
Studies, Dean, Graduate Division, UCLA**

GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE)

- Require it as a university baseline standard?
- Security concerns
- Cost and accessibility concerns
- What does it measure/predict, particularly in terms of international applicants less familiar with this type of test format?
- ETS has always said “Use of multiple criteria is particularly important when using GRE scores to assess the abilities of ...students whose primary language is not English.”

GRE at UCLA

- Required by graduate programs, not by the Graduate Division - about 2/3 of programs do require it
- Requirement is enforced at department level
- Some departments do not require GRE for international applicants
- Dean annually encourages admissions committee chairs to review ETS guidelines and to review their program's practices regarding GRE as a criterion for admissions

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Baseline standards are important but should not obscure the mission or preclude admitting the exceptional candidate, including those with three-year degrees
- For the U.S. on average, international graduate students have lower attrition and shorter time-to-degree than domestic students
- Exceptions should be based on academic/professional arguments from the faculty

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Review process should be holistic – and measure what is valued - qualitative rather than quantitative or numeric criteria more helpful
- Exceptions based on personal whims of individuals or financial reasons are not a best practice
- Decision on Bologna degrees appears to be 1) accept unconditionally or 2) treat case-by-case and require specific faculty recommendation
- When Bologna process is completed, in 2010 or later, should there be universal acceptance?