



Institutional Strategies for Addressing Three-Year Degrees: Bologna and Beyond

Student Perception of Preparation

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CGS Annual Meeting
December 2-5, 2009
San Francisco



Georgetown University



Enrollment (2008):

Undergrad	7092
Grad w/MBA	5330
Medicine	813
Law	2083

Degrees (2008):

Baccalaureate	1730
Grad w/MBA	1987
Medicine	181
Law	1051



Carnegie:

Basic	RU/VH
Size/Setting	L4/HR
Undergrad Profile	FT4/MS/LTI
Enrollment	MU
Graduate Instr	CompDoc/MedVet
Undergrad Instr	A&S+Prof/HGC

104-acre main campus in Georgetown
Law Center located near U.S. Capitol

Faculty (2008):

	full-time	part-time
Main Campus	750	399
Medical Center	370	84
Law Center	139	202





Graduate School of Arts & Sciences



40 master's, 22 Ph.D., and
42 dual degree programs



Largest master's programs:

foreign service	MBA
security studies	public policy
communication, culture and technology	



Largest doctoral programs:

government	economics
history	linguistics
chemistry	



Evolution of Policy around the Three-Year Degree



- Requirement: “bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in the U.S. or the equivalent from an international college or university.”
- Prior to 1999, 4-year “equivalence”, literally = 3-year degree + [1-year of graduate work, or master’s]
- After 1999, case-by-case on recommendation of individual programs, guided by judgment and experience



Student Views of Preparation



Questions:

- Undergraduate Institution and Country
- Undergraduate Major
- Graduate Program at Georgetown
- Was 3-yr program created in response to “Bologna Process”
- Rate your general preparation for graduate study (1=low to 5=high)
- Are there areas in which you feel your background has given you:
 - An advantage in studying at the graduate level
 - A disadvantage relative to others for graduate work
- Other comments



Student Views of Preparation



Three broad categories of students and undergraduate institutions:

- UK: traditional 3-yr post IB
 - Warwick (2), Cambridge, Sussex, LSE
- EU, but not UK: Bologna 3-yr
 - Tübingen, Jagiellonian (Poland), Florence
- India
 - Madras



Student Views of Preparation



Undergraduate to Graduate:

- Sociology to MA in Communication, Culture and Technology
- Biotechnology to PhD in Physiology
- Political Science to MA in Security Studies
- International Relations to MS in Foreign Service
- History to PhD in Economics
- Politics with International Studies to MS in Foreign Service
- International Relations to MA in German and European Studies
- International Relations to MA in Security Studies
- Philosophy, Politics and Economics to Master of Public Policy



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Preparation: 4-5, but one 3*

“However, the limitations in my preparedness were **because my BA is in a different field of study to my program at Georgetown, and do not reflect the rigor of my undergraduate education.”*

from History B.A. now studying for Ph.D. in
Economics



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Advantages:

*“**very good preparation in writing**, and better preparation in particular knowledge of the field (more in depth than U.S. bachelors) but less breadth.”*

*“I was surprised to find **my writing and reasoning skills far above the average** in my current graduate program.”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Advantages:

*“I have found myself at an advantage in respect to students with a U.S. undergraduate [degree] in projects of an academic nature (**more theoretical and longer**). This is probably due to the training I have received in **writing more frequent in-depth papers.**”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Advantages:

*“My undergraduate course encouraged independent study and research, and **required writing long papers on a regular basis**, so I feel this gave me an advantage concerning reading, writing, and (to some extent) research skills.”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Disadvantages:

“Quantitative skills, specific subject expertise”

from student with B.A. in History studying for Ph.D.
in Economics

*“Political subjects in the U.S. require some
quantitative knowledge in line with viewing
politics as a ‘science’. This is not the case in the
UK, where the approach is more theoretical.”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Disadvantages:

*“team projects and **presentations** were **underutilized**, too narrow in focus”*

*“The pressure of speaking in class was less prevalent (considering that **class participation did not form part of the grade**).”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Other Comments:

*“I think that 3 year degrees are **great for students who are certain** in their field of study when applying for the B.A. However, for students who are unsure of future aims when still in high school, the **U.S. system can be advantageous because it allows a broader field of study**. If I had done undergrad in the U.S., I would probably have ended up as an econ major...”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Other Comments:

*“In order to ‘condense’ the education in 3 years, there is **less flexibility** in changes in courses/orientation. This would not be useful for someone unsure of their aims...it is **great for someone with a clear idea** about the course they wish to pursue. The 3-year degree can be extremely beneficial, though it **depends upon the ambitions of the student.**”*



Student Views of Preparation



UK: traditional 3-yr honors from IB

- Other Comments:

“I would have very much enjoyed the freedom of being undeclared when first entering university and think that 3 year Bachelors are too short to offer this opportunity.”

“I believe that they [3-yr degrees] give a huge amount of preparedness for the much more specialized degrees of very high quality that GU and other U.S. institutions give at master’s level.”



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Preparation: 3-5 (broader range than UK)
- Advantages:

*“I must admit I felt **well-equipped in the basic knowledge** from all areas of my current expertise to undertake studies here. The biotechnology studies I sent through were a combination of molecular biology, biochemistry, biophysics, physics, and medicine, **so when I started my classes here, nothing was intimidating.**”*

from Biotechnology B.S. to Ph.D. in physiology



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Advantages:

“great emphasis on theory and research training in contrast to the popular perception that in Germany the BA programs are primarily practically oriented degrees”

“In Italy, universities tend toward a very theoretical rather than career-oriented approach to teaching. That gave me a clear advantage in introductory and mandatory classes.”



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Disadvantages:

“having a four year B.A. would have provided a broader background of knowledge”

“When I started in the MSFS, I had only ever written two academic papers - in Germany when I was an exchange student there.”

from Italian student at Florence



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Other Comments:

*“Though a good 3-yr B.A. will equip graduates with a **solid theoretical understanding** of the major issues in their discipline, they usually are **clueless when it comes to writing papers** or memos and have only **rudimentary research skills**. Italian universities also do little to encourage students to get acquainted with the professional environment they will have to work in after graduation.”*



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Other Comments:

“Currently, the discussion in Germany is to move away from strictly 3-yr programs toward 4-yr programs whenever necessary (such as engineering).....long overdue, since the idea was from the start of the Bologna Process that undergraduate programs should be in the 3-4 year time frame, but the vast majority were for some reason always limited to 3 years.”



Student Views of Preparation



3-yr Bologna Degrees in the EU

- Other Comments:

“Also, the old argument made when comparing German and U.S. universities that Germans have an additional year of high school, and therefore should only have 3 years of undergraduate education, is not valid anymore, since high school now also ends after the 12th grade and not after the 13th. This point was often heard as a justification for shorter B.A. programs.”



Student Views of Preparation



India (one student)

- Preparation: 2
- Advantages:

*“The only real advantage that I’ve seen in completing my education in India is my **command of the English language**, especially the formal written form.”*



Student Views of Preparation



India

- Disadvantages:

*“The areas my previous education are **lacking in** would be **critical thinking and reasoning skills** as well as a **lack of exposure to specific knowledge** in my undergraduate degree. From my research of institutions in the U.S., I’ve found that they would have provided me a broader knowledge base in terms of classes I could have taken and majors I could have pursued.”*



Student Views of Preparation



Take-Away Message on 3-Year Degrees

- **Depth, not breadth - highly focused, theoretical**
 - If student is studying in the same area as bachelors and is clearly focused (personal statement, recommendation letters), then likely a low risk for admission
 - If student seems less sure of career aims, the letters are broadly worded, and/or the student is changing disciplines, then admission is of higher risk



Student Views of Preparation



Take-Away Message on 3-Year Degrees

- **Clear differences remain between UK and rest of EU**
 - Although both highly focused on theoretical content, UK degrees seem to develop writing and research skills to higher degree; increased risk with EU degrees for graduate programs relying on these skills
 - Questions remain in EU on rationale for 3-year degrees, possibly affecting continued implementation



Student Views of Preparation



Take-Away Message on 3-Year Degrees

- **Beyond Bologna remains high risk**
 - Although limited information, the one student who responded painted a rather negative picture of preparation
 - Although all admission decisions are effectively case-by-case, there needs to be high level of scrutiny outside Bologna