



**Council of Graduate Schools 49th Annual
Meeting
San Francisco, California
Wednesday, December 2, 2009**

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

Policy and Practice

Daniel J. Bennett, Assistant Dean

Graduate Admissions/Student & Academic Affairs, UCLA Graduate Division

GOALS OF WORKSHOP

- Briefly review Bologna Process and other three-year degrees and the challenges they pose
- Discuss policy/practice at each of our campuses
- Review process steps in shaping new policies where they have occurred
- Examine the range of admissions practices
- Questions, answers, interactive discussion

POLICY AND PRACTICE

- The Bologna Process
- Other three-year degrees
- Policies and practices
- Some universities with policies re: Bologna degrees
- Mission of graduate admissions
- UCLA policy and practice
- Final thoughts on changes in graduate admissions

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

- 47 countries have joined since 1999
- Ministers of Education meet every two years to review progress, Leuven, Belgium in April, 2009
- 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

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

- Most countries: three-year Bachelor's and two-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*)

POLICIES REGARDING BOLOGNA DEGREES

Accept:

- North Carolina State University
- Oregon State University
- Purdue University
- University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
- University of California, Berkeley
- Business Schools at University of Chicago, Columbia University, Wake Forest University, and University of Pennsylvania

BOLOGNA: WHAT ONE INSTITUTION HAS DONE

- *Myron A. Thompson, Associate Provost/Executive Director of the Graduate School, University at Buffalo/State University of New York* – “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.”

OTHER POLICIES REGARDING BOLOGNA DEGREES

- *World Education Services (WES)* – deems most but not all Bologna three-year degrees to be “functionally equivalent” to U.S. bachelor’s degrees
- *James Frey, Senior Adviser and Founder of Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)* – “It is important to differentiate between determining eligibility for admission to a graduate degree program in the United States and determining that a degree obtained in another country is the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree in the United States.”

INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SURVEY 2008

- About one-half of 167 respondents have developed a policy on Bologna
- About one-third consider degrees “equivalent,” and another third consider “equivalency” by field
- A very small number (15%) reject Bologna degrees
- “Respondents who specifically indicated that Bologna had influenced their admissions process tended to say that **‘our focus has shifted from degree equivalency to academic readiness or preparedness.’**”

NAGAP SURVEY ON BOLOGNA AND THREE-YEAR DEGREES*

- 69% of respondents do not have a policy for Bologna degrees
- 87% of the universities that have a policy indicate it was developed by the graduate school/graduate council
- 74 % of respondents indicated they accept Bologna degrees on a case-by-case basis. Primary reasons for the exception are the applicant holds another graduate/professional degree (79%), has high test scores (46%) or strong letters of recommendation (29%)
- 53% of respondents accept other 3-year degrees on a case-by-case basis. Primary reasons for the exception are the applicant holds another graduate/professional degree (93%), has high test scores (40%) or strong letters of recommendation (29%)

**November 2009 survey on Bologna and 3-year degrees conducted by the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP). 124 respondents from membership of 1400.*

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDY

- Since 1999 Europe has awarded more Ph.D.s in science and engineering than has the U.S.
- Competition from Europe: national efforts to recruit and the Bologna Process are showing success (3-2-3 degree cycles are appealing to international students compared to times-to-degree in U.S.)
- More graduate study available in China, Japan, India
- Australia, another competitor, is reaching its capacity to absorb many more international students, some private universities abruptly closed last month

EXAMPLES OF OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE THREE-YEAR FIRST UNIVERSITY DEGREES

- India
- Pakistan
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Canada
- Mexico
- Israel*
- Brazil
- Singapore*
- U.K.*

*Per WES, usually accepted for graduate admission in U.S.

CHALLENGES POSED BY BOLOGNA AND OTHER THREE-YEAR DEGREES FOR U.S. UNIVERSITIES

- Determining equivalency and maintaining quality
- Maintaining equity and fairness (U.S. students with 3-years of university admissible?)
- Maintaining global competitiveness – U.S. no longer has monopoly on graduate education
- New three-year standard beyond Europe? Re-examine U.S. degrees in light of global changes and domestic budget concerns? Will G.E. be reduced?
- Policy: Accept? Accept provisionally? Case-by-case?

2007 BANFF PRINCIPLES ON GRADUATE EDUCATION*

- ***Respect and learn from the differences in programs and their modes of delivery directed towards our common goal***
- Promote the quality of graduate programs
- Develop global career competencies and awareness in graduates
- Clarify and strengthen the role of the master's degree
- Promote high-quality inter-university collaborative programs across national boundaries
- Review and understand the global flow of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (early stage researchers)
- ***Engage stakeholders, e.g., employers, policy makers and universities, to improve and advance graduate education in a global context***
- Establish an inclusive global platform for discussion of best practices in graduate education

*From the Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education convened by CGS in August, 2007, with representatives from Australia, Canada, China and the U.S.

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**)
 - Pearson’s Test of English (**PTE-A-New**)
 - **Other** testing, interviews, etc.
- Graduate Record Examination (**GRE**) & Subject Test

UCLA GRADUATE DIVISION

- Graduate student body of approximately 10,000 with 19% international enrollment for Fall 2009
- 20,000 applications a year, 30+% are international
- 3% decrease in international applications for Fall 2009
- International admit numbers were stable for Fall 2009
- 5% increase in international graduate accepts for Fall 2009
- Non-waive able non-resident tuition (NRT) that must be paid from student support funding. No NRT break for TA's/RA's
- International students are largely in areas where grant support exists (e.g., sciences, engineering, economics, math)
- 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 Graduate Council Guidelines for the Graduate Admissions Process and Codification of the Policies and Procedures Governing Graduate Admissions*

- Policy and procedure statement of the Academic Senate Graduate Council
- Current document adopted in 1992 and revised twice since
- Good practice for every university to establish one
- Serves as a legal document
- Covers everything from baseline standards to the number of faculty that must review an application

*<http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gasaa/library/gccodific.pdf>

UCLA POLICY

- “Applicants who have completed studies at, and received diplomas or professional titles from, institutions outside of the United States, should ordinarily have completed 16 or 17 years of study: 12 years at the elementary or secondary school level and four or five years at the university level. Eligibility is judged by grades (marks), class obtained, or rank achieved in class.”

UCLA POLICY

- “Applicants with degrees from schools organized according to what is known as the British tradition are expected to have completed an Honours degree in first or high second. Applicants with degrees from schools in Bangladesh, Burma, India and Pakistan, countries in which schools differ from the standard British tradition, must show completion of a degree program requiring at least four years of study beyond the Intermediate or comparable examination level.”

UCLA POLICY

- “Foreign degrees are considered not acceptable when they are three-year ordinary or “Pass degrees” in the British tradition, professional diplomas in librarianship, social work, physical education, health education, etc., or diplomas and higher certificates from technical or vocational schools in foreign educational systems. *Holders of such degrees, diplomas, or certificates may appeal the decision for denial of admission...*”[emphasis added]

CHANGES IN GRADUATE ADMISSIONS IN THE U.S.

Decentralization driven by:

- **Financial exigencies**, e.g., cuts in central admissions, staffing, elimination of preliminary evaluation of all records
- **Technology**, e.g., online application, scanning of documents centrally that are immediately viewable by departments
- **Faculty** want to see all applications and records first
- **Retirement of veteran staff** with records evaluation expertise – see discussion from conference of the College Board, *Student Services Officials Discuss Upcoming Wave of Retirements**

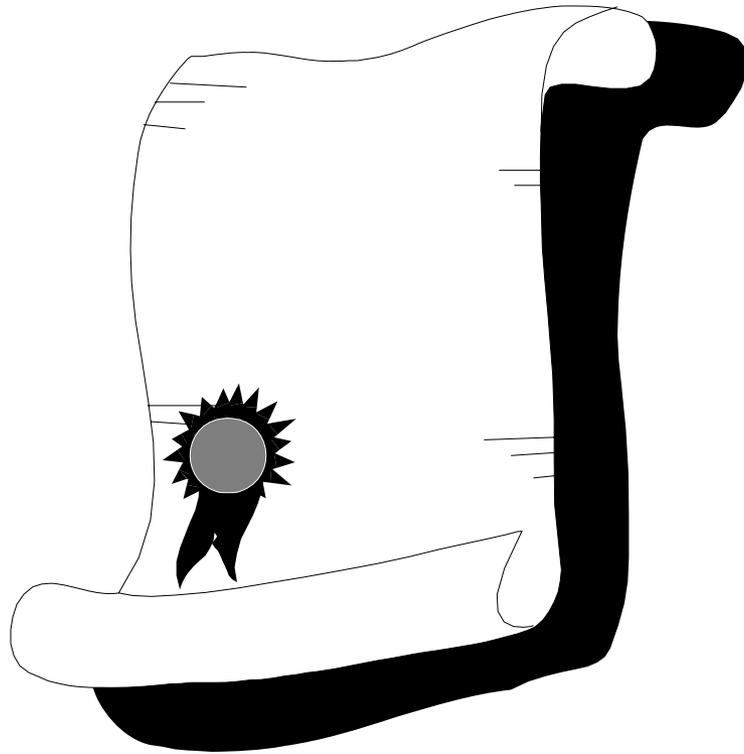
AACRAO Transcript, Lisa Rosenberg, 11/13/2008

UCLA RESPONSE TO CHANGES

- Bifurcated admissions process – since ‘budget crisis’ in 1990s
- Departments receive transcripts, etc. directly from applicants
- Departmental staff are trained by Graduate Division staff to evaluate records
- Graduate Division maintains a general records evaluation guide that is updated annually, using web/print resources
- Graduate Division maintains staff expertise in order to provide individual help with unusual cases
- Graduate Division and departmental staff have dual responsibilities for admissions and continuing student and academic affairs work – synergies develop
- Campus wide efforts to increase awareness of issues – held seminar on Bologna for faculty and staff in 2008

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



UCLA – EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY

- Smaller number of applicants with European degrees compared to large number with Asian degrees (Pacific Rim)
- Handle all 3-year degrees, including Bologna degrees, through case-by-case process, Gus Arlt Tradition (dating back to post-colonial Africa applicants with different credentials)
- 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, test scores, etc.

TYPES OF THREE-YEAR DEGREE EXCEPTION REQUESTS AT UCLA

- Bologna degree holders
- 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 regular, fully-employed, and executive MBA programs

UCLA DEAN'S SPECIAL ACTION ADMISSIONS FOR FALL 2009

- Cases that do not fully meet baseline standards
- 284 special admit requests were approved
- 75 of these requests were for international applicants
- Most of these requests involved alternative types of undergraduate degrees
- Many of these applicants had other degrees and credentials (e.g., a U.S. master's degree or the M.D. or D.D.S) that supplemented their undergraduate degree

CHANGES AT UCLA RE BOLOGNA ADMITS FOR FALL 2008 VS FALL 2009

- Bologna degree holder admits increased from **6** for Fall 2008 to **24** for Fall 2009
- 15 of these admits were from Italy where the Bologna Process is most advanced
- Six of these 24 admits were to the Department of Economics and the rest were spread over 13 other majors, from Civil Engineering to Public Policy
- Most of these admits also had the Bologna master's
- One of these admits was a student from China who obtained a Bologna degree

MILLENNIALS/FIRST GLOBALS/NET GENERATION*

“In this age cohort itself, one-third of the population will be global. All evidence points to a continuing flow of students into the U.S. graduate programs from abroad. But the electronically flattened world of this cohort will also render the domestic student more globally aware.”

Getting it Right: Graduate Schools Respond to the Millennial Challenge*, Deborah Stewart, **CGS Communicator, August/September 2007. John Zogby calls them The First Globals, Don Tapscott, the Net Generation

THE FUTURE OF GRADUATE ADMISSIONS?

- Convergence of domestic and international applicants – will the issues be that different?
- Increased mobility of students (one goal of Bologna) worldwide – e.g., Chinese applicants with Bologna degrees
- Financial pressures to shorten baccalaureate time-to-degree in the U.S. – three-year degrees and less G.E.?
- Changing views of what constitutes general education and/or preparation for graduate and professional study
- Reevaluation of current policy and practice

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Millennials/First Globals/Net Generation are changing graduate admissions
- Graduate admissions will increasingly confront applicant cohorts who hold a variety of credentials
- U.S. universities may reconsider their own four-year degrees
- CGS and many of its member institutions are in the process of developing principles and new paradigms to meet the challenges of global graduate education and postdoctoral training
- If new policies are needed should we wait for the Bologna Process to be completed? Can we afford to do that?

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Some degree of flexibility is required but given that holistic review has always been a hallmark of graduate admissions, maintaining quality should not be difficult
- Baseline standards are important but should not obscure the mission or preclude admitting the exceptional candidate, including those with three-year degrees
- Exceptions should be based on academic/professional arguments from the faculty (not on financial reasons)
- For the U.S. on average, international graduate students have lower attrition and shorter time-to-degree than domestic students

Thank You!

Daniel J. Bennett

Assistant Dean

Graduate Admissions/Student and Academic Affairs

UCLA Graduate Division

dbennett@gdnet.ucla.edu