

ACADEMIC BOARD – MEETING 5/00 (22 JUNE 2000)

Extended Degrees: Information Paper

Rationale

Secondary education in a number of countries is considered not to be of the standard of the VCE, yet some of these students move directly from secondary school to top universities in the USA. Countries where secondary school studies are not considered to provide the educational and personal maturity levels of VCE by accrediting agencies, i.e. NOOSR, include China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Also, in some cases the curriculum in particular subjects is much less demanding than the VCE, for example no calculus in mathematics, or students have not reached required English prerequisites. Students with such backgrounds can gain entry to the University of Melbourne after completion of an appropriate foundation program. For some students with a high academic standing this option is unpopular, and they choose instead direct entry into a USA university.

Market research indicates that students would find it more attractive to be selected into a degree program at The University of Melbourne with the foundation studies being part of that degree, than to undertake a foundation studies program and then seek selection into The University of Melbourne. The idea of the extended degrees is, therefore, to select students of high academic standing and provide a special three semester, or 150 point, program before joining the regular degree program as a regular degree second year student. The special three semester program will make good deficiencies in English and other prerequisite subjects, provide VCE-type level subjects to reach maturity and intellectual skills of VCE students, and to cover first year degree subjects. The extended degree program will be taken at the University with students enjoying all the responsibilities and rights of University of Melbourne students. Students would start in July, and most likely take some subjects in the summer semester, and take subjects in the usual semesters 1 and 2. Upon successful completion they would join the regular degree as year 2 students.

Student Selection Criteria

- Completion of secondary schooling in the student's "home" country
- Inclusion, where relevant, of prerequisite subjects for degree in secondary schooling.
- Very high level of performance. This might be indicated by a number of criteria including:
 - results which would merit acceptance into the top university within the country where the schooling was taken
 - completion of schooling with a grade point average that places students in the top 10% of their cohort
 - high results in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or an equivalent test, with reference to comparable scores used by top USA universities.
- An IELTS score of at least 5.5, or an equivalent TOEFL score.

Extended Degree Program (or first 150 points)

- English skills need to be brought up to the level of at least an IELTS of 6.5. It is generally considered that it takes about six months to raise the IELTS by 0.5 suggesting a minimum of one English subject in each of the semesters for students with an entry IELTS of 5.5, and a minimum of two semester length subjects for students with an entry IELTS of 6.0. A subject integrating development of English and its use in completing degree related study methods and assessment tasks seems desirable. All English as a Second Language subject must be passed.
- In order to move from the extended degree to the regular degree all students with an entry IELTS of less than 6.0, or equivalent, must complete, as an assessment requirement of one subject, an IELTS test and obtain ≥ 6.5 in order to pass that subject.
- Where subjects have much the same content, but a different set of assessment, for example English as a Second Language for students required to take an IELTS test and others not requiring the test, two subject numbers should be used with the additional bracketed term (Special Studies) for the subject requiring an IELTS test.
- VCE type level subjects in degree prerequisites such as mathematics, chemistry where required to meet the degree prerequisites.
- In total at least 50 points in addition to the usual degree program directed at reaching VCE level academic preparation.
- Sufficient regular first year subjects of the regular degree to provide prerequisite knowledge for students to move into second year and to meet degree requirements.
- It is desirable to provide indicative programs of subjects for students entering with IELTS of 5.5, 6.0 and 6.5, and where relevant for different backgrounds in degree prerequisite subjects.

Subsequent Program

Upon successful completion of the 150 points of the extended degree, students become regular second year degree students.

Some Other Issues

1. Student Progress: To be handled by the same procedures as for regular degree students, including the use of Unsatisfactory Progress Committee system.
2. Availability: Only for fee paying international students (Australian students enter via VCE or equivalent).
3. Monitoring and Review: As these extended degrees are an innovation, Faculties will be required to report at the end of each semester to SEP on the progress of students, any problems or other observations.

Procedure

Faculties considering developing Extended Degree programs should make contact with the Chair of the Student Entry Pathways Sub-Committee (SEP). SEP will work closely with the representative of the Faculty who is responsible for the proposal. SEP will then consider both selection and academic content issues, making formal recommendations for approval to the Selection Procedures Committee, regarding selection, and the Academic Programs Committee, regarding academic content, when it is satisfied with both aspects of the program. The Academic Programs Committee's shepherd for the relevant Faculty will be invited to attend SEP meetings at which the proposal is considered so that he or she can properly brief the Academic Programs Committee.