

AN ANALYSIS OF THE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE AND UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCES OF EARLY ADMISSION ENTRANTS

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Since 1971 the University of New England (U.N.E.) has offered places to a considerable number of final year secondary school students on the basis of a report received from their school. To be eligible to apply for admission under this scheme (known as the Project of Admission on the Basis of Principals' Reports) the student must be attending a school in one of the areas participating in the scheme — currently the North Coast, the North West, and the Western Area Directorates of the New South Wales Department of Education, the Darling Downs Region of Queensland, the A.C.T. and the Northern Territory. If a student within these localities wishes to be considered for entry to U.N.E. through this project he applies for admission through his school and his principal is asked to provide an assessment of his academic and personal qualities relative to others of his age. Applications under this scheme are considered by U.N.E. in September each year and if a candidate is successful he will receive an offer of admission long before his Higher School Certificate Examination result is known. If an applicant is not offered admission under this scheme he will automatically be reconsidered when his matriculation results are received early in January.

This report examines the subsequent academic performances of students who were admitted to U.N.E. on the basis of a Principals' Report (P.R.) during the years 1972 and 1973 — the first two years of this admission scheme. As only the cream of applicants were admitted under the P.R. scheme in these years it would be expected that if the principals' ratings were valid then the successful students should have performed appreciably better at both the appropriate H.S.C. examination and subsequently at U.N.E. than other students.

The 1972 Intake

The 1972 internal, undergraduate, first-year intake could be divided into three groups:

- those admitted under the Principal's Report Scheme,
- those about whom reports were received but who were admitted on the basis of H.S.C. marks,
- those about whom no reports were received.

H.S.C. Performance. The relative H.S.C. aggregates are shown in Table 1.

It is clear that the successful P.R. applicants did perform on the average well above the other students. (Statistically the analysis of variance test for equality of group means is significant $F_{2,698} = 44.3, p < .05$).

U.N.E. Progress. The 1972 intake of students who were enrolled in three year courses would have qualified to graduate at the 1974 Annual Examinations if they had completed their courses in minimum time. For these students qualifying at the 1975 examinations would represent taking minimum + 1 year to complete their courses. Thus the progress of the 1972 intake studying three year courses could be classified as:

- graduated in minimum time,
- graduated in minimum + 1 year,
- have not graduated but still continuing,
- have not graduated and have discontinued.

The second of these categories is not yet applicable to those 1972 intake students studying four year or concurrent courses. The academic progress of the 1972 intake is shown in Table 2 and 3. The successful P.R. entrants have performed slightly better at U.N.E. than the unsuccessful P.R. students but much better than the other students.

The 1973 Intake

As a list of unsuccessful P.R. applicants was not available for this group the 1973 intake could only be divided into two groups — those who were successful P.R. applicants and those who were admitted to U.N.E. by some other criteria.

Table 1

Mean H.S.C. Aggregates of 1972 Intake		
	N	Mean H.S.C. Mark
Admitted under P.R. scheme	161	580.1
Report submitted but H.S.C. entrant	184	524.8
No report submitted	356	470.8
TOTAL	701	510.1

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Table 2
Academic Progress of 1972 First Year Internal Undergraduates

	Graduated in minimum time			Graduated in minimum + 1			Not Completed			Not Continuing		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Admitted under P.R. scheme												
3 year course	28	62	90	6	4	10	4	7	11	15	15	30
4 year course	3	4	7	-	-	-	0	1	1	0	0	0
Concurrent course	5	0	5	-	-	-	4	3	7	0	0	0
Report submitted but H.S.C. entrant												
3 year course	40	46	86	7	2	9	11	2	13	27	17	44
4 year course	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	3	0	3
Concurrent course	8	0	8	-	-	-	15	6	21	0	0	0
No Principals' report												
3 year course	50	48	98	14	8	22	16	14	30	68	32	100
4 year course	31	4	35	-	-	-	15	1	16	26	5	31
Concurrent course	7	0	7	-	-	-	12	5	17	0	0	0

Table 3

Academic Progress of 1972 Intake (Expressed as Percentage)

	Graduated in minimum time			Graduated in minimum + 1			Not Completed			Not Continuing		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Admitted under P.R. scheme												
3 year course	52.8	70.5	63.8	11.3	4.5	7.1	7.5	8.0	7.8	28.3	17.0	21.1
4 year course	100.0	80.0	87.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Concurrent course	55.5	0.0	41.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	44.4	100.0	58.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Report submitted but H.S.C. entrant												
3 year course	47.1	68.6	56.6	8.2	3.0	5.9	12.9	3.0	8.6	31.8	25.4	28.9
4 year course	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Concurrent course	34.8	0.0	27.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	65.2	100.0	72.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
No Principals' report												
3 year course	33.8	47.1	39.2	9.5	7.8	8.8	10.8	13.7	12.0	45.9	31.4	40.0
4 year course	43.1	40.0	42.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	10.0	19.5	36.1	50.0	37.8
Concurrent course	36.8	0.0	29.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	63.2	100.0	70.8	0.0	0.0	0.0

H.S.C. Performance. The H.S.C. aggregates of these students are shown in Table 4. The majority of successful P.R. applicants clearly performed well

above the level of the other students. (Statistically the difference between the two groups is significant: $t = 11.2, 794d.f., p < .01$).

Table 4

Mean H.S.C. Aggregates of 1973 Intake		
	N	Mean H.S.C. Mark
Admitted under P.R. scheme	159	565.1
Not admitted under P.R. scheme	637	504.8
TOTAL	796	516.9

U.N.E. Progress. The academic progress of the 1973 intake is shown in Tables 5 and 6. The P.R. entrants enrolled in three year courses have graduated at a

much higher rate (63.5%) than the other entrants (35.7%).

Table 5

Academic Progress of 1973 Intake

	Graduated in minimum time			Not Completed			Not Continuing		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Admitted under P.R. scheme									
3 year course	25	60	85	11	17	28	15	6	21
4 year course	-	-	-	9	3	12	4	1	5
Concurrent course	-	-	-	4	6	10	0	0	0
Other entrants									
3 year course	80	86	166	93	48	141	104	54	158
4 year course	-	-	-	84	14	98	52	9	61
Concurrent course	-	-	-	12	10	22	3	0	3

Table 6

Academic Progress of 1973 Intake (Expressed as a Percentage)

	Graduated in minimum time			Not Completed			Not Continuing		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Admitted under P.R. scheme									
3 year course	49.0	72.3	63.5	21.6	20.5	20.9	29.4	7.2	15.7
4 year course	0.0	0.0	0.0	69.2	75.0	70.5	30.8	25.0	29.4
Concurrent course	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other entrants									
3 year course	28.9	45.7	35.7	33.6	25.5	30.3	37.6	28.7	34.0
4 year course	0.0	0.0	0.0	61.8	60.9	61.6	38.2	39.1	38.4
Concurrent course	0.0	0.0	0.0	80.0	100.0	88.0	20.0	0.0	12.0

Conclusions

It is clear that in the first two years of the Principals' Report Scheme students who were admitted under this policy tended to perform appreciably better than

other students both in the H.S.C. and at U.N.E. examinations. This finding supports the validity of the Principals' Report as a method of assessing suitability for tertiary study.

STUDENT ATTITUDE TO DEFERMENT OF ENTRY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

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In 1973 the University of New England (U.N.E.), at the request of the U.N.E. Student's Representative Council, instituted a policy which allowed students offered enrolment as internal undergraduates to apply for deferment of their entry to university. At that time the two principal criteria for granting deferment were financial hardship and level of maturity. The first year of the scheme saw 57 applications for deferment. Of this number 35 were actually granted deferment.

Following the apparent success of this pilot scheme it was recommended that all persons offered enrolments for 1975 be granted deferment if they so wished. This policy resulted in 216 deferments being sought that year. It was clear that the possible advantages of deferment were being realised by more and more young people.

This paper presents the results of a mail survey of the 77 students who sought and were granted deferment of their entry to U.N.E. in 1975 and who either came to U.N.E. in 1976 (N=28) or deferred their entry one more year (N=49). Replies were received from 48 of this sample which represents a response rate of 62.3%. As is to be expected a much higher response rate was obtained from those students currently attending U.N.E. (78.6%) than for the other group (53.1%).

Reasons for seeking deferment

The subjects were first asked to answer the question "Why did you seek deferment?". The responses were classified into categories and the frequency with which each reason was provided is shown in the table below. An average of about two reasons per subject was given.

Clearly the great majority of those subjects who currently attend U.N.E. had deferred their enrolment at least partly because they wanted a break from academic work. They usually also stated that they wanted some experience of the outside world or that they were unsure of what they wanted to do. A typical response was:

A number of factors influenced my decision to defer enrolment. Firstly I wanted experiences outside an educational institution. I wanted to experience different stimuli to see if my opinions and attitudes would change. I very much wanted a break from study and learning as I was developing a negative approach to schooling etc. Then again I was completely undecided on what course to do and the type of career I'd like. Lastly I had an opportunity to travel overseas which I accepted.

The respondents who had further deferred their entry to U.N.E. until 1977 were also often influenced by the reasons discussed above. However, their decision to withdraw was almost as often due to financial factors. In addition, just over a quarter of them had used deferment as security in case their first choice of action was unsuccessful. An example of one such respondent was:

I sought deferment as I was unsure of the decision I was making to go to College instead of University and thought it an excellent opportunity if for some reason I didn't like College. You feel less pressured and free to really decide if you like your present area of study, knowing that you still have the opportunity to go to University.

Was deferment the right decision?

The respondents were unanimous in agreeing that their original choice to defer was the correct one. However, two of those who did enter U.N.E. in 1976

Table 1

Frequency of Reasons given for Seeking Deferment

Reason	Subjects at U.N.E. in 1976 (N = 22)		Subjects still deferring (N = 26)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
unsure of what I wanted to do	10	45.5	12	46.2
needed a break from school	17	77.3	9	34.6
wanted some experience of outside world	12	54.6	9	34.6
wanted more money	3	13.6	8	30.8
as "back-stop" to first choice	0	0.0	7	26.9
to repeat school	1	4.6	1	3.9
to help run family property	2	9.1	0	0.0

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