New York University
Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee

Advisory on the Awarding of Advanced Standing for Country-Specific Standardized Tests

Spring 2012

Over the past few years, the number of undergraduates at NYU from outside the US has grown considerably, the result of a deliberate move by the University to conduct undergraduate admissions at a more international level. As the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee (UAAC) noted in its spring 2011 advisory on the implications of the Global Network University for undergraduate education, international students will very soon reach 20 percent of the undergraduate student body. This year, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions expanded the list of accepted testing options to reflect this development. This change also brings the admissions policies on the Square into closer alignment with those of NYU Abu Dhabi. Applicants to NYU may now submit results not only from the SAT Reasoning Test, the ACT (with Writing Test), three Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores, or three International Baccalaureate (IB) higher-level exams, but also from several country-specific exams, including the Chinese Gaokao, the Indian School Certificate, and the British A-Levels. Successful applicants with AP and IB scores, regardless of whether they submitted these scores when they applied to NYU, are eligible for advanced standing upon matriculating, provided that they achieve sufficiently high scores on the approved subject area tests. While there is no expectation among entering students that they should receive credit toward their degree requirements for SAT and ACT scores, there is much less clarity at NYU about the credit-worthiness of the approved non-US exams.

To this point, there has been significant confusion among students, faculty, and administrators as to which non-US exams might be eligible for advanced standing and how exactly to award credits for scores on these exams. Not only is there currently no information about such policies on the NYU website, but faculty and administrators have not had any internal document to which they could refer when advising international students. This has created a sense among some international students of being disadvantaged in relation to their US-based classmates, who have access to detailed information about how credits are awarded for AP and IB exam scores. As the UAAC observed in its spring 2011 advisory (noted above), “[International] students also have the right to clear, accessible information about whether the national or international examinations…that they have taken in high school qualify them for advanced standing.”

This year, the UAAC took up the charge of recommending policies for awarding advanced standing for country-specific standardized tests. (This is not the first time that the UAAC has weighed in on the question of advanced standing: in spring 2008, it recommended that the minimum score for all AP subject exams be raised to 4 and that the minimum score for IB exams be raised from 5 to 6.) To that end, the committee consulted with Shawn Abbott (Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Admissions) and Bobbe
Fernando (Associate Director for International Recruitment). Discussions then continued both in a subcommittee and in plenary sessions of the UAAC.

Three overarching considerations emerged from these discussions. First, the committee agreed that the list of country-specific tests eligible for advanced standing that Admissions had developed should be shorter than it currently is. Although individual schools have not been privy to this list, credits have historically been awarded at NYU for up to twelve different international tests, excluding the IB. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions has confirmed that a more conservative approach would not put the University at a competitive disadvantage in terms of international recruitment. With this in mind, and after careful consideration, the UAAC recommends the following exams for advanced standing:

- CXC Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exam (Commonwealth Caribbean Region)
- Baccalauréat (France)
- Abitur (Germany)
- Esame di Stato / Maturità (Italy)
- Matura (Switzerland)
- GCE A-Level (UK and Singapore)

These are the most commonly accepted exams among our peer and target institutions that award advanced standing to international students (e.g., Boston University, Brown University, Duke University, and the University of Pennsylvania). What these exams have in common is that they are designed to measure advanced-level knowledge in specific subject areas; furthermore, they are not mandatory high-school completion exams but are taken by students who intend to pursue undergraduate-level study.

In developing this list, the subcommittee gave special consideration to the Chinese and Indian exams, since large numbers of international students at NYU come from these two countries. To that end, consultations took place with representatives from the NYU Shanghai admissions team and IIE India, who confirmed that these exams are of a high-school standard and do not represent advanced-level work. It should be noted, however, that many students from China and South Asia come to NYU having taken the A-Levels (which are regularly offered throughout the Commonwealth) or the IB; the latter is currently offered in 132 countries (including the US, which is by far the IB’s largest market).

Second, it was agreed that a flexible policy for granting credits for country-specific standardized tests is preferable to setting course equivalencies for each individual subject exam. This is a different approach from the detailed AP course equivalency chart that is updated periodically by the College of Arts and Science following a review of the various subject exams by the relevant departments. The consensus among committee members was that it would be undesirable to add several standardized tests to this review process, especially since the various national education programs are subject to curricular
changes. Rather than setting course equivalencies for these exams, the committee recommends that advanced standing be awarded through “generic credits” in subject areas. Departments and schools can then decide, through consultation with their students, whether and how to count these credits towards completion of major, minor, and general education requirements. In many cases, however, the issue at stake for international students is not credit toward the degree or reducing the number of courses that they need to take for their major or minor, but the ability to place out of introductory courses on material they have covered in high school. To that end, departments—particularly those that see large numbers of international students, such as Economics—should offer placement tests to all interested students, as Mathematics and the various language departments currently do.

Finally, the committee agreed that credits should only be awarded for reasonably high scores on country-specific exams. Exam scores that would not be competitive for admissions purposes should not be considered for advanced standing, nor should international students be held to lower standards than are students who take the AP or the IB. With this in mind, the subcommittee used the percentages of students who in 2011 scored at least a 4 on the average AP exam and a 6 on the average IB exam as benchmarks in determining (where score distribution data were available) which minimum scores to recommend for each country-specific exam. The group also took into consideration the minimum scores that other institutions use for non-US exams.

The table on the next page shows the minimum score that the UAAC recommends at this time for each of the country-specific tests listed above, as well as the number of points that should be awarded for each subject area exam. Of course, not every NYU school awards advanced standing for standardized tests, but those schools that do should follow these guidelines. Each school should, however, develop its own policies about which particular subject area exams it will accept for credit. There is no obligation to limit the awarding of credit to exams in liberal arts subjects.

This set of guidelines should be reviewed periodically by this or another all-University faculty committee.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Examination</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Min. Score</th>
<th>No. of points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Caribbean Region</td>
<td>CXC Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE)</td>
<td>I-VII</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>8 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Baccalauréat</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Abitur</td>
<td>1-15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Esame di Stato (Maturità)</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore &amp; United Kingdom</td>
<td>GCE A-Level</td>
<td>U-A*</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Matura</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8 points</td>
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