

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: J. Munro, Chair
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

Subject: B.C. Grade XII upgrading
(SCUS Reference: SCUS 00 - 2)
(SCAP Reference: SCAP 00 - 10)

Date: March 17, 2000

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies and the Senate Committee on Academic Planning gives rise to the following motion:

"That Senate approve as set forth in S.00 -36 that upgrades of B.C. Grade XII marks may be made in accordance with Ministry of Education policies, except that the final mark in a provincially-examinable course may not be increased by taking a college course deemed to be its equivalent."



Memo from
N. Heath, Director of Admissions
Simon Fraser University

To: SCUS
Date: 1999 12 10

Subject: BC Grade 12 upgrading - revisited

Suggested Motion

Upgrades of BC Grade 12 marks may be made in accordance with Ministry of Education policies, except that the final mark in a provincially-examinable course may not be increased by taking a college course deemed to be its equivalent.

Discussion

Admission averages in general are competitive and are very high for certain disciplines. (For example direct entry to BUS requires an average of 88%). Competition is even stronger for entrance scholarships that are sometimes determined on marks alone. Consequently, many students in secondary school and recent graduates participate in an unseemly rat-race to gain high marks by whatever means they can. Traditionally, some students remain at secondary school or take courses at a school district adult education centre to improve their records, to gain entry to a competitive program. Some feel that it is unfair to students who take each course once only to be compared and ranked in with those who have attempted their courses more than once.

In 1999, the Ministry of Education ruled that ABE courses in colleges could be treated as the equivalent of certain Ministry -authorized Grade 12 courses and could receive graduation credit towards the Dogwood or 'Adult Dogwood'. These courses are tuition free. This has created increased opportunity to upgrade for students whose averages are not competitive. However there is a widely-held suspicion that the course grades are not strictly comparable.

SCUS addressed this issue earlier this year and ruled that repeated courses may not be computed into the average for a B.C. secondary school graduate. However, SCUS recognized that it is impractical to identify most of these repeats because the Ministry of Education transcript shows only the highest passing mark achieved in a course.

However, the proposed solution has prompted loud protests from secondary school counsellors as well as from those responsible for college ABE programs. It is pointed out that we permit repeats in SFU gpas and in computing transfer admission averages, so our policy is inconsistent. Further, to deny the opportunity to upgrade is to undermine or even negate the purpose of Adult Basic Education programs in colleges.

BC Grade 12 upgrading – revisited

1999 12 10

A more defensible solution and one that would be more palatable to the school system, although not to the ABE community is:

Upgrades of BC Grade 12 marks may be made in accordance with Ministry of Education policies, except that the final mark in a provincially-examinable course may not be increased by taking a college course deemed to be its equivalent.

This means for example that, although we are obliged to take an ABE Provincial level mathematics course as if it were BC12 Principles of Mathematics course if the student takes it for the first time, we do not need to replace the grade of a secondary school course with the grade of a (probably) different course taken at a college. This takes care of most of the potential problems of 'mix 'n match' upgrading.

Rationale

The ABE courses, while deemed to be generally similar (80% or better match of learning outcomes), are not assessed in the same manner as examinable grade 12 courses.

Also, the grading scale used by the Ministry of Education and by the various colleges will be different in some cases.

Practicality

The transcript course coding for external courses on BC secondary school and adult records will generally show that a course has been taken elsewhere, permitting us to distinguish between repeats of the same course at within the school system and courses taken at colleges.

nh Dec 1999