

Admission of Mature Non-Matriculated Students into a Degree Program

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The admission of mature non-matriculated students into degree-granting programs in Canadian universities is a fairly recent innovation. The mature admission privilege appears to have been used very sparingly when it was first introduced in 1965/66. The number admitted was small and few, if any, records were kept. The 1968/69 calendars of twenty-four Canadian universities listed a special admission privilege for mature non-matriculated students.¹ However, it should be noted that the requirements for admission and the definition of the term "mature" vary, not only from one university to another, but within a given university from faculty to faculty. This article will review briefly the admission requirements, the number, background and level of achievement of mature non-matriculated students working towards a Bachelor of Education degree at the Faculty of Education, the University of Calgary.²

In the early part of 1969, a questionnaire was sent to the registrars of the twenty-four universities with adult admission privileges. Unfortunately, only incomplete information was made available. However, several of the registrars contacted expressed an interest in a study of mature non-matriculant admission and their co-operation made some of the present findings possible. Table I is a summary of the information obtained.

TABLE I

REGISTRATION OF MATURE NON-MATRICULATED
STUDENTS AT TWENTY-FOUR CANADIAN
UNIVERSITIES

(NUMBER ADMITTED — REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION)

Name of University	Age	Pre-Test Required	Course Pre-required	Number Registered			
				1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69
Alberta	Mature	Yes	Eng. 30	7	31	34	62
Brandon	21	Yes	—	—	—	17	—
Brock	25	No	—	—	48	17	53
Calgary	23-25	Yes	Individual case	—	50	144	262
Carleton	23	No	—	—	28	33	—
Guelph*	21	No	Ontario resident	—	—	—	—
Lakehead*	21	No	—	—	—	—	—
Laurentian*	Mature	No	—	—	—	—	—
Lethbridge	21	Yes	Individual case	—	—	23	60
Manitoba	21	Yes	—	—	—	277	800
Memorial*	25	No	—	—	—	—	—
Mount Allison	Mature	No	Individual case	No. so small, no records kept			
Mount St. Vincent*	25	No	—	—	—	—	—
Ottawa	21-23	Yes	Individual case	—	—	—	814
Prince of Wales	Mature	No	Individual case	2	3	2	3
Queen's	23	No	Eng., Math, or lang.	—	—	143	240
St. Francis Xavier	Mature	Yes	—	—	6	5	5
Simon Fraser*	25	Yes	—	—	—	—	—
Sir George Williams*	21	Yes	—	—	—	—	—
Trent	25	No	1 Gr. 13 course	—	3	8	7
Waterloo	Mature	Yes	—	—	64	57	168
Waterloo Lutheran	23	Yes	Individual case	—	3	5	4
Windsor*	Mature	Yes	—	—	—	—	—
York*	23	No	—	—	—	—	—
Total Number of MNM students registered				9	236	765	2478**

*These universities did not volunteer any information on their MNM students.

**The totals are only approximations. However, they indicate a definite trend.

As already noted, the figures in the above table are only approximate and unfortunately incomplete. Eight universities did not provide any information and several registrars could only state approximate totals because no records of mature non-matriculated students had been kept. However, the tremendous increase in the number of mature non-matriculated adult students into Canadian universities seems to indicate that a definite need is being met and also to warrant an examination of the background and achievements of these students.

Adult Admission at the University of Calgary

The Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary has made a special study of the admission and performance of the students admitted under adult privilege. The remainder of this paper is a short synopsis of this information.

In January, 1965, a joint meeting of the Faculties of Arts and Science of the University of Alberta, Edmonton, approved the recommendation of the Joint Curriculum Committee that, in exceptional circumstances, admission would be granted to persons lacking the full matriculation requirements. The only criterion specified was that the candidate must produce evidence that he could benefit from university studies. The recommendation was later submitted to and approved by General Faculty Council and the Coordinating Council of the University of Alberta in the following form:

In exceptional circumstances a person who lacks formal matriculation may petition the Arts or Science Faculty Council for special permission to enrol for a degree in the Faculty of Arts or Science respectively, on the grounds that he or she can profit from a university education. Each application will be considered on its own merits by the Council of the Faculty. Successful completion of the normal first year of university work or five courses will stand in lieu of formal matriculation.³

The University of Alberta at Calgary, at first a branch of the University of Alberta, became completely autonomous as the University of Calgary in 1966. The new university in Calgary adopted, with variations, a number of the regulations laid down by the former parent body, and the policy towards admission of

mature adults is one of these. The University of Calgary's calendar states:

Mature non-matriculated students: A student of mature age who is unable to present complete matriculation, and who realizes a need for a university education, may apply for admission under special conditions. Each application will be considered on its own merits by the Dean or Director of the Faculty or School concerned. Such students may be required to provide evidence of ability to undertake academic studies, such as a recent matriculation or correspondence course taken, and to undergo special entrance examinations.⁴

This is a general regulation; each school and faculty may have special requirements to be fulfilled within this general framework. The Faculty of Education states its requirements for adult admission in the 1968/69 calendar:

Certain mature adult students who can give evidence of being able to profit from university studies, may be admitted as provisional students by making application to the Faculty of Education Council through the Dean. The records of such students will be examined at the end of the first year, and if satisfactory, their matriculation will be waived retroactively.⁵

Procedure for Admission into the Faculty of Education

The term "mature student," as defined by the Faculty of Education, means that the student must be at least twenty-five years of age in order to be considered for entrance into the Faculty.⁶ The next part of the statement, "who can give evidence of being able to profit from university studies," involves three considerations. First, the candidate is interviewed by an assistant to the Dean; during the interview, the candidate's background is noted, and arrangements are made for the submission of documentary evidence of courses previously completed. Second, if the background indicates that the candidate may be able to study at the university level, an appointment is set up for a series of tests with the University's Student Counselling Services. Third, the test results are forwarded to the Dean's office and a second interview may take place. The interviews and test results may indicate that the candidate has

ability, but that he needs upgrading in certain areas. He may, as a result, be required to take one or two Grade 12 courses as a preparation for entrance into the university. The successful completion of these courses will then become a requirement for entrance.⁷

Terms for Acceptance

The successful candidate is admitted with the understanding that he must complete one full academic year's work, that is, five courses with a C average or 2.0.⁸ The five courses do not have to be completed within a chronological year; they can be done on a part-time basis. However, the mature non-matriculated student is required to attend intramurally for one full academic year in order to be recommended for certification. Normally, he is expected to take at least one course per year. After the five courses are completed, the student's record is reviewed by the office of the Dean and, if it is found to be satisfactory, the matriculation requirements are waived and the student receives credit for courses taken. The student is henceforth treated like any other second-year student.

Student Counselling Tests⁹

The test battery that the candidate is required to complete before admission is not an entrance examination. The test results are used as indicators of the strengths and weaknesses in the candidate's background. If the results are disastrously low, unless special circumstances are involved¹⁰, they may indicate that the applicant's expectations are unrealistic. In such a case, he will be advised to seek some other avenue for self-improvement. The tests administered by the Student Counselling Services are:

- (1) Student Biographical Inventory
- (2) Cooperative Academic Ability Test
- (3) Iowa Tests of Educational Development
 - interpretation of reading materials in the social studies,
 - interpretation of reading materials in the natural sciences,
 - interpretation of literary materials.

The results of the tests are confidential and are placed in a closed envelope in the student's file. If the test results appear to be inconclusive, or perhaps an indicator of special problems, the candidate may be invited to complete more individualized testing by the Student Counselling Services. However, it should be noted that the scores obtained on Student Counselling tests have not proven to be a reliable predictor of the adult student's performance in university studies.¹¹ The Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) were dropped from the test battery in 1968 on the basis of the data collected during the first two years of the program.¹² The Test of Adult College Aptitude (TACA) was adopted in the fall of 1968, and the result of these tests will be under examination for the next year or so.

Number Admitted

The 1966-67 academic session was the first year that the mature non-matriculated program was implemented. The Faculty of Education admitted thirty-two students — fourteen females and eighteen males. Fifty-six students were admitted for the academic session 1967-68 — twenty-nine females and twenty-seven males. The total for the first two years of the program was eighty-eight students.¹³ For the rest of this paper, the mature non-matriculated student will be designated MNM, and the grade point average as GPA.

An Analysis of the Calgary Data

The data were obtained through interviewing, through completion of a questionnaire, and by the submission of documentary evidence of academic courses successfully completed. The data were then compiled and arranged into tables for the purpose of describing the population.* Out of the data, seven "models" were chosen, each being used to test a specific hypothesis concerning predictors of GPA from the variables, the GPA being that obtained after the first year of university study. The predictor variables used in the respective models were:

*Copies of the individual tables are available from the author. They have been omitted here due to space limitations.

- Model 1: Age in Years
- Model 2: Years of Formal Schooling
- Model 3: Standing Obtained During the Last Year of Formal Schooling
- Model 4: Type of Work Experience
- Model 5: Social Background
- Model 6: Matriculation Courses Taken
- Model 7: The Total Data.

Method of Analysis

For each of the seven models, a regression coefficient was calculated, the criterion being the grade point average. The R² obtained was tested for significance at the .05 level using the formula:

$$F = \frac{R^2}{1 - R^2} \cdot \frac{N - k - 1}{k}$$

where N is the number of cases and K is the number of predictors when entering the table of F, df₁ = k, and df₂ = N - k - 1.¹⁴

The results of the calculations for each of the seven models are summarized in Table II:

TABLE II
RESULTS OF THE CALCULATIONS

<i>Models</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>
1: Age in Years.....	88	1	.0078	.6761 N.S. ^a
2: Years of Formal Schooling.....	88	1	.0031	.2674 N.S.
3: Standing Obtained.....	88	5	.1319	2.4918 S. ^b
4: Student's Occupation.....	88	10	.1089	.9410 N.S.
5: Social Background.....	88	10	.0579	.4732 N.S.
6: Matriculation Courses Completed prior to admission.....	88	1	.0005	.0430 N.S.
7: Total Data.....	88	31 ^c	.3473	.9612 N.S. ^d

- a Not significant
- b Needs 2.33 to be significant at 5% level
- c Three models: No. of dependents: No. of pre-school children; and No. of courses taken during the first year of university were not dealt with in this brief review. The findings did not influence the calculation.
- d Needs 1.67 to be significant at 5% level.

The average GPA of all students was 2.38 on their work during the first year. They took an average of 3.5 courses. There was no relationship between the number of courses taken and the GPA. That is to say, a student did not seem to perform better if he only studied one or two courses rather than if he took a full year.

Model 1: Age in Years — The age range of the eighty-eight students was from twenty-four to fifty-five years.¹⁵ The mean was 35.7 years. As shown in Table II, the age of the MNM students was not related to their first year success as measured by GPA.

Model 2: Years of Formal Schooling and GPA First Year University — The number of years of formal schooling ranged from eight to thirteen, with the mean being eleven years. Again, the relationship to GPA is non-significant.

Model 3: Standing Obtained During the Last Year of Formal Schooling — Fifty-one of the eighty-eight students obtained B or C standings (50-64%; 40-49%) in formal schooling. No data were available for thirty-five of the remainder, as many of them did not finish a final year. Standing obtained, however, related positively to GPA in first year university (see Table II).

Model 4: Type of Work Experience and GPA — Of the forty-three female students, twelve had been secretaries, eleven teachers, eight skilled labourers, the rest being clerks, housewives, and so forth. Seventeen for the forty-five males were teachers and thirteen were clerk-salesmen.

It is worth noting, in female occupations, that teachers had only a slightly higher GPA than former secretaries, with teachers placing at a GPA of 2.73¹⁶ and secretaries at 2.68. The highest GPA was made by the one male who had formerly been a secretary. Males who held clerk-salesman (GPA - 2.46) and teacher (GPA - 2.39) positions placed next highest. Those who had been self-employed placed lowest (GPA - 1.45). Skilled labour and managerial backgrounds produced an equal GPA of 2.26.

Model 5: Social Background — The student's social background was determined by his father's occupation. It should be noted that approximately 80 per cent of the students came from a social background which, according to Blishen¹⁷, is below the status of a teacher; 9.09% skilled labour; 22.72% unskilled; 17% self-

employed, mainly farmers; 15.9% clerk-salesmen; and others 12%. Only approximately 20.0% came from professional or managerial social backgrounds. Social background apparently has a very low relationship to GPA as shown by the R^2 of only .0579 in Table II.

Model 6: Matriculation Courses Completed Prior to Admission — Many MNM students are expected to take a Grade 12 level course as preparation for admission into the Faculty of Education. English is most frequently required. If one or more additional courses are needed, they are usually in preparation for specializing in a given major field. For example, a MNM student who wishes to teach mathematics will need Mathematics 30 and 31. Out of the total of eighty-eight students, fifty-six took matriculation courses in preparation for admission.

Model 7: The Total Data — As shown in Table II, the full set of predictors does not significantly relate to GPA.¹⁸

Discussion

Examination of the above data seems to indicate that the traditional admission requirements may not necessarily be valid as far as the mature person is concerned. This applies particularly to students enrolled in Arts courses, or courses that do not require a specific prerequisite. Few MNM students elect a major field of study which requires mathematics. Most of them lack the prerequisites, and they tend to score lower than regular students on the mathematical part of Student Counselling tests. However, the scores achieved on the tests did not prove to be predictors of the GPA achieved in the first year of university studies.

The individual's school achievement gives an indication of later-life performance level only on the positive side. The poor or indifferent young student may become a good student when he matures. The individual may need to reach a stage in his development where he is psychologically prepared and willing to pursue disciplined studies. When compared with a young student, the mature student is less timid of seeking counselling if he finds himself in a difficult situation. He tends to be better organized in his studies and time allocation. He is, in short, very strongly motivated to succeed because he is usually at the University because *he* wants to be there, because he has reached a stage where he accepts the

need for higher education in order to reach his goal in life. This may be one of the keys to academic excellence; namely, that the clearer the goal, the more dedicated and the better organized will be the behaviour devoted to reaching the goal.

Some positive factors in the findings should be noted. The eighty-eight MNM students examined achieved a GPA of 2.38 in their first year of study at the University. The regular student body achieved a GPA of 2.16. Only four MNM students withdrew from their studies. Forty successfully completed five courses, or one full year's work, during their first year at the University. Thirty-nine of them are presently enrolled either part- or full-time.

The lack of predictability of GPA is perhaps a credit to the screening procedures used for such applicants. Those accepted seem to do better than regular freshmen, and the lack of relationships noted above might imply the existence of motivations and drives which do not show up in our equations. It is suspected, however, that if all mature NM applicants were admitted, the GPA's would be much more predictable.

More generally speaking, the admission privilege has some built-in fringe benefits: First, it enables people to get a second chance at achieving higher education. Thirty out of the eighty-eight students examined claimed that lack of financial resources had prevented them from finishing high school and going on to university. Second, the program encourages adults to strive for self-improvement, when they can achieve a degree eventually. Third, it has led a large number of people to seek guidance on educational requirements. In many cases, they find that the preparation needed is within their reach, or they receive expert advice on how they can improve their socio-economic status in areas other than university studies. Fourth, it has added a new dimension to adult education. To be able to work towards a university degree has great status value; it provides a vertical mobility channel and a challenge to the adult learner. Fifth, it enables the university to admit persons from other academic jurisdictions, persons whose academic qualifications may be difficult to equate with the local requirements. Finally, it enables society to utilize more readily the accumulated skills of its population and, at the same time, it provides an avenue for adding to and making more sophisticated this skill and knowledge.

Notes and References

1. *Commonwealth Universities Year Book*, Edinburgh: R. R. Clark, Ltd., 1968, pp. 2423-2459.
2. This paper is a brief synopsis of some data compiled for an unpublished study ("An Innovation in University Adult Education") which was completed in May, 1969 by Mimi M. Vaselenak.
3. "Information for Individuals Seeking Admission as Non-Matriculated Degree Candidates," *University of Alberta Bulletin*, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1969.
4. *Calendar*, University of Calgary, 1969, p. 36.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 115. It is interesting to note that the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta has adopted somewhat similar regulations for the admission of mature non-matriculated students. In 1969, that Faculty issued a leaflet which sets out the admission regulations and programming of mature non-matriculated students. It states in part:
"The candidate must normally be 25 years of age or older; he must be interviewed and tested; he will be required to present English 30 and one other Grade XII examination subject appropriate to his major field of specialization with an average of 60% or better in the two subjects. The candidate is admitted as a special student and he is required to successfully complete five courses — two compulsory and three chosen from specially defined areas of discipline. The candidate must pass all five courses without repetition with a minimum grade of 4 on each subject and with a grade point average of at least 4.5. Subsequently, the matriculation requirements are waived and the student is henceforth considered a regular second-year student."
6. All other faculties and schools at the University of Calgary define a mature student as a person twenty-three years of age or older. Some deviation is, however, allowed.
7. Many applicants are required to take English 30 and one additional course pertaining to the major field they wish to specialize in as teachers. The additional course may be a prerequisite for future courses. A good example would be mathematics.
8. The grading system is as follows:

A = 4.00
B = 3.00
C = 2.00
D = 1.00

D is a conditional pass which allows the student to proceed to the next level. To graduate, the student must obtain a 2.00 average on the last ten courses.

9. Since 1967, all mature non-matriculated students are required to take a battery of tests.
10. For example, an applicant with a non-English background.
11. A study done at the University of Lethbridge with mature non-matriculated students arrived at somewhat the same conclusions. S. A. Perkins, *An Examination of Five Different Groups of First Year Students at the University of Lethbridge on the College Qualification Test and Grade Point Average 1967-68*, Research Bulletin No. 1, the University of Lethbridge, 1968.
12. See R. C. Conklin, *Facts and Figures Concerning Mature Non-Matriculated Students at the University of Calgary*, Calgary: The University of Calgary, 1969, p. 10.
13. For the academic session 1968-69, the Faculty of Education admitted 105 mature non-matriculated students. The background and performance of this group is presently under study.
14. H. J. Hallworth and A. Brebner, *A System of Computer Programs*, London: British Psychological Society, 1967, and George A. Ferguson, *Statistical Analysis of Psychology and Education*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966, pp. 401-411.
15. The age requirement (25 years minimum) was waived in two instances.
16. Out of the twenty-eight MNM students who claimed teaching as their main work experience, fifteen held interim teaching certificates based upon one year of Normal School. Thirteen had been teaching in institutions which did not require certification. Since 1968, all teachers in Alberta who are not teaching under permanent certification are required to upgrade their academic backgrounds. For certification requirements see *Regulations Governing Certification of Teachers*, L. S. Wall, Queen's Printer for Alberta, 1968.
17. Bernard R. Blishen, *A Socio-Economic Index for Occupations in Canada*, cited in *Canadian Society*, B. R. Blishen, et al. (eds.), Toronto: Macmillan, 1968, pp. 741-753.
18. While sex differentiation and the GPA were not indicated in the total data, it may be observed that in 1966-67, out of a total of 32 MNM, 14 females achieved a GPA of 2.68; 18 males a GPA of 2.35; in 1967-68, out of a total of 56 MNM, 26 females achieved a GPA of 2.52, and 27 males a GPA of 2.09.