

## **Review of Admission Rules and Procedures Arising from Recommendations from the External Investigation of the Admission Irregularity in 2011**

The external investigation into the circumstances surrounding the 2011 MBBS admission irregularity made a number of recommendations in regard to changes to the University's admission rules and procedures, including the making of offers by exception. A Working Party (chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and involving the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); the President, Academic Board; and the Academic Registrar) was established to review UQ's admission rules and procedures in response to the recommendations from the external investigation. The Working Party has finalised its deliberations and a summary of the outcomes is provided below.

### **Immediate Actions**

The University has already undertaken a number of actions to ensure the Admissions Rules are more robust than they were for the 2011 admissions period. These include:

- **Admission Rule 4.5.1** (pre-2012), which was the rule intended to be the mechanism by which the President of the Academic Board was able to authorise offers to students who have successfully appealed an admission decision under Admissions Rule 4.6, has now been updated to make the application of the rule more transparent. It has also been re-positioned more logically under Admission Rule 4.6 – Admission appeals.

In addition, **Admission Rule 4.5 – Special admission**, has been re-drafted to focus purely on approved special admission schemes (see below for examples). These rules were approved by Senate on 8 December, 2011, in time for application to the 2012 admissions period.

- **Admission Rule 4.9 – Power to waive compliance**, was re-drafted to mandate that such a waiver by the Vice-Chancellor can be approved only following consultation with both the Executive Dean (not to be delegated) and the President of the Academic Board. This revised rule was also approved by Senate on 8 December, 2011, in time for the 2012 admissions period.
- **Reporting on Admission Outcomes for Special Admission Schemes** – The University has a range of special admission schemes intended to assist students from specific cohorts, in particular, students from under-represented groups such as people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent. The offers to students admitted through these schemes are authorised by the President of the Academic Board under the provisions of Admission Rule 4.5 – Special admission. The effectiveness of the special admission schemes was previously reviewed on an ad hoc basis and it was recognized that refinement of the schemes, especially the selection criteria used, would benefit from more systematic analysis. To this end, in late 2011, an ad hoc Special Admission Scheme Working Party of the Committee of Academic Programs Policy (CAPP) that had been convened earlier in that year was formalised into an ongoing Sub-committee of CAPP.

The terms of reference for this group include responsibility for the annual collection and analysis of data about the outcomes of all special admission schemes including, but not limited to, the number of offers made, the OP/ranks of applicants admitted and the respective program cut-offs, the academic performance of the students following admission including GPAs, attrition rate, and graduation outcomes.

## Other Recommendations

### Recommendation 1:

***In recognition of the need to balance the flexibility afforded by the ability to make forced offers with the need for a fair and transparent process for the making of such offers, we recommend that a properly defined process be developed and published as part of the University's Admission Rules.***

**Action:** This recommendation appears to suggest that 'offers by exception' should have a status in the Admission Rules in their own right. An offer by exception, also called a manual offer, is an administrative tool used to give effect to an admissions decision that has been made either by virtue of one of the provisions of the Admissions Rules, or other administrative function e.g. to correct a patent error. In order to clarify this function, the Admission Rules will be footnoted to refer to situations where offers by exception are used to give effect to decisions made under the respective Admission Rules and a definition of 'manual offers' will be included.

### Recommendation 2:

***If "exceptional circumstances" are to remain as the cornerstone for making such recommendations, a non-exhaustive list of examples to guide decision makers should be developed and published.***

**Action:** Add a note (see below) to both Admission Rule 4.6 – Admissions Appeals and Admission Rule 4.9 – Power to waive compliance, setting out the type of exceptional circumstance that might warrant application of the rules.

#### *Admission Rule 4.6 – Admissions Appeals*

*Note: Exceptional circumstances might include, for example, remedying a situation where a student had acted on written advice from a UQ staff member to take a particular action in relation to their admission and that advice was incorrect and led to the student who would otherwise have been made an offer missing out on a place.*

#### *Admission Rule 4.9 – Power to waive compliance*

*Note: Exceptional circumstances might include, for example, consideration of an applicant presenting unusual but academically elite qualifications not readily assessed in these rules.*

### Recommendation 3:

***The ability to make forced offers should apply to all courses and programs of study where there is a potential need to make such offers. The current clause 4.9 procedure does not apply to the MBBS Program.***

**Action:** Relocate the MBBS Year 12 Provisional Entry pathway rules related to admission (called enrolment requirements in program rules) to the Admission Rules and delete them from the program rules – for 2013 admissions.

Continue to manage all MBBS Year 12 Provisional Entry pathway admissions through the Admissions section and through QTAC.

Relocate the graduate entry MBBS rules related to admission (called enrolment requirements in program rules) to the Admission Rules and delete them from the program rules – for 2013 admissions (subject to confirmation this is administratively possible within the timeframe)

Manage graduate entry MBBS admissions through the Admissions section and preferably through QTAC – for 2013 admissions (subject to confirmation this is administratively possible within the timeframe).

**Recommendation 4:**

***So as to get more consistency in decision making in relation to forced offers, they should ideally be dealt with at the same time or in relevant groupings rather than on an ad hoc basis. Minutes of the reasons for decisions to make or not to make a forced offer should be kept. If a decision is challenged, reasons are potentially required to be given.***

**Action:** Where decisions are made under Admission Rule 4.5 – Special admission, a small group comprising the President, Academic Board, Academic Registrar and Manager, Admissions will convene to make special admission decisions, preferably in one meeting per category of applicant or, where that is not possible, in manageable groupings of applicants. The reasons for the decisions will be recorded.

Decisions in accordance with Admission Rule 4.6 – Admission appeals, will be made by the President, Academic Board, with advice provided by the Manager, Admissions. Reasons for making these decisions will be recorded and provided to appellants.

Decisions regarding the application of Admission Rule 4.9 – Power to waive compliance, are necessarily made on an ad hoc basis. However, evidence of consultation with the President, Academic Board and the relevant Executive Dean as well as a description of the exceptional circumstance that led to the decision to waive compliance will be requested by the Manager, Admissions, before offers by exception are made.

**Recommendation 5:**

***Given the strategic importance of the Scholarships program and its objectives - to attract the best and brightest – we recommend that the University formally amends its Admission Rules to expressly allow for forced offers to be made to Scholarship recipients (or at least for certain classes of Scholarship) where the applicants do not meet the requirements for their first preference at the University.***

**Action:** Progress the proposal from the Committee for Academic Programs Policy (CAPP) to the Academic Board, to introduce a special admissions scheme from 2013 admissions, to facilitate the offer of 'program of choice' for recipients of the Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship. This will align the admission arrangements for the University's most prestigious academic scholarship with other Go8 institutions such as Monash University and the University of Melbourne.

*At the University's 16 April 2012 Academic Board meeting, consideration was given to the recommendation that a special admission scheme be established for recipients of a UQ Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship, to waive the requirement to obtain the threshold scores and/or the required aggregate score in the Undergraduate Medical Admissions Test (UMAT). The Academic Board determined not to pursue this recommendation until the consideration of the ongoing use of UMAT for entry to the MBBS is finalised.*

**Recommendation 6:**

***The decision to make forced offers should not rest with an individual office holder. The decision to make such offers should be made by a committee established for that purpose.***

**Action:** Refer to the response to recommendations 4 and 5 above.

Where offers by exception are being made to correct patent administrative errors, the Admissions Manager will be required to keep a record of all such offers and the reasons for those offers.

Where offers by exception are used as a mechanism to manage precise cut-offs that are unable to be accommodated using the setting of parameters in the QTAC allocation system, a record of all such offers shall be made by the Admissions Manager along with the reasons for those decisions.

A mechanism to audit the use of offers by exception will also be implemented including preparation of an annual report of all offers by exception made under the authority of the Admission Rules as well as for administrative functions such as correcting errors and fine-tuning cut-offs. The audit report will set out the basis for the offer (e.g., approved special admission scheme; appeal upheld; waiver of compliance with rules) and the approval authority.

This audit report will be reviewed annually by the Academic Registrar, in consultation with the President, Academic Board, and any concerns about the application of the rules will be raised for consideration by CAPP.

#### **Recommendation 7:**

***In relation to the MBBS Program, consideration should be given to replacing the UMAT scores as a condition of eligibility for admission. This recommendation is based on the strongly held view of the Dean as to the value (or more particularly lack of value) of the UMAT scores as a predictor of suitability and the fact that other competing medical schools apparently do not use the UMAT scores as an eligibility requirement.***

**Action:** Investigations are in progress to determine if the use of the Interstate Transfer Index (ITI) or Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) can usefully be applied as the selection criterion for admissions to the Year 12 Provisional Entry pathway to the MBBS by OP1 (or equivalent) students. If the investigation reveals that the ITI allows sufficient fine-grained differentiation to make selection decisions into the Year 12 Provisional Entry pathway into the MBBS, consideration will be given to removal of the requirement to undertake UMAT altogether.

If use of the UMAT is retained as part of the selection methodology, consideration will be given to removing the current threshold score of 50 in each section of the UMAT as a basic eligibility criterion.

Because of the lead time required to advise applicants about changes to the MBBS selection requirements, no major change to the requirements will be implemented until the 2014 admission round.