



Senate Committee on Academic Development
Report to Senate – Meeting of May 20, 2009

**Proposal to introduce QBridge: Proposed Queen's University
English Bridging Program**

Introduction

The proposal to introduce QBridge: Queen's University English Bridging Program was reviewed by the Senate Committee on Academic Development (SCAD) at its meeting April 29, 2009. E. Armstrong from the Queen's School of English, J. Brady, University Registrar, and J. Lee, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science, attended the SCAD meeting to speak to the proposal and answer questions from members of SCAD. A copy of the proposal is attached to this report.

Analysis and Discussion

The following should be noted:

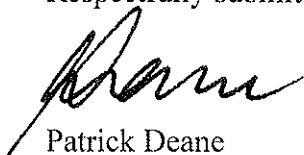
- as part of Queen's strategic plan on internationalization, establishing QBridge will allow successful applicants to be admitted to an undergraduate degree program conditional upon satisfactory completion of an advanced English language training course delivered through the Queen's School of English (QSOE);
- this proposed program will be offered as a three-year pilot and it will be offered to students applying for admission in September 2010;
- admission would be limited and applicants would need to demonstrate exceptional academic potential and a high enough proficiency in English that the QBridge program would be complete in an eleven-week period;
- many universities have bridging programs that provide opportunities for students with high academic potential to focus on English language proficiency skills so that they can gain admission to the university;
- Faculties and Schools across campus have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the development of this proposal;
- a variety of marketing mechanisms will be used to promote this proposed program in schools, during student recruitment events and on the University's website.

Conclusions/Recommendation

Recommendation:

On academic grounds, SCAD recommends that Senate approve the proposal to introduce QBridge, the Queen's University English Bridging Program, to commence for students applying for admission in September 2010, and to be reviewed after a three-year pilot.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick Deane
Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Development

Committee Members:

Members

C. Baker
J. Coates
P. Deane (Chair)
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M. Lombardi
D. McKeown
K. O'Brien (Secretary)
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QBridge: Proposed Queen's University English Bridging Program

Background

The current strategic plan, “Engaging the World,” commits the University to increasing the proportion of international students on campus. In support of this objective, the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) has developed a renewed approach to its international recruitment practices with more emphasis being placed on targeting particular markets in order to establish how best to meet the needs of prospective students and ensure that they understand why a Queen’s education may be the best choice for them.

Queen’s is internationally respected as a university of exceptional quality with high academic standards. For many international students, the challenge in gaining admission lies not only in being able to demonstrate exceptional academic ability, but also in meeting the necessary English language proficiency requirements. Currently, a student who does not meet the minimum English language requirements, regardless of his/her academic ability, will not be accepted to an undergraduate degree program at Queen’s.

In recent conversations with education professionals, parents, and applicants representing international student interests in a variety of countries, it is becoming increasingly clear that we are losing top-quality applicants to competitor universities willing to make more accommodations, in the form of English Bridging Programs, for students not able to present the necessary English language test scores (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS). We have the opportunity to respond positively to this situation and increase the number of high academic achievers who can attend Queen’s while also fulfilling the university mandate to enhance the diversity of the student population.

Specifically, an English Bridging Program that provides select students with academic English language training prior to beginning their degree studies is a model which has been used with success in other universities. Please see the University of Toronto’s Green Path program (http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~registrar/greenpath2007/e_main.html) and Simon Fraser University’s English Bridge Program (<http://www.sfu.ca/ebp/>) for details on two such examples.

It is proposed that a Queen's University English Bridging Program (QBridge) be introduced. Successful applicants to QBridge would (a) be admitted to and enrolled in the Queen's School of English (QSOE) and (b) be admitted to the undergraduate degree program conditional upon satisfactory completion of an advanced English language training course (ESLA 150) delivered through QSOE. This course would be offered over eleven weeks in the Spring/Summer term and upon successful completion students would begin their undergraduate degree studies in September. By providing these students with the option to bring their English language abilities rapidly up to the required standard through coursework at QSOE, we can ensure that more high-quality international undergraduate students choose to come to Queen’s.

It is proposed that QBridge be offered, initially, on a three-year pilot basis, with a period of review to follow in which the future of the program would be determined. The program will be available to students applying for admission in September 2010.

Eligibility

It is proposed that applicants meeting the following requirements be given the option to apply for QBridge:

- Applicants should be of exceptional academic ability (i.e., significantly above the minimum admission requirements for the relevant degree program).
- Applicants should also be able to demonstrate a level of English only slightly less than that necessary for direct admission, and therefore not require a prolonged period of English language study. In order to ensure that QBridge students can finish the program in one semester, QSOE has done a considerable amount of cross checking and back checking to determine the proposed entrance requirements. The objective will be to ensure a high level of accuracy in predicting when students will be ready for their degree studies, a factor especially important given the constraints of one-term entry. Moreover, we want to have very high certainty that applicants will be successful.

Requirements for Admission to QBridge

Successful applicants will be advised that their application for admission to a degree program is conditional upon completion by no later than mid-August of ESLA 150 with a minimum grade of 75%. All students failing to achieve the required level will have their offer of conditional admission withdrawn. No other demonstration of English language proficiency (e.g., TOEFL) will be acceptable for meeting the offer condition.

In general, admission requirements will be as follows:

1. The opportunity to enroll in the program will be directed in the first instance to students in carefully selected high schools in specific language areas where we have noticed a high level of demand for a bridging program (e.g., China, Middle East). Applicants must be qualified and, normally expected to be, nominated by the Principal or guidance counselor of their high school.
2. Applicants must achieve a minimum pre-defined average in their high school marks. This minimum benchmark will vary depending on the degree program to which the student is applying and the relative strength of the current applicant pool. The QBridge admission average will be set at least three percentage points higher than the minimum admission average.
3. Applicants must meet all admission requirements, including specific course prerequisites, for their desired degree program.
4. Offers of admission will be conditional upon successful completion of all requirements for high school graduation.
5. Applicants must demonstrate a minimum level of English through submission of an official standardized English language test score (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS). The minimum threshold will be an (Internet Based) TOEFL score (or equivalent) between iBT 80 and 87. Applicants are currently required to achieve a score of iBT 88 to gain direct admission. Equivalents for other English proficiency tests (e.g. IELTS, MELAB, CAEL) will be determined.

6. Admission to the QBridge program will be granted on a competitive basis, and possession of the minimum qualifications will not guarantee entry. Offers of admission will be granted following consultation among the Office of the University Registrar, the relevant Faculty or School, and the School of English.

Requirements for Progression from QBridge to Degree Program

To progress from QBridge to register in a degree program, students would have to meet all conditions of their offer, that is, receive a minimum final grade of 75% in ESLA 150. Students will register for credit courses during the regular course selection period in the summer. It will be made clear to students that completion of the course registration process while continuing to fulfill the conditions of their offer will not eliminate the requirement to meet the conditions of the offer of admission to begin degree-level studies.

Failure to Meet Conditions

Students failing to meet the necessary conditions will have their offer of admission withdrawn. In this case, students would have to re-apply to the university to be considered for admission the following year. The student could enroll in an additional term(s) at the School of English but would have to re-apply for undergraduate admission during the next intake cycle and meet all admission requirements. The School of English will make every effort to ensure student success and monitor progress throughout the term with a view to recommending additional tutorial assistance as required.

Class Size

The QBridge program will be limited, during the three-year pilot period, to a maximum of 20-30 students per annual intake, with the ESLA150 course limited to a maximum number of 20 per class. In order for this program to be financially viable, QSOE would need a minimum of seven QBridge students per intake.

While it is proposed that enrolment in the QBridge program be limited during the three-year pilot period, numbers could be expanded by mutual consent of all parties.

Timeline

In order to ensure the adequate time for planning and approval as well as to provide time for the creation of marketing materials and training, it is recommended that the first QBridge students be welcomed in Spring 2010.

Offers of admission for applicants without permanent status in Canada will be completed by the end of February, 2010 to ensure adequate time for students to complete the immigration process. The student response date will be set three weeks later. Applicants not requiring study permits or visas (i.e. those with Permanent Resident status or Canadian citizenship) will be offered admission until the first week of April with a final student response date two weeks later.

Two separate certificates of admission will be issued. The first will be unconditional admission to the QBridge program to study ESLA 150. The second will represent conditional admission to the applicable

academic degree program. This distinction is meant to assist applicants in the process of gaining permission for a Study Permit through Canadian visa offices abroad.

The timeline in future years will be similar, but may be slightly adjusted in light of the experience gained in the first iteration of the program and to allow for improved promotion of the program.

Promotion

The program will be promoted through direct contact with prospective partners from schools that have in the past expressed interest. Marketing materials outlining the benefits and details of the program will be distributed through mailings, by email, at student recruitment fairs and guidance counselor events and through other student recruitment events conducted by the OUR and the School of English. QBridge will also be promoted in the Queen's Viewbook, QSOE marketing materials, OUR marketing materials, and appropriate University websites as well as any other appropriate mediums.

Furthermore, applicants meeting the eligibility requirements for QBridge will be notified directly of their eligibility in the program after their application has been assessed. The Office of the University Registrar is in a position to make offers of admission to international applicants as early as December.