

Successfully Implementing a Decentralized Graduate Admissions Process

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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Agenda

- Overview of Graduate Admissions at U of T
- Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure
- Advantages/Challenges
- Implementation Issues
- Leveraging Technology
- Policies & Procedures
- Quality Assurance
 - Admissions & Program Committee
 - Audit
- Training
- NAGAP Survey



Structure of Graduate Education at U of T

- SGS is organized into **four** divisions
 - 1 Recruitment & Admissions Officer
 - 4 SSOs & 5 SSAs
- **103** graduate degree programs
- **13, 500** graduate students
 - **5,239** new students in 2008/2009
- **25,000** applications annually!



SGS Admission Task Force

Recommendations affected three facets of the admissions process:

1. They are designed to reduce or eliminate redundancy;
2. They recognize that most of the work in the admissions process is departmentally based;
3. They identify the role of central staff as advising departments staff rather than “policing” them.



Overview: Then...

- Application package distributed to prospective applicant.
- Application form and fee received by SGS.
- A paper file is opened, a database record is created, and a copy of application sent to Dept.
- Statement of interest & references received by Dept.
- SGS receives transcript. Copy send to Dept.
- Dept. committee reviews file and recommendation form is filed with SGS.
- SGS checks admissibility of applicant. SGS sends letter of offer or refusal.



Overview: Now...

- Self –administered application (applicants now submit electronic application via the program's admission requirements page).
- References submitted electronically.
- Transcripts sent directly to Dept. (grade pilot project in process)
- Application data is downloaded and reviewed locally.
- Offers/Refusals are issued locally but SGS template is used.
- Non-standards cases must come to SGS.



Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure

- **1. Resource efficiency**

- eliminate duplication of effort (applicant & staff)
- look for economies of scale
- effectively use technology



Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure

▪ 2. Service

- minimize applicant confusion and errors
- increase responsiveness, prompt decision-making
- provide excellent service to *all* constituencies
- meet the needs and priorities of the institution and graduate programs, faculty, staff & students.



Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure

▪ 3. Consistency

- application of (and exceptions to) admissions policies & procedures
- communications with prospects, applicants, and admits
- standards of staff professionalism



Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure

▪ 4. Clear leadership

- promote shared vision and priorities
- support a clear understanding of short-term enrolment objectives and long-term strategic goals
- are tailored to the size, resources and culture of the institution



Principles of Good Graduate Admissions Structure

- **5. Communication**

- Involve excellent communication across functions, offices and graduate units



Advantages

- Fast! Timely processing of applications
- Efficient use of resources
 - Aligns decision making with data entry
- Development of 'value added' activities
 - Recruitment
- Respects local authority
- Access to advice



Challenges

- Enquiries Management
- Multiple offers
- Communication
- Consistency
- Staff Turn-over & Training
- Foreign Credential Assessment



Implementation

- **Graduate Admission Documents**
 - Required documents and test scores
- **Admission Processes**
 - Key decision makers
 - Foreign Credential Assessment
- **Organizational Structure**



Policy & Procedures

- SGS sets minimum admission requirements and maintains consistent standards across all graduate programs.
- Graduate programs may set higher minimum admission requirements.
- Graduate programs may waive their own higher minimums, but cannot admit anyone who does not meet SGS minimums.



Lessons Learned

- **Provide on-going training and support**
- **Constant tweaking !**
- **Expert resources/advice**
 - Bologna Accord
 - Language assessment
 - Foreign Credential Assessment



Leveraging Technology

- The next step was to **add value** to the process by leveraging technology.
 - implementing an online graduate admissions system
 - electronic submission of letter of reference
 - applicant grade summary project



On-line Application System

➤ Savings in Time and Resources

- View applications as soon as they are submitted
- Speed-up decision making

➤ Service to Applicants

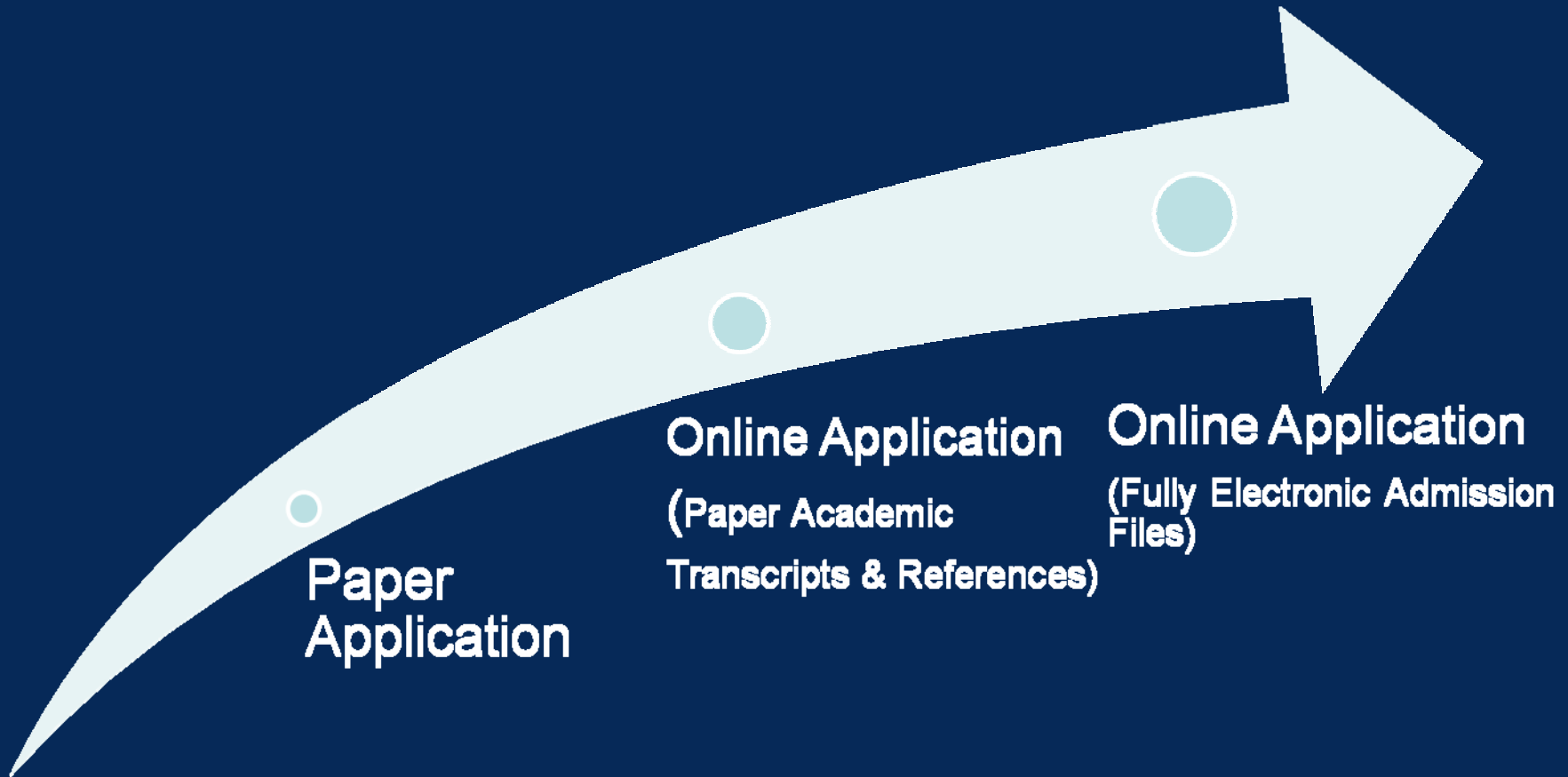
- Student can check application status
- Building a communication/decision making system

➤ Data Management & Institutional Reporting

- Opportunity to collect information on admission decisions and reasons (why accepted or declined)



Evolution of On-line Application



Advantage of E-Documents

Electronic documents are preferred over paper files:

- Security
- Remote access (esp. in 3 campus programs)
- Retention schedule
- Less paper and administrative effort



Training

- Provide the information, tools, resources and professional development necessary to faculty & staff to make good admission decisions
 - Admission Workshops (Overview of Application Process, Admission Procedure, Admission Policy, Foreign Credentials)
 - Admissions Manual
 - Placement Guide
 - Central Recruitment/Admissions Officer



Audit Objective

- Annual audit of graduate student files.
- Each department will be audited once every five-year cycle.
- Ensure graduate student records are maintained in accordance with relevant processes, policies, and procedures.
- Provide in-person discussion and advice; to support graduate units.



Audit Process

- An SGS team visits the graduate unit; Graduate Coordinators are not required to attend.
- Audit focus: admission and registration criteria.
- General diagnostic reports (entire student cohort).
- Each department receives a detailed audit report and a general report goes to the Graduate Education Council.



Audit Check List

- ✓ Final official and authentic copies of transcripts
- ✓ Certified English translations of non-English documents
- ✓ Appropriate degrees from acceptable institutions
- ✓ Acceptable average in final year of the degree on which admission is based
- ✓ Acceptable English language facility test scores on official reports
- ✓ At least two official letters of reference.
- ✓ Completed application form signed by student
- ✓ Admission form signed by Graduate Co-ordinator
- ✓ Offer of admission issued to student with correct assigning of admission conditions
- ✓ Correct entry of admissions data into ROSI



Non-Standard Admissions

An applicant is considered *non-standard* in the following circumstances:

- Do not meet minimum admissions requirements
- Hold degrees from institutions that are not recognized
- Hold degrees that are not accepted as equivalent to a U of T degree



SGS Admissions and Programs Committee

- Standing committee of Graduate Education Council
- Chaired by the SGS Vice-Dean, Students
- Members include:
 - 1 graduate faculty representative from each of the four SGS divisions
 - 1 graduate student and 1 alternate student
 - Dean of SGS
 - SGS Vice-Dean, Programs



SGS Admissions and Programs Committee

- Types of cases that may be reviewed by the Committee include:
 - non-standard admissions
 - leave requests that fall outside SGS leave policy
 - requests for course extensions or grade revisions
 - requests for third program extensions
 - posthumous degrees



NAGAP - Recruitment

- **38% decentralized**

- 21% at the school/college level
- 17% decentralized to the department/program

- **35% centralized**

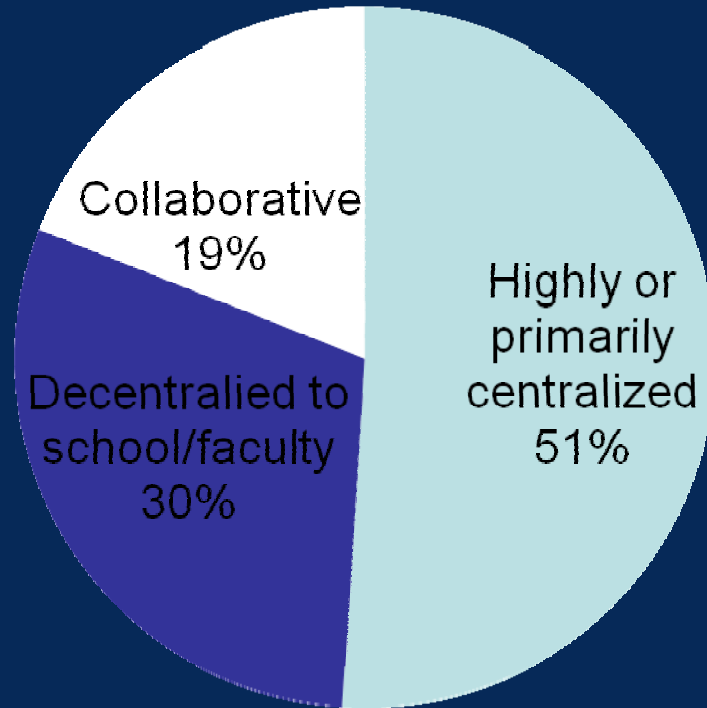
- 21% highly centralized (all graduate recruitment within single office)
- 14% primarily centralized (all but one or two specific fields, such as law and/or medicine, handled by a single office)

- **27% collaborative**

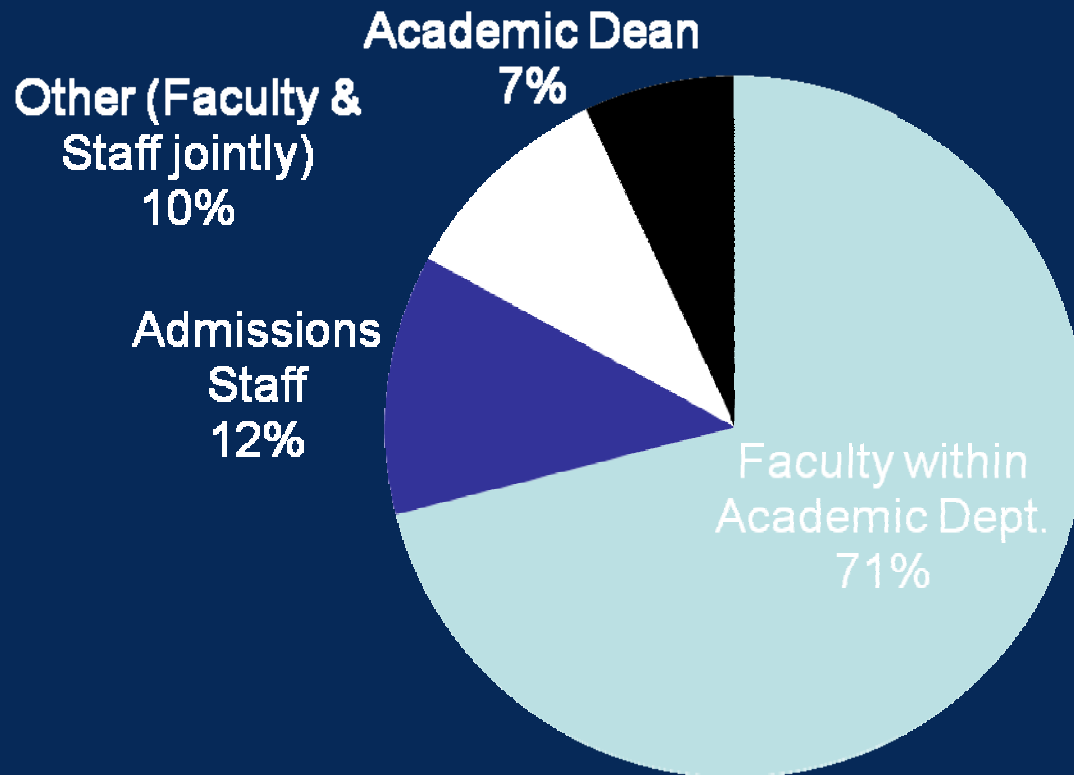
- Joint effort by central administration and schools; schools and programs; or by all levels



NAGAP- Graduate Admissions Processing



NAGAP-Graduate Admission Decisions



NAGAP- International Credential Evaluation

