GRADUATE ADMISSIONS PROCESS:

Overview: The graduate admission process is a shared responsibility of the Office of Graduate Admissions and the academic department in which the graduate program resides. Once a complete application has been assembled for review, admissions decisions are made by the academic department. The Office of Graduate Admissions facilitates departmental decisions by serving as the centralized clearinghouse for all incoming application documents (with some exceptions) and all notifications of admission decisions to applicants. The office checks documents, verifies minimum admission requirements, assembles files, distributes files to academic departments, and processes decisions. In cases where an applicant clearly does not meet a minimum college admission requirement (e.g. TOEFL), the office may deny the application. The office also responds to inquiries from prospects and applicants, plans and organizes on-campus recruitment events, and participates in off-campus recruitment events.

During 2011 the Office of Graduate Admissions improved its processes, implementing new procedures for assembling application files, an upgraded online application to allow applicants to complete their application over more than one internet session, and a self-managed document submission process. Together, these changes significantly speeded up the forwarding of complete application packets to academic departments.

Academic departments contribute to an efficient and an effective graduate admissions process in a number of key areas:

Targets for new students: From an admissions perspective, there are two types of programs—selecting programs (those in which the number of qualified applications exceed available spaces) and recruiting programs (those in which the number of qualified applications do not exceed spaces). For both types of programs, it is essential to establish estimated new enrollment targets for each admissions cohort. With enrollment targets in place, Graduate Admissions can aid selecting programs by closing their online application when the target has been reached and by redirecting late applicants from selecting programs to recruiting programs that still have spaces.

- Do your graduate programs work with the Office of Graduate Admissions to establish realistic targets for new student enrollment?
- Do your graduate programs work with the Office of Graduate Admissions to forecast overall enrollment for future years?
- How do these departmental projections contribute to the strategic plan for development of graduate programs within your school?
**Review method—rolling admission or gathered field:** Programs may use rolling admissions, where files are reviewed individually or in batches as they arrive, or use a fixed deadline and evaluate applications as a “gathered field”. A fixed application deadline can be useful for selecting programs which receive a large number of applications, such as Speech-Language Pathology. Reviewing applications together enables comparisons to be made between applicants. Rolling admissions on the other hand enables a shorter review process and quicker decisions, which is helpful for recruiting programs.

- Do your graduate programs use rolling admission or a gathered field method of review?
- Do your program review methods support your program type and yield the desired results?
- Are there ways in which the Office of Graduate Admissions can better support your review process?

**Application deadlines:** Application deadlines help applicants to plan their applications and assist programs in managing the volume of applications to review. Deadlines currently vary by program for fall admission, ranging from Jan 15 to August 20 (please refer to table). For deadline dates to be effective, they need to be set in relation to various factors, including the duration of the student selection process, deadlines at competitor institutions (those with “overlapping” applicants), and international student visa deadlines. It is important that applicants understand whether the program they are applying to employs a fixed deadline or rolling deadline as this influences their decision about when to apply, or, if a late applicant, whether to apply at all.

- Are application deadlines set at appropriate dates during the year?
- Is the significance of the deadline (fixed v. rolling) clearly conveyed to applicants?

**Application Requirements:** As demonstrated in [Graduate Applications Requirements](#), a table representing all of the graduate programs that are currently marketed to graduate students in the bulletin and on the college website, the de facto minimum application requirements for all graduate programs are official transcripts and at least two letters of recommendation. However, there are significant variations in other requirements across programs. For example, some programs require three recommendations, while a handful require a standardized admission test such as GRE and GMAT.

Most programs require a statement of purpose (also known as essay or biographical statement or personal statement), but some do not. The statement of purpose allows the admissions committee to understand an applicant’s “fit” for the program, i.e. their
motivation for applying, their understanding of the program, and their long-term goals. It is particularly helpful for applicants who are not typical candidates to be able to explain why, for example, they wish to change to a different career.

The TOEFL score sets the standard of English proficiency for international students. The college set a minimum TOEFL score of 61 for entry to graduate study (the maximum score obtainable on TOEFL is 120). The minimum TOEFL score varies significantly across programs, from 61 to 114.

- Please review the Graduate Applications Requirements table for your programs. Do application requirements provide sufficient information for admissions committees to render decisions? Conversely, are there some application requirements that could be removed?
- Now that there are five schools, should standards for admission to graduate programs be coordinated within each of the schools so that students are admitted to graduate programs within a specific school and then meet additional program-specific requirements?
- Is the TOEFL score associated with your programs appropriate? Should the college or each of the schools review the TOEFL score policy to establish greater consistency?

Student selection: Selecting the best candidates for a program generally requires the identification and evaluation of attributes that are predictors of student success. Predictors may include past academic performance in addition to one or more of the following competencies: writing skills, verbal articulacy, ability to self-reflect, motivation, professional experience, career goals, and so on.

The School Psychologist program, for example, identifies two key indicators of student success in addition to academic ability: (1) strong writing skills and (2) an accurate understanding of the role of the school psychologist. They employ a two-step process to select candidates. The first step involves the review and ranking of all applications based on undergraduate academic criteria and letters of recommendation. A smaller group of candidates are selected for an on-campus interview in which they meet with a faculty member and a student and produce a writing sample. Of that group, only the best candidates are offered admission to the program.

Ideally, an admissions committee meets together as a group to evaluate candidates, since one member may overlook an important aspect of an application. Evaluating candidates in a fair and consistent way presents a challenge, since interviews are known to
introduce subjective bias. It is considered a best practice to have more than one faculty member review applications. If there are widely different evaluations of a candidate, then a third person should adjudicate.

- How do your programs go about evaluating candidates?
- Do your programs have formal admissions committees?
- For programs that interview candidates, how many interviewers are on the panel?
- How do faculty interview candidates who live at a distance from New York City?

Increasingly, applicants to graduate programs wish to advance their professional careers, rather than progress to doctoral-level study. The admission criteria need to be sufficiently flexible so that it identifies suitable candidates for professional pathways, as well as doctoral progression. For example, the sociology program accepts students with both professional and doctoral goals.

- Do your programs take into account the diverse goals of applicants when making admissions decisions?

**Timely decisions:** Successful enrollment of applicants is dependent on a timely response from the college. Delays decrease the probability of a candidate enrolling, since they may accept offers from other universities, or, if they are international students, may miss the deadline to obtain a student visa. It is also considered best practice to promptly inform applicants who are clearly inadmissible.

- What is the average time for programs to review files?
- Are there ways that the review process could be accelerated?

**Acceptance categories:** Students may be accepted to Brooklyn College with one of five categories or statuses (refer to table below). Statuses are not always used in a consistent way. For example, applicants have been provisionally accepted when missing an academic requirement, or if they do not meet an admission standard (e.g., low GPA), or to communicate an advisement request (e.g. that an applicant meet with a graduate deputy).

Applicants who fully meet the admission requirements for a program are sometimes conditionally accepted, in order to request a missing administrative requirement (e.g. letter of recommendation). Some programs use conditions as a way to enforce advisement, rather than admission, by notifying applicants of the Master’s degree requirements on the official acceptance letter. Applicants are
occasionally given *non-degree status* with comments that advise them how to meet matriculation requirements. Within the current framework, such students ought to be non-matriculated, since they evidently do not wish to pursue a degree.

The Council of Graduate Schools, a national organization that promotes best practices in graduate education, recommends that institutions minimize the number of admission categories used and that all non-degree students are admitted under one status rather than establishing a status for each type of student. At Brooklyn College there are five categories of acceptance to graduate programs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance status</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Enrollment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully accepted (G2)</td>
<td>Applicant fully meets all admission standards.</td>
<td>Matriculated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditionally accepted (G7)</td>
<td>Applicant does not meet an admission standard, e.g. Bachelors degree in progress; missing undergraduate prerequisites (up to 3 courses); required to complete particular graduate courses.</td>
<td>Matriculated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted non-degree (G0)</td>
<td>Applicant may register non-degree for up to 15 credits.</td>
<td>Non-degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted non-matriculated (G1)</td>
<td>Applicant intends to pursue a degree, but does not meet admission standards. Applicant may register non-degree for up to 15 credits.</td>
<td>Non-degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally accepted (G5)</td>
<td>Applicant has not met an administrative requirement (e.g., missing letter of recommendation, transcript, etc).</td>
<td>Non-degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Utilization of multiple conditional admissions categories in the period 2008-2010 resulted in the following one year retention rates by category:

**Newly Admitted Degree and Non-Degree Graduate Students**

**Enrollment and 1 Year Retention by Admissions Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Admission Status</th>
<th>Start Term Enrolled</th>
<th>One Year Retention Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Admit: Matric G2</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>87.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Provisional - G5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>61.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Matric Conditional - G7</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>80.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>Admit: Matric G2</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>79.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Provisional - G5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Non-Matric - G1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Matric Conditional - G7</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>80.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>Admit: Matric G2</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>77.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Provisional - G5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Non-Matric - G1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit: Matric Conditional - G7</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>82.87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Do your programs use acceptance categories consistently?
- Do your programs routinely enforce conditions of acceptance so that students are not surprised by unfulfilled admissions requirements when filing for graduation?
- Would it be useful to have fewer admission categories?
**Marketing:** The admission process is a two-way exchange - it is as much an opportunity for qualified candidates to select the college, as it is for the college to select them. More than ever, prospective students are concerned about program costs and outcomes, particularly professional advancement outcomes, and are often considering graduate programs elsewhere, particularly private colleges with generous scholarship packages. It has become increasingly important to “convert” accepted applicants, that is, to influence them to enroll at Brooklyn College rather than choosing another college or opting not to enroll in graduate study at all. Recruiting should continue all the way to a student’s first day in class.

- Do your programs take full advantage of the Office of Graduate Admissions fall open house event and the web-based video technology that supports virtual special events throughout the year?
- Do your programs have attractive marketing materials that are persuasive about their benefits? Do you regularly review the content of your marketing materials and compare them to information provided by major competitors?
- Do your programs invite applicants to events on campus (or online), such as information sessions, and conversion events?
- Do your programs engage current students and alumni in recruitment activities?