

Lower entry for UWI certificates Garcia: Not degrees

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EDUCATION Minister Anthony Garcia has confirmed that entry requirements for programmes at The University of the West Indies (The UWI) have been lowered.

The minister, when questioned by the media yesterday, said the prerequisites for entry were lowered for the certificate programmes offered at The UWI's Faculty of Social Sciences. A Prior Learning Assessment Requirement (PLRA), he said, will also be done for the applicant.

Garcia also said it is "too premature" to determine if there is a drop in tertiary level education applicants since Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) results have not yet been released.

An Express report yesterday stated that UWI has taken a decision to lower the entry requirements for the Faculty of Social Sciences given the drastic drop in the number of applicants.

The Express understands only 186 students have been offered places in its evening programmes to date, and the faculty decided to cut its matriculation standards and sought the approval of the Academic Board of the Campus to go ahead.

Students entering Social Sciences are expected to pursue courses in Management, Economics, Behavioural Sciences and Political Sciences.

Certificate programme, not degree

Garcia, who was attending the funeral of entertainer Devon Matthews in Arima, said: "It is really the Faculty of Social Sciences and it is in respect of the certificate programme, and not the degree programme. They have lowered it from five to three O-Levels. An interview will be conducted to determine one's Prior Learning Assessment Requirement (PLRA) before acceptance. There are number of people who don't have a certificate but possess a wealth of experience."

Asked about the decline in overall registration, Garcia said: "It is premature to determine if there was a drop in registration because CAPE results have not yet been released. But there seems to have been a drop in the online registration."

When contacted, Prof Ann Marie Bissessar said: "I am not supposed to give any comment. Contact Marketing and Communications Department (Dawn De Four Gill)."

Drop in applications

Another senior administrator at tertiary level, when contacted, said: "It is a fact there is a drop in tertiary registration all over. I don't know how many. But it is true. It could be (due to) GATE."

The senior administrator added: "A lot of stuff is happening in education. You can do an MBA without doing a bachelor's degree. It could be based on your experience and what you have been doing in management. You can do a master's degree. I don't fully agree with that move. But if you have certain O-Levels and experience and an equivalent of the subjects you can be considered for PLAR. They are using PLAR a lot to give people entrance into certain degrees. There is a drop in applications all over."

Another senior administrator said: "It is a lot of hype being created. Final decisions have not been made yet. Grades are not being considered for this academic term."

Efforts to contact UWI principal Prof Brian Copeland on his mobile yesterday proved futile.

GATE background

In April, Garcia told the nation's

CORNER

PICTURE



SELLING SCHOOLBOOKS: Tyrone Nathaniel, 12, a pupil of Barataria North Secondary School, assists his grandmother with the sale of used schoolbooks on Henry Street, Port of Spain, yesterday. —Photo: STEPHEN DOOBAY

Parliament that cuts in the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme from August 2017 are expected to yield savings of at least \$165.7 million in the next fiscal year (September 2017 to September 2018).

The changes to the programme started taking effect from August 2016 and additional measures will be introduced in August, Garcia indicated as he tabled the GATE report.

He said the savings disaggregat-

ed would be as follows:

- \$68 million—from the discontinuation of funding for postgraduate studies;
- \$16 million—from the discontinuation of funding to people 50 years and over;
- \$69 million—from the reintroduction of cost-sharing;
- \$12.7 million—from the cessation of funding of new students at St George's University in Grenada.

See Page 8

...Drastic decline in Social Sciences intake

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DURING the period 2010 to 2015 the enrolment of evening students for the Bachelor of Science degrees and Certificate in Public Administration (CPA) programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences fluctuated to just over 1,600.

For the 2017/2018 academic year, a total of 554 online applications were submitted to The University of the West Indies (UWI) with 186 being approved for offers for 16 programme options under the faculty.

The drastic decline in the figures prompted the faculty heads to hold a meeting and revise prerequisites of the qualifications for admissions as well as reduce the GPA average for admission into degree programmes.

These details are contained in a document signed by Prof Ann Marie Bissessar, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, dated July 14, 2017. On July 20, 2017 the UWI's Academic Board agreed to the lowering of the entry qualifications.

The document made the following request to the Academic Board:

(1) To amend the Part-time Regulations to allow entry of new students (2017/2018) applying as Evening University Students to be accepted and to be registered as part-time students.

(2) To reduce the Matriculation Requirements (2017/2018) for the Certificate in Public Administration, the Bachelor of Science in Psychology, the Bachelor of Science in Sociology, the Bachelor of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice, the Bachelor of Science in Political Science and the Bachelor of Science in Public Sector Management.

Comparative figures

The document provided figures to show the comparison in the enrolment rates from 2010 to present. It stated that the enrolment of evening students registered for 15 programmes (approximately 27 courses for each programme) offered at the level of the Bachelor and the 10 courses at the level at the Certificate in Public Administration by the Faculty of Social Sciences during the period of 2010-2016 were as follows:

2010-2017
2011-1661
2012-1663
2013-1645
2014-1584
2015-1526

Bissessar stated that given the low enrolment of students over the years and the high cost of delivery of these programmes, there was a "special meeting" on July 7.

Present at this meeting was the board of the Faculty of Social Sciences, with Heads of the Departments/ Administrative Assistants/ Senior Lecturers/ Tenured Lecturers/ Programme Coordinators/ Programmes Heads, Administrative Assistants at the Faculty of Social Sciences

Secretariat/ the Director of Human Resources/ the Accountant and Accounting Assistant (Bursary).

She stated that it was decided "unanimously" that the faculty, through the Dean of the Faculty, should approve the proposal to not offer placements to these students under the Evening Regulation but rather request that they be offered entry as part-time students.

She added that the Dean of the Faculty, therefore, has approved on behalf of faculty board, the request to amend the Part-Time Regulations in order to offer students who have applied as evening students to be offered placement as part-time students.

Point system revised

The document also requested Revision of the Point System for Admissions in certain programmes. Bissessar pointed out that a request was made by both the Head of Behavioural Sciences (Prof Derek Chadee) and the Head of Political Science (Dr Bishnu Ragoonath) to revise the point system for the year 2017/2018 in the following programmes:

Behavioural Sciences:

- BSc Psychology - 6 points or GPA of 2.5
- BSc Sociology - 5 points or GPA of 2.5
- BSc Criminology and Criminal Justice - 5 points or GPA of 2.5

Political Science:

- BSc in Political Science - 4 points
- BSc in Public Sector Management - 4 points

• Certificate in Public Administration—in exceptional circumstances to allow entry to "mature" students with three CXC (grades B and above with English and Mathematics included) as well as with prior learning experience (at the level of Clerical Officers IV, Administrative Assistants, Human Resource Officers, Personnel and Industrial Relations Officers) or with requisite training in the areas of Political Science/ Management/Public Management/Human Resource Management / or any other Social Sciences

disciplines.

She stated that the heads of the four departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Behavioural Sciences, Economics, Political Science, Management Studies have also requested consideration to interview candidates who may be under the borderline of the required matriculation requirement. In these cases the Heads and their committees will take into account the following:

- Qualifications
- Maturity
- Prior Learning Experience
- Continuing Professional Education
- Job Experience.

Board agrees to changes

On July 20, the UWI Academic Board agreed to several of the requests made by the Social Sciences Faculty:

1. Change the GPA average for entry into degree programmes
2. Lower the entry for CPA Matriculation in exceptional circumstances to three CXC passes, including English and Maths with other qualifications.
3. Formally write students who have applied to be considered as Evening University students to read for degrees and advise them that the option for entry as Evening Students will not be considered for this academic year (2017/2018) but they may take the option to be considered as full-time students or have their applications on hold for consideration in the future.
3. No new programmes will be offered in South (Naparima College)
4. The Certificate in Public Administration will continue to be offered as Evening but only to students in the North St Augustine Campus.



'SPECIAL MEETING': Prof Ann Marie Bissessar

Today's Weather

Mostly sunny intervals interspersed with a medium chance for light to moderate morning and early afternoon showers. There is a low chance some of these showers could become heavy and/or thundery.

Sea: Slight 1.5m in open waters; bear calm in sheltered areas. Rainfall (Sunday): 0.0 mm (Port of Spain to 12pm)	Cumulative 2017 (Port of Spain): Maximum Temp: 30°C (Port of Spain) Minimum Temp: 24°C (Port of Spain)	Port of Spain Times: High: 5:03 a.m., 8:03 p.m. Low: 11:34 a.m., 11:44 p.m. Swathrough Times: High: 4:48 a.m., 5:42 p.m. Low: 11:24 a.m., 11:32 p.m.
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