

'Internal memo called for lowering of UWI entry'

ST AUGUSTINE

JAN INTERNAL memorandum from The University of the West Indies (UWI) has indicated there was a request for a reduction in the Grade Point Average (GPA) for admission into degree programmes in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

This was requested because of the low number of applications for the programmes.

Prof Derek Chadee, head of the department of Behavioural Sciences, by memorandum dated July 13, 2017 stated:

"Given the low number of offers, the Department of Behavioural Sciences is requesting with immediate effect the new point system for entry into the following programmes: BSc Psychology—six points or GPA 2.5 BSc Sociology—five points or GPA 2.5 BSc Criminology and Criminal Justice—five points or GPA of 2.5.

"In the case where applicants have lower matriculation/prior learn-

ing experience, the department will undertake an interview. I kindly request that the above be implemented immediately."

The GPA was introduced by The UWI in 2003.

The highest GPA is 4.3.

The GPA is a system that awards quality points for academic performance based on grades earned on each course.

Head of the Department for Political Science Dr Bishnu Ragoonath also made a request for a lowering of the GPA for entry into the degree programmes falling under his purview.

These are:

- BSc in Political Science—four points
- BSc in Public Sector Management—four 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 1V, 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.

The requests were made to Prof Ann-Marie Bissessar, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, who presented a comprehensive document requesting the academic board to approve the lowering of GPA points.

Bissessar also pointed out that the offers as of July 2017 were at 186 and given the low figure and the high cost of expenditure for these programmes that changes be made—which included that no new evening programmes be offered and those who were approved will be sent letters advising entry as part-time students.

The Academic Board, chaired by The UWI principal Prof Brian Copeland, gave its approval on July 20.

The *Express* on Monday reported the approved changes made by the Academic Board.

The UWI in a release later Monday sought to provide clarification, stating:

1. The CXC selection criteria only applies to the Certificate in Public Administration (CPA), not degree programmes. Programmes like the CPA can be used as a "bridging" programme to bring students up to the qualification levels required for entry to degree programmes. It is also used as one of the criteria for promotion in the public service.

2. The current CPA requirement is for five O-Levels or equivalent. The qualifications for entry into degree programmes at The UWI have not changed.

The entry qualifications for the CPA programme have been expand-

ed in keeping with university matriculation requirements to allow for applicants with at least three or four CXC passes who, having not achieved the required 5 O-Levels or equivalent, can now be assessed against additional criteria that reflect sufficient prior learning through experience, professional development or formal qualification.

"It should be noted that this "Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)" approach is well in line with how universities, including The UWI, are changing their systems to improve their delivery to a wider demographic. It should also be noted that this decision is in keeping with The UWI's new strategic direction of widening access, particularly to the under-served.

The UWI stated there is evidence the fall in offer acceptance is a consequence of changes in GATE and there are some programmes that are seeing record numbers of applicants.