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ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

February 2007

(1) Following the release of the Tulloch Report in early November 2006, there were several meetings of the Osgoode community generally and some separate meetings of its constituent parts. Members of the Admissions Committee attended each of these meetings. Informed by the views expressed at those meetings, the Admission Committee resolved that, while there remained points of disagreement, there was a sufficient basis of support in the Osgoode community for the general thrust and approach of the Tulloch Report. As a result of these meetings and further consultations by individual Committee members, the Admissions Committee determined that there was some optimism that a series of proposals which flowed from and built upon the Tulloch Report might garner widespread support in the Osgoode community. Consequently, since November 2006, the Admissions Committee has met regularly to debate and decide upon the proposals that should be put before Faculty Council. It would be fair to report that the Committee, although containing a wide variety of views and interests (both student and faculty), managed to reach a consensus on all of these proposals. Indeed, the wide variety of views and interests represented has given the Committee as a whole a strong collective sense that these proposals meet and advance the overall goals of the Osgoode community.

(2) Although there has been a lengthy and contested history to formulating such a successful plan, this memorandum will not attempt to survey that history. Nor will it re-visit many of the general arguments and positions which have characterized that history: these have been amply stated in a variety of Reports and forums. Instead, this memorandum seeks to offer a genuine and practical attempt to introduce reforms that will allow the law school to improve its admissions process in three ways -- it advances the traditional and contemporary goals of the law school in its efforts to admit the best entering class that it can; it can be administered effectively and fairly with the available resources in the law school; and it garners the widest range of support in the law school community.

INTRODUCTION

(3) Despite differences of opinion within the Osgoode community, the Tulloch Report came to the conclusion that “there are areas of common agreement.” The Admissions Committee has sought to build on those areas and develop them into a series of proposals to amend and reform the existing admission policies and procedures of Osgoode Hall Law School. The most pertinent and general findings about these ‘areas of common agreement’ were:

(1) “All parties agree that they wish to have the best possible class of students. All parties agree that diversity is important to the law school”:

(2) “Any system of admissions ... is an imperfect process. The system can be too objective (i.e. relying solely on Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and Law School Admissions Test scores (LSAT) or too subjective (relying solely on the discretion of the admissions personnel)”:

(3) “the present system is indeed sufficiently broken to warrant changing.” In particular, that:

(a) “Fully two thirds of the present class is chosen by a system of pure numbers”;

(b) “the letters of recommendation that applicants solicit and the statements that they submit with regard to their desire to study law are not read.”

(4) “*Any* admissions system will necessarily create winners and losers. The task is to create a process that will admit the best students and which will also be able to satisfy the unsuccessful applicants that at least they were treated fairly and given a real opportunity to make their case as to why they deserved admission. The present system, with its over-reliance on pure numbers, does not do this”:

(5) “The present system works to deprive the Law School of the ability to make offers to outstanding applicants who fall just beneath the automatic admission line and who do not qualify for consideration under one of the present alternative admission categories”:

(6) “It is common ground that all those connected to Osgoode Hall Law School are committed to attracting and retaining students with proven academic excellence as well as students with a diversity and wealth of life experiences who can succeed in this academic forum.”

(4) Accordingly, in line with spirit and thrust of these findings by the Tulloch Report, the Admissions Committee puts forward before Faculty Council **five main proposals** to modify the policies and procedures of the law school's admissions process:

(A) that a Mission Statement be approved to inform and guide the detailed development and administration of the admission process;

(B) that there be only two Categories of admission into the law school -- a General Category and an Aboriginal Category;

(C) that the minimum number of years of university study that an applicant must complete prior to admission be increased from two years (60 credits) to three years (90 credits);

(D) that an Equity Floor be established each year to ensure that the entering class is at least as talented, diverse and equity-responsive as in previous years;

(E) that there is an Annual Report to Faculty Council by the Admissions Committee and that there is a full three-year review of any changes to the admissions process.

MISSION STATEMENT

(5) What amounts to "the best entering class" goes to the heart of the admissions process and the debate surrounding recommendations for any changes to the present admissions process. The Tulloch Report noted that there was broad support for the creation of a Mission Statement that would frame and guide the admissions process. However, it was of the opinion that such a statement must not be too broad or ambiguous and that Osgoode's commitment to diversity must clearly be understood to include and emphasize equity concerns. Accordingly, the Admissions Committee sought to draft a Mission Statement which better captured Osgoode's commitment to identify and admit a talented, diverse, and equity-responsive class. Such a Statement would not only allow the Admissions Committee to measure and guide its own decision-making both generally and in regard to particular files, but also to communicate to potential applicants the overall philosophy and goals of Osgoode's admission process.

(6) It is proposed, therefore, that the following Mission Statement be adopted:

Osgoode Hall Law School's admissions policy and procedure stress excellence and equity. We admit an outstanding class of students whose academic abilities, varied experiences, and sustained engagement make a continuing social and intellectual contribution to the law school, the legal profession and the community.

Our admissions policy identifies a diverse and exceptional group of students with a commitment to excellence, demonstrated through academic and other contributions to society. Together with our renowned faculty and dedicated staff, these students form a vibrant intellectual community that contributes to Osgoode's international reputation for leadership in legal education, thoughtful and creative scholarship, the promotion of social justice, and leadership in all aspects of the legal profession. Our innovative programs foster strong foundations in legal reasoning, recognition of diverse perspectives on law, and an understanding of law's transformative role in promoting a just society. Our spirit of service to society is exemplified in our motto: *Through Law to Justice*. We encourage our students, as part of their education, to be critically aware of and intimately involved in access to justice and the advancement of the public interest. Through diverse career paths, our students develop into leaders in all areas of professional and public life.

Osgoode's historical and contemporary leadership role in diversifying and reshaping the legal profession is second to none. Our admissions policy recognizes, fosters and celebrates excellence and equity. We consider academic and LSAT results, significant achievements, and the ways in which barriers created by social inequality can stand between students with a demonstrated capacity and a legal education. Our current admissions policy encourages students to identify any barriers that they face in seeking to enter the legal profession. We continue to place a priority on opening doors to communities that traditionally have been under-represented in the legal profession. In creating each class, we look for those who can demonstrate not only intellectual achievement, but also a passion for learning and service.

CATEGORIES

(7) The Tulloch Report noted that "Osgoode Hall Law School has a justifiably proud tradition of promoting social justice [which] ... has extended to allow the inclusion of students who have faced barriers to admission." Nevertheless, it concluded that there is "is a problem with the current system.... [because] any system having the potential to reject students with better qualifications, and who have overcome greater barriers than the students admitted, is to be discouraged." In line with this, the Tulloch Report suggested that there should be "more rather than less discretionary judgment inasmuch as we endorse the move away from pure numbers." It came to the conclusion that "a holistic, comprehensive review of the applicant's files is to be preferred to the current system in which the majority of students are admitted based entirely on their LSAT scores and Grade Point Averages."

A. General Category

(8) In order to achieve the objective of admitting 'the best entering class', the Admissions Committee has determined that this can only be done if the existing four categories of

admission -- Regular, Special, Access, and Mature -- are combined into one General category. This would enable the Admissions Committee to treat all applications in exactly the same way: admission decisions would be based on a general appreciation of each applicant's experience and achievement and on an assessment of each applicant's ability to contribute to a talented, diverse and equity-responsive entering class. All files would be read so as to incorporate all the factors which are spread out across the present categories. All those persons who presently apply under Special, Access, and Mature categories would be given full consideration and assessed in line with those factors and considerations which affect their personal situation. The objective, of course, is not to marginalize those traditionally-considered factors and considerations, but to bring them to the centre of the admissions process for each and every file.

(9) Nevertheless, the Tulloch Report was also of the firm opinion that, particularly if there is a move to a General category and, therefore, an increase in the discretionary powers of the Admission Committee, clear and firm criteria for admissions decisions should be established. While it did "not recommend an actual 'weighting' to the criteria, ... there should be set criteria for each member on the admissions panel delineating the factors to consider when assessing an applicant's personal considerations, barriers to admission, the extent to which they will contribute to the diversity of the law school, and so on." This is an important and necessary feature of any move away from a more categorized approach to a more general one.

(10) In order to operationalise the shift to a General category of applications, the Admissions Committee devoted much of its time to developing a thorough and workable set of guidelines, procedures, and forms which will be utilized to implement and administer such a shift. This effort can be divided into two main parts -- information-gathering and decision-making.

(11) In order to obtain the necessary information from each applicant, the application form has been thoroughly revised. Guided by the Mission Statement and directed towards selecting the 'the best entering class', the application form asks all applicants to provide full and complete information about those experiences and achievements that will enable the law school to make an informed and balanced decision about the merits of their applications; see *Appendix A*. The Admissions Committee maintains that such a revised application form will facilitate the work of the Committee and allow an effective and fair exercise of its discretion in admitting students.

(12) As regards the decision-making itself, the committee has developed a series of detailed criteria by which application files can be read and assessed. Again, guided by the Mission Statement and directed towards selecting the 'the best entering class', these criteria will structure decision-making in such a way that an appropriate blend of academic and equity factors can be combined and optimised; see *Appendix B*. The Admissions Committee maintains that such a sophisticated and integrated set of considerations will facilitate the Committee's exercise of its discretionary judgment and make it accountable to the larger Osgoode community.

(13) Finally, it is necessary to recognize that any admissions process must be capable of being administered in a fair and reasonable manner in regard to the institutional resources available; this includes the membership and make-up of the Committee itself as well as the Admissions' personnel of Student Services. There would be little point in designing a revised admissions process which could not be implemented properly. It is the view of the Admissions Committee that the proposed procedure will better utilize the available resources in that the procedure will be more streamlined than at present and allow the bulk of resources to be devoted to the crucial task of reading and assessing files.

(14) It is the view of the Admissions Committee that the following two-part procedure is the best way to achieve the goals and purposes of the admissions process, as captured by the Mission Statement, in a substantively fair and administratively effective manner:

Presumptive Admits -- applicants' files would be read to the extent that it is necessary to determine if they achieved an LSAT score in the 80th Percentile or better AND if their Undergraduate Grade-Point Average (UGPA) on their best 2 years is 3.70 or better.

[It is important to add that this is not an either/or test. By present standards, this will result in about 350-400 admission offers being made. However, on the existing conversion rate of about 20-25% (i.e., no more than 1 in 4 of present early offers are accepted), this will produce about 70-90 new students.]

Reads -- all files will be read if they achieved an LSAT score in the 50th Percentile or better OR their UGPA on their best 2 years is 3.00 or better

[This is an either/or test. By present standards, this will result in about another 500-600 admission offers being made. In line with the existing overall conversion rate of about 40% -50% (i.e., no more than 1 in 2 of present early offers are accepted), this will generate the remaining numbers required to finalize a class of about 300 students. Also, applicants in this 'Read' group who have graduate level work will have priority for review. Importantly, if this 'Read' group does not release an entering class which is appropriately talented, diverse and equity-responsive, then the Admissions Committee will begin to read those files of applicants who have a UGPA of less than 3.00 on their best 2 years, but whose LSAT scores are above the 50th percentile.]

(15) In order to carry out this procedure, especially under the 'Read' category, the applicants' files will first be assessed and scored by the Director of Admissions. Those that fall into the presumptive 'Read' category will then be divided into several batches and two Committee members will be assigned a batch of files. In accordance with the admission criteria, a decision will be made as to how to proceed with the file. In the event of there being a marked discrepancy between the two assessments, the Chair of the Committee will cast a deciding vote. Also, where appropriate, the Chair will refer any file to the whole Committee for full debate and decision.

B. Aboriginal Category

(16) The Tulloch Report came to the conclusion that, while there might be a plausible case for including Aboriginal applicants in the General category, it would be best to retain a separate Aboriginal category of admission. This was based on the facts of “the very limited number of applicants in this category, and the high priority for attracting applicants from this limited pool.” Accordingly, the Admissions Committee recommends that the Aboriginal category should be retained in its present form:

Osgoode Hall Law School is concerned that members of First Nations, Inuit and Métis do not have substantial representation in the legal profession and, accordingly, strongly encourages applications from these groups. The Admissions Committee’s decision to admit a candidate ultimately depends on its judgment of the candidate’s ability to successfully complete law school. To be considered, candidates must have successfully completed a minimum of three years at a recognized university (90 credit hours of graded course work). It should be noted that, although courses completed at a community college, CEGEP, private institution or as part of a non-degree study abroad program may be recognized for advanced standing toward an undergraduate degree, such courses do not count towards the minimum requirement of 90 assessable credit hours and are not used in the calculation of a candidate’s blended score (cumulative grade point average and LSAT). Candidates with no university study, or less than three years of university, should still apply and may be admitted in exceptional circumstances. Competitive candidates typically possess a cumulative 70% average at university and an LSAT score in the 60th percentile or better. Candidates with an LSAT score below the 26th percentile are ineligible for consideration through this category. Applicants through this category are required to provide proof of Aboriginal status as part of the application. Osgoode Hall Law School endorses the Program of Legal Studies for Native People at the University of Saskatchewan, which provides a “head-start” program during the summer preceding the first year of the LL.B. program. At times the Committee may determine they have insufficient evidence to definitively decide whether an offer of admission can be made. In such a case, admission to Osgoode Hall Law School may be made conditional upon successful completion of this program. Applicants who are made a “non-conditional” offer are not required by Osgoode to complete the summer program at Saskatchewan as a condition of entry into first year.

(17) Files in the Aboriginal category will receive at least 2 readings with a possible 3rd reading by the Chair of the Committee. Each reader will provide an evaluation of the file with recommendation to *Admit*, *Admit Conditional*, *Wait List*, or *Refuse*. Applicants who receive a recommendation of *Conditional Admit* will be required to attend and successfully complete the Native Law Program in Saskatchewan as a condition of the offer. There will be no ceiling on the number of offers issued. An average 25 applications per year are received from Aboriginal students, but with around 4-7 actually becoming members of the entering class.

EQUITY FLOOR

(18) The Tulloch Report made it clear that, if Osgoode was to ensure that it maintained and improved upon its traditional and confirmed commitment to admitting a talented, diverse and equity-responsive class of students, it must place no ceiling upon the number of students admitted from any particular group with certain characteristics, experiences

and/or achievements. However, it is important to take steps to assure members of the Osgoode community and applicants generally that there will be a baseline or floor below which any year's entering class will not fall and, hopefully, will exceed. Accordingly, the Admissions Committee recommends that, in order "to ensure that Osgoode continues to maintain its goals of equality and diversity and continues to open doors to people who have traditionally been under-represented in the legal profession," there will be a requirement that all decisions made to determine the overall balance of the entering class be guided by the profile of the previous year's class in terms of the those factors which have been identified by the Admissions Committee as being important in ensuring that the admissions process operates to produce a talented, diverse, and equity-responsive entering class (see supra, para. 12).

(19) In order to create a reliable and nuanced profile, it is proposed that each entering class will be surveyed in the first few weeks of the Fall Semester. To this end, a survey has been developed which has built-upon, but supplemented further particular sections of the recent province-wide Access Study; see *Appendix C*. This process has already begun; all Osgoode students have received such a survey. It is hoped that the results of such a survey will be collated and made available to Faculty Council in the next few weeks.

THREE YEAR REVIEW

(20) The Admissions Committee acknowledges that full and complete reporting is vital. Because there will be a considerable measure of discretion, it is important that the whole admissions process is transparent and, therefore, worthy of people's trust in the good faith of those exercising the necessary discretion. Furthermore, such reporting will enable the Committee to report on any perceived and unanticipated problems in the operation of the admissions process and seek advice. Accordingly, the Admissions Committee recommends that, as part of its Annual Report to Faculty Council, there will be a report on the performance of the admissions process in attaining the aims and purposes articulated in the Mission Statement. Moreover, at the end of every three-year cycle of admissions, the Admissions Committee shall conduct a specific review of the proposed changes and assess their capacity to improve the overall balance, diversity, quality, and equity-status of the entering class.

CONCLUSION

(21) The challenges for the Committee have been many. Yet the most compelling and pressing concern has been to develop an admissions process which is well-attuned to Osgoode's traditional commitments to both excellence and equity, but also capable of being administered in a fair and reasonable manner within the available administrative resources at the school's disposal. Balancing these competing goals has been at the forefront of the Admission Committee's deliberations and decision-making. Accordingly, the Committee maintains that these proposals represent its best effort to introduce and maintain a balanced, progressive, equitable, and administrable admissions

process that will be likely to receive widespread approval by Faculty Council and the Osgoode community at large. It allows Osgoode to advance its traditional admission goals more effectively and to do so in a way that meets contemporary circumstances and concerns.

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**APPENDIX A
APPLICATION FORM**

PROPOSED

Status: Logged in
Application Links

- *Account
- *Personal
- *Information
- *Address Information
- *Questions
- *Choices
- *Sketch
- *Referees
- *LSAT
- *Institutions Attended
- *Transcripts
- > School Submissions

Quick Links

- *Info
- *About OLSAS
- *OUAC & Privacy
- *Applicant Responsibilities
- *Contact Info

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES' APPLICATION CENTRE

ONTARIO LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION

> School Submissions Main Submit Log Out

> Osgoode – York University ? Help

Categories

- General
- Aboriginal

Previous Year Applied (if applicable)

Choose

Save and Continue

COMPASS.
OLSAS 2007

Status: Logged in

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES' APPLICATION CENTRE

ONTARIO LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION

> School Submissions Main Submit Log Out

> Osgoode – York University

- Admissions Information
- Scholarships/Bursaries/Financial Assistance Forms
- Visit Osgoode – York University

* Applicants may select one program only.

- Application Links**
- *Account
- *Personal
- *Information
- *Address Information
- *Questions

- *Choices
- *Sketch

- *Referees
- *LSAT
- *Institutions Attended
- *Transcripts

All applicants are encouraged to complete the Osgoode Financial Statement Form. The Financial Statement is mandatory for entering students and will be required for both the awarding of entrance scholarships and for the awarding of bursaries. Failure to complete the Financial Statement will result in not being considered for either scholarships or bursaries. To complete the Financial Statement, [click here](#) and follow the instructions provided.

You must click on each link in this section to enter a response. The links at the top of this screen provide the instructions. The length of each response is limited to 1500 characters.

Important Note: To format paragraphs in your submissions, do not use the 'tab' key. Please enter two hard-returns ('Enter' key twice) to separate paragraphs.

To clear one or more of Osgoode – York University submissions, click the desired box(es) in the "Delete" column and then click button below labeled "Delete".

> School Submissions		Completed	Supplemental Information		
Quick Links *Info *About OLSAS *OUAC & Privacy *Applicant Responsibilities		<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>To be completed by all applicants.</i>		
		Completed Personal Statement – Part A <i>All applicants must complete Part A of the Personal Statement.</i>			
*Contact Info		<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Discuss how your academic and non-academic experience has prepared you for the study of law.		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Discuss the significance of a law degree in light of your goals.		
*Contact Info		Completed	Delete	<i>(Pop-up Help Screen)</i>	Personal Statement – Part B <i>Please complete the sections that are applicable to your circumstances. The information you provide will assist the Admissions Committee in reaching an informed and thoughtful decision on your application.</i>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	1. EQUITY
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	2. Work Experience
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	3. Potential for Contribution to Community
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	4. Leadership and Accomplishments
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	5. Advanced Academic Studies
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	6. Performance Considerations
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	?	7. Diversity

DELETE

COMPASS.
OLSAS 2007

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES' APPLICATION CENTRE

ONTARIO LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION

> School
Submissions

Main

Submit

Log Out

Status: Logged in
Application Links*Account
*Personal
*Information
*Address Information*Questions
*Sketch
*Referees
*LSAT
*Institutions Attended
*Transcripts

> School Submissions

Quick Links

*Info

*About OLSAS

*OUAC & Privacy

*Applicant
Responsibilities> Osgoode – York University
> Add Information

? Help

All applicants must complete this Supplemental Information section.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Please complete

1. How many years of university study will you complete by September 1, 200_
- 2 yrs
 more than 2 years
 less than 2 yrs
 no university
 no post-secondary
2. Have you completed or are you currently enrolled in a Graduate Studies program?
- Yes
 No
3. Where did you complete your degree?
- Canada
 US
 Other (Please specify)

4. If you do not have a minimum of 3 years university, please indicate the number of years you have been away from Secondary Education (ie., High School).
- _____ Years
5. If you have a disability did you receive accommodation in university?
- No
 Yes
If yes, please specify year(s) in which accommodation was granted (example: Yr. 1, 2, 3, 4)

6. If you have a disability did you receive accommodation on the LSAT?
- Yes
 No
7. If not born in Canada or the U.S., please indicate the total number of years in the Canadian or U.S. education system.
- _____

*Contact Info

Save and Continue

**APPENDIX B
ADMISSION CRITERIA**

EQUITY FACTORS	OTHER FACTORS				
Equity	Work Experience	Potential for Contribution to Community	Leadership and Accomplishments	Advanced Academic Studies	Performance Considerations (UGPA and/or LSAT)
<p>Growing up in a low-income community or household</p> <p>Overcoming substantial discrimination</p> <p>Overcoming/persevering in face of adversity</p> <p>Under-representation in legal profession</p> <p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Family: size, make-up, educational background, economic background</p> <p>Access to educational resources</p> <p>Required by economic circumstances to work substantial hours while attending school full-time</p> <p>Familial responsibilities and other responsibilities during school</p> <p>Disabilities: Learning, Psychological, Sensory, Physical</p>	<p>Number of years in full-time non-academic endeavours</p> <p>Type of industry or business</p> <p>Position/type of experience</p> <p>Level of responsibility achieved</p>	<p>Helping in overcoming discrimination against others</p> <p>Serving in underserved communities or peoples</p> <p><i>Motivated to help represent and empower minority or underrepresented communities (Richardson Report)</i></p>	<p>Community leadership/accomplishments</p> <p>Academic leadership and organizations</p> <p>Athletic activities</p> <p>Significant personal accomplishments</p>	<p>Graduate Degrees</p> <p>Publications</p> <p>Other advanced academic work</p>	<p>Circumstances that have impeded a discrete portion of academic performance</p> <p>Circumstances that have impeded LSAT performance</p>

**OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL
APPLICANT FILE EVALUATION**

APPLICANT NAME	
APPLIED	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal

EQUITY FACTORS	No Consideration	Very Strong consideration	Strong consideration	Moderate consideration	Less consideration

OTHER FACTORS	No Consideration	Very Strong consideration	Strong consideration	Moderate consideration	Less consideration
Work Experience					
Potential for Contribution to Community					
Leadership and Accomplishments					
Advanced Academic Studies					
Performance Considerations					
Diversity					

ACADEMIC SCORES	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Questionable
Undergraduate Grade Point Average				
LSAT Score				
TOEFL				

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION	Strong Admit	Admit	Hold for Wait List	Questionable	Refuse

NOTES

DATE ASSESSED:	ASSESSED BY:

APPENDIX C
STUDENT SURVEY

