



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.

Credentials Evaluation Service

Report for the Association of Business Management Academics

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I Introduction

On the invitation of Dr. Denny Choi, acting on behalf of Dr. Clive Matthew Slattery, Chairman, ABMA, the International Education Research Foundation, Inc. (IERF), submitted a proposal to evaluate the ABMA Advanced Diploma for Management Studies (ADMS) and Postgraduate Diploma for Management Studies (PDMS) in order to ascertain the standard achieved by their successful candidates and to determine the U.S. Qualification equivalent of the two programs. The IERF proposal was accepted by ABMA on March 16, 2004, and the resulting report was scheduled for April 30, 2004 delivery.

The International Educational Research Foundation is a not-for-profit organization registered in the State of California. IERF provides educational equivalency assessments and conducts research on educational programs and systems. Founded in 1969, it is the oldest credential evaluation service in the United States and is a charter member of NACES, the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services. The Service is an institutional member of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

The study and report were completed by Maxine McCarty, Senior Evaluator-Specialist at IERF. Ms. McCarty, an International Credentials Senior Evaluator since 1966, has over 37 years of credentials evaluation experience. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from UCLA and completed doctoral studies in History at the same institution. She has worked as an international credentials evaluator in the undergraduate and graduate admissions offices at UCLA and was Assistant Director of International Admissions at USC; she was Dean for Academic Affairs and Assistant Provost at West Coast University, where, in addition to other responsibilities, she was in charge of articulation with AACSB and ABET and coordinated the University team for WASC accreditation visits. She has been active in professional associations having been Chair of the Study Abroad Committee for AACRAO and a NAFSA member of the Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials, served as monitor for the World Education Series volume on Southern Africa and is the co-author of *ECE Presents the Educational System of Spain*. She has extensive knowledge of the U.S. and world educational systems and is a specialist in comparative education and Francophone education. She has just completed editing *The New Country Index*, to be published by Ten Speed Press in April 2004.

II Scope and Methodology

The primary objective of this study was to determine the content and level of the ABMA Advanced Diploma for Management Studies (ADMS) and Postgraduate Diploma for Management Studies (PDMS) in terms of their academic and professional equivalents in the U.S. educational framework. In order for IERF to arrive at an understanding of the program, Dr. Choi submitted examination papers for each component of the Advanced and Postgraduate diplomas (a total of thirty-three papers), in evidence of the level and content of each program. These were then compared with syllabi for traditional undergraduate and graduate programs in management offered at academic institutions in the United States (University of Southern California, University of Maryland), Australia (University of Melbourne, University of Southern Queensland) and England (University of Kent at Canterbury, University of Liverpool), as well as the examinations for admission to professional associations in each country.

III Program Structures

English and Australian University Programs: First degree programs in England and Australia are based on three-year business-related curricula capping twelve years of secondary studies in Australia and thirteen years of study in England. The Bachelor of Commerce is three years of concentrated coursework in theoretical studies in commerce, accounting, business law, finance and marketing.

Admission to postgraduate programs in Australia and England usually requires completion of a bachelor's degree, with some selective institutions requiring an Honours degree and several years of professional experience for consideration. MBA programs in England usually require one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study, thus representing sixteen or seventeen years of combined secondary and postsecondary education, often requiring a research dissertation or thesis as the final component of the program. Australian degrees range in duration from twelve to sixteen months.

US Academic Programs: Bachelor's degree programs in the United States are based on four-years of postsecondary studies and combine a general curriculum of social science, physical science, and humanities with major-related theoretical studies in psychology, sociology, and subject specific courses in accounting, economics, finance, information systems, law, management, marketing, mathematics, statistics as related to business. The first US degree in business is thus the product of sixteen years of combined secondary and postsecondary instruction, covering a general body of knowledge capped by

advanced undergraduate study in a combination of fields or in one concentrated field of specialization such as accounting, management, marketing, etc.

Master's degree programs in business in the United States tend to last for two years, particularly in those cases where the undergraduate preparation is in disciplines other than business. The normal requirement for admission to such programs is a four-year bachelor's degree, a competitive examination, plus a minimum of two years of professional experience in the business world. Thus the MBA or similar US graduate degree is based on seventeen to eighteen years of combined secondary and postsecondary instruction. Executive programs and programs for working adults often include an applied and/or practical component, and case studies are frequently a significant curricular element.

Professional Association Membership: Membership in professional associations in the United States does not carry the same academic connotation that adheres to membership in similar Commonwealth professional bodies. The U.S. Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation and membership in the Association of Chartered Accountants in the United States indicate completion of examinations that attest to a standard of professional competence in the field of accounting, and neither is tied to a level of academic achievement beyond the academic preparation required to sit the examinations. Conversely, levels of membership in Commonwealth chartered societies earned by virtue of examinations that are predicated on approved syllabi and a required level of prior academic training, are commonly accepted as equivalent to academic degrees awarded by recognized educational institutions.

ABMA Programs: The papers for the ABMA examinations for the ADMS and PDMS represent professionally oriented curricula, suggesting the applied or hands-on approach frequently found in executive business programs. The papers for the ADMS and PDMS attest to the rigor of the programs, though determining prerequisites was difficult.

ADMS: Based on information found on the ABMA web site and in correspondence with Dr. Tsui, we have determined that the entrance requirement for the examinations for the Advanced diploma is a diploma in business management or its equivalent. This would indicate that in its British and Australian contexts, the ADMS, predicated on the prior diploma in business management might grant placement in the second or third year of a university undergraduate program in management, depending on the interpretation of the business diploma.

PDMS: The requirement for admission to the examinations for the Postgraduate Diploma is a recognized first degree or its equivalent, thus those British and Australian universities that accept a three-year pass degree as fulfilling this requirement would be able to consider the PDMS examinations as study beyond the award of a first degree, and might sanction waivers for a portion of their postgraduate program. Those institutions requiring an honours degree for admission to their postgraduate programs might consider the additional year of study for the PDMS as fulfilling that requirement.

IV Summary of findings and placement recommendations

As is the case with many professional institutions and associations, U.S. evaluation guidelines on the assessment of acquired skills place special emphasis on the quality of prior learning. Thus evaluation services, professional associations and universities will interpret programs according to their own institutional structure and requirements. Organizations in the United States may disagree with any assessment and are bound by no outside policies. Equivalency conclusions stated in this report reflect the judgment of IERF based on detailed study of all components of the ABMA programs as they conform to tenets of applied comparative education, but should be understood to reflect our opinion only, and should not be construed as prescriptive in any way to other services, institutions or professional associations.

Section III (Program Structures) has outlined the structural similarities and differences between programs in the United States, England and Australia. Bearing those considerations in mind, IERF has made the following findings regarding the ADMS and PDMS:

ADMS: The ABMA Advanced Diploma represents completion of nine examinations requiring a minimum of one year of study beyond the award of a diploma in business, awarded upon completion of two years of postsecondary professional studies. The Advanced Diploma may be considered to represent a level of education that is roughly comparable to the third year of postsecondary study in business management. Fundamental theories relative to the allocation of credit for completed studies indicate that one year of full-time undergraduate and/or professional study is considered equivalent to thirty to thirty-eight semester hours of undergraduate credit. Thus the ABMA Advanced Diploma is considered by us to be comparable to thirty-six semester hours of credit in the third year of a first university degree.

PDMS: The ABMA Postgraduate Diploma represents completion of eight examinations requiring a minimum of one year of study beyond a first degree, awarded upon completion of three years of postsecondary academic studies. The Postgraduate Diploma may be considered to represent a level of education that is roughly comparable to the fourth year of postsecondary study in management studies. Thus the ABMA Postgraduate Diploma is considered by us to be comparable to thirty-two semester hours of credit in the fourth year of a first university degree. In the event that the holder of the PDMS entered the ABMA program holding a degree that is recognized as equivalent to the US bachelor's degree (an honours degree from Australia, or the bachelor's degree from England), the PDMS may be considered comparable to completion of a one-year post-baccalaureate program in management studies.

Most US academic institutions require the majority of coursework taken towards the completion of master's degree be completed "in residence", and restrict the amount study taken outside their academic program. For that reason, while the level and quality of the work completed for the Postgraduate Diploma may be deemed sufficient and satisfactory, the practical transfer of such coursework is problematic.

For purposes of employment and in conjunction with a degree recognized as equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree, the PDMS might be considered comparable to a one-year master's degree in management studies.

V Summary: It is the judgment of the International Education Research Foundation, Inc. that the ADMS is equivalent to thirty-six semester hours of credit, comparable to completion of a one-year program of undergraduate coursework in management studies at regionally accredited colleges and universities, and the PDMS is equivalent to thirty-two semester hours of credit, comparable to completion of a one-year program of post-baccalaureate coursework in management studies. For purposes of employment, and in conjunction with previous academic achievement, the PDMS may be considered comparable to a one-year Master of Management Studies, awarded by regionally accredited colleges and universities in the United States.