

1. Title

Admissions Procedures for U. T. System Institutions

2. Rule and Regulation

Sec. 1 Policy. It is the policy of The University of Texas System Board of Regents that U. T. System institutions implement admissions policies and establish admissions criteria and processes in a manner that is as fair and transparent as possible to ensure that integrity in the admissions process is upheld.

Sec. 2 Establishing Admission Policies. *Texas Education Code Section 51.352* assigns responsibility to governing boards to "set campus admission standards consistent with the role and mission of the institution and considering the admission standards of similar institutions. . . ." In addition, [Chapter 51 \(Subchapter U\)](#) establishes guidelines for admission of freshman students and requires that institutions of higher education adopt guidelines for admission of students to other programs. The policies governing admission to academic programs shall be designed to maximize opportunity and access for all Texans, within parameters established by applicable laws.

2.1 Automatic Admission. Each covered institution shall adopt a policy for admission of first-time freshman students that incorporates criteria consistent with *Texas Education Code Sections 51.803, 51.804, and 51.805*. The admissions policy must provide, in keeping with regulations promulgated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, for automatic admission for students who have graduated in the top ten percent of the graduating class from an accredited Texas high school. For students who do not qualify for automatic admission, the policy shall specify the criteria that will be considered in making the admission decision.

2.2 Graduate and Professional School Admissions. Each covered institution shall also adopt policies for admission of transfer students and for admission to graduate, postgraduate, and/or professional programs. The factors to be considered in graduate and professional school admissions decisions must be consistent with *Texas Education Code Section 51.842*.

2.3 Delegation to President. In keeping with the requirement of *Texas Education Code* [Section 51.804](#) that governing boards determine for each academic year whether automatic admission to a general academic institution shall be granted to students who graduate in the top 25 percent of their graduating class, the responsibility for this annual determination is delegated to the president of each institution covered by this policy. If a change in the admissions policy were proposed, Board of Regents' approval would follow established procedures for administrative approval and inclusion in the Consent Agenda.

Sec. 3 Fairness and Transparency in the Admissions Process for Prospective Students.

3.1 Publicly Available Information. Each U. T. System institution shall identify and make readily available to prospective students all criteria used in its admissions review process. Such criteria shall be publicly available on the institution's website through written policies that outline the admissions process and expectations for all admissions categories including freshmen, transfer students, graduate students, and professional school students. The policy shall include descriptions of the process and factors to be considered in the admissions review process including those used in holistic review processes. The information shall also include deadlines, notification dates, and response dates.

3.2 Each institution may tailor its process to the specific needs of a campus and student population; however, the following elements shall be common to all academic institutions:

3.2.1 A prospective student shall apply to an institution using an accepted application method for the relevant degree program.

3.2.2 The applicant shall submit required information such as transcripts, test scores, letters of recommendation, or other information identified as required or as optional.

- 3.2.3 Applicants who are automatically admitted by law or approved institutional policy shall be promptly notified of admission.
- 3.2.4 Applicants whose files are incomplete shall be notified of missing information.
- 3.2.5 An applicant with a complete file who is not automatically admitted by law or approved institutional policy may be reviewed through a holistic process.
- 3.2.6 Holistic review shall be conducted in accordance with an institution's approved and published process and evaluation criteria, considering the relevant factors identified for a particular degree or program. An applicant admitted after holistic review shall be notified in accordance with published notification policies.
- 3.2.7 Because the admissions process is a rolling process, an applicant may be admitted at any time after the applicant's file is complete.
- 3.2.8 Any applicant who is not qualified for admission or who has no realistic chance of admission shall be notified that he or she has not been admitted.
- 3.2.9 An admissions file may be flagged to manage the timing of an admissions decision or to assist with administration of the admissions process, but not in any way that would manifest advantage for a particular applicant in the holistic review process.

Sec. 4 Consistency and Fairness in the Holistic Review Process. Admissions decisions shall involve collaborative decision-making among multiple qualified, well-trained parties. Admissions decisions shall be based on the substantive information contained within the applicant file. It is the responsibility of admissions officials, deans, the provost, and the president to protect the admissions staff from undue influence. The president shall provide leadership to ensure compliance with policies and rules.

Sec. 5 Undue Influence and Conflicts of Interest. To uphold the integrity of the admissions process, undue influence and conflicts of interest should be eliminated. It is acknowledged that institutional leaders and other personnel may receive third-party inquiries, calls, emails, letters, or other forms of communication about a prospective student that may range from providing substantive information about an applicant to an attempt to unduly influence or coerce decision makers into admitting an applicant. The presidents, provosts, and deans of U. T. System institutions shall ensure that the admissions offices are shielded from attempted undue influence and shall handle such communications as follows:

5.1 Letters, emails, or other communications that provide substantive, relevant information about an applicant. Communications that provide credible, substantive input about an applicant shall be forwarded to the appropriate admissions office or staff member. The individual forwarding such communication shall make clear that in providing information, there is no request for special treatment of the applicant or attempt at undue influence or favoritism toward the applicant. Presidents shall provide leadership to ensure that admissions officers understand that they are to independently evaluate recommendation letters based on the substance of the letter and not the status of the author or the fact that the letter was forwarded by the president or other university official. The person who originally received the communication may respond to those who provided the information with an acknowledgement that the information has been received and forwarded to the relevant office for consideration.

5.2 Letters, emails, or other communications that provide a general endorsement of an applicant without containing substantive information pertinent to evaluating the relevant qualities, character, or ability of an applicant. If the communication does not contain substantive information pertinent to the qualities, character, or ability of the applicant, the communication shall not be forwarded and shall not become part of the applicant file. The individual receiving the communication may acknowledge receipt without referencing any further specific action regarding the communication or the applicant.

- 5.3 Letters, emails, or other communications from government officials. Government officials are often asked by constituents to write letters for or otherwise communicate on behalf of applicants. Communications from government officials shall be treated the same as communications from others. Communications that provide credible, substantive input about an applicant shall be forwarded to the appropriate admissions office or staff member. Admissions officials shall give no consideration to any relationship they or others at the institution may have with a particular government official. As with letters from others, the individual forwarding such communication shall make clear that in providing information, there is no request for special treatment of the applicant or attempt at undue influence or favoritism toward the applicant.
- 5.4 Third-party inquiries and requests for status updates of applicants. Updates on applicants shall not be provided to third parties. Only the applicant may be provided updates and notified of the final admission decision.
- 5.5 Letters, emails, or other communications that go beyond providing information about the applicant or are designed to influence or coerce admissions decisions. There are occasions in which calls, letters, and inquiries are not confined to substantive information relevant to the applicant's qualifications or general endorsements. These may range from citing long service to the institution by a relative or friend of the applicant to more far-ranging contributions. One way or another, such communications attempt to influence admissions outcomes. In these instances, institutional leaders shall shield admissions staff from undue influence or coercion. Depending upon the nature of the communication, the institutional leader shall act as follows:
- 5.5.1 Letters, emails, or other communications indicating that special consideration is owed because of past action. An outside party may indicate that because of past actions of those who have some relationship with the applicant the institution owes the applicant special consideration. In such instances, the

communication shall not be forwarded to the admission process and shall not become part of the applicant file. The person receiving the communication may acknowledge the communication, according to the circumstances, but will do so neutrally with respect to the prospect of admission.

5.5.2 Letters, emails, and other communications indicating that special consideration is owed and there exists a threat of action or promise of quid pro quo. There are very rare circumstances in which a communication may contain a threat regarding consequences of a negative admissions decision or a promise related to a positive decision. In such cases, institutional leadership shall respond with a firm reminder that only information pertinent to the qualifications of the candidate shall be considered in the applicant file. The communication shall not be forwarded to the admissions process or become part of the applicant file. If the attempt to influence is egregious, the institution's president shall inform and confer, in a timely manner, with the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor and General Counsel.

5.5.3 Inappropriate internal influence. Institutional personnel shall not allow their personal relational considerations to influence admissions decisions. If credible suspicion exists of inappropriate relational considerations influencing admissions decisions, such suspicions must be reported to the institutional or U. T. System compliance office or hotline.

Sec. 6 Presidents' Discretion to Act Optimally and Properly in the Best Interest of the Institution within the Holistic Admission Process. Since it is ultimately the responsibility of the president to operate in the best interest of the institution, he or she may, on very rare occasions, have cause to admit a qualified student who might not otherwise be admitted through the normal process. It is the policy of the U. T. System that such admission decisions be very rare, be limited only to students who are qualified to pursue the degree for which admission is sought, be defensible

decisions that take into consideration the overall best interests of the institution, be consistent with the requirements of Section 5 on Undue Influence and Conflicts of Interest, and be reported by the president to the Chancellor at the conclusion of the admissions cycle. The expectation is that any such decision shall only be made under situations of highest institutional importance consistent with the “very rare” concept. In no case shall such an admissions decision displace another student who would otherwise be admitted.

For cases in which the president decides to admit a qualified applicant counter to the recommendation of the normal admissions process, the president shall:

- (1) Discuss the merits of the applicant’s admission case with appropriate admissions officials prior to making a decision to ensure that the president fully understands the admissions case, and
- (2) Be required to meet with the Chancellor at the conclusion of the admissions cycle to discuss the process employed, the rationale, all personal or institutional relational considerations in each decision, and to explain why the decision was in the best interest of the institution.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chancellor to ensure the decisions of an institution’s president are reasonable in terms of process, the number of such admissions decisions is consistent with the policy of very rare, and the rationale for such decisions is consistent with the requirement for highest institutional importance. The Chancellor shall report to the Board of Regents any significant deviation from this policy. The rationale for admitting a student outside the normal process shall be documented by the president.

- Sec. 7 Responsibility for Admissions to Certain Degree Programs. Deans of graduate and professional schools, by presidential delegation, are principally responsible for admissions to the school’s degree programs. The roles, duties, and responsibilities of the deans in the graduate and professional schools will mirror those designated for the president. The president will require an annual face-to-face report from the provost on admissions cases that were external to the normal admissions process. In all cases, decisions at any level that would admit a student outside of the normal admissions process

must be reported by the president to the Chancellor and follow the procedures outlined above.

- Sec. 8 Establishing Scholarship Award Policies. *Texas Education Code* [Section 51.809](#) requires that institutions of higher education adopt guidelines for awarding of competitive scholarships and fellowships. For the award of institutional competitive scholarships and fellowships, each covered institution shall adopt policies that identify the criteria to be considered in making the awards. The policies governing the award of institutional competitive scholarships and fellowships shall be designed to maximize opportunity and access for all Texans, within parameters established by applicable laws.
- Sec. 9 Inclusion of Policy Changes in Catalog. The admissions policies and criteria for award of scholarships and fellowships shall be included in institutional catalogs and shall be available to the public on request.
- 9.1 Changes in admission policies must be published in the institutional catalog and made available to the public not later than one year before the date that applications for admission are first considered.
- 9.2 Changes in the factors to be considered for the award of competitive scholarships/fellowships for a graduate or professional program must be published in the institutional catalog and made available to the public not later than one year before the date that applications for competitive scholarships/fellowships are first considered. Changes in factors to be considered for the award of all other competitive scholarships/fellowships must be published in the institutional catalog and made available to the public prior to the deadline for submission of applications.
- Sec. 10 Board Approval. Regental approval of the initial policies and subsequent amendments, if any, shall be made via the Consent Agenda following administrative review and approval by the appropriate Executive Vice Chancellor for inclusion in the institutional catalog(s).

3. Definitions

None

4. Relevant Federal and State Statutes

Texas Education Code [Section 51.352](#) – Responsibility of Governing Boards

Texas Education Code [Sections 51.803](#) – Automatic Admissions: All Programs

Texas Education Code [Section 51.804](#) – Additional Automatic Admissions: Selected Institutions

Texas Education Code [Section 51.805](#) – Other Admissions

Texas Education Code [Section 51.809](#) – Scholarships and Fellowship Awards

Texas Education Code [Section 51.842](#) – Admission and Scholarship Factors for Graduate and Professional Programs

5. Relevant System Policies, Procedures, and Forms

[U. T. System Proposed Admissions Policy for Academic Institutions – August 2015](#)

6. Who Should Know

Administrators
Students

7. System Administration Office(s) Responsible for Rule

Office of Academic Affairs
Office of Health Affairs

8. Dates Approved or Amended

August 20, 2015
Editorial amendments to Sections 1.3 and 4 made April 12, 2012
Editorial amendments made to Section 3 and Number 4 on
September 16, 2008
December 10, 2004

9. Contact Information

Questions or comments regarding this Rule should be directed to:

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