



**Summary of Post-Secondary Admissions Practices
When Dealing With Unaccredited Home Educated Students**
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Students who have been educated at home come in two main “formats.” There are those who have, in some fashion, simply brought school home and have generally followed public programming, ending up with government issued credits, transcripts and possibly diplomas. These “home-schooled” students do not usually pose any challenges for admissions as they are usually assessed using standard admission criteria.

The “home educated” students, on the other hand, have followed alternate, individualized programming and as a consequence, lack the standard credits, transcripts and diplomas. Although they are generally as well prepared as their public schooled counterparts, lacking standard admission credentials does require admissions personnel to use some form of alternate criteria when assessing these students for admissions.

It should be stated that many studies have been conducted that indicate that home educated students do very well, on average, and that post-secondary institutions can be encouraged with the fact that well qualified home educated students are not likely to disappoint. In any case, it is agreed that students applying for post-secondary admission must demonstrate some level of proficiency to ascertain a hope of success. To this end, we have summarized alternate admission practices generally in use by post-secondary institutions when considering unaccredited home educated applicants.

General Considerations

Despite the fact that home educated students come without government issued accreditation, this does not mean they lack proficiency in any way. The individualized programming that they have received allows them to have a greater comfort with their individual attributes (as well as an acknowledgement of innate weaknesses), making them far more certain of what they want to do with their lives than the average publicly schooled student, who has been directed to conform to a standard rather than develop his or her individual potential. Since the home educated are generally allowed to soar with their strengths while encouraged to manage their weaknesses, their programming is in keeping with their vocations. It is, therefore, unreasonable to direct home educated students to obtain accredited high school level courses which simply force students to go backwards in order to advance. It is also highly recommended that no upgrading be required as it usually ends up being a waste of time and money for the student.

Home education policies include a range of options for evaluating student candidates for admission. Some institutions have developed their home education policies to include fixed evaluation instruments, such as an Educational Background Chart or Academic Profile Form which provide consistency of assessment. Other institutions have more general or open home education policies that, while providing some guidelines, may result in a lack of consistency. The following summarizes the most common instruments generally used in student admission assessments.

Open Admission Policies

Open admission policies, where students simply apply and pay for programming, is not very common. They are more often used for online courses as there is no net loss to the institution, should a student not be successful. These policies can apply to individual courses or towards an entire program and are generally used by smaller, more specialized institutions.

Some institutions may offer an open conditional acceptance towards permanent admission to a program based on the student's performance. This shortens the evaluation process by placing the responsibility for success directly on the student, who, after paying tuition, must prove that he or she can succeed in the program.

Individual Assessment

Generally speaking, most institutions must deal with the home educated on a case by case basis as they do not fit neatly into the prescribed criteria of standard admissions. This is more practical for smaller institutions who are not dealing with large numbers of applicants, yet yields a better assessment. Individual student interviews can go a long way towards ascertaining who the student is, what he or she is capable of, and how he or she could potentially do in the program of choice.

Transcripts and Portfolios

Institutions that have had positive experiences with the home educated often simply accept them on the basis of a home made or third party transcript outlining the courses taken and final grades. Even though these documents lack the official status of government issued transcripts, they nevertheless provide a quick look at what the student has accomplished in his or her home education program.

Although portfolios are not used as much as they were in the past, some institutions still like to see a general collection of achievements, accomplishments and experiences when individually assessing students. This is especially true of students applying for the arts or faith-based programming and may be included as part of a personal interview.

Testing and Third Party Evaluations

Although letters from parents, facilitators and school boards are occasionally accepted, most institutions prefer some kind of third party evaluation of individual proficiency when determining possible admission. Some institutions use tests they have developed expressly for this purpose. Others accept more general evaluations such as English Language Studies Assessment Test (ELSAT), or a general skills-based test such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). For more content specific evaluations, SAT II or American College Test (ACT) instruments can be used. Although few institutions use them, it is recommended that the GED not be used to measure proficiency as the academic levels are not rigorous enough for most post-secondary applications.

Transfer Programs

Students sometimes approach admissions having already taken post-secondary level courses. These are often online courses taken from another institution and then transferred to the institution of choice, if applicable. They can also be courses taken from the resident institution through extension or night courses. Proven proficiency at a post-secondary level should facilitate assessment for admission.

Course Challenge

A few home educated students have proven proficiency by challenging first year course exams within a program. Through the institution's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) opportunity or by simply asking to write the institution's first year English course final exam, students not only prove proficiency but enter with advanced standing.

We Can Help

We have been helping post-secondary institutions and unaccredited home educated students to understand each other, and the unique challenges that need to be addressed when seeking admission, for a long time. Feel free to contact us with your questions regarding the establishment of your home education admission policy.

Conclusion

It has been said that there is more than one way to accomplish a goal. Basic academic training, while mostly done following government sanctioned programming and accreditation, does not have to be done that way to be effective. Any institution that insists on all students meeting criteria established for the majority will find that well-trained home educated students simply go somewhere else, preferably where they are not required to be the same as every other student. They want to be measured on merit rather than an assumed standard.

Clearly, there has to be some standard admission practices. However, to avoid the rejection of qualified students who have been educated using alternate forms of programming, alternate admission criteria for assessing them are highly recommended.

There is no doubt that unaccredited home education students present a bit of a challenge for admission personnel. However, once it is established that a student possesses the skills and attributes required to succeed in a program, institutions will usually find that the students are very capable of not only accomplishing the goals of the program but of excelling in many ways. When questioned, most institutions who have admitted unaccredited home educated students have discovered that if there is one characteristic that can generally be attributed to these kinds of students, it is that they tend to be overachievers. Institutes of higher learning should not only take note but actively recruit such students.