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ABSTRACT

Selection procedures for the Wellington (New Zealand) Polytechnic Journalism Program were studied. An exploratory analysis of 1983 selection data was undertaken, resulting in elimination of one selection test and establishment of a provisional cutoff for 1984 applicants. In the principal study, the following four aspects were examined: (1) selection tests; (2) the selection interview; (3) the personal information asked of applicants; and (4) the role of the written assignment required of applicants. Selection tests included: a test of general mental ability for use at the tertiary level; a story written after interviewing another candidate; and a test of listening comprehension. The pool of about 162 successful applicants from 1982 to 1984 (about 54 applicants per year) and about 150 unsuccessful applicants from 1982 to 1984 (about 50 applicants per year) formed the sample. Correlations were determined for the course grades, selection tests, and the ratings of candidates by three course instructors. Selection tests demonstrated satisfactory validity against course grades. It is suggested that the general ability test would be best complemented by a composite test sampling the skills measured by the other tests. Recommendations incorporated into the 1985 selection process and suggested for future use are discussed. Appendices provide information about students and forms used in the study. (SLD)

SELECTION FOR JOURNALISM

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE VALIDITY OF PROCEDURES FOR A POLYTECHNIC COURSE

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CONTENTS

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Preparation of data tapes was undertaken at the Polytechnic Computer Centre by Paul Cooper and his staff. This assistance was very beneficial at a busy stage of the project. Fiona Moir and Debbie Bailey of NZCER undertook much of the early secretarial and clerical work. Denise Edwards of NZCER expertly typed the final manuscript, her attention to layout and detail being a considerable asset at this stage. Peter Ridder, NZCER, supervised the design and production of this report.

Nevertheless, all comments, conclusions and recommendations have been made entirely by us, in light of our interpretation of the available data.

Cedric Croft
Alison Gilmore

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 NZCER's Involvement

NZCER became involved in the selection of students for the Wellington Polytechnic Journalism Course at the request of the course tutors. Over the previous two years Journalism Staff (JS) had contacted the Council's Test Advisory Services about interpretation of a standardized test being used at that time (applicability of norms; stability of IQ; effects of varying language backgrounds on performance). During these discussions the validity of the test had been raised, and JS came to the view that their own assessments of the validity of this test should be investigated more rigorously. It was a short step to move from that point to a decision to investigate the total selection procedure in use at that time.

The concensus of JS was that current and previous selection procedures had served them well, but restructuring of the journalism course and changes to the general nature of the pool of applicants suggested the need for a formal assessment of the selection procedures. If such an investigation led to changes in future selection procedures, these would be welcome. If, however, changes were not indicated, JS would continue in the knowledge that existing procedures had been subject to a formal evaluation.

1.2 Preliminary Investigations

Following preliminary discussions about existing selection practices, an exploratory analysis of 1983 selection data was undertaken. At this early stage there was no attempt to relate selection tests to course marks or final grades; this analysis was of selection data only. By comparing the means and standard deviations for the 'selected' and 'rejected' groups of applicants, it was possible to demonstrate to JS the actual 'cut-offs' that had operated for that year, and to introduce the concepts of measurement error and the standard error of measurement. It was also possible to demonstrate which of the current selection tests was providing the most 'weight' in selection, and to show how the tests intercorrelated. On the basis of this exploratory work one selection test was not used with 1984 applicants, and a provisional cut-off equal to the 1983 mean of 'rejected' students minus one standard deviation, was instituted for the major selection test.

During 1984, before the study proper commenced, the selection interview was also examined. The major feature of selection interviews were discussed with JS. As the interview was an important determinant of

final selection for the course, it was apparent that steps had to be taken to ensure that consistent criteria were used by all interviewers and that all candidates were placed on a common scale. These aspects of the interview were all the more important when it is considered that there were a variety of interviewers, a number of locations and unspecified criteria for 'acceptance' or 'rejection'.

NZCER staff and JS were able to identify five broad areas to be covered by the selection interview, describe achievement and behaviour relevant to these areas, and formulate a numerical scale to accompany each. This draft interview schedule formed the basis of interviews for the 1985 course. Provision was made to redraft the interview schedule for the 1986 course and to embark on a validation of the revised format at that stage.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was designed to investigate four aspects of the selection procedures.

These were:

(i) The selection tests.
(ii) The selection interview.
(iii) The nature of the personal information asked of course applicants.
(iv) The role of the 'selection assignment'.

(i) The Selection Tests

The primary focus of the study centres on an examination of the predictive validity of the selection tests. Analyses were undertaken of the internal characteristics of these tests and the relationships between performance on these tests and available criteria, such as course marks and tutors' ratings.

By taking sets of selection test results and course marks for applicants from 1982 to 1984, it was hoped to gain a more complete picture than could be provided by any one year. In addition, it was hoped that developing group profiles of 'selected' students over three years would be useful in establishing realistic 'cut-off' scores for accepting or rejecting applicants.

For the years 1982 to 1984, the following selection tests were in use.

- A test of general mental ability eveloped for use at tertiary level.
- A 'story' written as a result of interviewing another candidate.

- A test of listening comprehension consisting of recall of the factual aspects of a recorded newspaper editorial.

(ii) The Selection Interview

The practice during the years under investigation has been to interview each candidate in a fairly informal and unstructured manner. As a result, a global judgement was made as to the 'suitability' of each candidate. One of the principal thrusts of this investigation centres on the following aspects of the interview:

- Developing criteria.
- Identifying behaviours indicative of the various criteria.
- Developing a numerical rating scale to summarize interviewers' assessments.
- Drafting an interview schedule incorporating the three points above.

These four aspects of the interview were identified as needing attention first, because of the importance of the interview in the selection process and the marked improvement in reliability and validity that would result.

(iii) Personal Information

Over a number of years, a comprehensive application form had been developed, covering a variety of biographical, educational and personal data. The major questions for consideration were: what importance should be attached to this information? what data could be shown to make a valid contribution to a selection decision? how could these data be integrated into a meaningful whole? was some form of weighting appropriate?

(iv) Role of the 'Selection Assignment'

As part of the application, students are required to submit a written assignment based on an interview of a person featuring in a newspaper article. Current practice is not to assess the assignment in any systematic way, but to regard candidates who do not return it as not having completed an application. In general, those who do not return an assignment are rejected at this point. The major issue to consider is whether the quality of the written assignment can be reliably assessed and used in the selection process. Is it possible to reject those whose writing skills are not judged to be of a certain minimum standard?

In summary then, the specific objectives of this study were fourfold:

1. To investigate and report on the validity of the current selection tests and to make recommendations about future selection testing as suggested by the findings of this study.
2. To work with JS to improve the validity and reliability of the selection interview.
3. To advise JS on the utility of the information gained from current application forms, with a view to suggesting how the information obtained could be focussed directly on the matter of selection.
4. To consider whether the present selection assignment could or should contribute to an assessment of each candidate's suitability.

1.4 Constraints of the Study

The study was carried out with existing data from selection tests, course marks, tutor's ratings and interview assessments. In effect, all the analysis was of a post hoc nature. There was no opportunity to explore relationships not encompassed by the existing data.

With the exception of the interview, the nature of the *selection* data created no particular problems. However, there were some difficulties validating data based on course marks and assignments. This does not suggest that course marks were invalid or unreliable, but reflects the changing priorities of JS over the three year period. For example, there were changes to the nature, scoring, frequency and underlying content of some class assessments and ratings. These changes were in response to issues of teaching and assessment as seen by JS. From the point of this research, these changes in the nature and form of the results from year to year meant that data entry measures were validated against, were not constant. Although we could reasonably assume that all course data possessed satisfactory content validity, there was no way of assessing the impact of the changed nature of the data on the resulting validity coefficients. By and large however, our assumption was that despite changes to the grading scales, the measurements of learning and achievement remained valid in relation to the objectives of the courses.

Given the potential value of the interview in the selection procedure, it was seen as important to include some data from this source in the validation process. Difficulties were encountered here, as numerical data on a 5-point scale from the interviews existed for only one year. Nor were there qualitative assessments of the kind that could be transformed to an appropriate numerical scale. Thus, no systematic analysis of the contribution of interview performance to predicting

achievement in the study of journalism could be undertaken.

This also highlights a major difference between research into selection, and the real difficulties of selecting candidates. Providing there are agreed and constant criteria, it is reasonable for experienced interviewers to discuss and finally decide on each applicant's suitability, in qualitative terms. For the purposes of research a dichotomy of 'accept' or 'reject' is not adequate for numerical analysis, when the sample already exhibits a restricted range of achievement. When there are no course data available for those who have been rejected by interview, the dichotomy provides no basis at all. This illustrates, however, the reality of basing research on data found adequate for other purposes.

If elements of longitudinal research or in depth case studies could have been included, it may have been possible to tease out some of the biographical details contributing to course success. Indeed, the utilization of multiple regression analyses would also provide strong inferential data of this nature, but regrettably, was beyond the scope of this study. Hence the research team's task was restricted to considering what aspects of the biographical information could contribute to a selection decision, bearing firmly in mind that the ultimate objective of the selection process was to choose students who were most likely to complete the course to the best possible standard.

2.0 THE JOURNALISM COURSE AND EXISTING SELECTION PROCEDURES

2.1 Description of Journalism Course

The one year, fulltime Journalism course at Wellington Polytechnic is part of the General Studies Department. The course concentrates on writing, news-gathering and sub-editing skills, in addition to the basics of preparing material for publication. Most of the students' work is published in either course publications or outside publications and is print oriented, but there is the opportunity for some work in the electronic media.

The course aims to give a sound grounding in the skills required to work in any area of the media, including daily newspapers, radio, public relations and information work. Most of the students are adult and have full or part degrees. (See Appendix I)

2.2 *Existing Selection Procedures*

About 400 applicants a year apply for the course, for which there are only approximately 60 places. Dealing adequately with such a number, in addition to daily tutoring tasks, imposes a considerable burden on JS, during the final term in particular. In 1982 and 1983 selection began with applicants attending a polytechnic in groups of about 20, where they each interviewed another applicant and then wrote a 'story' as if they were working for a small-town newspaper. This was marked by a tutor and graded for 'natural news-writing ability', i.e., clarity and brevity. The applicants then completed the *ACER B40* test. During the two hour period following the test, each applicant was interviewed by a tutor or media representative for approximately 20 minutes. In that time the interviewer sought to establish whether the applicant had the 'personality, general knowledge and inquiring mind' necessary to work in the media. Because such an assessment was subjective, the tutors were reluctant to rely too much on the outcome of the interview. However, interviews were felt necessary for 'face validity'.

After the lunch/interview break, the applicants listened twice (without taking notes) to a tape on press censorship and were then asked to recall as much as they could. This was scored by a tutor and marks awarded for accurate recall of the points made. In addition, a 'plus' was given if the writing was particularly concise and clear, and a 'minus' if it was clumsily expressed. When all applicants had completed the selection procedures (news story, interview, *ACER B40*, *Comprehension*), the tutors sifted through the results, selecting the successful candidates for the following year's course.

JS tended to look first at the *ACER B40* and *Comprehension* results. If they were acceptable (i.e., better than about 120 and 60% respectively), the tutors then looked at the 'story' score and the background information supplied by the applicant in the interview. In looking at the background information JS were trying to assess motivation, but they were well aware how difficult this was. The interview mark was viewed with 'healthy skepticism'.

Age was another factor considered and young people from the sixth or seventh forms had to do exceptionally well in the *ACER B40* or *Comprehension* to be accepted. Generally, the tutors relied mainly on these two scores, regarding them as the most objective. They did this because results on the course over the years suggested to them that while good scores in these two tests did not guarantee success, it was necessary, with few exceptions, for a person to have done well in the tests if they

were to excel. However, if a person had applied more than once they were often accepted ahead of first-time applicants who had scored better. Applying more than once was regarded as indicating strong motivation. While some of those accepted on this basis did well on the course, others were unimpressive.

Tutors also exercised 'positive discrimination' in the case of applicants from minority ethnic groups. They did this for two main reasons. Firstly, the industry had indicated an interest in hiring more representatives of minority groups. Secondly, it was felt that the validity of the tests might be suspect for many minority group applicants who were second language learners.

In 1984 the JS were forced to change their selection procedures because of the increasing number of applicants. It was decided to use a screening process that would reduce the number of applicants to be interviewed. When people inquired about the course, they were sent a lengthy questionnaire to complete and were also asked to do a written assignment. This involved them in interviewing someone involved with the news, or featured in the news, and then writing a report. Those who completed these tasks were invited to undertake the *ACER B40* and *Comprehension* tests. Those who scored reasonably well (about 117 plus for the *ACER B40* and 60% plus for the *Comprehension*) and those whose supporting material (questionnaire and assignment) was satisfactory were interviewed by either a tutor or an industry representative or, in some cases, both.

As a result of this procedure, 140 were interviewed from which 60 were selected. During the selection process more attention was paid to the interview results than in previous years, because JS were of the opinion that 1984 interviews had been conducted in a more uniform way, using an outline developed in consultation with NZCER staff. However, interview results were still treated with some caution because of the lack of demonstrated validity and concern about excessive subjectivity. JS were also, at this stage, questioning the wisdom of having media representatives undertake selection interviewing for the Polytechnic, without the presence of at least one tutor. JS thought that tutor-conducted interviews were likely to be more consistent because the tutors have interviewed many more applicants and are better able to make informed comparisons. Additionally, JS are able to confer often with a view to developing and maintaining constant standards. This, of course, will involve tutors in more interviewing than previously.

One of the more significant recent developments in the selection

process for the course has been the increased emphasis on establishing the motivation of applicants. This has been achieved by ensuring that serious applicants have had some previous experience of journalism before joining the course, e.g., work on a student newspaper, or radio station, or freelance work for a provincial or community newspaper. It was felt that people who have some prior experience of journalism are more likely to remain motivated when they are on the course, than others who have drifted into the field, in the hope that it might suit them.

In the past all those who have completed the course satisfactorily have seemed to do well on the job. Very few complaints from employers have been received by JS about the performance of graduates. Further feedback from former students suggests that the skills imparted on the course are highly relevant. A survey by the Journalists Training Board found that 82% of polytechnic graduates surveyed regarded their training as a 'good' or 'excellent' preparation for the job.

2.3 Overseas Research into Selection for Journalism Training

Much of the specific research on selection for journalism originating from overseas must be interpreted cautiously, mainly because of differences between the Polytechnic Journalism course and the overseas courses. In the United States, for instance, journalism education is located largely within the College system, where it is often part of Communications Departments. As credits from Communications may count towards degrees and diplomas in a range of fields, study may reflect academic concerns, rather than focusing on the practice of journalism. Because of this academic nature of many journalism courses, selection criteria have tended to focus on the attributes of academic success rather than the attributes needed to complete a practically oriented course similar to the one at Wellington Polytechnic. Notwithstanding the difficulty of interpreting specific findings, conclusions coming from some American research are relevant here.

Brown and Weaver (1979) reviewed a number of current procedures and concluded that the "predictors effective in one graduate programme may not be effective in another." They did note, however, that for their own course which "... strikes a balance between professional and academic training that is tipped toward scholarship", that Grade Point Average (GPA) was generally the best predictor of graduate grades, but the maximum correlation of .27 was not strong. Additionally, the *Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Verbal* was found to be a weak to moderate

predictor of graduate GPA which did not support Scotton (1977), who had concluded that *GRE Quantitative* was generally more useful for predicting graduate grades than *GRE Verbal*.

Brown and Weaver also indicated that more than test scores are needed to predict graduate success, as their best four predictors accounted for just 27% of the variability in graduate GPA. The unknown reliability of GPA probably contributed to this moderate prediction. Lynn (1978) found that 39% of the variability in graduate GPA was accounted for by undergraduate GPA plus two *GRE* scores, but the addition of scores from the *Californian Psychological Inventory* boosted the variance accounted for to nearly 75%. Findings of this nature led then to suggest that "... graduate admissions committees should take a hard look at applicants' personality characteristics as revealed in interviews, autobiographical statements, conversations with others who have known them well, and such tests as the *Californian Psychological Inventory*." Although Lynn does not elaborate on the meaning of "... take a hard look at applicants' personality characteristics", this can be viewed as some support for the policy of including an interview in selection for journalism. Their suggestion for including the *CPI* as well is intriguing, but it does presuppose knowledge of relationships between journalism and *CPI* profiles.

Scotton (1977) undertook a survey of the admission procedures for 71 college journalism programmes. He found that 46 of these programmes turned away at least one half of their applicants and that across the study there was a 20% dropout rate. After reviewing studies of *GRE Verbal* scores, *GRE Quantitative* scores, *GRE Advanced Tests*, personal recommendation, biographical information and interviews, Scotton noted that this latter category had been found to be the best single predictor of interpersonal skills; qualities cited by several studies as being important to journalism. He suggested a need to re-evaluate selection criteria for journalism in terms of the requirements of the programme. If selection is to be on academic grounds only, the prediction of 'success' will be minimal, if the programme incorporates skills other than those sampled by academic measures. In a word, selection procedures must be valid.

Payne, Wells and Clarke (1971) have noted that the reliability of various predictors of success change from programme to programme. This suggests that the definition of success may differ from programme to programme, or that success is being defined in a way that does not

relate logically to admission criteria. This may be more true of postgraduate journalism programmes where the emphasis shifts from academic criteria at entry, to professional development as the course progresses. Whatever the reason, the outcome is a lack of validity in the selection tests, which is manifested in terms of varying reliability.

Fedler and O'Keefe (1977) describe screening procedures used to select students to undertake practical assignments on a daily paper during their course work. They report that their screening procedures improved the calibre of students going forward and ensured that students without basic reporting competencies, did not become a burden to newspaper staff. Prior to implementing the screening procedure, the internship programme with the local paper had been restricted to students who earned a 'B' or better in basic reporting and editing courses, but these assessments did not prove to be adequate by themselves. The screening procedure began with an application from all students wishing to participate. The application consisted of academic transcripts, examples of academic work and published stories. Phase two involved both typing and style tests.

The significance of the selection procedures described by Fedler and O'Keefe is probably to be found in the manner in which they sampled daily skills of journalism. In effect, they instituted assessments based on 'work samples'. Traditionally, 'work samples' have proved to be a most valid approach to selection, but the most difficult problems associated with them revolve around the actual assessment of the sample, and the time taken to obtain the 'product'. An additional important consideration for the Fedler and O'Keefe procedure is that it differed from a typical situation of primary selection for course entry. Their students had partly completed a journalism course, so they had the opportunity to master a core of journalism skills utilized in the screening procedure. The screening then could measure developed skills, and not have to rely on identifying candidates who might develop skills given appropriate instruction.

What then are some implications of these studies for the Polytechnic Journalism Course? The importance of ensuring that selection measures sample skills that underpin course performance is of primary importance. As a corollary to this, goes the need to match the selection to the course and submit selection procedures to an empirical validation. The other major implication for this study is the support for adequate assessments of applicants' personality characteristics, by interview or other means. This is a conclusion that JS had reached themselves and fully supports the

emphasis placed on improving the validity and reliability of the interview. The specific finding reporting the contribution to selection made by a personality test, is food for thought. It further supports the role of personality attributes in journalism training and indicates an alternative measure that could be investigated.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Sample

The total pool of completed applications for 1982 to 1984 formed the basis for the study. Applicants were identified as 'Successful', that is, were selected for and completed the journalism course, or 'Unsuccessful', that is, were rejected, or did not complete the course. For each year, complete records for all Successful applicants (N = approximately 54 each year) were gathered. A random sample of approximately 50 Unsuccessful applicants were selected for each year.

Over the three years there was reasonable uniformity of selection measures administered, allowing comparisons to be made of both selected and rejected groups on these measures. Some variation did exist for assignments and end of course assessments, meaning that comparisons between selection results and course results for the three groups of selected students are not identical. Although these 'criterion variables' differ, they do reflect differences in the structure of the course from year to year, so they may be regarded as equally valid measures of achievement.

3.2 Selection Tests and Course Measures

A brief description of selection tests and course measures follows:

(i) ACER Advanced Test B40 (second edition)

A broadly based, predominantly verbal measure of general mental ability. Designed for use at tertiary level and having maximum discrimination around IQ 120. Provides percentile ranks, IQ's and stanines. Reliability and validity known.

(ii) Comprehension

A test of recall of facts as presented in a recorded newspaper

editorial. Each candidate is required to summarize the exerpt after a second listening. Note taking is not permitted. Scoring is based on the number of facts recalled, with an additional two-point rating indicating 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' writing style. Marking undertaken by one tutor. Hitherto no information on reliability or validity.

(iii) ABBA

Applicants are paired off. Each member of the pair interviews the other person, then writes a short report of the interview. The report of the interview is marked on a variable scale by one tutor for 'writing style'. No information on reliability or validity available.

(iv) Interview

A free ranging selection interview of about 20 minutes duration, covering no fixed content and without standard criteria. Interview may be conducted by JS, media representatives or a combination. No provision for summarizing or reporting on candidates in a uniform manner. No information on reliability or validity.

These selection measures remained constant for 1982-1984 candidates. Modifications were introduced for candidates for the 1985 course.

3.3 Course Marks

The typical pattern of course marks and grades was for each student to be assessed on a core of six subject marks, plus two of four additional optional marks. A final summative assessment was also issued Some assessments, e.g., typing and shorthand gave scores representing words per minute, while the others were generally graded on a five point (A-E) scale.

For 1982, letter grades (converted to a 10 point numerical scale) for ten individual subjects were available. The topics included: reporting, subbing, principles, attitude, shorthand and typing; with special options in public relations, sub-editing, broadcasting and feature writing. For 1983, marks for up to twelve topics were available: newsgathering, newswriting, subbing, feature writing, investigative, business reporting, shorthand and typing; with special options in public relations, sub-editing, broadcasting and feature writing. A summative mark of all course topics was computed by standardizing each score, summing across subjects and then averaging. This procedure was followed to ensure that each topic

contributed equally to the composite score. For 1984, the course mark available was a global one with credit pass/pass/fail grades awarded for performance on the course as a whole. This grade was converted to a three point numerical scale.

In addition to course marks for 1983 and 1984, the three course instructors independently rated each student for *likely success as a journalist*. Ratings were provided on a ten-point scale. The three ratings for each student were then pooled to provide an overall tutor-rating. These ratings were gathered some months after the end of the 1984 course.

3.4 Analysis of Data

All necessary transformations and coding of data were carried out by the research team. Data tapes were prepared at the Polytechnic Computer Centre for subsequent analysis at NZCER, using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

3.5 Development of Revised Interview Schedule

The nature of the selection interview used for selecting students for 1982-1984, has already been described in broad detail. During late 1984 some modifications were introduced prior to the selection round for 1985 applicants.

The dissatisfaction JS expressed with the format and procedures of the selection interview up to and including the 1984 Course, proved to be the starting point for a close examination of procedures, and the development of a standard interview schedule. Before specific work started on the selection interview for journalism, JS undertook some reading on selection interviewing, and engaged in discussions with the authors about the concepts of validity and reliability and, in particular, their applicability to selection interviewing. From the outset, the development of the interview schedule and the formulation of interviewing procedures were shared between JS and the authors. JS provided their expert knowledge of journalism, the journalism course, and the characteristics, interests, attitudes and backgrounds of students, suggested by their collective experience to be important for successful completion of the course. The authors helped JS identify and articulate all the factors that would contribute to the validity of the final interview. On the basis of this information a standard interview schedule incorporating appropriate numerical scales, was drafted.

For the restructured interview, six areas of behaviour were identified as being valid indicators of likely success on the course. These were Writing and Publication Experience; Knowledge of Journalism; Awareness of Media Issues; Intellectual Curiosity/Investigative Skills; and Awareness of Issues of Social Justice in New Zealand Society. A summarizing category of Overall Suitability was also included. Each of these categories was accompanied by a five-point numerical scale with verbal descriptors. (See Appendix II)

In addition to the five broad areas to be focused on during the interview, a series of 'anchor' questions was developed for each section of the interview. The anchor questions were designed to make up approximately 75% of the interview, thus leaving interviewers scope to explore aspects appropriate to the background and perceived talents of individual candidates. Given that these were 'selection' interviews as defined by Bolton (1983), it was hoped that the provision of anchor questions would ensure that all candidates would receive broadly equivalent interviews.

Having regard for the well known rating problems of errors of leniency, errors of central tendency and the halo effect (Guilford, 1954), it was decided to construct a numerical/graphic scale to provide a measure of each behavioural category identified. Given the likely multidimensionality of the set of traits to be rated, numerical summation was *not* to be used to determine a final rating. Validation of the interview schedule was not possible prior to the beginning of the 1985 selection round, so the development of the interview to this point was regarded as part of a continuing research investigation. Results of interviews for those selected for the 1986 Course are to be followed up during 1986.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants

The test performance of Successful and Unsuccessful applicants for 1982-1984 is summarized in Table 4.1.

The groups of Successful applicants have performed better than their corresponding Unsuccessful counterparts. The former obtain significantly higher mean scores than the latter, on the *ACER B40*, and the *ABBA* tests. This pattern is consistent from 1982 to 1984.

TABLE 4.1 *Comparison of Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants on the Selection Tests (1982-1984)*

Year	Test	Successful Applicants Mean	S.D	Min	Max	Unsuccessful Applicants Mean	S.D	Min	Max	t
1982	ACER B40	127.7	4.0	117	137	116.2	7.5	100	127	9.75*
	ABBA	7.0	1.0	4	9	6.6	1.1	3	8	1.90
	Comp	12.7	2.9	6	19	7.5	3.3	1	13	8.52**
	Interview	21.4	2.9	15	25	20.0	4.5	10	25	1.89
1983	ACER B40	128.5	5.3	116	141	118.9	9.3	93	133	8.24**
	ABBA	5.8	1.1	3	8	5.2	1.2	2	8	2.61*
	Comp	7.1	1.3	4	9	5.7	1.5	1	8	5.00**
1984	ACER B40	124.1	7.6	100	136	120.4	6.6	97	132	2.59*
	ABBA	6.6	0.8	5	8	5.9	1.0	2	8	3.89**
	Comp	7.1	2.2	2	11	5.1	2.0	1	9	4.76**

* Statistically significant at $p < .05$

** Statistically significant at $p < .01$

Further, the groups of Successful applicants tend to be more *uniform* (i.e., homogeneous) in terms of ability as represented by the substantially smaller standard deviations. This is especially so on the *ACER B40* for 1982 and 1983. The operation of 'positive discrimination' in 1984 resulted in a somewhat more heterogeneous group of successful students.

To examine further the relative performance of the Successful and Unsuccessful groups on the selection tests, the distribution of scores on each measure was examined. The overlap between the minimum scores of the Successful applicants and the maximum scores of Unsuccessful applicants is reported in Table 4.2.

Despite the statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups on most measures, a substantial proportion of applicants come within this area of overlap. Between 55% (1982) and 98% (1984) of our samples of rejected applicants have scored *at or above the minimum* for the accepted applicants. Again the most pronounced overlap occurred in 1984 when a policy of 'positive discrimination' was adopted, which meant that a small number of second language applicants who didn't meet all test criteria were included in the course. The overlap was almost complete for the *ABBA* and *Comprehension* tests with approximately

95% of the rejected group gaining scores *at or above the minimum* of the accepted group.

TABLE 4.2 *Number and Percentage of Unsuccessful Applicants Who Scored At or Above Successful Applicants on Three Selection Tests*

Selection Test	1982 N(%)	1983 N(%)	1984 N(%)
ACER B40			
at or above maximum of successful group	-	-	-
at or above mean of successful group	-	5(10%)	16(33%)
at or above minimum of successful group	29(55%)	34(71%)	47(98%)
ABBA			
at or above maximum of successful group	-	1(2%)	1(2%)
at or above mean of successful group	30(58%)	19(40%)	11(23%)
at or above minimum of successful group	50(96%)	47(98%)	45(94%)
COMPREHENSION			
at or above maximum of successful group	-	-	-
at or above mean of successful group	3(6%)	30(63%)	12(25%)
at or above minimum of successful group	40(75%)	45(94%)	47(98%)

4.2 Selection Tests, Course Marks and Tutor Ratings

(i) The Selection Tests

Table 4.3 summarizes the correlation coefficients between the selection tests for the total sample of applicants (above the diagonal) and for the group of successful applicants (below the diagonal).

Because of the more homogeneous nature of the latter group, the correlations below the diagonal are lower overall than for the sample as a whole. However, for both groups, the relationship between the *ACER B40* and the *Comprehension* test is consistently the strongest and statistically significant. This indicates that there is more in common between these two tests than between any other pair of tests in the selection battery.

TABLE 4.3 *Correlations Between the Selection Tests*

Test	1982 1	1982 2	1982 3	1982 4	1983 1	1983 2	1983 3	1984 1	1984 2	1984 3
1. ACER B40		.31*	.79*	.18		.39*	.55*		.19	.55*
2. ABBA	.13		.30*	.00	-.01		.27*	.20		.23*
3. Comp	.39	.18		.14	.27	.08		.53*	.27	
4. Interview	-.08	.05	.05							

(total sample above the diagonal; the selected group below the diagonal)

* Statistically significant at $p < .05$

An important requirement for test instruments is reliability, that is, the test must produce consistent results from one occasion to another. The *ACER B40* has a reported reliability coefficient of .85 (KR-20). Estimates of the reliability of the other two tests was also obtained by applying the KR-20 formula to test statistics. The *Comprehension* test had a modest degree of reliability (approximately 0.5), while no statistical measure of the reliability of the *ABBA* test was possible. It appeared to have nil reliability - a serious defect.

(ii) Course Marks

In order to examine the relationships between the selection tests and course marks, a series of correlational analyses was carried out. The correlations between the selection tests, course marks and ratings are reported in Table 4.4. As outlined previously, it should be noted that the course marks differ from year to year.

The relationship between the selection tests and course marks for 1982 and 1983 vary from moderate to weak (.55 - .07). This may be a result of the nature of the course marks and the procedure for determining them. However, since the practice of awarding grades in individual subjects no longer operated in 1984, there is more value in examining the figures for this year. The course marks and instructors' ratings all correlated at a statistically significant level with the selection tests for 1984. The *ACER B40* showed the strongest correlations with course marks and ratings (.56), while the *Comprehension* and *ABBA* were slightly lower with .47 and .53 respectively. The correlations between *ABBA* and tutor ratings are worthy of mention too. These are either highest or equal

TABLE 4.4 *Correlations Between Selection Tests and Course Grades*

Selection Test	Course[2] 1982	Course[2] 1983	Rating 1983	Course[3] 1984	Rating 1984
ACER B40	.55*	.26	.41*	.56*	.47*
ABBA	.28*	.21	.41*	.53*	.53*
Comprehension	.27	.07	.23	.47*	.47*
Interview	.05				

Correlations corrected for coarse grouping and restriction of range

[2] Course mark = average standardized mark over individual subjects

[3] Course mark = credit/pass/fail mark awarded as overall grade

Rating = composite value of ten-point scale from three tutors

* Statistically significant at $p < .05$ or greater

highest for 1983 and 1984, and have been recorded despite the almost total unreliability of *ABBA*.

It should be noted that correlations can be influenced by a number of factors, such as the coarseness of the grading scale, the reliability of the tests and the distribution of abilities of the members of the group. While the correlations were corrected for coarseness of the scale, the true relationship between selection tests and course marks may still be *underestimated* because of the relative unreliability of the test measures and the homogeneous nature of the groups.

(iii) Raters and Ratings

Some interesting findings of secondary interest in this study, relate to the level of agreement that exists between the three course instructors. Whilst each instructor teaches independently, all three must collectively provide an end-of-course assessment incorporating the assessments made of students over many topic areas. All instructors teach aspects of each topic and frequently teach the same material to different subgroups of students. Hence, it is relatively important that there be a high level of agreement.

It can be seen from Table 4.5 that the three instuctors provided ratings which were of similar level (mean) and spread (standard deviation) and, in addition, were very much in agreement (median correlation of .80 between individual raters). The pooled ratings show a median value of .95,

indicating a high level of relationship between each rater and his/her two colleagues.

TABLE 4.5 *Correlations Between Ratings of Three Tutors (1983-1984)*

Year	Rater	Mean	S.D	Correlation with Rater 2	Correlation with Rater 3	Pooled Ratings
1983	Rater 1	2.9	.80	.85	.73	.94
	Rater 2	2.9	.81		.81	.98
	Rater 3	2.8	.91			.96
1984	Rater 1	2.6	1.00	.69	.80	.93
	Rater 2	2.5	1.20		.82	.97
	Rater 3	2.8	.81			.95

Correlations corrected for coarse grouping

TABLE 4.6 *Correlations Between Tutors' Ratings and Course Marks (1983-1984)*

	1983	1984
Rater 1	.79	.97
Rater 2	.80	.76
Rater 3	.87	.91
Pooled Rating	.94	.99

Correlation corrected for coarse grouping

Table 4.6 contains data on the relationship between tutors' ratings and course marks for two years.

As might be anticipated, the relationship between instructors' ratings and the final course marks awarded were also extremely high, with median values between individuals of 0.91 for 1984 and 0.80 for 1983. The latter is slightly lower, probably due to the one year longer period between the two assessments. The pooled rating for all three tutors is even higher where the ratings almost parallel their course marks, indicating that the marks and the ratings share a common basis.

4.3 *Interview Data*

The only objective data available regarding the validity of the interview were presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.3. These indicated that for 1982 there was no measurable difference between scores awarded for the interview for successful and unsuccessful applicants and that the relationship between the interview and the three other selection measures was practically nil. It is highly likely that these data reflect the lack of reliability of the interview at that time. The interview was subsequently restructured as described in an earlier section.

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 *Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants*

It is clear from the analysis of test results for 1982-1984, that the selection measures in use differentiate effectively between the Successful and Unsuccessful groups of candidates. With the exception of one test in one year, all measures showed statistically significant differences, when means for the two groups were compared. This is not surprising when it is reiterated that in the first instance at least, selection is based on the results of the tests. This does emphasize that the objective test data were applied consistently enough to result in two distinct groups with measurably different characteristics. In no case has the mean for the Unsuccessful group exceeded the mean of the Successful group. In other words at the broadest level, the selection process has been consistent.

In all but two cases, the standard deviation for the selected group is less than the standard deviation for the unselected group, illustrating that students accepted for the course were more homogeneous, with respect to the skills measured, than those who were not. With the exception of 1984, when a 'positive discrimination' policy for some second language applicants was followed, there tends to be a greater difference between the minimum *ACER B40* scores for each group, than the maximum scores, indicating that the greater variability is largely due to the presence of candidates in the Unsuccessful group, who scored about two standard deviations below the mean of that group. This suggests there are applicants who either do not appreciate the highly selective or competitive nature of the course, or do not have a realistic appreciation of their own abilities or background.

Despite the substantial differences between the mean performances of

the Successful and Unsuccessful groups, of more importance from a selection point of view, is the overlap between the *minimum* scores of those selected and the *maximum* scores of those rejected. Clearly there are a number of applicants who fall into this category, despite the significant differences between the mean scores of these two groups. Between 55% (1982) and 98% (1984) of our samples of rejected candidates have equalled or surpassed the *lowest* score from the group of the accepted candidates. The proportions vary over tests and years, but they are most often a function of the lowest score on any single test by an accepted candidate. Additionally, between 6% and 63% of rejected candidates scored beyond the *means* of the accepted students for any one test.

At first glance the proportion of rejected candidates placed above either the minimum or mean score for accepted candidates on any one test, seems large. A major confounding factor is that in any one year up to about ten candidates who are offered places reject the offer in favour of some alternative. On administrative grounds, these candidates are finally assigned to the rejected group, although in terms of entry tests, they have met the criteria for acceptance. This group will have inflated the test data we have collected on the Unsuccessful group, and thereby depress the already substantial differences we have recorded.

When a multi-stage selection procedure is being used, a number of rejected individuals may exceed the minimum score of the selected group for that variable, but the problem arises when they fall below the minimum value for some other variable. For example, we can identify quite clearly candidates who scored *above the minimum ACER B40* score for the Successful group, but who also scored *below the minimum* of this group for *Comprehension*. Rejection was on the basis of this *Comprehension* score, despite the *ACER B40* result. Also, we were able to identify other candidates who scored more than a standard deviation *above the minimum Comprehension* score for the accepted group. Their rejection was on the basis of the *ACER B40* score.

The total number of 'false negatives' may appear to be accentuated when multiple measures are used in selection, each having a different cut-off point. One alternative is to accept all candidates who satisfy any *single* criterion. Another is to accept only those candidates who *surpass* all the individual selection criteria. A third approach is to adopt a summed and weighted score approach, as developed by Angoff (1984). This has an additional merit of allowing superior performance on one measure, to compensate for a more average performance on another.

However, if there are multiple measures, 'false negatives' will occur in some form or other, when a fixed quota of applicants is to be accepted. The aim must be to minimize the number of candidates in this category. The paradox for selection is that by increasing the number and range of quality measurements, the validity and reliability of the overall selection process should be enhanced, but at the same time, the proportion of partial 'false negatives', i.e., candidates above the cut-off for some measures only, will rise also.

5.2 *Selection Measures and Course Marks*

The statistically significant relationships found between selection tests are dominated by the *ACER B40* and the *Comprehension* test, indicating that of the measures being used, these two share most in common. Some significant relationships were found between the *Comprehension* test and *ABBA*, two tests incorporating a substantial writing component. *ABBA* and *ACER B40* shared the least common variance. Interview data, available for 1982 only, was nonsignificant.

As would be expected, the relationships between test measures were more pronounced when they were calculated for the Successful and Unsuccessful groups combined. For the selected group, the relationship between *ACER B40* and *Comprehension* was significant for two of the three years. No other statistically significant relationships were recorded within the selected group. Given that *Comprehension* proved to be of moderate reliability, the significant correlations between *ACER B40* and *Comprehension* are noteworthy, as lack of reliability on the part of either measure imposes a ceiling on the resultant correlation.

The problem of restriction of range is commonly encountered in studies incorporating analysis of data from a selected group. Because the total range of abilities present in the population of applicants is truncated by selection, statistics based on regression cannot demonstrate the full relationship that existed prior to selection. The result of this restriction of range is illustrated by the generally lower levels of correlations between tests for the selected group, as compared with the total group.

With the exception of 1984 results, the values of the correlations have about halved, although *Comprehension* and *ACER B40* continue to show the strongest relationship. The much lesser reduction of correlations for 1984 does not mean that the relationship between *Comprehension* and *ACER B40* was intrinsically stronger that year, but rather that the 1984

policy of 'positive discrimination' resulted in a selected group, with a wider range of measured abilities than was the case for other years.

It has been shown quite clearly that the students making up the Journalism Course have achieved the highest selection marks. Their course marks too, tend to bunch towards the upper end of the marking scale. Despite the skew of selection marks and course grades, there were still a number of significant relationships between selection tests, course marks and ratings. Results for 1984 again show the strongest relationships, more than likely reflecting the greater heterogeniety of that group. *ACER B40* and *ABBA* show the greatest number of significant relationships between course marks and ratings, with *Comprehension* next. The strong showing of the *ABBA* test, despite its complete lack of reliability, suggests the importance of having a measure of writing retained in the selection battery. The slightly less strong showing of the *Comprehension* test, suggests that a combination of the writing thrust of *ABBA* and the cognitive emphasis of the *Comprehension* test, could provide the basis for a valid selection measure.

On the whole, the relationships between selection tests and course marks for 1982 and 1983 are only moderate, despite corrections for restriction of range. It is likely that the nature of the course mark derived for this study, is largely responsible. For 1982 and 1983, the course mark was derived by averaging standardized marks across ten to twelve individual subjects. For 1984, the course mark was an overall grade awarded by JS. The combination of the overall grade, and the greater range of the group's measured abilities, are the most likely reasons for the substantial increase in the relationships for this latter year. Notwithstanding all considerations, the statistical relationships are strong within the context of a selection study, and undoubtedly represent the situation for 1984.

In addition to course marks, global ratings by three tutors also served as criteria for judging the validity of the selection test results. Overall, correlations between the selection tests and tutor ratings are a little higher, and a little more consistent than correlations between these tests and course marks. This leads to the question of which measure is the more valid indication of course outcomes. On logical grounds, more weight should be given to the ratings, as they were undertaken from overt criteria, were arrived at independently by three raters, show high levels of agreement, and are a measure of broad course outcomes. The course marks, on the other hand, were not comparable from year to year, were on

differing scales, were of unknown reliability and were measures of specific aspects of the course, rather than general outcomes.

The relationship demonstrated between *ABBA* and the ratings are worthy of some additional comment. *ABBA* correlated more highly with ratings for 1983 and 1984 than did the other two tests, despite its total lack of measurable reliability. Is the rating of 'likely success' really another measure of writing skill, or is writing skill the dominant quality leading to success in journalism? Would the ratings of 'likely success' hold up against on-the-job assessments? Have we uncovered an enduring measure, that predicts course and job performance, or are these assessments primarily a reflection of the experience and skill of JS? Most of the above probably contribute a little, but these particular results further underline the need for a valid and reliable measure of writing to be included in any selection for this course.

The selection tests have demonstrated satisfactory levels of validity, against the criteria of course ratings. Taking this relationship and the intercorrelations between the tests into account, it is likely that the *ACER B40* could be complemented best by a composite test sampling the skills measured by *ABBA* and *Comprehension*.

5.3 Raters and Ratings

There was a high level of agreement between raters, indicating that they were operating from standard criteria. With respect to ratings and course marks, average levels of agreement were very high. The ratings for 1984 were a little higher than for 1983, but this probably was a function of recency, as both sets were generated for the purpose of this study.

The high level of agreement between course marks and pooled rankings should be a source of considerable satisfaction to JS, as they show a level of validity seldom obtained in educational measurement. The value of pooled ratings is also well illustrated, as the values of these correlations are higher than the individual correlations.

Taking the total package of selection tests, course marks and course ratings, it is apparent that we have a set of valid measurements functioning in a consistent fashion. The validity of the selection tests has been demonstrated and the adequacy of the criteria against which they have been judged has, we believe, been established. Our data suggest that it is feasible to reduce the number of selection tests and, at the same time, bring about some improvement in validity and reliability.

5.4 *Criterion Cut-Off Scores*

A number of factors need to be considered before recommending criterion cut-off scores on the *ACER B40* and *Comprehension*.

First, it is assumed that the overall calibre of applicants is relatively constant from year to year, with a mean and standard deviation on the *ACER B40* of about 122 and 8 respectively, and on the *Comprehension* test of about 60% and 20% respectively.

Second, the maximum number of applicants that JS may reasonably expect to be able to interview is up to approximately 130. Allowances also need to be made for the operation of 'positive discrimination', in which members of ethnic minorities who do not meet the selection test criteria are accepted. About five or six such places are reserved, as long as JS consider each applicant can successfully complete the course. Another category of applicants which needs to be taken into consideration includes those who meet the selection test criteria, have a successful interview and are offered a position in the course, but subsequently withdraw. Approximately ten applicants each year fall into this category.

Of the selection tests, the *ACER B40* has been shown to have clearly greater predictive validity than the *Comprehension* or *ABBA* tests. However, the inclusion of an alternative test which incorporates components of the latter two, is very important for reasons of face validity, even though its addition is likely to improve the prediction of success in the course only moderately.

The primary purpose of the selection tests under investigation, is to reduce by valid means, the number of applicants (from an initial pool of 250 to 400) to approximately 130, who are then interviewed. On the basis of the interview, 55-60 applicants are offered a place on the course, and 10-15 will go onto a provisional list to replace those who withdraw. Those eligible for preferential entry are considered separately.

Cut-off procedures on the selection test to identify the top 130-140 applicants will vary with the size of the original applicant pool. For instance, when the number of applicants is 400, more stringent cut-offs will be necessary than when the number of applicants is 300. Table 6.1 shows the percentages to be accepted and the corresponding *ACER B40* cut-off which would identify the top 120 for interviewing, for applicant pools from 200 to 450. In addition to these applicants, those who score at or beyond 75% on the proposed *Journalism** test, would provide a total

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* This figure needs to be verified as the *Journalism* test is a proposed new measure combining the *Comprehension* and *ABBA* tests employed in the previous three years.

of approximately 130 for interviewing.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 What Tests Should be Used in Selecting Journalism Students?

A number of factors must be considered in making judgements about the most appropriate testing strategy to use in selecting for the journalism course. Face validity of the procedure is an important consideration, as the process must be seen to be appropriate to journalism. While the *ACER B40* is clearly the best single indicator of success on the journalism course, use of this alone to select applicants may well be viewed as inappropriate, because it assesses predominantly academic abilities, and ignores others considered 'journalistic'.

By including in the selection procedure a journalistic-type exercise such as the *ABBA*, or some other measure of reporting, it is likely that both face validity and predictive validity will be improved. The analyses presented earlier indicate that the *ABBA* or similar writing task, would add more to the prediction of success on the course, than would *Comprehension*. However, as stated earlier, the reliability of *ABBA* was nil, while that of *Comprehension* was moderate. Hence, the *ABBA* test in its *present form* could not be considered to provide any usable information to aid selection. As described earlier, the *ABBA* test involves the reporting of an interview and consequently may represent a somewhat different task in terms of difficulty for each student. That is, some interviewees may be more forthcoming and therefore easier to interview than others, hence the write-up may be easier too. This would seem to create inconsistencies in the requirements of the exercise and hence adversely affect the reliability of the test scores, as well as influencing the ultimate validity.

With some modification, however, a *Journalism* test could incorporate elements of *Comprehension* and *ABBA*. A revised test would need to represent the same task for all applicants, be administered in a standardized manner and be scored objectively. Such a test might involve listening to an address/report, during which note taking is permitted. The test could assess the comprehension of the address, and require applicants to 'write up' the address, as though it was a report for publication. The report could be assessed for both content and style on scales that would provide useful information for selection purposes. (See Appendix III)

Deciding on the nature of tests to be included in the selection process is one matter, but of an equally pressing concern, is the development of valid criterion cut-off scores.

Some broad issues relating to these scores were discussed earlier, but before firm conclusions can be drawn, the following constraints and assumptions must be specified:

- the number of applicants JS are available to interview will be approximately 130. The final selection of 60-65 students, including reserves, will be made from this pool.
- the overall calibre of applicants is constant from year to year, i.e., *ACER B40* $\bar{x}$ = 122, s.d = 8; *Comprehension* (or its new equivalent) $\bar{x}$ = 60%, s.d = 20%.
- allowances are to be made for 'positive discrimination', by which members of ethnic minorities who JS consider will succeed, are found places on the course.
- all information from or about applicants, should contribute to the selection process.

The actual value of cut-off scores on the *ACER B40* must finally be a function of the size of the applicant pool. For example, from Table 6.1, for an applicant pool of 300 (i.e., those who had completed the initial assignment and taken the selection tests), a cut-off score of 124 would apply. An additional 5-10% may be included by adding applicants gaining a score of 75% or better on *Comprehension* or its new equivalent. Thus making the number available for interviewing approximately 130.

TABLE 6.1 *Number of Applicants Related to ACER B40 Cut-Off Scores*

Number of Applicants Taking *ACER B40*	Percentages Accepted	Cut-Off on *ACER B40*
up to 200	60	120
201-225	60-53	121
226-250	53-48	122
251-275	48-44	123
276-300	44-40	124
301-350	40-34	125
351-400	34-30	126
401-450	30-26	127

We acknowledge that, at this stage, we are being somewhat tentative about the role of *Comprehension* in selection, as we intend to recommend that it be modified to include elements of *ABBA* and be renamed *Journalism*. Our reasonable assumption is that the validity coefficient for this new measure will not be less than those obtained for *Comprehension*.

6.2 What is the Role of the Interview?

Given that we have virtually no data on previous interviews, we have been obliged to start from square one. The modified interview format and anchor questions developed as part of this study, appear to have adequate consistency in the hands of trained interviewers. Given the pooled expertise and experience of JS, it is likely that the interview will prove to be a valid indicator of course success, assuming that the factors measured by the interview are relevant to the course. This must remain to be put to the test.

The initial justification will be that JS are convinced of the predictive worth of the interview. There is support for this view in the overseas studies cited earlier. Validation and refinement of the interview can be demonstrated in objective terms. If this validity ultimately falls below acceptable levels, decisions about the fate of the interview must then be made. It is the intention of the project team to follow up the interview in 1986, but we should make our final position clear. Unless the reliability and validity of the interview can be demonstrated, it has no place in the selection of young people for career training. Given these circumstances, drawing names from a hat would be equally effective.

6.3 The Use of Information from the Application Form

No data on the use of information in the application form was obtained, hence the coverage of this objective of the study has been minimal. However, use of information obtained from the application form and design of the form was discussed. JS did indicate that a considerable amount of time was spent assessing the information presented. The conclusion reached was that developments in the application form over a number of years had resulted in a document that obtained much information that could not be used effectively in selection, because *it had not been established whether much of this information was a valid indicator of course success*. Hence the application form was redesigned with the aim of making *all* information relevant to selection for the course.

Although this guiding principle was accepted, the point was made by JS that seemingly irrelevant questions on an application form could provide information to be explored further during an interview. The redesigned application form is included in Appendix IV.

6.4 The Selection Assignment

The selection assignment was a relatively new procedure, first being introduced in 1984 for reasons that could not be clearly substantiated. Our view was that it could contribute to the selection decision *if* it was assessed in a reliable fashion. There was also the possibility that the selection assignment could provide a measure of writing and thus substitute for one of the formal selection measures.

Administrative problems have beset the selection assignment. In 1985 for example, one group of applicants were not required to complete this. JS have acknowledged that the nature of the assignment may make it more difficult for some applicants than for others. This is because the assignment involves the applicant in making contact with the writer or person featuring in a published article, and interviewing one or the other. Applicants who know someone in the media may find it easier to make the initial contact, as may those living in urban areas, because of the more ready access they have to media personnel. If it is agreed that these two factors are significant, they could be nullified by changing the nature of the assignment.

If the assignment is to be a requirement of the application process, it should have a high degree of 'face validity', be required of all applicants, and, in logistic terms at least, be of about similar complexity for all. Additionally, it should have a potential for contributing to the selection process. If information coming from the assignment is then to be included in selection decisions, it must be assessed in a reliable fashion and its validity should be tested empirically. However, if the assignment is not used to provide objective information relevant to selection, in our view, it should be discontinued.

6.5 Recommendations

As a result of the study described in this Report, the following recommendations regarding the selection for the Wellington Polytechnic Journalism Course are made.

(1) Tests should not be administered nor interviews conducted until after the closing date for all applications. This date should be widely

promulgated and constant from year to year.

(2) After this date, the following multi-stage selection process should begin.

(i) Initial screening be undertaken on the basis of the application, provided that JS can identify criteria that may be empirically validated. Information from this study suggests that factors such as age, educational qualifications, evidence of published writing, prior involvement with journalism, could be considered. Criteria used at this point must be overt, objective and available if requested. In the event that it is not possible to develop appropriate criteria, all candidates completing an application should proceed to the testing stage.

(ii) *ACER B40* to be continued with. Candidates below a prescribed cut-off, as indicated in Table 6.1, to be rejected at that point.

(iii) *Comprehension* test to be reformulated as a *Journalism* test. Candidates below a prescribed cut-off, as indicated on page 27, to be rejected. (See Recommendation 4)

NOTE: Candidates who have not been rejected at this stage should be regarded as exhibiting the requisite verbal/educational attributes to complete the course.

(iv) Only candidates *not* rejected at this point to be interviewed. All interviews to be conducted and assessed using modified format, scale and anchor questions.

(v) Decisions on selection to be made on the basis of interviews. In the event that candidates cannot be adequately discriminated at this point, final weight should be given to *ACER B40* results.

(The above sequence is illustrated schematically on the following page)

(3) Test *ABBA* to be discontinued in its present form.

(4) The proposed *Journalism* test, combining elements of *ABBA* and *Comprehension* be developed. This test to be marked for recall/understanding of content and quality of writing.

(5) The selection assignment, as presently constituted, be discontinued. If there is a need to gather additional biographical data as a background to the interview, this could be included in the application form.

(6) If the procedure of 'positive discrimination' is to be continued with, the selection tests and interview be used to place these candidates in an order of merit. Entrance to the Course should not then be automatic for these candidates, but on the basis that JS consider that

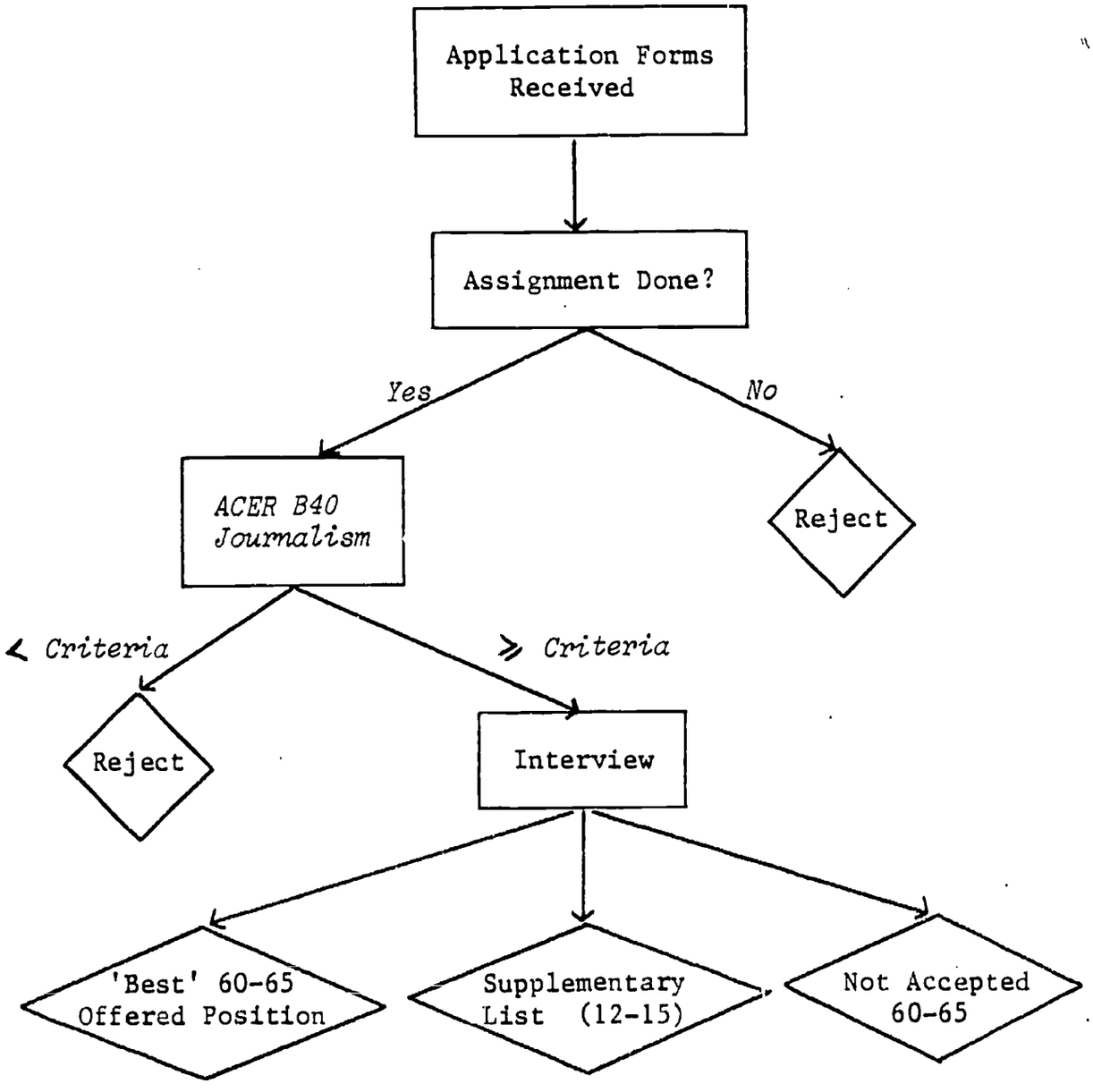
each individual will successfully complete the course.

(7) If it is necessary to grade students' course performance for awarding merit passes, this be done on the basis of the combined ratings of all tutors.

(8) The heavy additional burden that selection procedures place on JS should be brought to the attention of the Principal, Wellington Polytechnic. As selection is now an established aspect of the course, an appropriate time allowance for these duties could be considered for JS.

(9) Validation of the revised interview schedule and the *Journalism* test (if adopted) be undertaken during 1986.

Proposed Selection of Journalism Students: Procedure



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APPENDIX I: STUDENTS COMPLETING JOURNALISM COURSES, NUMBERS TWENTY YEARS AND OVER, AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

	1982	1983	1984
STUDENTS COMPLETING COURSE			
Male	20	19	17
Female	30	27	34
Total	50	46	51
NUMBER TWENTY YEARS AND OVER AT END OF COURSE	31	30	42
HIGHEST TERTIARY QUALIFICATION AT ENTRY			
Full Degree	10	14	18
Part Degree	11	11	7
Other	3	3	4
Nil	16	18	22
HIGHEST SECONDARY QUALIFICATION AT ENTRY			
HSC or Bursary	31	34	33
University Entrance	16	10	12
Sixth Form Certificate	2	1	1
Other	1	1	5

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Polytechnic Journalism Course

Interview Summary

Applicant ..... Date .....

Interviewer .....

Writing and Publication Experience

Extremely Experienced	Very Experienced	Experienced	Reasonably Experienced	Not Experienced
1	2	3	4	5

Knowledge of Journalism

Extremely Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Reasonably Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable
1	2	3	4	5

Awareness of Media Issues

Extremely Aware	Very Aware	Aware	Reasonably Aware	Not Aware
1	2	3	4	5

Awareness of Issues of Social Justice in New Zealand Society

Extremely Aware	Very Aware	Aware	Reasonably Aware	Not Aware
1	2	3	4	5

Intellectual Curiosity / Investigative Skills

Extremely Curious	Very Curious	Curious	Reasonably Curious	Not Curious
1	2	3	4	5

Overall Suitability for Course

Extremely Suitable	Very Suitable	Suitable	Reasonably Suitable	Not Suitable
1	2	3	4	5

NOTE: Accompanying 'anchor' questions have not been included in Appendix, but readers engaged in selection should approach the Senior Tutor in Journalism, Wellington Polytechnic, if they wish to discuss the relationship of the questions to the interview schedule.

APPENDIX III: SCALE FOR RATING QUALITY OF WRITING

1 = No subbing needed. Could be published as is.

2 = Minor subbing needed before suitable for publication.

3 = Moderate subbing needed before suitable for publication.

4 = Major subbing needed before suitable for publication.

5 = Needs total rewrite. Cannot be salvaged by subbing.

No Subbing Needed	Minor Subbing Needed	Moderate Subbing Needed	Major Subbing Needed	Needs Rewrite Not Subbing
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX IV: APPLICATION FORM

Polytechnic Journalism Course

1987 Application Form

Please read the questions carefully before completing.

Family Name .....

First Names .....

Name known by ..... Date of Birth ..... Age .....

Contact Address .....

.....

..... Telephone .....

Next of Kin: Name ..... Telephone .....

APPLICATION FOR COURSE

Have you applied for this course before? Yes/No

If YES, please give year(s) .....

Have you applied, or do you intend to apply, for admission to another journalism course in 1987? Yes/No

If YES, specify which course(s) .....

Specify any non-journalism course(s) you have applied for in 1987.

.....

PHOTOGRAPH

Please attach a recent photograph of yourself (passport type)

With which race do you identify? .....

ACADEMIC RECORD

Copies of all qualifications attempted, e.g., school certificate, must accompany this application, or be forwarded as soon as they are received.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

School(s) Attended	Years
.....	.....
.....	

Achievement Summary:

Subjects studied or being studied	Form 5	Form 6	Form 7	SC Mark	Sixth Form Certificate Grade	UE Mark	Bursary/ Scholarship
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

Examinations attempted in 1986 .....

.....

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Please list any course(s) attempted since leaving school, e.g., university, nursing, secretarial.

Institution	Subject or Course (please list subjects, if degree)	Year	Grades
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

WORK RECORD

Please indicate all fulltime and regular part-time employment.

Position	Employer	Date From To	Reason Left
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

Have you previously worked in a branch of the media? Yes/No

If YES, was it: [ ] fulltime or [ ] part-time?

Name of Employer .....

Were you an: [ ] employee, [ ] freelancer, [ ] school student

[ ] other ..... please specify

Have you had any work broadcast or published? Yes/No

If YES, please list below the stories you have had broadcast or published, and attach transcipts or copies.

Story	Publication	Date
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....

JOURNALISM AS A CAREER

When did you decide you wished to become a journalist?

.....

.....

Who and what influenced you to make this decision?

.....

.....

.....

What do you think you have to offer journalism?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

List you community activies and interests.

....

....

Which of the above activities do you intend to continue in 1986?

....

....

PROGRAMME AT WELLINGTON POLYTECHNIC

How did you hear about the course at Wellington Polytechnic?

.....

Did you know any students before you applied? Yes/No

Do you wish to work in a particular branch of the media after graduation? Yes/No

If YES, state which one .....

Why have you chosen this area? .....

.....

GENERAL

List the characteristics which you feel best describe yourself.

....

....

....

....

....

List your favourite writers. .....

....

....

....

What type of publication do you most enjoy reading?

.....

What TV programmes do you watch regularly?

....

....

What daily newspapers do you read regularly?

....

What weeklies do you read regularly? .....

....

What do you listen to on the radio? .....

....

What current issues have you been following in the media?

....

....

....

What are the things you like or dislike about the media?

....

....

Most reporting jobs require a driver's licence.
Do you have one? Yes/No

Do you have any medical condition which may impair your performance as a student or a journalist? Yes/No

SELECTION ASSIGNMENT

1. Select a story from your local newspaper. Interview either the reporter responsible or a person named in the story. Write a story based on your interview (maximum 500 words). Use A4 paper. Type or write on one side only. Write the time, date and duration of the interview at the top of your story.

2. Staple a copy of the original story to your story.

SELECTION

You will be required to attend selection tests and possibly an interview during the second half of the year. These are held in some centres outside Wellington. A small fee is charged for tutor travel and accommodation.

Wellington tests and interviews are arranged days and weeks apart, so you will have to make two trips to Wellington Polytechnic. If you choose a venue outside Wellington, you should be prepared to stay overnight - tests will be run one day and interviews the next.

Please circle the venue you prefer:

Wellington (July)	Auckland (November)
Wellington (August)	Hamilton (November)
Wellington (September)	Christchurch (November)
Wellington (October)	Dunedin (November)
Wellington (November)	Palmerston North (November)

Other ..... (no guarantees, so please specify an alternate)

Alternate .....