



CBE, PO box 80125, 3508 TC Utrecht

Examination Appeals Board

ex article 7.60 of the Higher Education Act

Visiting address

Heidelberglaan 8, Utrecht

DECISION

Our reference	CBE/K21 05 028
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Website	www.uu.nl
Date	26 July 2021
subject	Appeal [appellant]

The Examination Appeals Board at Utrecht University (hereinafter referred to as: the Board) has made the following decision on the appeal by:

[appellant], appellant,

versus

[the Admissions Committee of] the Graduate School of Economics, defendant.

I. Origin and course of the proceedings

The appellant lodged an appeal on 21 May 2021 against the defendant's decision of 4 May 2021 not to admit the appellant to the Master's programme Multidisciplinary Economics. The appeal was sent to the defendant. On 7 June 2021 the Board received a statement of defence from the defendant. On 22 June 2021 the Board received requested additional information.

On 24 June 2021 a hearing was held. Due to covid-19 measures, this hearing was held online via MS-Teams. [Appellant] attended. The admissions committee was represented by [].

II. Grounds

The Admission Committee stated in her decision that the appellant was not admitted to the Master's programme Multidisciplinary Economics because her GRE score was below the minimum score (80% on the quantitative section) required.

The positions of both parties



The appellant stated the following in her appeal and during the hearing.

She explained that she understands the decision taken as the admissions officer explained to her that the course is intensive, and her quantitative reasoning needs to be strong to keep up with the program. She asked for the opportunity to resubmit GRE scores with a better quantitative score component. She also requested to receive a conditional offer instead of a rejection, with terms to do required premasters courses in order to be eligible for this course for the Academic year 2021-2022. Utrecht University is her first preference and she believes this is the course that would shape her career, is in line with her previous education and the right time now, after focusing on family due to Corona to pursue her ambition.

The defendant stated the following.

The research master Multidisciplinary Economics is a selective and demanding programme. In order to be admitted you must demonstrate academic excellence, knowledge and competence in Economics, and solid quantitative skills. These skills can be shown by having passed at least 30 EC in quantitative courses and a GRE test. Due to the large quantitative component of the programme, the applicants performance in the quantitative field is particularly relevant. In the assessment the GRE test showed a score of 150 (36%) in Quantitative reasoning. As mentioned in the entry requirements, successful applicants usually score 80% or higher in the quantitative reasoning part. The Admissions Committee therefore believes that the appellant's quantitative skills are not solid enough to successfully finish this Master's programme in time. A conditional letter of acceptance is not possible. For the residence permit, the IND demands a letter of acceptance with only the condition that hardcopies are sent to the university. This means that the GRE requirement must be met before providing a conditional letter of acceptance. As the deadline for the residence permit and financial matters is already about to pass on June 15, a new GRE test result would not be in time to meet the requirements for the visa procedure and financial matters for a start in September 2021.

Based on the documents submitted in these proceedings and what was said during the hearing, the Board considers the following.

The programme specific part of the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance 2020/2021 states the following:

"Multidisciplinary Economics

Art 2.1 E - Admission requirements to the degree programme

1. Admission to the programme requires a Dutch or foreign academic (Bachelor's) Degree (or comparable) in a relevant field and including solid quantitative skills with an average grade of at least 7.8 on a ten-point scale;
2. Students will be selected on the basis of objective standards concerning:
 - previous academic performance in a relevant subject area or areas
 - relevant skills
 - command of the language(s) used in the programme.
 - an interview with the programme coordinator may be part of the selection*This information is used to consider whether the student concerned is in a position of being able to complete successfully the Master's Programme within the nominal time period.*
3. The admission requirements have been formulated clearly and transparently so that candidates are aware beforehand of the requirements they must meet to be admitted to the programme."



On the UU website the following was stated about the entry requirements:

"The Admissions Committee selects students based on their competences, interests and academic excellence. In order to be admitted to this programme you must demonstrate:

- **Knowledge and competence in Economics** as shown for instance by an academic Bachelor's degree with at least 30 EC (1 EC = 28 hours) in Economics or related fields. Applicants with academic degrees in a quantitative field are encouraged to apply;
- **Academic excellence** as shown for instance by proof that you belong to the top 10% of your cohort or a minimum average grade of 7,8 in a ten point scale (equivalent to a GPA of 3.4). Students with an average between 7 and 7,8 will also be considered for admission if they compensate this lower average with other capacities. The Admissions Committee will decide if the compensation suffices;
- **Solid quantitative skills** as shown for instance by a minimum of at least 30 EC (1 EC = 28 hours) in statistics / mathematics. Grades for these courses are particular relevant. Successful applicants usually score at least 7,5 in quantitative courses. Applicants can also demonstrate their quantitative skills by submitting a [GRE General tests \(Princeton Graduate Record Exam\)](#). Successful applications usually score within the top 20% of all test takers in the quantitative part. The GRE institution code for Utrecht University is 7946.

As part of your application to the programme, you should submit a clearly written statement that outlines your motivation for wanting to follow this particular Master's programme and your future ambitions. An interview with the programme coordinator may be part of the selection procedure.

If you do not fulfill all requirements listed above but you have strong quantitative skills and academic excellence please contact the programme coordinator [E lena Fumagalli](#)."

The Board's considerations

By virtue of the Higher Education and Research Act and Art. 7 of the Code of Order the Board requested the defendant to investigate whether an amicable settlement can be achieved. At the hearing it became clear that the defendant had taken action to see whether an amicable settlement could be achieved, but there was no consultation with the appellant. She only explained the decision to the appellant by email. Although the Board is of the opinion that merely explaining the decision is not enough to follow the law in this regard, the chair of the Board, has decided at the hearing according to art. 7, that such an attempt now was obviously futile and would disadvantage the appellant because of needless delay.

It should be stated first and foremost that the duties and powers of the Board do not extend to assessing or reassessing an application for a master's programme. The Board assesses whether the assessment of the defendant has been made with due care and has been sufficiently substantiated. Furthermore, the assessment is one of the discretionary powers of the Admissions Committee. This means that, in addition to the assessment given above, it will only be possible to consider if there has been a conflict with any rule of written or unwritten law.

On the grounds of the documents submitted in these proceedings and on the grounds of the defendant's justification of the assessment, the Board takes the view, judging the matter within the limits set out above, that the assessment by the defendant of the application for the master's programme can be upheld. The defendant explained the procedure and the assessment of the appellant's application following the criteria as stated in the EER and the website. It can therefore be concluded that the assessment was made with due care. The arguments put forward by the appellant in her appeal were not sufficient to persuade the Board to take a different view.



This leads to the conclusion that the appeal should be considered unfounded.

The Board decides as follows.

III . Decision

The Board

- I. Finds the appellant's appeal unfounded;
- II. Requires that copies of this decision be sent to the parties, to the Board of Utrecht University, and the management of the faculty Law, Economics and Governance and made available to interested parties.

Thus decided on 24 June 2021 and made know to the parties involved on 26 July 2021 by E.F.D. Engelhard LL.M, chair, Dr. C. Pafort-Overduin, Dr. P.J.C.M. Franssen, Dr. G. de Krom, J. Rooijmans, members, in presence of X.L. Westenburg LLB, secretary.

X.L. Westenburg LLB, secretary

E.F.D. Engelhard LL.M, chair

Any party whose interests are directly affected by this decision may submit an appeal to the Appeals Tribunal for Higher Education, P.O. Box 16137, 2500 BC Den Haag (www.cbho.nl) for a period of six weeks after the day on which this decision was announced. The appeal should be written in Dutch. There is a registry fee involved.