

Questions and Answers about the College R Score

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INTRODUCTION

This document provides answers to the main questions that may arise concerning the college CRC score, also called the R Score.

For a detailed description of the three main components of the R score, the college Z score, the indicator of the strength of the group (ISGZ) and the indicator of the dispersion of the group (IDGZ), please see *The R Score: What It Is and What It Does*. The document describes and provides an example of how the R score is calculated and how it affects candidates' ranking.

General information on the R score can be found in *The R Score: a Survey of Its Purpose and Use*. This document is shorter and information is expressed in non-mathematical terms. It is an abridged version of the first document and is written for a general public not familiar with the concepts inherent in the R score. These two information documents, as well as this document, are available on the Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (BCI) Web site at the following address: <http://www.bci-qc.ca/en/students/r-score/>.

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1. IMPORTANCE OF THE R SCORE IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

QUESTION 1

Is the R score used when selecting applicants to all university programs?

Although the R score is the instrument of choice for analysis of all applications to university programs, it is used mainly in the selection process for admission to programs with limited enrollment. A limited enrollment program is one for which the applications received outnumber the places available. Students who plan to apply to such programs should therefore expect that their academic records will play an important role in the selection process.

QUESTION 2

Is the R score the only selection criterion used for admission to a limited enrollment university program?

No. In some limited enrollment programs, other criteria may replace or supplement the R score in the selection of candidates. For certain programs, candidates may, for example, be required to sit for a particular exam, take an entrance test, attend an interview, submit a portfolio, etc. This kind of information is compiled by the BCI and is available in the "Tableau comparatif des critères de sélection des candidatures évaluées sur la base du DEC aux programmes contingentés de baccalauréat". This information is also available on the university web sites, as well as in their admission guides and university calendars.

QUESTION 3

Does a student need a very high R score (at least 30) in order to be admitted to a limited enrollment university program?

No. Only extremely competitive programs (such as Medicine, Dentistry, Optometry, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Law) generally require a very high R score. The various university Web sites will show the lowest R score for students admitted to each limited enrollment program in the previous year.

QUESTION 4

Can a student who has failed courses in CEGEP ever hope to be admitted to a university program?

Yes. As of Winter 2005 admissions, failed courses have less importance in the calculation of the average R score. In fact, courses failed in the first semester count for only 25% of the

credits allocated to them while courses failed in subsequent semesters count for 50% of the allocated credits. This measure was adopted in order to restore the confidence of students who encounter orientation problems in CEGEP.

2. PROGRAM AVERAGE R SCORE AND ADMISSIONS¹

QUESTION 5

Which average R score is used for university admissions when the student has enrolled in more than one academic program in CEGEP?

The average R score used is the one for the program that has resulted (or will result) in a DCS. When there is no DCS on the student's record, the university uses the average R score for the last DCS program in which the candidate was registered, with the condition that at least 16 courses contribute to its calculation. The R scores for the courses that are considered to be relevant prerequisites for admission to certain university programs are incorporated into the average R score calculation when necessary. If the average R score calculation for the last registered program is not based on at least 16 courses, then the overall average R score, which includes all of a student's CEGEP grades, is used for admissions purposes.

Furthermore, when the student has already completed a DCS before registering in another CEGEP program, the university uses the higher of the average R score for the completed DCS program and the average R score for the last registered program (still with the condition that at least 16 courses contributed to its calculation). When necessary, relevant prerequisites are added to the average R score used for admission purposes.²

QUESTION 6

When a student has switched from one college program to another, are the course grades for the program not completed taken into account in the analysis of the student's record?

The course grades for the program not completed are only considered if they meet the objectives and standards for the program used for admission purposes or if the courses are relevant prerequisites for admission. Note that grades for general education courses contribute to the average R score calculation for all DCS programs and are always taken into account when the student's record is analyzed.

¹ This section concerns only candidates for admission to the Fall 2009 and subsequent semesters. Note that to manage most admissions to their study programs, McGill University does not use the program R score but rather the overall R score, which includes all of the college-level grades obtained by a candidate. If the candidate is enrolled in more than one college program and would like to know which R score will be used for evaluation of his file, he or she must contact the Admissions Office at McGill University.

² To facilitate understanding of these rules, some fictitious examples of potential cases are described in Appendix B of the document entitled *R Score: What It Is and What It Does*.

QUESTION 7

When a student has switched from one college program to another and the CEGEP allows the substitution of a course specific to a DCS program not completed for a complementary general education course, does that course contribute to the calculation of the program average R score for the program in which the DCS was obtained?

It is important to distinguish between the average R score calculation rules and the rules that determine whether a student has met all the conditions required to obtain a DCS. If the “substitute” course (the one that replaces a “substituted course”) fulfills the objectives and standards of the program in which the DCS will be obtained (as defined in the Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur (MEES), Système des objets d’études collégiales, SOBEC), then it will contribute to the average R score. Otherwise, it will not be included. For example, if a student switches from a Science to a Social Sciences program, Science course 203-NYA-05 (Mechanics) could serve as a substitute for a complementary course in the Social Sciences DCS program. However, since this course does not belong to either the general education courses or to the specific Social Sciences program courses, it will not be included in the calculation of the average R score for the Social Sciences program. In other words, only the courses directly linked to a program objective are considered in the R score calculation; courses indirectly linked as substitute courses will not be taken into account.

QUESTION 8

When a student registered at one CEGEP (the home institution) takes a course at another CEGEP (host institution), will the grade for that course count toward the program average R score?

If the host institution links the course to the fulfillment of an objective in the student’s program, then it is included in the average R score, whether or not the home institution posted a course substitution notice in the MEES Socrate system linking the course to its local program. In other words, any course related to a program objective, regardless of the CEGEP at which it was taken, is included in the calculation of the program average R score.

QUESTION 9

Which R score is used for university admission if the student is registered in a combined program (double DCS)?

The general rule is to use the higher R score of the two component programs and add, as necessary, the relevant prerequisite courses for the intended university program. For example, for a student registered in program 200.11 – Science and Music, the university will use the higher of the Science average R score and the Music average R score.

QUESTION 10

Do grades for courses considered to be necessary prerequisites to university admission always have to be added to the average R score calculation?

No. In the large majority of cases, the prerequisites are already incorporated into the student's CEGEP program. This is the case, for example, for a CEGEP graduate with a DCS in Science who wishes to be admitted to a university Health Sciences program.

QUESTION 11

Can the average R score value used to admit a candidate differ according to the program applied for?

Yes. Since university programs do not all require the same prerequisite courses, the average R score value used for analysis of a candidate's record may vary depending on the university program applied for. For the same reason, the average R score value used may vary according to the university to which a candidate applies.

QUESTION 12

Do failed prerequisite courses count in the program average R score?

Yes. However, as explained in question 4, these grades are weighted for calculation of the average R score, depending on the semester.

3. INDICATOR OF THE STRENGTH OF THE GROUP (ISGZ) AND INDICATOR OF THE DISPERSION OF THE GROUP (IDGZ)

QUESTION 13

What are the ISGZ and IDGZ and how are they calculated?

The ISGZ and IDGZ are corrections applied to the college Z score. The ISGZ takes into account the *strength* of the students in a college group and the IDGZ considers the *dispersion* of the students in the same group. The ISGZ is based on the average secondary Z scores and the IDGZ is based on the standard deviation of the secondary Z scores. Both factors use the final grades in Secondary 4 and 5 subjects for which uniform examinations are imposed by the MEES. For each subject, the student's final grade includes the student's result on the ministerial examination and the grade obtained during the school year. The subjects concerned are:

- History, Secondary 4
- Science, Secondary 4
- Mathematics, Secondary 4
- Language of learning, Secondary 5
- Second language , Secondary 5

QUESTION 14

Does a student need to be in a class of strong students to obtain a good R score?

No. The R score considers the relative strength and dispersion of the group each student is in. There is therefore no advantage or disadvantage to being in one group rather than another. Studies of CEGEP students show that the combined effects of the three R score components (the college Z score, the ISGZ and the IDGZ) offset each other. Also, if a student transfers to another college, program or group, the Z score obtained for each course is corrected by the indicator of the strength of the group and the indicator of the dispersion of the group in which the student was graded.

4. INFLUENCE OF THE CEGEP ON R SCORE CALCULATION

QUESTION 15

Does a student need to attend a CEGEP that is considered academically strong in order to get a good R score?

No. Because the R score takes into account group strength and dispersion, all students start off with the same opportunity in all colleges. In fact, it is pointless to choose a CEGEP solely because you believe it will give you a competitive advantage for admission to university. In the past, certain advantages may have existed when only the Z score was used but this is no longer true. Students should consider other factors when selecting a CEGEP such as, for example, course type and diversity, programs and activities, how well they are received, the quality of the teaching, student services, proximity of the CEGEP, etc.

QUESTION 16

Is there a CEGEP ranking that influences the R score calculation?

No. No CEGEP ranking is used when calculating the R score.

5. INFLUENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADES ON R SCORE CALCULATION

QUESTION 17

Can a student who had low grades in secondary school still obtain a strong R score?

Yes. A student's secondary school grades are only used to calculate the group strength indicator (ISGZ), while the group dispersion indicator (IDGZ) uses the Secondary 4 and 5 grades of all the students in the college group. The impact on the R score of an individual student's secondary school grades is therefore fairly limited. For example, if there are 35 students in the college group, the secondary school grades of a single student will only count for about 3% towards calculation of the ISGZ and IDGZ. Students are not adversely affected by their secondary school grades when applying to university.

6. “GROUP AT EVALUATION” AND CALCULATION OF THE R SCORE

QUESTION 18

What is a “group at evaluation”?

A “group at evaluation” should include the students at the same college who have taken the same course in the same year and the same semester and have been evaluated in the same way. For example, if during a Winter semester a professor teaches the same course to three groups of 40 students each and if the method of grading is the same for all, there should be only one evaluation group of 120 students. The group average, standard deviation, strength indicator and dispersion indicator are therefore calculated for this evaluation group. Each CEGEP is responsible for the way it determines its evaluation groups.

QUESTION 19

How can two students who took the same course in the same year and the same semester and received the same grade obtain different R scores when they have been graded according to the same method?

Even though they were subject to a common method of grading, the students in these two classes were not included in the same evaluation group by the CEGEP. The R score of each student was calculated using different statistical inputs (please see question 9).

QUESTION 20

If two students, who are not part of the same group at evaluation, took the same course in the same year and the same semester, but one of them had a higher grade than the other, will his or her R score be higher than that of the other student?

Not necessarily, since the R score calculation is based on different statistical indicators (group average, standard deviation, and indicators of group strength and dispersion).

7. METHOD USED TO CALCULATE THE R SCORE FOR A COURSE

QUESTION 21

How often are the statistics used to determine the R score calculated?

The statistics used to determine the R score are calculated by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES)³ four times a year for the last six terms:

- At the beginning of October, to include summer courses for students applying to university for the following Winter term
- In mid-January, to provide CEGEPS with preliminary information, including grades for Fall courses, for applications for admission to university for the following Fall term
- At the beginning of February, to include the Fall term courses for admission to university for the following Fall term
- In mid-June, to include Winter term courses for finalizing Fall admission to university.

QUESTION 22

Can a student obtain an R score of 99.999 even if he or she received a good grade for the course?

Yes. A value of 99.999 indicates that the R score could not be calculated. This value is not part of the R score. It may apply to:

- Physical education courses taken before Fall 2007, which are automatically excluded
- Remedial or qualifying courses, which are also excluded
- A course where there were fewer than six grades higher than or equal to 50
- A course in which all students received the same grade

³ The R scores for Collège Marie de France and Collège Stanislas, which offer the French academic program instead of the Quebec program, are not calculated by the MEES but by the colleges themselves. Please contact them for information about their method.

QUESTION 23

Why was the R score not calculated when there were more than six students in a class?

To be able to calculate an R score, the group must contain at least six students who attended secondary school in the Quebec system and had grades higher than or equal to 50. If the number is less than six, then no R score will be calculated for any student in this group.

QUESTION 24

Why can a student, whose grade for a course is clearly above the group average on his or her CEGEP transcript, receive an R score that is lower than expected?

The group average calculated by a CEGEP for a course is not the same as the group average used to calculate the R score. The group average used for the R score may be higher because all the grades below 50 in the group are excluded from the R score calculation. This is not the case for the group average on the student's CEGEP transcript.

8. METHOD USED TO CALCULATE THE AVERAGE R SCORE FOR A STUDENT'S RECORD

QUESTION 25

How do you account for the fact that an R score of 23 obtained for a course taken last year now shows as 22?

Each time the R scores are recalculated, the five last terms are also recalculated (see question 20 on this topic). For this reason, some of the information for a group may have changed because of a grade change for another student in the group or some students may have been added to or removed from the group. All these changes can affect subsequent calculation of the R score.

QUESTION 26

How can you account for the fact that an overall average R score has hardly changed, despite the fact that a student received higher grades in his or her final courses?

The average R score considers the credits for every course taken. For example, the addition of an R score for a two-credit course to a student's record that includes more than 40 courses will have little impact on the average.

9. ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE R SCORE

QUESTION 27

Where can students obtain their R score?

According to the Access to Information Policy adopted by the *Comité de gestion des bulletins d'études collégiales* (CGBEC), composed of representatives of the colleges, universities, and the MEES, a student who wants to know his or her R score must contact the college attended or the university to which an official application for admission was submitted. In addition, for any general information about the use of the R score in the admissions process, the student should contact the university to which an application for admission was either made or will be made.

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