

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Which one is not true?

1

Serious concerns about UTP were received over the winter break(after 23 December,2023) and in early Jan, 2024, prompting the 2024/2025 intake to be paused for an external review.

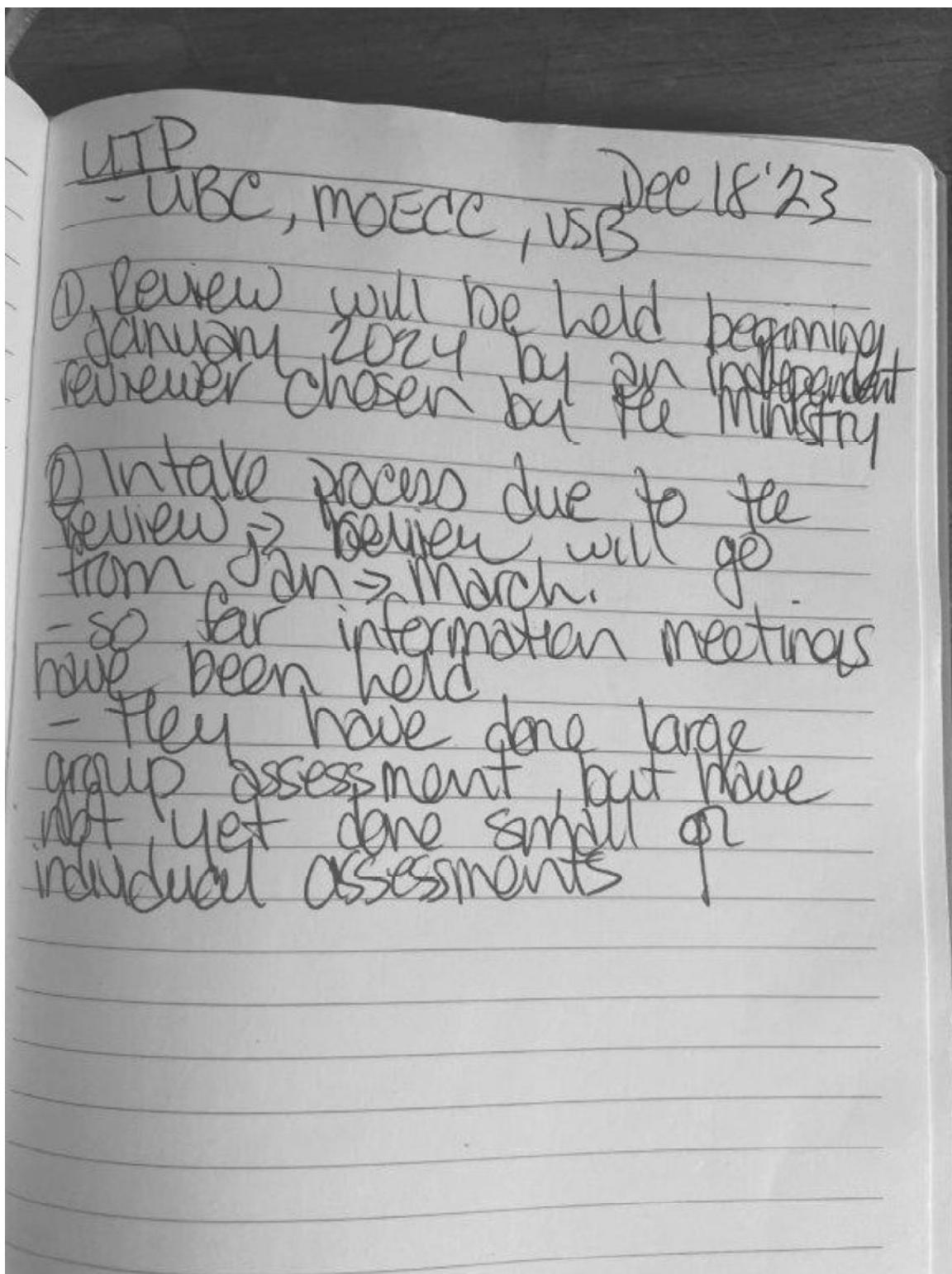
2

VSB knew the external review was going to happen two years ago. On December 18, 2023, a VSB administrator handwrote a note about the upcoming January Ministry interview and the intake process. VSB knows the interview takes 18 weeks.

3

VSB suddenly paused the 2022/2023 intake in Oct 2022 and reopened it in Jan and Mar 2023, under pressure from the UTP community, causing many families to give up the offers due to the delay.

These notes were created by Jody Langlois.





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Education

December 12, 2022

Ms. Jody Langlois
Associate Superintendent Learning Services
Vancouver School Board
1580 W Broadway
Vancouver BC V6J 5K8

The UTP community has been requesting a review for a long time, especially after 2022, when VSB paused the 2023/2024 intake, moved the program coordinator, and changed the intake requirements.

Re: University Transition Program

Dear Ms. Langlois

I am writing to follow up on meetings held earlier this year regarding the University Transition Program. As noted during our discussions, we presently have no Memorandum of Understanding governing our respective obligations to the program.

We understand that the program has not been reviewed since 2002. At this time, we formally request that the University Transition Program be reviewed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jan M. Hare'.

Jan M. Hare, PhD
Dean *pro tem*

CC Dr. Reg D'Silva, Associate Dean, Equity and Strategic Programs, UBC Faculty of Education
Katy Ellsworth, Director, Communications and Administration, UBC Faculty of Education
Rosie Poetschke, Director of Instruction—Learning Services, Vancouver School Board

From: Rosie Poetschke
Sent: Monday, August 21, 2023 2:04 PM
To: Hare, Jan <jan.hare@ubc.ca>; Shorthouse, David <david.shorthouse@ubc.ca>; D'Silva, Reginald <reginald.dsilva@ubc.ca>
Cc: Jody Langlois <jlanglois@vsb.bc.ca>
Subject: Transition Program for Gifted Students (UTP) review--CONFIDENTIAL

Good afternoon Jan, David and Reg,

We hope that this email finds you all well and gearing up for another school year.

I have connected with the Ministry of Education and Childcare regarding the Transition Program for Gifted Students (UTP) upcoming review.

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Would you folks be able to review the attached document and let me know your thoughts before I respond to the Ministry?

Best regards,

Rosie

Rosie Poetschke

Director of Instruction—Learning Services
Vancouver School District
1580 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V6J 5K8
e: rpoetschke@vsb.bc.ca | p: 604-713-5202



www.vsb.bc.ca

Honoured to be working and learning together on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

Program Review Overview

Objective:

Conduct a review of the Transition Program for Gifted Students (sometimes referred to as the University Transition Program for Gifted Students or UTP)

Timeline:

Based on work planning and assumptions, it is anticipated this project will take ~310 hours across 18 weeks.

UTP Community e-sign letter to Trustees

January 16, 2023

This is an e-signature letter ([click here to add your name](#))

Dear VSB Trustees,

We wish to express our concerns and to bring your attention to the **lack of transparency and the misleading information provided by VSB officials** regarding the University Transition Program. The information in this letter is based entirely on publicly available documents, UTP Steering Committee meeting minutes, past members of the UTP Steering Committee, consultations with UBC senators, alumni, and established precedents.

We would like to draw your attention to the following statements communicated by the VSB.

1. When did UTP start to take students from across the province?

VSB: "The application process was broadened [this fall] to include school districts across the province"¹

In fact: In 1995 UTP became a Provincial Resource Program serving school districts throughout BC.² Since then, intake has always been 10 students from the Vancouver School District and 10 students from other school districts throughout BC. Current students come from all over BC, including Vancouver Island, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Delta, Burnaby.

2. What is UBC's role in UTP?

VSB: "The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a host site and provides space for this Provincial Resource Program to operate." ¹

More accurately: UBC is a full partner who provides liaison staff, teaching staff through visiting professors, consistent financial support and has a strong investment in the students that will graduate from UTP. UTP students are part of the UBC student body and are provided access to facilities in UBC and permission to attend lectures.

In 2002, the UBC Senate approved formal early entrance to UBC for UTP students, granting Concurrent Enrolment to students in the "UBC-VSB Transition School". UTP was added to the official UBC Course calendar, where it remains today. Upon entry to UTP, students are enrolled in UBC courses TRSC 001 and TRSC 002. These courses stay on the UTP students' permanent university transcript.

This means that UBC has an equal interest in the UTP admission process.

¹ Letter from Associate Superintendent, Jody Langlois to UTP parents, Jan 13, 2023.

² Transition Program Conceptual Framework adopted by the Transition Program Steering Committee, 1998.

3. Is it true the assessment has always been in spring?

VSB: "Historically there was a March deadline [for assessments] when the program was first started."³

More accurately: Student assessments occurred in the spring during the first year of the program. This late assessment was found to be detrimental to the application process. **The October assessment date has been consistent since 2006.** This allowed adequate time for the multi-step assessment process to proceed.

The accepted application procedure was captured in the “UTP Conceptual Framework”² that was published in 1998 and signed by the VSB Vice Superintendent. This established Admissions Process has been in use for 25 years! Over the years, the only changes to the admissions process have been to move the application deadline from January to November (in 2005), in order to allow for the lengthy process to be completed in line with other high school programs.

4. What is the application deadline?

VSB: "More recently there was no official deadline and it was somewhat amorphous."³

In fact: Application deadlines have always been prior to the assessment dates in the fall. There has been no deadline change.

5. Who proposed and has the authority to change the staffing?

VSB: "The Ministry has advised that moving forward the position of University Transition Program Coordinator will no longer be funded effective January 2023"⁴ and "All staffing positions are the ministry's decision [emphasis added] and in this case the ministry decided to shift the staffing from one coordinator to one District Principal."³

In contradiction: In an emailed statement, the Ministry of Education said it "did not make any changes to the funding model for the program" and that the VSB was "responsible for staffing and administrative oversight of the (UTP) program." ([Vancouver Sun, Jan 8, 2023](#)).

These statements made by the VSB and Ministry are in complete opposition.

6. Did the Jan 5th VSB-parents meeting provide adequate information?

VSB: "Families of current students were invited to attend a meeting the first week in January where they were introduced to the new district principal. Their questions were addressed during the meeting."¹

In truth: There are many questions and concerns awaiting a response from the Vancouver School Board since the January 5th meeting. After the meeting, UTP PAC tried to follow up with the Associate Superintendent, Jody Langlois and Director of Instruction, Rosie Poetschke. However, despite **UTP PAC attempts to communicate with VSB from the official PAC email address, the response was: "we are unable to communicate with an anonymous email recipient".**⁵

³ Email from VSB School Board trustee Lois Chan-Pedley to James Yu, Jan. 11, 2023.

⁴ Letter from Director of Instruction, Rosie Poetschke to UTP parents, dated Dec. 9th, 2022.

⁵ Email from Associate Superintendent Jody Langlois VSB to UTP PAC, Jan. 10, 2023.

Our requests and recommendations:

1. **Reinstate the UTP program coordinator role as agreed upon in the original formation of the program². Dr. Shepelev who has been trained for 10 years by one of the UTP's founding members and long-standing program coordinator Daria Danylchuk is currently the only suitable candidate.** We strongly believe the district principal who has no previous training in this particular program, and the added responsibilities of overseeing 9 programs, will not be able to perform these tasks as efficiently as Dr. Shepelev. We are concerned for our children's mental health and their future relationships with UBC. It is unreasonable for teachers to be required to perform their tasks without proper title, and associated authority.

The UTP coordinator role is described both as "VSB Program Staff" and "UBC Liaison Staff".² It follows that a shared role can only be eliminated by a shared decision.

2. **Have the Program Coordinator play a primary role in the assessment process. According to the official framework as adopted by the Transition Steering Committee, the assessment and selection is to be conducted by the Program Coordinator.**² The Program Coordinator was granted an associate professorship at UBC in 2006 to facilitate their role supporting students as UBC-VSB liaison.
3. The second information night is now scheduled for February 7th while the second assessment is scheduled almost two months later on April 3rd. **This is too late. The changes which have been made by VSB have discouraged many applicants already and these continual delays make it difficult for the students who need this program the most to feel confident that they can rely on it.**

We request the second assessment to be a week from the second information session.

4. **Any changes must go through the trilateral UTP Steering Committee (SC), which includes representation from the original Faculties and relevant parties:**
 - a. Ministry of Education,
 - b. UBC leadership:
 - i. Associate Dean from the Faculty of Science,
 - ii. Associate Dean from the Faculty of Arts,
 - iii. Associate Dean from the Faculty of Applied Science and
 - iv. Associate Dean from the Faculty of Education, and
 - v. 3-4 UBC faculty members
 - c. Vancouver School Board,
 - d. UTP parents,
 - e. alumni,
 - f. students, and
 - g. Staff
5. We respectfully request a copy of the 2021-2022 Financial Statements. We determined from publicly available information that the program coordinator job description does not hold any significant salary increase. As we understand it, a new district principal salary would be an additional increase in the budget (at minimum \$100,000). Since the ministry budget for 2022/23 has increased by 5% (approximately \$25,000), could you please explain how these funds are being distributed to add value to the University Transition Program.

UBC has a strong interest in both the rigor and comprehensiveness of the UTP application procedure, which is also inherently linked to

1. The need for the Program Coordinator Position as a joint staff member;
2. The need for a fall application deadline so the in-depth application process can be completed; and
3. Application being open to any learner in British Columbia, as the application process needs to meet UBC's standard of equity and inclusiveness which would preclude a teacher referral system.

Our community believes that the VSB does not have the authority to unilaterally change the admissions deadline, to remove the joint Program Coordinator staff position or to require referral to the program by BC Teachers. As a full partner who concurrently enrolls UTP students, UBC must be consulted in the same comprehensive manner in which these procedures were first established. The appropriate forum for this is a broad UTP Steering Committee.

We welcome improvements to the program; and expect due process to be followed in bringing any changes into effect. Furthermore, our goal is to ensure proposed changes take into account the strength and longevity of the UTP community, along with the care of the students, parents, and teachers.

We respectfully request an in-person meeting with the Trustees and the VSB superintendent to discuss the concerns of UTP parents regarding these recent changes. We look forward to hearing back from you very soon as this is a time-sensitive matter. We are eager to find a resolution in an amicable manner.

Thank you for your consideration,

The UTP PAC

Below includes the eSignatures of UTP community who support the above ([click here to add your name](#))

With the efforts of the UTP PAC and the UTP community, we clarified much of the information that VSB had passed to the trustees and gained their support to reopen the 2023/2024 intake.