



**விடுவியுலகு ப்ரவியுலகு ஙுலிஷன் ஙலுவ**  
**பல்கலைக்கழக ஙானியங்கள் ஂணைக்குழு**  
**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION**

**The method adopted by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to select students to Universities based on the results of the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination held in August 2019 under old and new syllabi**

As per the National Policy of the Government, the syllabus of the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination is revised once in eight years. .

**1. Background**

Accordingly, there were two Examinations for G.C.E. (A/L) Examination in August 2011, under new and old syllabi.

Since the number of places available for University Admission had to be filled from both categories using an accepted statistical method, the UGC appointed an Expert Committee to obtain their recommendations for the Commission to decide on the method of selection of students to Universities for the Academic Year 2011/2012.

The said Expert Committee recommended a pooled z-scores method for calculation of z-scores to rank students considering old and new syllabi students as a single population and the Department of Examinations released results accordingly.

**a. Challenging the method adopted by the UGC before the court of law**

However, a case was filed by the Ceylon Teachers Union and 16 students who sat for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination in 2011 against the Department of Examinations (DOE) and the UGC and few others **challenging the decision to merge two groups of the students who sat for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination in 2011 under old and new syllabi to rank them on the order of merit** [S.C. (F/R) Application No. 29/2012].

The Supreme Court pronounced its judgment on 25.06.2012 directing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Respondent (UGC) to comply with Section 15 (vii) of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 as amended and to take necessary and relevant steps to reissue z-scores of the candidates who sat for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination 2011 according to accepted statistical norms and principles on the basis that the old and new syllabi are two distinct populations.

Soon after delivering the said judgment, a new Committee of Experts was appointed by His Excellency the President to propose a suitable method to calculate the Z-Scores and rank the students of the two groups' i.e. old and new syllabi to select them to Universities in line with the decision of the Supreme Court.

Accordingly, the committee made the following recommendations:

- Calculating Z-Scores considering those students who sat for G.C.E. (A/L) Examination under old and new syllabi as two distinct populations.
- Such two sets of Z-Score be amalgamated and arranged in descending order to give rise to the set of Z-Scores of the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination in 2011, to be referred to in the sequel as the set of Z-Scores of the examination.

The Z-Scores were released again by the DOE accordingly.

Subsequently, another group of students whose ranks had come down with the new issuance of Z-Scores filed several cases challenging this method too before the Supreme Court. [S.C. (F/R) Application No. 418/2012, 441/2012, 445/2012, 462/2012, 459/2012 and 460/2012]

#### **b. Settlement proposed by the UGC**

The Supreme Court having heard all parties directed the UGC to propose a suitable method to select students based on the rankings issued subsequently considering old and new syllabi as two distinct populations.

All parties agreed that the **only fair solution is to consider the historical patterns of the selection of students to Universities based on their attempts (i.e. first-timers and repeaters) for each academic program and to adopt a suitable method.**

In compliance, the UGC filed a Report suggesting four options. Out of which all parties agreed on the 03<sup>rd</sup> option as the most reasonable solution for the problem which **was based on calculating the ratios of students admitted to universities for each degree program on an all-island merit and district merit for first-timers and repeaters separately and then use the five-year maximum ratio to select students to Universities. The judgment was entered accordingly making this method applies only for the academic year 2011/2012.**

As a result, the Universities had to accommodate students over and above the normal intake and the UGC had to provide the Universities with extra financial assistance due to the request of the Court of Law to accommodate more students as much as possible who were to get selected under both lists (i.e. the first list issued before S.C. (F/R) Application No. 29/2012 and the list issued after the case).

#### **2. Selection of old and new syllabi candidates who sat for G.C.E. (A/L) in the year 2019 to universities**

The Department of Examinations informed the UGC that in the year 2019 too, two Examinations will be held under new and old syllabi.

This time the UGC having taken note of the directives made by the Supreme Court i.e. the requirements of treating Old and New syllabi students as two distinct populations and giving prior notice to the students the criteria of selection decided to appoint an Expert Committee

comprising of statisticians and mathematicians in and outside the University System to obtain their expert opinions and recommendations as to how to select students based on the two examinations going to be held in 2019.

Accordingly, the UGC in consultation with the Admissions Committee decided to implement the following recommendations of the Expert Committee;

- Consider the candidates sitting for a new syllabus and old syllabus as two distinct populations.
- Calculate z-scores separately for each population.
- Two different sets of ranks to be determined for the two populations based on the Z-Scores in each population.
- 'Composite five-year average' align with the historical pattern of selection of students during the five year period from 2013 to 2017 to be used to select students to Universities under two syllabi.

Thereafter, the UGC published a Public Notice setting out the method applicable for the selection of students of the old and new syllabi for the Academic Year 2019/2020 dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in weekday newspapers of Daily News, Dinamina, Lankadeepa, Thinakaran, and Thinakkural and also dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019 in weekend newspapers of Sunday Observer, Sunday Times, Silumina, Lankadeepa, Thinakkural, and Vaaramanjari specifically informing the Public that;

- The percentage of students to be admitted to universities from those sitting for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination under the new syllabus in the year 2019 for each degree programme (course of study) on district merit from each district and all island merit shall be the composite average percentage of students admitted to universities through their first attempt during the five year period from 2013 to 2017 for that particular degree programme (course of study) on district merit from each district and all-island merit, respectively.
- The percentage of students to be admitted to universities from those sitting for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination under the old syllabus in the year 2019 for each degree programme (course of study) on district merit from each district and all island merit shall be the composite average percentage of students admitted to universities through their second and third attempts during the five year period from 2013 to 2017 for that particular degree programme (course of study) on district merit from each district and all-island merit, respectively.

The UGC published the said notice on selection criterion in its official Webpage as well for the information of the General Public.

Further, the UGC included the said selection criteria in the Handbook on "Admission to Undergraduate Courses of the Universities in Sri Lanka" published for the Academic Year 2019/2020 in March 2020 for the information of the prospective undergraduates.

It is important to note here that no one challenged this criterion published by the UGC in the newspapers in all three languages in April & May 2019, Handbook published in March 2020 and on the website of the UGC.

**a. Comparison of Z - scores of New and Old syllabus**

It is also important to mention here that since the new syllabus and old syllabus were considered as two distinct populations, Z-Scores, and Island & Districts ranks of the new syllabus and the old syllabus cannot be compared to each other.

**b. All Island Merit and District Quota system**

As per the National Policy of university admission, students are admitted to State Universities and Higher Educational Institutes on All Island Merit and District Quota System. Accordingly, the selection of students to all the courses of study in the Art stream except for the courses of study in Music, Dance, Drama & Theatre, Visual Arts, Visual & Technological Arts, and Art & Design is done solely on the order of the Z-Scores ranked on All Island Merit. However, for the above 6 exceptions and all the courses of study of other Streams, the selection is done based on a dual criterion i.e. All Island Merit and the district quota system. Accordingly, up to 40% of the available places of a particular course of study is selected on the order of the Z-Scores ranked on All Island Merit, up to 55% of the places of the remaining 60% is selected on the District Quota System allocated to 25 Administrative Districts in proportion to the total population of each district; i.e. on the ratio of the population of the district concerned to the total population of the country and the remaining 5% of the places is allocated to 16 educationally disadvantaged districts in proportion to the total population of each such district concerned to the total population of the 16 educationally disadvantaged districts.

Thus, there is a possibility that a student with a higher Z-Score in a particular district may not be selected to a particular course of study if he is not within the district quota in that district and a student with a lower Z-Score of another district may be selected to the same course of study under the District Quota System.

Accordingly, the Composite averages used to select the students for the course of study in Medicine and the number of students selected for the course of study in Medicine from each district under new and old syllabi for the Academic Year 2019/2020 are given below.

**UNIVERSITY ADMISSION - ACADEMIC YEAR 2019/2020**  
**COMPOSITE AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF ALL ISLAND MERIT BASIS AND**  
**DISTRICT BASIS**

**COURSE OF STUDY IN MEDICINE**

	COMPOSITE AVERAGE PERCENTAGE	
	New Syllabus	Old Syllabus
<b>ALL ISLAND MERIT BASIS</b>	43%	57%
<b>DISTRICT BASIS</b>	<b>New Syllabus</b>	<b>Old Syllabus</b>
1. Colombo	36%	64%
2. Gampaha	26%	74%
3. Kalutara	14%	86%
4. Matale	16%	84%
5. Kandy	34%	66%
6. N' Eliya	35%	65%
7. Galle	27%	73%
8. Matara	18%	82%
9. Hambantota	14%	86%
10. Jaffna	42%	58%
11. Kilinochchi	56%	44%
12. Mannar	36%	64%
13. Mullaitivu	50%	50%
14. Vavuniya	54%	46%
15. Trincomalee	50%	50%
16. Batticaloa	44%	56%
17. Ampara	39%	61%
18. Puttalam	20%	80%
19. Kurunegala	22%	78%
20. Anuradhapura	25%	75%
21. Polonnaruwa	17%	83%
22. Badulla	27%	73%
23. Monaragala	17%	83%
24. Kegalle	15%	85%
25. Ratnapura	17%	83%

**UNIVERSITY ADMISSION - ACADEMIC YEAR 2019/2020**

**Number of Students Selected for the Course of Study in Medicine under New and Old Syllabi under the Normal Intake**

District	Number of Students Selected				
	All Island Merit Basis		District Basis		Total
	New Syllabus	Old Syllabus	New Syllabus	Old Syllabus	
1. Colombo	93	93	40	72	298
2. Gampaha	20	41	29	82	172
3. Kalutara	9	28	8	51	96
4. Matale	4	6	4	20	34
5. Kandy	27	31	23	45	126
6. N' Eliya	4	4	15	28	51
7. Galle	33	35	14	38	120
8. Matara	17	21	7	33	78
9. Hambantota	7	13	5	32	57
10. Jaffna	30	37	15	20	102
11. Kilinochchi	0	0	4	3	7
12. Mannar	0	0	2	4	6
13. Mullaitivu	0	0	3	3	6
14. Vavuniya	4	4	6	5	19
15. Trincomalee	3	3	12	12	30
16. Batticaloa	5	2	14	18	39
17. Ampara	5	4	16	25	50
18. Puttalam	6	13	9	38	66
19. Kurunegala	18	27	17	62	124
20. Anuradhapura	2	4	13	39	58
21. Polonnaruwa	3	3	4	21	31
22. Badulla	5	4	13	36	58
23. Monaragala	1	0	5	23	29
24. Kegalle	2	16	6	35	59
25. Ratnapura	15	27	11	55	108
<b>Total</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>1824</b>

**c. Filing a case by new syllabus Bio-Science students**

In the meantime, a group of students who sat for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination held in 2019 under the new syllabus in the bioscience stream filed a case bearing No. SC FR Application No. 170/2020 mainly challenging that they were deprived of the opportunities to get ready for the Examination when compared with the old syllabus students and as a result, they have been treated unfairly by the then Ministry of Education (specifically NIE and Department of

Examination) and the new syllabus student group should be allocated with more places when selecting students for the Academic Year 2019/2020. Subsequently, another group of students who sat for G.C.E. (A/L) in the same year in the Bio-Science stream under the old Syllabus made a request to intervene in the case.

The UGC gave an assurance through the State Counsel who represents the UGC, to the court that it will take all possible measures to increase the number of students to be admitted to Universities as much as possible by applying the historical pattern of students selected for universities for the years from 2013 to 2017 for each course of study. Further, the officials of the UGC met the lawyers, several petitioners including intervenient petitioners and their parents at a meeting facilitated by the Hon. Attorney General, to explain the method of selection of students for the Academic Year 2019/2020.

However, the UGC having realized that the previous Commission based on the advice of the experts' group, has already declared that the composite average method is used when selecting students for courses of study from both group of students for the Academic Year 2019/2020 and deviating from this method will lead to unnecessary legal implications decided to release cut off marks for the Academic Year 2019/2020 according to the method already declared in advance.

This was informed to the Supreme Court by the Hon. Attorney General by filing a motion with notice to parties to the case pending before the Supreme Court.

The Chairman  
University Grants Commission  
November 9, 2020