

THE JOINT DOCTORAL PROGRAM  
IN ADMINISTRATION

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In the spring of 1973, in response to independent proposals for doctoral programs in administration (or management) from three of Montreal's four universities, the Comité des Programmes (a committee composed of university representatives that recommends university education policy to the Quebec Ministry) asked all four universities to develop a single joint program. What could have been rejected as an unworkable whim of a committee was instead welcomed as a positive opportunity. The result is the Joint Doctoral Program in Administration, a unique experience from which we believe much can be learned - about doctoral teaching in particular and cooperation across institutions in general.

In describing the design of the program and its administrative functioning in the following pages, we wish to emphasize four of its main characteristics in particular.

\* First, in keeping with Montreal's overall cultural milieu, the program involves very much a cross between European and American style doctoral work. To overstate, the European student shakes his professor's hand on the day he begins doctoral studies, and reappears three years later with a completed dissertation. The American professor takes that hand and leads his student through three years of lockstep requirements, much of it programmed coursework. The joint doctoral program seeks to build the minimum necessary amount of structure around student responsibility and individual student effort in one-to-one relationships with faculty members.



To take the most important element of this, the Joint Program offers no designated areas of study, or, more exactly, no non-designated areas of study. An applicant may be accepted in any area he or she proposes in which a group of professors, active in research, express a keen interest in supervising the candidate. Using actual examples, some students are working in traditional areas (such as policy, marketing, and accounting), others in areas within traditional areas (such as organizational development), and others in areas that cut across traditional ones (such as international business policy, the administration of non-profit institutions, and the behavioural aspects of information systems).

\* Second, the Joint Doctoral Program in Administration has established a set of administrative arrangements to encourage a degree of cooperation seldom achieved across different institutions. Each university necessarily grants its own degrees, but every stage of the program of every student as well as all of the administrative arrangements involve the participation of more than one university. In effect, four universities have pooled their resources (notably a corps of 300 professors) to offer a single, integrated program.

\* Third, the program requires three core seminars of all students, two of which appear to be innovations in doctoral studies in administration. These seminars serve not only to develop substantive knowledge and skills, but also to knit the students into a single social group. Thus these seminars are taken in each of the first three semesters of



the program, to ensure that all the students come together at least once a week through the first year and half. In the first semester, the students take "Fundamentals of Administrative Thought", a course designed to provide them with a broad overview of the nature of scientific thinking and its application and relevance in the field of administration. In the second semester they take "Pedagogy in Administration", a course designed to expose students to basic concepts in course design and to develop their knowledge and skills in the use of alternate methods of teaching used in administration, including experiential learning, case studies, and programmed instruction. This course has been included on the assumption that in a degree program designed to certify people to spend perhaps sixty percent of their careers in teaching and forty percent doing research, 3% of the program devoted to the training of the former is not excessive. (In fact this course has been extremely well received by the students. On a seven-point scale course evaluation questionnaire, in response to the question "Compared with other seminars that you have taken the seminar in pedagogy was more/less interesting", the course received a 5.5 rating. Moreover, all 13 students who filled out the questionnaire this year recommended the course be maintained "as is" instead of "made optional", "eliminated", or "replaced by \_\_\_\_\_".) And in the first semester of the second year, typically just before beginning dissertation research, the students take a course on "Research Methodology in Administration". This course covers material from the basic philosophy of research to alternative methodologies of research and data reduction techniques.



\* Fourth, this is a doctoral program with a serious language requirement, perhaps the only one. The program is a fully bilingual one, which means that students are expected to begin with some working knowledge of English and French and to develop that knowledge to functional bilingualism by the time of their graduation. In the three program seminars, students may use either language to communicate, while the professors - who are typically fluently bilingual - switch back and forth between the two languages. The result is conversation that proceeds with an almost perfect mixture of French and English. It is not uncommon in these courses to see a running debate between two students each speaking his or her own language with no break in the flow of ideas.



### The Basic Design of the Joint Program

In common with many North American doctoral programs in Administration, this one is designed on the assumption that all students should have a broad knowledge of the different areas of administration before they specialize. Hence the program is divided, like many others, into three phases - Preparation, Specialization, and Dissertation. Each, together with its different requirements, is described below and shown in Figure 1.

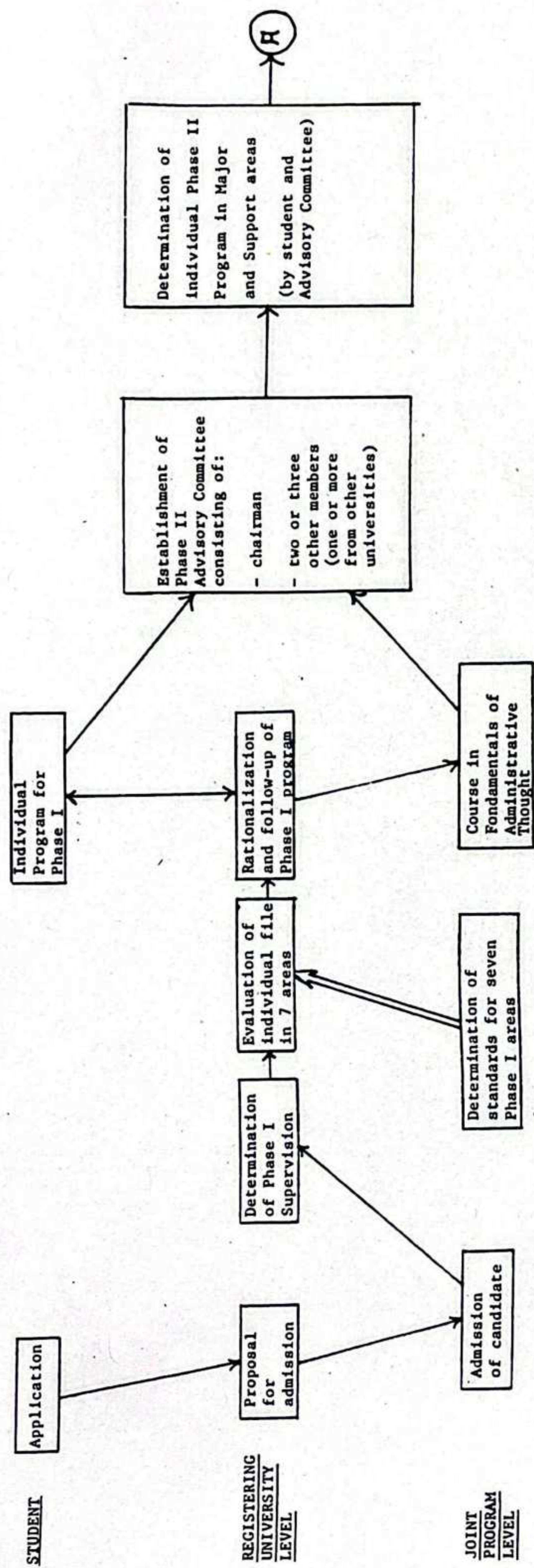
#### Phase I: Preparation

All students are expected to have some knowledge of the behavioral sciences, economics, quantitative methods, marketing, finance, policy, and accounting/control as these are taught in schools of administration. Practically, the required level of knowledge amounts to the equivalent of the core material of a strong MBA program, and is specified in each of the seven areas by a committee made up of one member from each of the four universities. When the student enters the program, the seven area representatives in his own university assess his background and determine the appropriate requirements in each of the areas. The student may waive all the requirements in a given area, be asked to sit for a waiver examination, take the appropriate master level course(s), or study or do a paper on his own. Students with strong (and recent) MBAs typically waive most or all of the requirements and move immediately into Phase II



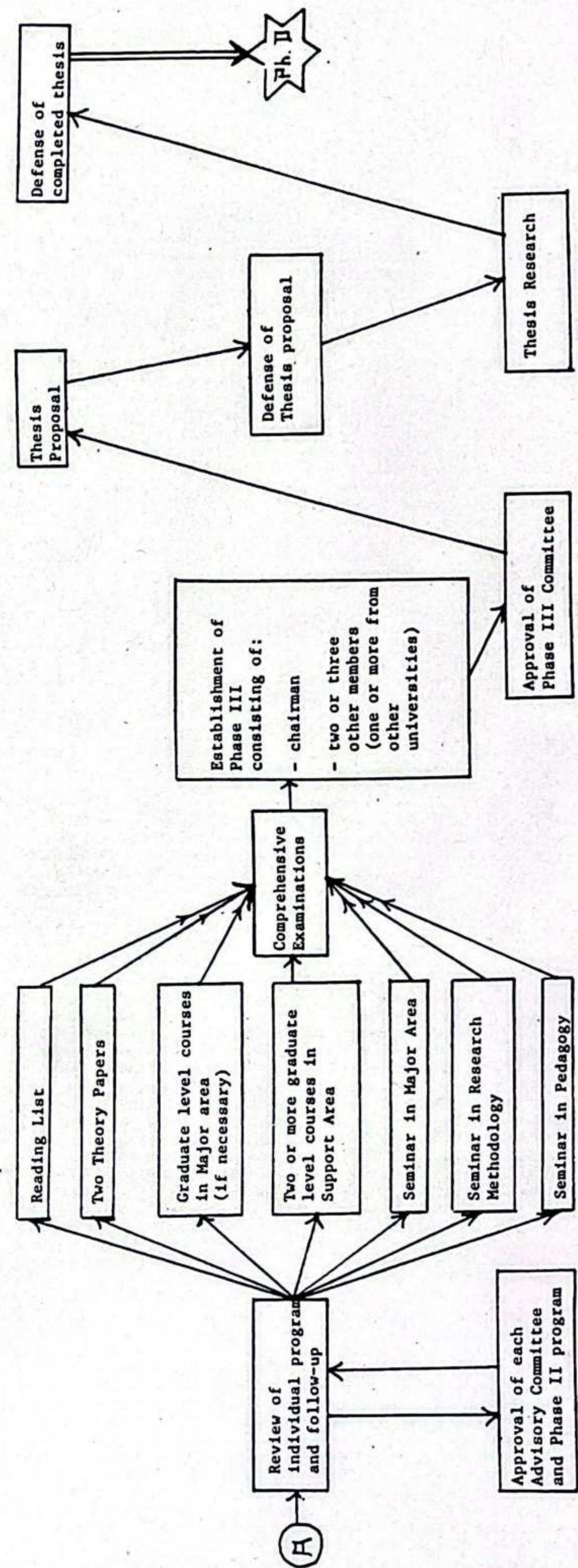
FIGURE 1: JOINT PH.D. PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION

- CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
- ECOLE DES HAUTES ETUDES COMMERCIALES
- MCGILL UNIVERSITY
- UNIVERSITE DU QUEBEC A MONTREAL



Phase I: Preparation (from 1-7 months)

Phase II: Specialization (about 12 months)



Phase II: Specialization (about 12 months)

Phase III: Dissertation (12 months or more)



of the program. Those with older MBAs, with deficiencies in their MBA studies, or with Masters degrees in peripheral areas (such as Economics or Industrial Psychology) typically end up with work in perhaps three or four areas, usually no more than the equivalent of a full semester of work, while those with no related Masters degree end up taking the equivalent of the full core of an MBA program, requiring two full semesters of work.

In addition, all students take the course "Fundamentals of Administrative Thought" as a part of their Preparation Stage. Like the other two required seminars, this one is taught by professors from each of the four universities, and is run in the bilingual fashion described earlier. In this course, the students read Kuhn and Kaplan\* to get a broad perspective of the nature of scientific thinking and the progress of science. They then apply these ideas to the field of administration, looking at management as a formal, interpersonal, decisional, economic, analytic, intuitive and political process. Readings draw on the classics of Weber, Taylor, Fayol, Roethlisberger and Dickson, Crozier, Simon, Forrester and others.

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\*Kaplan, Abraham, "The Conduct of Inquiry", Scranton Pennsylvania, Chandler Pub. Co., 1964.

Kuhn, T.S., "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", University of Chicago Press, 1970.



## Phase II: Specialization

In this Phase, the student probes deeply into his or her chosen ( major ) areas of specialization. Each student forms an advisory committee, with representation from at least two of the universities (a number in fact have three, although none yet has four), and works out a program of study with that committee according to general guidelines set by the joint program. These guidelines in fact allow for considerable flexibility so that, for example, a student interested in one subject may find himself in only one or two graduate level courses in the area while one interested in another may take six or eight. Coupled with the major area is a support area, namely a basic discipline that underlies the major area (for example, sociology in the case of a major in organizational theory, mathematics in the case of management science, economics in the case of finance). Students are encouraged to use their imagination in selecting a support area, for example, to consider anthropology in the case of a major in international business, the history of science when the major focusses on the problems of applying management science, cognitive psychology when the student's interests center on questions of strategy formation.

As shown on Figure 1, the general guidelines for Phase II comprise the following:



- \* The courses in research methodology and pedagogy.
- \* Doctoral seminar(s) in the student's major area. When the numbers warrant it, the seminar is offered by the joint program and typically involves professors from all four universities. Otherwise, the student takes a reading course with specialists in the area.
- \* At least two courses - existing graduate level courses in any of the schools of administration or other department, or else reading courses - in the support area.
- \* Any other relevant graduate-level courses in the major area available at any of the four universities.
- \* Two theory papers - major probes within the major and/or support areas, each involving the equivalent of about two months of full-time work; these papers are viewed as critical elements in the student's self development toward a dissertation, allowing him or her to investigate in depth a tightly defined topic on which there is sufficient research-based literature (for example, power distribution in professional organizations, the influence of structure on organizational development programs).
- \* A detailed bibliography, contributed to by each member of the advisory committee, which serves as a kind of "contact" concerning the material that the student is responsible for on the comprehensive examination, which is the last step in the Specialization Phase of the program.



### Phase III: Dissertation

The third phase of the program - the proposal, preparation, and defence of the dissertation research - is perhaps the most conventional one, in part because all dissertation work, consistent with the design of this program, is highly individualistic in any event, and in part because existing regulations already exist in each of the universities, particularly regarding defence of the completed thesis. Nevertheless, the program is able to add additional regulations that do not contradict these. One currently in force is that the advisory committee, as in the case of Stage II, must contain members from at least two of the participating schools. Other regulations concerning defence of proposal, invitations to attend the dissertation itself, etc. are currently being considered.

### The Administrative Structure of the Joint Program

A key to knitting the four schools into a single program is the establishment of an effective administrative structure. Hence, considerable attention has been given to this issue.

The program is administered by one joint committee, together with its full-time secretary, and four local committees. Each university sets up its local committee in accordance with its own internal structure. The four chairmen of these local committees in turn constitute



the joint committee, with one of their member elected by the four deans as chairman of the joint committee. The chairmanship is considered a half-time job, with 50% of the salary paid for by the budget of the joint program. The joint committee met five times in 1977-78, and has recently decided to institute monthly luncheon meetings for 1978-79 so that its members can share ideas more informally on a more regular basis. In addition, the joint committee, at the request of one of the faculties, has recently decided to convene a faculty council, consisting of the chairmen of all student advisory committees, to provide a larger forum for the discussion of policy.

The division of labor between the joint and local committees is based on the general premise that the joint committee establishes common policy for the whole program while the local committees apply that policy and ensure the appropriate supervision of each of their students. Candidates apply to any one or more of the local committees for admission, each following the admission regulations of its own graduate faculty. That is because each university grants its own degree - the joint committee of course has no power in this regard - and so students must be registered in one of the four universities. The local committees assess the applications as they see fit. In fact, although the procedures vary in details, in all four cases they are rather similar. All involve the review of common documents as well as the extensive interviewing of applicants where possible with members of the local committee as well as potential advisors. It is critical in an individual oriented program such as this one that a sufficient number of professors be enthusiastically committed to the supervision of



each and every incoming student. The local committee then proposes to the joint committee those candidates who it feels are acceptable and for whom it feels this kind of supervision can be arranged. The joint committee then formally accepts candidates into the program (subject, of course, to the approval of the faculty of graduate studies in each of the universities). Candidates acceptable to more than one school decide themselves where they will register.

Once the students are in the program, the local committees oversee their individual programs, while the joint committee approves their advisory committees in Stages II and III as well as their proposals for the work in Stage II. The joint committee also decides which seminars are to be offered in the program each year. Aside from the three required of all students and offered once each year, all other seminars are offered on an ad hoc basis, when the numbers warrant it. In general, when the joint committee believes that a seminar in a given area will attract at least four students, it convenes a meeting of one representative of that area from each of the four schools, and asks them to draw up a proposal. Needless to say, initiatives also come from area people themselves, and the joint committee's job then becomes to decide whether there is sufficient demand for the proposed seminar, and, if so, to ensure the involvement of area people from each of the other schools.

The Quebec Department of Education has provided the program with a special budget, separate from the normal per capita grants.



Part of that budget is reserved for the central administration - the half salary of the program director and the full salary of the program secretary as well as allowances for printing up the covers that "enrobe" this document (and are made freely available to the students to ensure the visual presence of the joint program every time they hand in a paper), for letterheads, telephone, xeroxing, and all the other usual administrative expenses. The rest of the budget is distributed among the four schools. At first this was on an even 25% basis, but the program has recently moved to a formula that provides a lump sum for local administration and distributes the rest on the basis of professorial involvement in seminars and student supervision. The joint committee decides on this formula and approves the actual allocation.

#### The Results So Far

For what was viewed at the outset as an experiment that flies in the face of so much academic tradition, the joint doctoral program has been remarkably successful.

The program currently has 28 students, and has just accepted another 14 for September. As might be expected, the program has attracted the mature student - the average age is well over 30, and in fact few students are in their 20's. This is almost certainly the highest average age of any North American doctoral program in administration. Most of the students are Quebec residents, indicating that the program, at the outset at least, has been satisfying a longstanding local



demand for doctoral studies. But this year's applications show an increasing interest in the program in the rest of Canada as well as foreign Francophone nations, especially France. It is our belief that the bilingual nature of the program should be viewed as a definite advantage in attracting these students. For the Francophone student, it provides a less disruptive bridge than do American programs to the world of North American management theory, and to the English Canadian student it provides the opportunity to become fully bilingual in a program with the greatest depth of academic staff in the country (by a factor of three!).

From the perspective of the participating schools, the program has generated a level of cooperation seldom aspired to, let alone achieved, across different institutions. The program requires professors to do something very unusual - travel across the city to visit their colleagues. There are joint committee meetings, area meetings, meetings of student advisory committees, and seminars, all of which involve professors from the different institutions. Thus, for example, a McGill professor is as likely to be teaching or attending a meeting in the program at the HEC or UQUAM or Concordia, as he is at his home institution. (A policy of the joint committee is to spread the seminars out as much as possible so that students are forced to visit the different institutions on a regular basis, and thereby get to know the different professors working in their area. Thus, for example, it is a policy to offer the three main seminars at three different institutions each year.)



More gratifying in some sense is the spinoff cooperation in other areas. Having been put in touch for the first time on such an intensive basis, the professors of the different schools have discovered each other so to speak. The result has been joint colloquia, cooperation agreements in the MBA programs, joint and visiting appointments, and a variety of other forms of cooperation, all attributable to the joint program at the doctoral level.

Perhaps the largest potential block to achieving coordination - and to extending it - is the question of culture. But not culture in the societal sense. Rather in the organizational sense. There are certainly differences between the French and English milieux, which have occasionally led to misunderstandings or simply to different preferences. But with a little goodwill - not to mention a sufficient level of language proficiency on both sides simply to be able to communicate and appreciate each other's culture - these problems are fairly easily overcome. Indeed, we believe that being forced to come to agreement on issues involving different cultural viewpoints cannot help but broaden perspectives on both sides, leading to more tolerance in general and a better program in particular.

In any event, these differences in culture were well known and fully expected. More surprising were the differences in organizational cultures. Each school has its own way of doing things, its own norms, its own style. That has posed problems for us, and will continue to do so, although none of these has been anywhere near



insurmountable. Again it has been the development of tolerance and understanding that has superseded all the problems so far encountered.

In conclusion, if there is one element that has set the joint doctoral program off to a good start and that makes us optimistic about its future, that element must be respect - respect for each student as a mature individual who can play a major role in the design of his or her own program of studies, and respect for our different cultures in working to achieve a full and rich cooperation.