

# Widening Participation

Learning More About Who is Coming to University  
and Where They Might be Going

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# Session Overview

- Putting admission decisions in context
  - Using Biggs (1999) concept of constructive alignment
- Some challenges associated with predicting students' potential
- Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs
  - Considering instructional adaptations
- Ways forward

# Gratefully acknowledging the help of ...

- Walter Sudmant, Director, Planning & Institutional Research, UBC
- Shane Dawson, Director, Arts Instructional Support and Information Technology, UBC
- Michelle Green, Organizational and Employee Development Consultant, Ryerson University
- Rona Abramovitch, Outreach and Access Advisor, Ryerson University

# And learning from ...

- Kylie Budge, RMIT
- Helen Larkin & Ben Richardson, Deakin
- Julie Willems, Monash
- Kylie Mansfield and team, Wollongong
- And all other keynotes and invited addresses

## In addition to ...

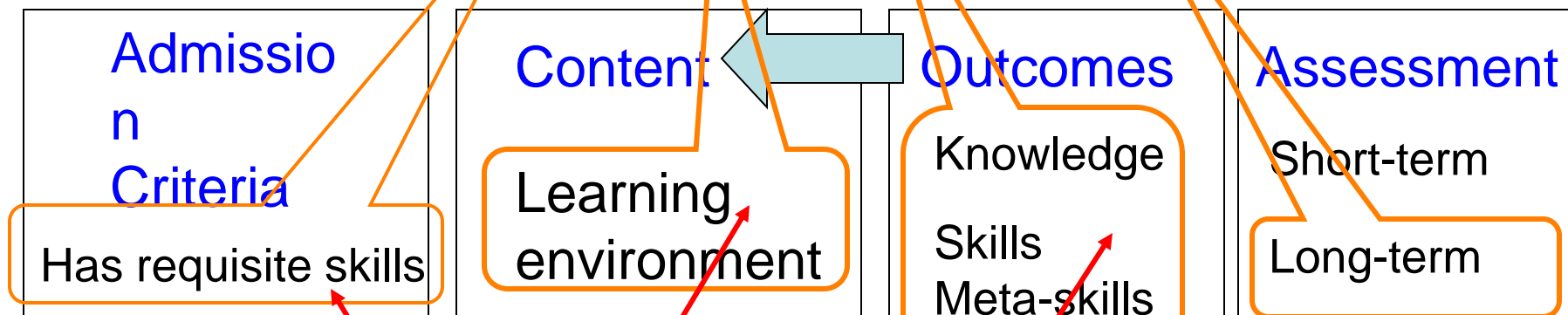
- “competing effectively in the new globalised economy”
- “the supply of people with undergraduate qualifications will not keep up with demand”
- “suppling skilled graduates to meet the increasing demands of business and industry”

# Let's continue to include ...

In \_\_\_\_\_, we believe that everyone has a fundamental right to learn. We acknowledge also that learning in higher education settings provides particularly important opportunities to better understand the wonders of the world and one's place in that world. Widening participation in higher education, therefore, represents this country's commitment to provide for as many as possible the opportunity to enrich their lives through that education. As a nation, we will benefit from a more thoughtful, intellectually engaged, and knowledgeable population.

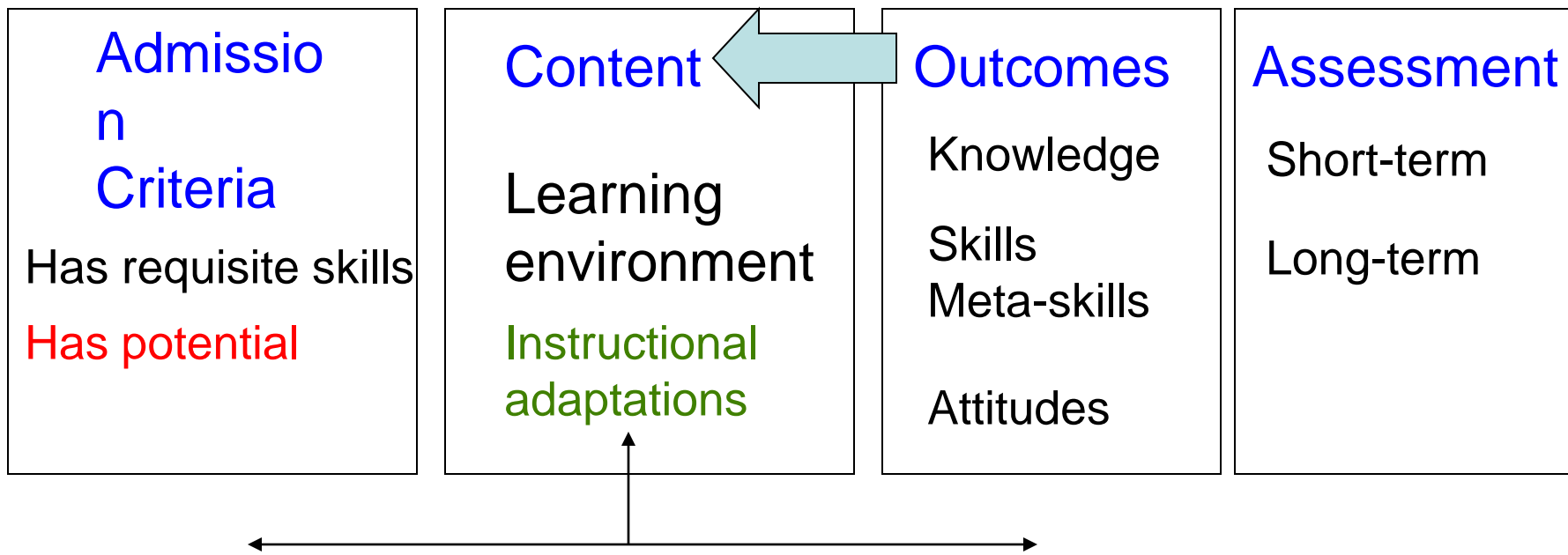
The University share of undergraduates -up from 45% in 1997 to 47% is a measure of competitiveness in the local market and of perceived demand. Other indicators used to measure demand include the ratio of applications to quota places and median tertiary entrance scores.

Of our Bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 73% were in full-time employment four months after completing their courses.



The University of \_\_\_\_\_ is a highly research-intensive university with a strong emphasis on researcher education. Thus, students are encouraged to develop their analytic and argumentative skills from the very beginning of their studies. These skills are also emphasized in the highly demanding entrance examinations in every discipline.

# Putting Admission Decisions in Context



# Some challenges associated with predicting students' potential

- The predictive validity of admissions criteria
  - Using past academic performance
  - Using other attributes
- The influence of stereotypes
  - “students these days”
  - Based on demographic and socio-economic factors
- Attrition rates in spite of admission tests

# Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs



# Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs

Broad-based admission criteria  
From the UBC calendar ...

## Broad-Based Admission

Some of our programs use broad-based admission, in which supplementary information about activities and achievements outside of the classroom is used in addition to academics to select qualified applicants. This information is required for admission to some programs and optional for others.

Submitting this supplementary information may require a separate application, audition, or portfolio, and may have a specific deadline and an additional fee.

# Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs

## Bridging in Australia

[Australia University Courses](#) → [Short Course Australia - Foundation Studies and Bridging Programs](#)

### **Short Course Australia**

### **Study Foundation Studies and Bridging Programs - Australia**

For international students, Foundation Studies courses and Bridging Programs provide an ideal pathway to undergraduate study at universities in Australia. Foundation Studies courses were introduced to meet the needs of overseas students from different countries and educational backgrounds.

Foundation and preparatory courses provide a structured pathway for international students wanting to gain entry to undergraduate study at Australian universities. They also help students adapt to the Australian academic environment and way of life. Some promise a place at university if you are successful in your completion of the course.

# Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs

## Bridging program

Mathematics Skills Program  
Chemistry Bridging Course  
Mathematics Bridging Course  
Physics Bridging Course  
Applications

**Assumed Knowledge** is what a lecturer or tutor of a first year UNSW course could reasonably expect all students enrolled in that course to know at the outset. For some degree programs and first year courses, it is assumed that students will have achieved a level of knowledge of the subject area that will prepare them to cope successfully with the content of the course, through their high school studies or other equivalent study.

Students who do not have the recommended level of assumed knowledge are not prevented from enrolling in a program, but they may be placed at a considerable disadvantage. Any students who have not achieved the recommended level of assumed knowledge are strongly advised to undertake a bridging program or other preparation course.

# Linking admission decisions to pedagogy and programs

- Spanning the Gaps — Ryerson University, Toronto
  - Ryerson University Now (RUN) — taking university courses prior to formal entry
  - Second Chances — academic support and course work to improve high school standing
  - Road to Ryerson — tutoring and mentoring for youth whose marks aren't high enough for entry into Ryerson. Going back to do a “victory lap”
  - Individual information and counseling sessions — planning one's post-secondary future
- Is there a pedagogy of inclusion?
  - *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Issue 3, 2007-2008*

# Ways Forward: Two Broad Possibilities

- Higher Education doesn't change
  - We must select students who can adapt to who we are
  - Pre-HE preparation
  - Bridging
  - Spanning gaps
- Higher Education does change
  - Accommodating a wider range of learners
  - Enhanced learner support
  - A wider range of learning environments, acceptable outcomes, and assessments

It isn't a question of whether we are willing to change, but how much we are willing to change

Reasons

Evidence  
new  
Values, ethics

Admission  
Criteria

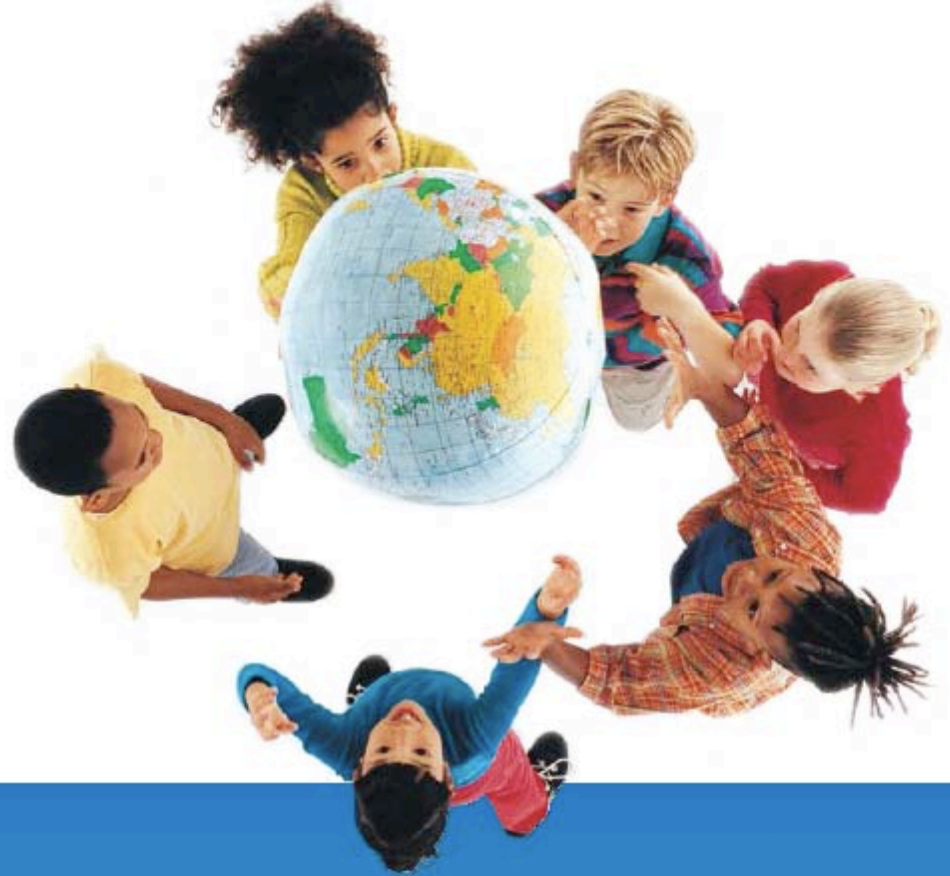
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Has potential

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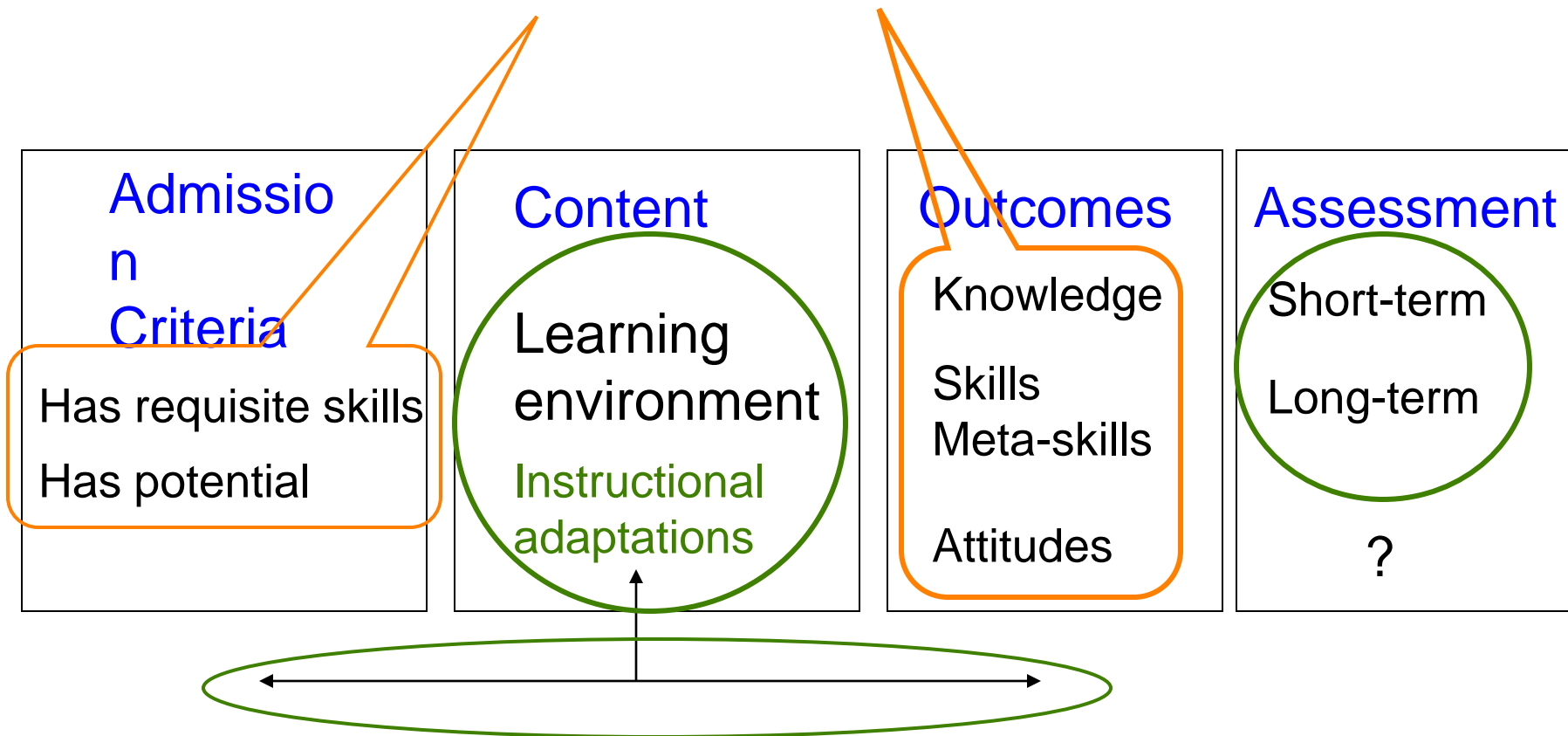
# 21st Century Skills, Education & Competitiveness

A RESOURCE AND POLICY GUIDE

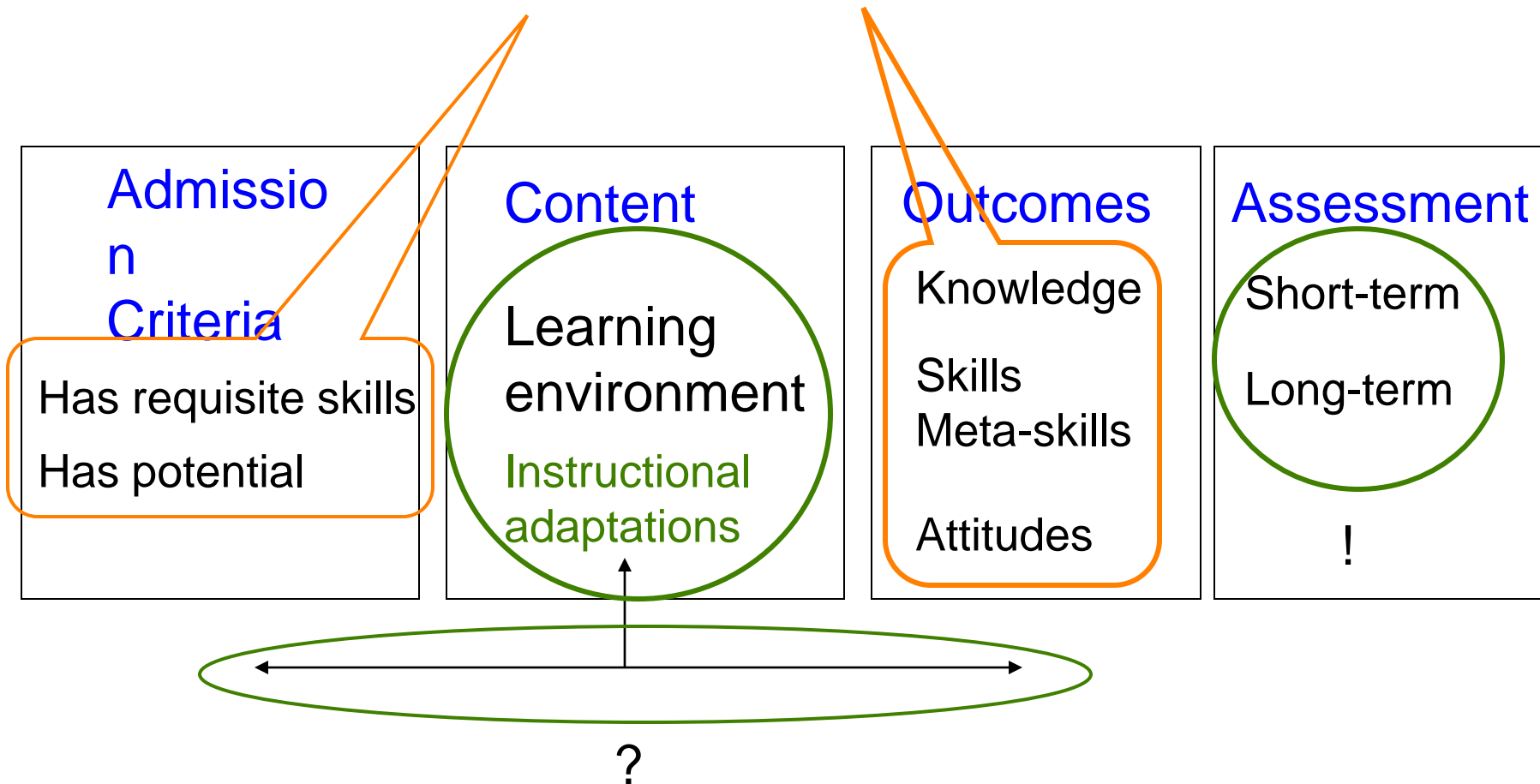


PARTNERSHIP FOR  
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

# Implications of Change: Expand admission criteria/ Hold desired outcomes constant



# Implications of Change: Expand admission criteria/ Adjust desired outcomes



# Two final thoughts to ponder

- The notion of constructive alignment, including admissions decisions, places discussions of widening participation in a useful context.
- Higher education at its best is transformative. Today this isn't just about students' transformation. It is also about our transformation.