of standards is so beloved of Canadian faculty committees, but as a British observer, I wonder whether the students are as likely to benefit from a *post hoc* review as their British counterparts.

It would be churlish to try to pass judgement on any set of processes without much more fundamental investigation. It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that where British institutions have adopted modular course structures similar to the North American style, they have retained both the admissions system and the examining board which fit the needs of the traditional British course. It may be that Canadian academics would find it interesting to experiment with examining boards, at least for programmes with a tightly controlled prerequisite system.

The admission of students by academics has an effect on the identity of staff and students as a group which may be lacking in Canada. British students identify with their course and their department in a way which is difficult in Canada. It is people they know who determine their progress whereas Canadian students' progress appears to depend on the 'administration's' collation of a set of unrelated results.

The role of administrators in determining progress and final results in Britain is virtually non-existent – or, at least, not visible outside the examining board meeting where advice on interpretation of examination regulations is offered.

It appears that from the design of a course of study, through the admission stage to the final graduation of the students the systems are more integrated in Britain than in Canada.

Could it be that the whole structure of higher education institutions is built on a more integrated approach? Such, at least, appeared to be the case of academic government already reported and the processes of admission and examination seem to support such a contention.

Harriet Greenaway
Assistant Academic Registrar
The Polytechnic of North London

STATISTICS FOR POLICY AND PLANNING: A RESPONSE

The article "Statistics for Policy and Planning" by B. Trotter and M. Creet offers a provocative point of view on a topic which would benefit greatly by more discussion. Their shrill attack on the Ontario data policy, however, does not accurately inform the reader as to the policies and practices of the Ministry. The authors suggest, for example, that the province has obliterated the distinction between full-time and part-time students. In fact, however, institutions continue to report students to Statistics Canada and the Ministry as full-time or part-time on the same time-honoured basis as before, namely the criterion used by the institution. (The fact that institutions change their definitions from time to time means that while this method may be time-honoured and may make historical series possible, it does not enjoy the pristine purity that the authors perhaps think it does.) Because both the full-time/part-time breakdown and the (Fiscal Full-Time Equivalent) for each student is in USIS reports, it is also possible to breakdown aggregate FTE data by the full-time/part-time distinction.

For purely provincial purposes associated with apportioning operating support to institutions, a statistic called the "Fiscal Full-Time Equivalent" was agreed upon after wide consultation. This reflects the fact that many institutions have pursued flexible course load and fee policies for full-time as well as part-time students. Students course loads are very fluid. A recent study in one Ontario institution shows the following average course loads of students registered as full-time: 1973-74, 5.00; 1974-75, 4.95; 1975-76, 4.90; 1976-77, 4.94; 1977-78, 4.86. (Throughout the period covered, the definition of full-time was consistent in terms of the minimum course load). In view of this kind of variance within an institution not to speak of between institutions, linking "Full-Time Equivalents" to actual course loads is necessary. In this, of course, the Ministry was following rather than leading changes in the academic policies of institutions. But the important point is that the provincial element does not affect historical series based on the distinction between full and part-time students; Statistics Canada should not suddenly find it has an unwelcome statistical gremlin bedevilling its numbers.

The goal of the Ministry has been to reduce annual recurrent data requirements to a core of data which are needed for international, national, interprovincial and provincial statistical reporting and policy analysis purposes. To avoid duplication of effort on the part of responding institutions as well as to forestall widely variant definitions between provinces, the province has also pursued the policy of cooperating fully with Statistics Canada. For all its flaws, the USIS system provides the flexibility to achieve these goals. The core recently recommended by a committee of Ministry staff, registrars and institutional analysts corresponds very closely to what Trotter and Creet have recommended. Others that they have pointed out as needing only occasional monitoring, e.g., continuing education, representation from social class groups and employment fits are, of course, not a part of the USIS system and have not been proposed for inclusion in the USIS system by the Ministry. For the authors to suggest, however, that language group data and interprovincial mobility are not justifiable on a recurrent basis in this country suggests that they are not fully attuned to some of the important national and provincial policy issues.

The authors suggest that institutions have been blamed for short-comings in the system because they have not reported with a high degree of precision. Again, the fact has been that all but a few Ontario institutions have reported data with a reasonably high degree of accuracy and precision. The recent provincial review committee referred to above concluded that institutions could and should report data with a high degree of precision in the core elements.

The assumption that provincial needs for data are for purely "financial control" purposes and that they are somehow of a totally different class than data say for interprovincial or national purposes is based on a very restricted view of the responsibility of provincial ministries, advisory councils and other provincial agencies. Universities, provincial governments, advisory councils and national agencies must have access to a common core of essential data consistently compiled, so that among other things, interprovincial comparisons can be made. Ontario universities we hasten to add have made extensive use of interprovincial comparisons. To dismantle this will set the clock back. USIS, for all its acknowledged faults, provides the essential core data identified by Trotter and Creet while giving provinces additional flexibility to meet purely local needs. Beyond this essential core, however, the Ministry recognizes that special periodic survey

activity is needed. To say that the Ministry is "pushing hard to go all the way to a single multi-purpose system" is of course, untrue as far as data on universities is concerned.

Benson A. Wilson
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
Province of Ontario

Bernard Trotter and Mario Creet reply:

Our purpose was to raise broader questions than Mr. Wilson has addressed; namely, what kinds of information are useful for policy and planning whether in a provincial or a national context. However, as Mr. Wilson has focussed on current practice in Ontario, we shall restrict our observations similarly. And we thank him for the opportunity of up-dating our analysis by referring to events which have occurred during the year since we completed the paper in July, 1977.

A central part of our argument was that there is a tension between the data requirements of financial administration and the information needed for policy and planning. We observed that pre-occupation with the former was tending to squeeze out the latter, and that policy makers and planners were likely to get short shrift. Mr. Wilson denies that there is any conflict in theory or in practice. We will confine ourselves to three examples drawn from recent events which will illustrate three different facets of the conflict and show how planners and policy makers have lost ground.

1. *The misplaced "part-time" enrolment.*

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has published for each year since 1972/73 a statistical summary of enrolments in, and financial support of, post-secondary institutions in Ontario. The summary for 1976/77 is now in the process of preparation. Table IB of the draft shows the series for part-time enrolments, separately for the colleges and the universities. The university totals for 1975/76 and 1976/77 are given as 22,072.1 and 19,660.2 respectively, and a footnote runs as follows: "Figure for 1976 undergraduates is estimated by multiplying total fall-term fiscal FTEs x 2 less 1 FTE per full-time student." The footnote needs some decoding. The fiscal full-time equivalent (FFTE) is a figure computed by aggregating all the course registrations in a program for one term and dividing by the full-time course load imputed to the program, thus arriving at a full-time-equivalent figure which includes both full- and part-time students indiscriminately. Doubling this figure converts it into an equivalent for the academic year (1 FTE = 2 FFTE). To arrive at the part-time component, the portion attributed to the full-time component is subtracted from the aggregate FTE. The assumption underlying the latter operation is that a full-time student is exactly 1 FTE, despite the contrary evidence produced in Mr. Wilson's letter (the drift in course loads, presumably for a BA program, from 5.00 to 4.86). There are several points to notice. The example displays the Ministry's concern with achieving precision in accounting. It shows how this preoccupation has led to a construction which clouds rather than clarifies the situation for other purposes. For example, other information obtained directly from the universities indicates that the drop in part-time enrolment from