

attainment in the various subjects of examination is in general on a level with that in the universities of Great Britain, and that for the higher degrees research work of excellent quality has been sent in, such as would entitle those who had produced it to the award of similar distinctions in any British university. (It is interesting to note that one of the Examiners, whose report goes into considerable detail and evinces a specially sympathetic interest in the New Zealand University, states that his task was in several cases rendered unusually difficult by the fact that the regulations precluded him from consulting with the professors under whom the candidate had studied.)

When, however, the scope of the examinations is considered, it seems impossible to maintain that the New Zealand initial degree in Arts or Science is up to the level of the corresponding British or Australian degree. In planning initial degree courses universities recognize that the first year's work is intended for the freshman straight from school, the second for the student who has had one year's experience of university study and is able, therefore, to approach his work in a more competent way, and the third for the still more mature student of the final year. Hence, to ensure that there shall be provision for the expanding powers of the students, degree regulations usually prescribe that one subject at least must be studied continuously for three years. In the University of New Zealand it is possible for a student to take a degree entirely on work of first year's grade. The regulation runs as follows: "Every course for the degree shall consist of—(a) Four Pass subjects and two Advanced subjects, or (b) five Pass subjects and one Advanced subject, or (c) six Pass subjects." (A Pass subject is pursued for one year only; an Advanced subject for three years.) In the British Universities four first-year courses are generally regarded as a fair allowance for a full academic year. On this basis one and a half years would be sufficient time for covering six such courses, and judging from the syllabuses given in the calendars of the Universities, it would appear that the amount of work required for a Pass subject in the New Zealand University is about equivalent to a one year's course in the same subject in a British or Australian university. If this be so, the third alternative would involve only about half the work required for the B.A. degree in England or Australia. But even assuming that the New Zealand Pass subject is somewhat more extensive, alternative (c) could hardly be held as equivalent to more than two-thirds of the work required for the B.A. degree elsewhere. It is to the credit of the New Zealand students that this "soft option" is selected only by about one in four of the students. Of the entrants for the final section of the B.A. degree (1924) the numbers taking these courses were respectively (a) 36; (b) 143; (c) 68.

Degrees in Arts and in Science compared with British and Australian degrees.

These alternatives, again, are in themselves very unequal in scope and character. Taking as the unit of study one subject pursued for a single year, alternative (a) contains eight units, (b) seven, and (c) six. It appears that (c) represents the original degree course, which by the abolition of compulsory subjects has been progressively weakened, and that (a) and (b) were subsequently introduced for the purpose of strengthening the degree, but that the authors of this reform were unable at the same time to secure the closing of the old avenue. We understand that the University has before it a proposal for the abolition of (c), and we desire to express the strong opinion that this most necessary reform should not be delayed. But, apart from this, alternatives (a) and (b), though forming a great advance on (c), can hardly be placed on a level with the requirements of the universities already referred to. In Great Britain and Australia a minimum of nine units is required, giving a rate of three units per year: the two improved alternatives fall short of this standard by one and two units respectively. Again, from the study of the syllabuses it would appear that the New Zealand unit is not appreciably larger in scope or more difficult in character than the British or Australian. We would suggest that the requirements for this degree should be equalized and brought up to the British standard by the adoption of a nine-unit minimum; also that freedom of option in the selection of subjects should be curtailed, so far as may be necessary in order to secure a proper balance of study.

Number who take easiest course.

Standard of Arts degree.

To enable a comparison to be made, we furnish in the Appendix to this Report an outline of the conditions prescribed for the B.A. degree in the Universities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide.