

GRADUATE CURRICULUM CHANGE MEMO

Date: 11/14/2022

From: Rebecca Reid, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Through: Gaspare Genna, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Through: Dean Bencomo, College of Liberal Arts

To: Martine Ceberio, Graduate Council

Proposal Title: Removal of GRE for Graduate Admissions for MA POLS

The Department of Political Science and Public Administration supports dropping the GRE requirement for Master's of Political Science applications. The attached document explains the nature of the request and rationale. In essence, empirical evidence demonstrates that the GRE does not predict student success in this program, consistent with similar evidence across political science and academia generally. Requiring the GRE fails to offer useful information in the admissions process, systematically under predicts minority students' success, and poses a financial barrier to applicants in a manner contrary to UTEP's mission of access and excellence as a Hispanic Serving Institution.

The University of Texas at El Paso requests approval to change the admission criteria for their MA in Political Science within the Department of Political Science and Public Administration as follows:

Description of Change [Required]. (*List only the changes being proposed.*)

The UTEP Department of Political Science and Public Administration proposes to revise the MA Political Science admissions criteria. This proposal seeks to **remove the GRE requirement** from the admissions requirements for the Master's in Political Science program.

Rationale for Change

1. The GRE does not provide additional valuable information to our admissions decision-making process.

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test is intended to offer information about student knowledge and readiness that is comparable across institutions, where undergraduate experiences and quality may vary significantly. However, recent scholarship reveals the weak correlation between GRE scores and student success in graduate school programs (Liefv Benderly 2017; Moneta-Koehler et al 2017; Orlando 2005; Peterson et al. 2018; Sealy et al. 2019; Verostek et al. 2021; Kuncel et al. 2001; Perez 2011; Petersen et al. 2018).¹ In response to this empirical reality—

¹ Liefv, Benderly, B. 2017. “GREs Don’t Predict Grad School Success. What Does?” *Science* (June 7, 2017). <https://www.science.org/content/article/gres-dont-predict-grad-school-success-what-does>

Perez, K. 2011. “GRE as a Predictor of Graduate Student Success at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education”. FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 361. <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/361/>.

Kuncel, N.R., Hezlett, S.A., and Ones, D. S. 2001. “A Comprehensive Meta-analysis of the Predictive Validity of the Graduate Record Examinations: Implications for Graduate Student Selection and Performance.” *Psychological Bulletin* 127 (1): 162- 181.

Orlando, J. 2005. “The Reliability of GRE Scores in Predicting Graduate School Success: A Meta-analytic, Cross-functional, Regressive, Unilateral, Post-Kantian, Hyper-empirical, Quadruple Blind, Bergiage-intensive and Hemerrhoid-inducing Study.” *Ubiquity* (June 2005) 1.

Verostek, M., Miller, C., and Zwickl, B. 2021. “Analyzing Admissions Metrics as Predictors of Graduate GPA and Whether Graduate GPA Mediates PhD Completion.” *Physical Review. Physics Education Research* 17 (2): 020115.

Moneta-Koehler, L., Brown, A.M., Petrie, K.A., Evans, B.J., and Chalkley, R. 2017. “The Limitations of the GRE in Predicting Success in Biomedical Graduate School.” *PloS One* 12 (1).

Peterson, S.L., Erenrich, E.S., Levine, D.L., Vigoreaux, J., and Gile, K. 2018. “Multi-institutional Study of GRE Scores as Predictors of STEM PhD Degree Completion: GRE Gets a Low Mark.” *PloS One* 13 (10).

as evidence that the test puts underrepresented groups as a disadvantage—many graduate programs across disciplines have removed the GRE from their admissions requirements (Langin 2019).² Several studies show that GRE scores fail to predict student graduation, time in graduate programs, publications, or grants/fellowships (Langin 2019).³

Turning to UTEP MA Political Science evidence, we evaluate student GRE scores with several measures of student success in our own program. We use anonymized individual data from 2016 to present (Fall 2022). We test aggregate and disaggregated GRE scores regressions on student success, measured as student GPA, degree completion/retention, and time to degree completion. We present the results for each analysis below, but the main results are that ***GRE scores do not systematically predict student success for any of the three indicators.***

GPA

Table 1 shows analyses of GRE scores on student overall GPA. As indicated below, GRE quantitative and writing scores do not predict GPA at all. Only GRE verbal scores achieve statistical significance in predicting GPA, but with a tiny effect size (0.036).

Table 1: GRE Scores Predicting Student GPA

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Aggregate GRE Score	0.021* (0.009)	--	--	--
Quantitative GRE Score	--	0.033 (0.020)	--	--
Verbal GRE Score	--	--	0.036* (0.014)	--
Writing GRE Score	--	--	--	0.121 (0.150)
Constant	-2.699 (2.672)	-1.216 (2.931)	-1.853 (2.178)	3.125* (0.582)
Observations	34	34	34	34
R ²	0.148	0.077	0.163	0.020
Adjusted R ²	0.121	0.049	0.137	-0.011
F Statistic (df=1; 32)	5.540*	2.686	6.253*	0.651

*p<0.05

We also compared the GPA of students who provided GRE scores in their applications to students for whom the GRE was waived (from 2016-2022). There is no difference in GPA across these two student groups, as indicated in Table 2.

Smith, R.L., Maroney, K., Nelson, K.W., Abel, A.L., and Abel, H.S. 2006. "Doctoral Programs: Changing High Rates of Attrition." *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* 45 (1): 17- 31.

Sealy, L., Saunders, C., Blume, J., and Chalkley, R. 2019. "The GRE Over the Entire Range of Scores Lacks Predictive Ability for PhD Outcomes in the Biomedical Sciences." *PLoS One* 14 (2).

² Langin, K. 2019. "A Wave of Graduate Programs Drops the GRE Application Requirement." <<https://www.science.org/content/article/wave-graduate-programs-drop-gre-application-requirement>>

³ *Ibid*

Table 2: GRE Waiver on Student GPA

	Model 1
Waived GRE Score	-0.323 (0.275)
Constant	3.532* (0.159)
Observations	45
R ²	0.031
Adjusted R ²	0.009
F Statistic (df=1; 43)	1.383

*p<0.05

Note: GRE waived is coded where 0=no and 1=yes.

Retention

We compare student stop-out rates between students who submitted GRE scores and students who had their GRE waived. We find that there is no difference between these two groups of students, as shown in Table 3. In other words, students who had the GRE waived are *not* more likely to stop out of the graduate program.

Table 3: GRE Waiver on Student Stop Outs

	Model 1
Waived GRE Score	0.018 (0.124)
Constant	0.182* (0.069)
Observations	48
R ²	0.0005
Adjusted R ²	-0.021
F Statistic (df=1; 46)	0.021

*p<0.05

Note: GRE waived is coded where 0=no and 1=yes. Stop outs = 1 (0 otherwise).

We also examine if GRE scores predict student likelihood to stop out, finding that GRE scores do not reach statistical significance for aggregate or disaggregated scores. Hence, GRE scores do not offer any valuable information about the likelihood of students to complete the program or stop out.

Table 4: GRE Scores Predicting Student Stop Outs

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Aggregate GRE Score	-0.008 (0.005)	--	--	--
Quantitative GRE Score	--	-0.018 (0.010)	--	--
Verbal GRE Score	--	--	-0.010	--

			(0.008)	
Writing GRE Score	--	--	--	-0.096 (0.078)
Constant	2.539 (1.424)	2.784 (1.440)	1.704 (1.249)	0.541 (0.300)
Observations	33	33	33	33
R ²	0.081	0.095	0.046	0.046
Adjusted R ²	0.052	0.066	0.015	0.016
F Statistic (df=1; 31)	2.748	3.273	1.489	1.507

*p<0.05

Note: Stop outs are coded as 1 (and 0 otherwise).

Time to Degree Completion

Finally, we examine if GRE scores correlate with time of program or degree completion. These results are shown in Table 5. We find that GRE scores are not statistically significant in predicting student time to degree completion. (Table 4) In other words, GRE scores do not predict student ability to complete the MA program within the two-year standard.

Table 5: GRE Scores Predicting Time to Degree Completion

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Aggregate GRE Score	0.002 (0.012)	--	--	--
Quantitative GRE Score	--	-0.001 (0.027)	--	--
Verbal GRE Score	--	--	0.006 (0.020)	--
Writing GRE Score	--	--	--	0.100 (0.199)
Constant	3.590 (3.720)	4.433 (3.970)	3.467 (2.985)	3.940* (0.771)
Observations	22	22	22	22
R ²	0.002	0.00004	0.004	0.012
Adjusted R ²	-0.048	-0.050	-0.046	-0.037
F Statistic (df=1; 20)	0.038	0.001	0.082	0.253

*p<0.05

Note: Time to degree completion is measured in number of semesters and excludes stop outs. The standard time to degree completion for POLS MA is two years (or four semesters).

We also examined if student for whom the GRE was waived took longer to complete the Master's program in Political Science compared to students who submitted their GRE scores. As shown in Table 6, there is no difference across these student groups in terms of how long it takes them to complete the graduate program.

Table 6: GRE Waiver on Student Time to Degree Completion

	Model 1
Waived GRE Score	0.682

	(0.381)
Constant	4.318* (0.187)
Observations	29
R ²	0.106
Adjusted R ²	0.073
F Statistic (df=1; 27)	3.209

*p<0.05

Note: GRE waived is coded where 0=no and 1=yes.

In sum, the GRE does not offer information that improves or assists in admission decisions. Of all of these results, the only correlation between GRE and student success is a small relationship between verbal GRE scores and student GPA. Verbal acuity is more directly ascertained from other application materials that already exist in our requirements, such as the statement of purpose. As such, the GRE offers no added benefit to admissions decisions—while posing serious concerns that undermine our enrollment and fulfillment of the UTEP mission, as discussed below.

2. Requiring the GRE violates UTEP mission for access and excellence by systematically disadvantaging low income and minority applicants.

Studies indicate that women and members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups score lower on the GRE compared to white (and Asian) men (Langin 2019). This disparity is due not to innate intellectual capacity or potential for student success; rather, it is due to existing disparities in educational background and unequal access to opportunities—as argued by Educational Testing Services (ETS) itself. Indeed, the ETS data suggests that women and most ethnic minorities score lower on the GRE, which can lead to incorrect usage and bias (Educational Testing Service 2008).⁴ ETS, the creator of the GRE, warns that there is only a “tenuous” connection between test scores and success in graduate school and that the GRE underpredicts the success of minority students, women over 25 (more than half of female test-takers) (Clayton 2016).⁵ Instead, the GRE correlates with student socioeconomic status, gender, and race—meaning that it is better reflects privileges in educational background, socioeconomic status, and other existing disparities than graduate success (Clayton 2016). ETS data and analyses from 2016-2021 show systematic differences in scores across gender, US citizenship status, age, and racial/ethnic groups—as well as intersectional groups falling into two or more of these categories (Educational Testing Service 2021).⁶ Combined with the financial costs to take the test (\$205), train for the test (with courses ranging from \$150 to \$2500), and often travel to take the test—the GRE further creates inequities of opportunity for low income and underrepresented students. As a timed test, the GRE can also disenfranchise capable students

⁴ Educational Testing Service. 2008. “Factors that can Influence Performance on the GRE General Test 2006-2007.”

⁵ Clayton, V. 2016. “The Problem With the GRE: The Exam ‘is a Proxy for Asking ‘Are You Rich?’ ‘Are You White?’ ‘Are You Male?’”. *The Atlantic* “ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-problem-with-the-gre/471633/>

⁶ Educational Testing Service. 2021. “A Snapshot of the Individuals Who Took the GRE General Test: July 2016- June 2021.” <https://www.ets.org/pdfs/gre/snapshot.pdf>

whose first language is not English.

Proposal

For these reasons, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration propose removing the GRE requirement for admissions requirements for applicants to the MA Political Science program. The GRE does not measure student intellectual capability, knowledge, or readiness; offers no systematic indication of student success; and perpetuates disparities in educational and financial opportunities in ways that further opportunities to these already underrepresented and historically excluded groups. Instead, we will place more emphasis on statements of purpose in our application to evaluate likelihood of student success, which is a more holistic review of student motivation, preparedness, verbal and writing skills, and matching between our program and their career goals. Our master's degree requires a statement of purpose by applicants, which must address the applicant's career goals and reasons for completing an MA to advance these goals. We believe the statement of purpose is a better indicator of potential student success and potential for employment in our master's degree program.

Current Unconditional Admission Criteria	Proposed Unconditional Admission Criteria
Application form and application fee	Application form and application fee
Official undergraduate (and graduate) transcripts	Official undergraduate (and graduate) transcripts
Two letters of recommendation	Two letters of recommendation
Statement of purpose	Statement of purpose
Official GRE scores	GRE scores are not required
Official TOEFL scores (foreign students only)	Official TOEFL scores (foreign students only)
Other supporting materials	Other supporting materials

CURRICULUM CHANGE PROPOSAL

APPROVAL PAGE

Proposal Title: Removal of GRE for Graduate Admissions for MA POLS

College: College of Liberal Arts

Department: Political Science and Public Administration

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I have read the enclosed proposal and approve this proposal on behalf of the department.



12/2/2022

Signature

Date

COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE CHAIR

I have read the enclosed documents and approve the proposal on behalf of the college curriculum committee.

Signature

Date

COLLEGE DEAN

I have read the enclosed documents and approve the proposal on behalf of the college. I certify that the necessary funds will be allocated by the college in support of this proposal.

Signature

Date