

Current Standardized Test Requirements and Alternative Admission Standards

Each graduate program at The University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas) requires minimum [admission requirements](#) as listed in the Graduate Catalog, conducting its own holistic admissions review process in accordance with the [Regents' Rule 40303](#). Graduate programs may propose alternative admission standards instead of standardized GRE or GMAT scores when the targeted student population justifies it. Current examples are the two schools, the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication, who do not require GRE scores; instead, their programs require writing portfolios as alternative admission standards. Other examples include self-supporting graduate programs, such as those offered by the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and the Naveen Jindal School of Management, which are geared to working professionals whose work experiences are substituted for the test scores.

Guidelines for Standardized Test Waivers

The Office of Graduate Education (OGE) will work in concert with the Graduate Council to provide guidelines to their graduate programs' admission committees who may request temporary (i.e., pandemic restrictions), individual (one program/department at a school), or permanent waivers of standardized exam scores in admissions decisions. OGE and Graduate Council note that standardized entrance exams are intended to give admission committees an opportunity to evaluate and compare the merit of applicants on a common metric because GPAs from different universities, programs, or forms of academic preparation are not always comparable. However, in adherence to *Texas Education Code Section 51.842(11)(b)*, the graduate admissions committee may not use standardized test scores as the sole criterion for consideration of the applicants or as the primary criterion to end consideration of the applicants. Moreover, OGE and Graduate Council note that:

1. In making admissions decisions, committee members should review a variety of application materials to assess the applicant's success in the program.
2. All application materials, not just standardized test scores, are prone to biases. Eliminating a requirement can exacerbate the inequalities created by these biases. Prior to pursuing a waiver of the GRE or GMAT, programs should critically analyze the subjective nature of, and the biases that may exist with, all application materials.
3. Those seeking a waiver should also analyze data on applicants, admitted students, and newly enrolled students to their program to determine how the absence of a standardized test score, the GRE or GMAT, will affect the admission review.
4. Diversity of the student body – including geographic diversity – should not suffer as a result of waiving the requirement.
5. Additionally, programs seeking a waiver should establish an assessment plan to ensure that the waiver's effects are reviewed and evaluated annually or after lifting temporary waivers.

Proposals to waive the GRE or GMAT requirement should clearly state the results of these discussions and analyses and should outline the program's review process along with its annual assessment plan/report. Waiver proposals should also outline what the graduate program is seeking to improve and why waiving the GRE or GMAT requirement will aid in achieving the desired improvement. Temporary waivers of the test scores are also an opportunity for the program(s) to examine the impact on the holistic admission review to determine whether a permanent waiver is desirable.

Even if a program does not require standardized test scores, students who believe that exam scores would strengthen their applications should not be discouraged from submitting them.

Fast Track Programs

Since UT Dallas offers [fast track options](#) to its qualified senior undergraduate students, OGE and Graduate Council further suggest that justifications for waiving standardized exam requirements are based on their

academic performance in the major's courses and will be matriculated into the graduate program if they meet all undergraduate requirements.

Self-supporting Programs

Self-supporting (self-funded) programs are tailored to serve non-traditional students who are working professionals and executives. Additionally, the method of delivery will be more flexible to allow these professionals to further their education at their own pace while they maintain and continue their full-time careers. These programs may propose work experience as an alternative admission standard in lieu of scores.

Waiver Request Materials

When a graduate program decides to move forward with the waiver proposal by removing the GRE / GMAT requirements from its admissions criteria, they will need to submit a waiver request with supporting documentation to ensure the integrity of the holistic admission review. Supporting documentation will justify why standardized test scores no longer serve as useful selective criteria for admission into the graduate program, and that these scores do not predict success for their admitted students. Temporary documentation is also needed, such as GRE exams being unavailable and unreliable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The waiver request materials should include, but are not limited to the following:

1. State whether the waiver request is temporary, individual program/department, or permanent.
2. Explain the usage of current admission criteria and/or suggested alternative admission criterion without the GRE or GMAT score.
3. Evidence from UT Dallas' aspirational peers, including those in Texas, who offer similar programs that also do not require a GRE or GMAT score.
4. Evidence of how the program will evaluate its students' performance to indicate the impact of not requiring the GRE or GMAT score for a specific period, including the effects on the student cohort and program caused by a temporary public health pandemic disruption.
5. Provide statements of why the removal of the GRE or GMAT is preferred over revising and publishing required minimum quantitative scores or requiring the standardized exam and publishing a range of competitive scores that may vary by cohort if requesting an individual/department and permanent waiver.

For programs of any type, the following justifications are not recommended:

1. The use of anecdotal statements or unsubstantiated data to suggest that the standardized test scores do not predict success in the graduate program.
2. Personal opinions and/or beliefs that waiving standardized test scores may lower the caliber of students being admitted or may adversely impact the program's academic quality without providing substantiated data.
3. Expressing workload concerns in reviewing all application materials although admission committees should not rely on the standardized test scores as the sole criterion for consideration.

Submission of Waiver Proposal and Routing through Internal/External Process

After receiving approval from both the school/program faculty and dean in adherence to its [bylaws](#), the graduate program will submit the waiver request in one of two ways: (1) if the waiver is temporary, submit the request to Dr. Juan Gonzalez, Dean of Graduate Education via [email](#); he will review and approve the request; or (2) if the waiver is permanent, send the request to Dr. Serenity King, Associate Provost for Policy and Program Coordination via [email](#). She will also be available to guide faculty through this process before routing the permanent waiver request through the internal UT Dallas governance approval process prior to submitting the request for placement on the Board of Regents' next meeting agenda; the Board of Regents will review and approve the requested revisions to the graduate program's admission criteria.