

Holistic Admissions

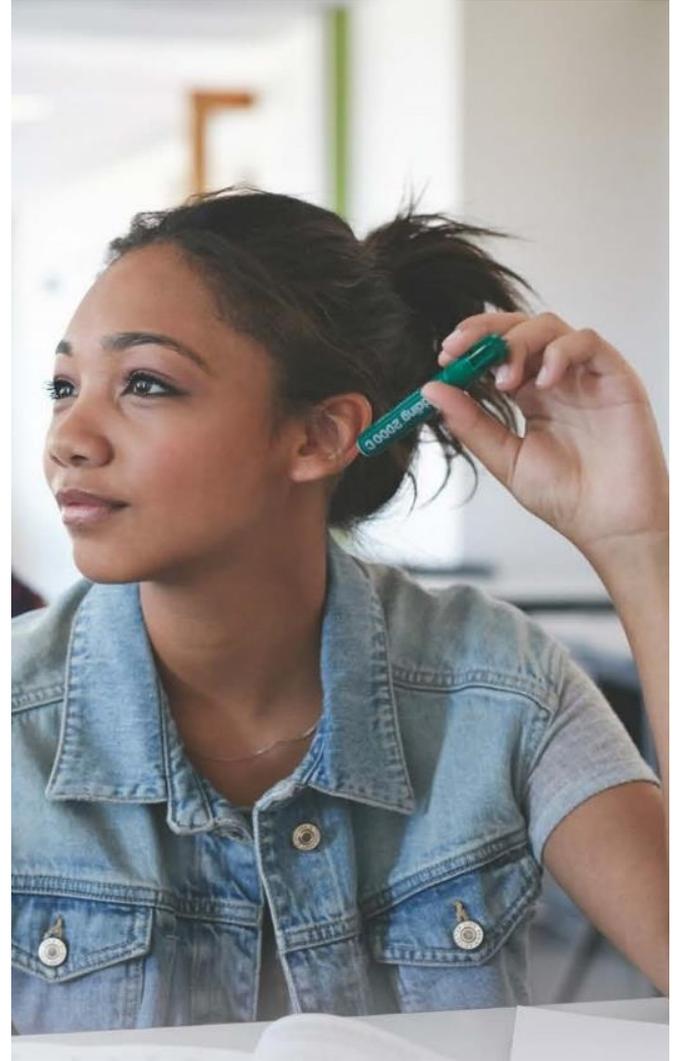
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Overview

- Holistic Admissions
 - Description and Benefits
 - Promising Practices that Institutions Are Using Now
 - Resources that Can Help



Description and benefits of holistic admissions

A method in which reviewers consider all available information to get a more complete picture of what all applicants can bring to a program.

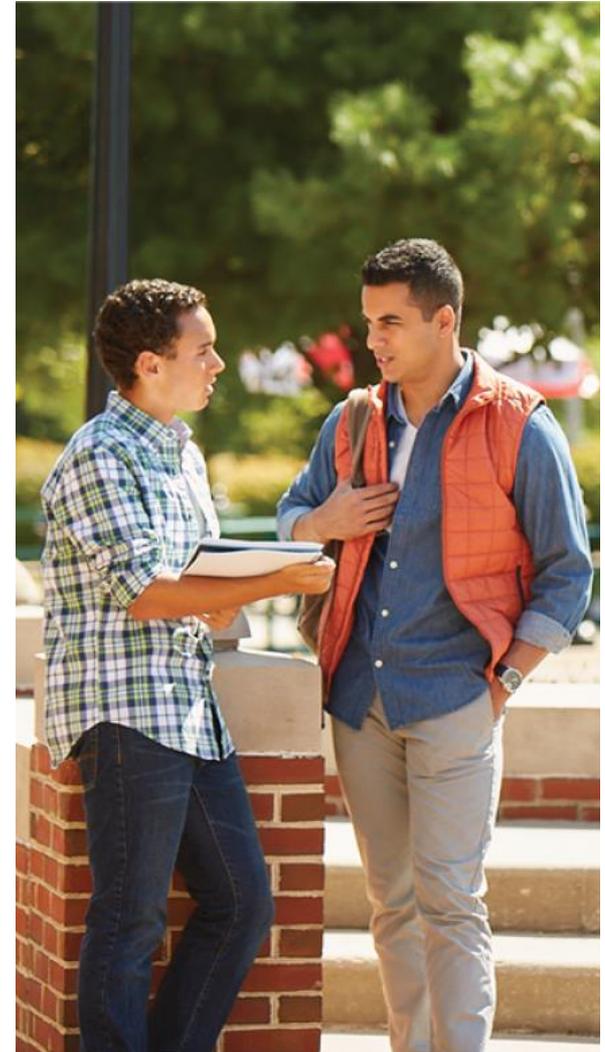
Implemented appropriately, it can support a fair and inclusive process that helps to identify applicants that effectively meet program needs and support institutional goals.



Description and benefits of holistic admissions

Programs conducting holistic admissions typically:

- Use evidence and information from multiple sources
- Avoid using threshold scores determined using only UGPA and GRE scores
- Give thought to the weighting of various components, and the order in which those components are reviewed



Public support for using *GRE*[®] scores as part of holistic admissions

THE HECHINGER REPORT

Covering Innovation & Inequality in Education

“ Some graduate programs have identified dropping the GRE as a solution to increase diversity. In an unequal society, equity will not present itself clearly with the elimination of one piece of the admissions puzzle, especially when so many of the other pieces are subjective — and therefore susceptible to our biases. Instead, it’s necessary for the focus to shift toward eliminating layers of institutional bias for underrepresented groups across every educational level and to move the blame away from one single aspect. Disregarding the one piece of an admissions packet that levels the playing field across race, gender and socioeconomic status is a step back to when social class was a determining factor in the college admissions process. Admissions processes that use standardized assessments, coupled with more subjective measures like essays, internships and interviews, are inherently fairer and more respectful to applicants, while also helping institutions achieve their diversity goals. ”

Michael Cunningham, professor of psychology and Africana studies, Tulane University

<https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-making-campus-diversity-real-starting-in-kindergarten/>

Holistic admissions is about being inclusive, not exclusive

- Scores are essential because they:
 - Support institutions' efforts to identify which applicants are academically prepared for graduate-level study
 - Provide a common, objective measure to help programs compare applicants from different backgrounds.
- However, they are just one piece of the puzzle and should always be considered along with other pieces of information.

How to move toward a holistic admissions process

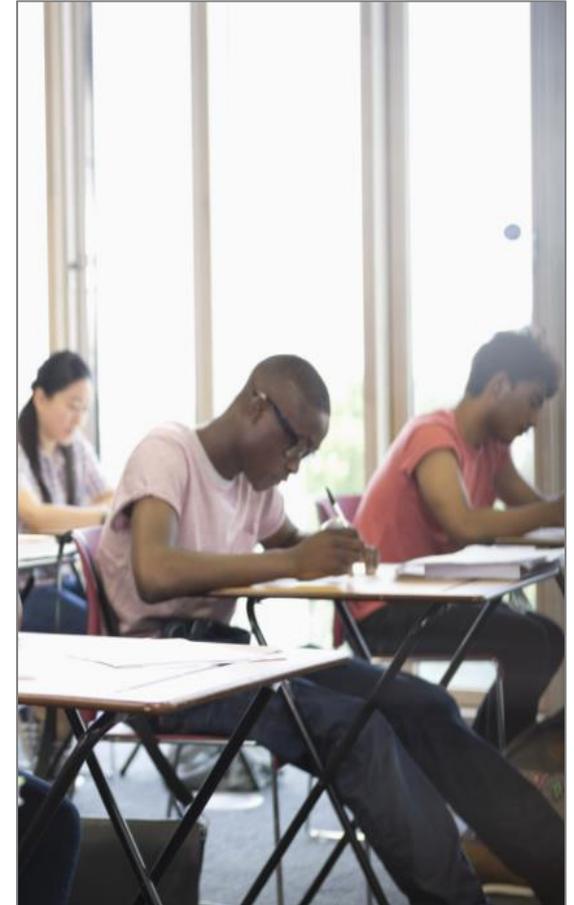


- We don't know of a "best way," but we can share "promising practices."
- ETS's research
 - 71 on-campus interviews with deans & faculty to learn about current admissions practices and challenges
 - These interviews and extensive literature review informed the curation and development of 12 promising practices

Promising Practices: Goal Setting

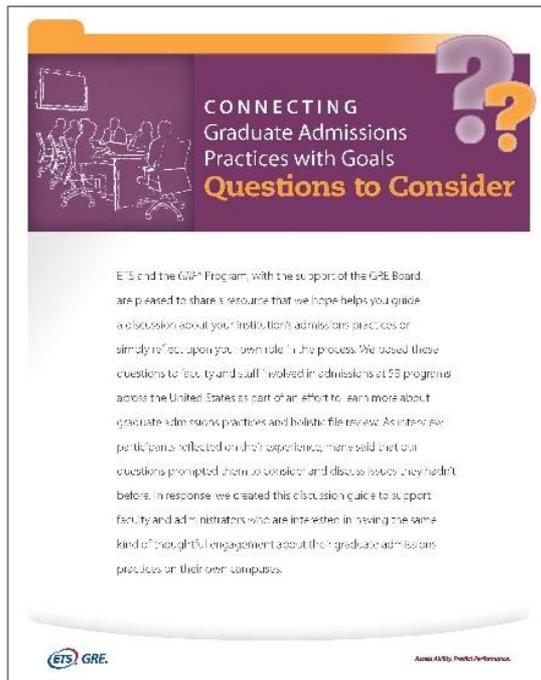
Work together to set goals and strategies to achieve them

- Agree upon goals early on and structure entire admissions process (recruitment to enrollment) to achieve them
- Be explicit about plans to identify and recruit desired populations and how to assess desired attributes
- Determine the role and importance of each component of an applicant's file



Promising Practices: Goal Setting (continued)

What can help: Discussion Guide



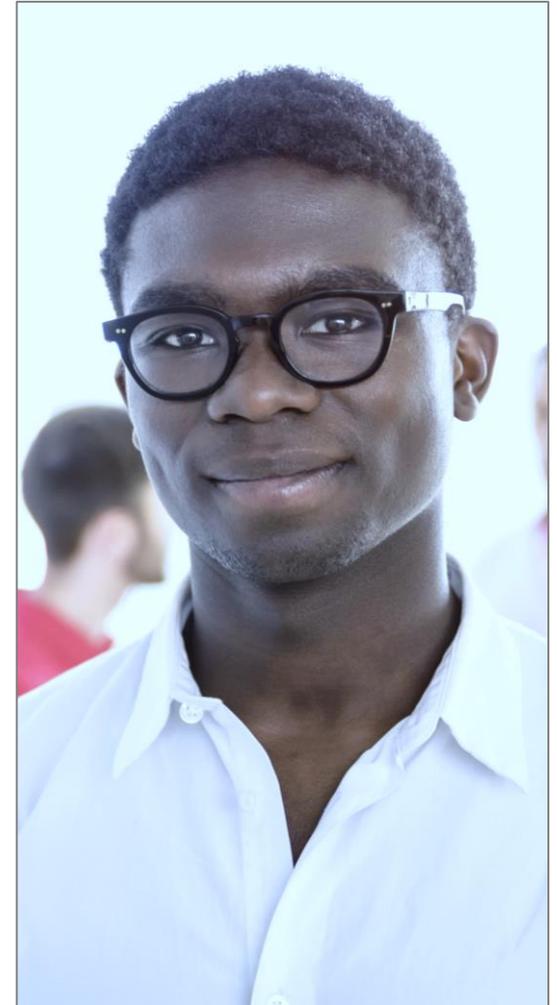
Available at holisticadmissions.org



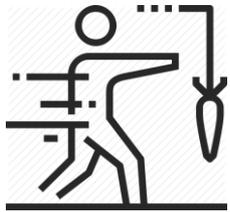
Promising Practices: Increasing Understanding

Determine and communicate the application review and selection process so all decision makers understand:

- Enrollment goals, strategy and process
- How to evaluate each component of the application
 - Role and importance
 - Order of review
 - What inferences can be made
- How to mitigate unconscious bias
- How disagreements will be resolved



An example...



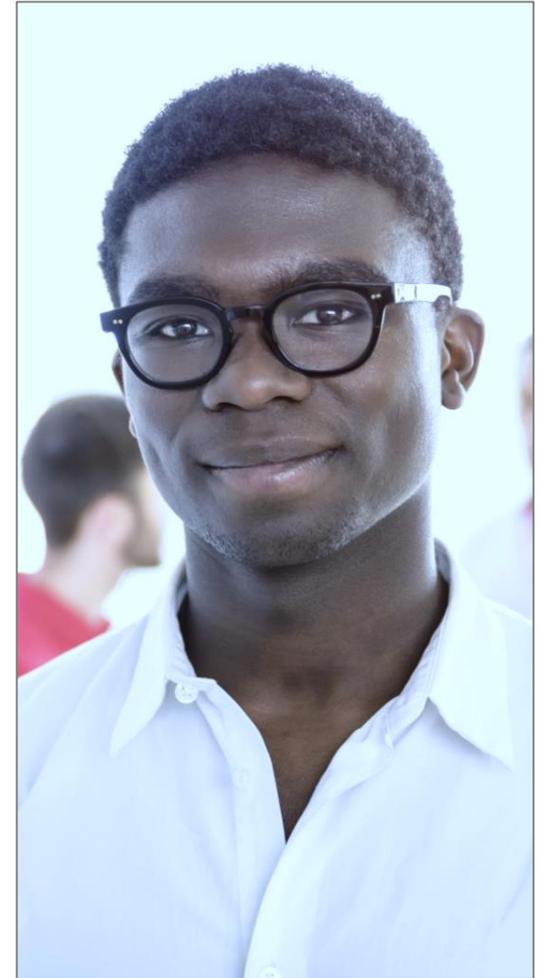
**Desired
Attribute**



**Related
Component**

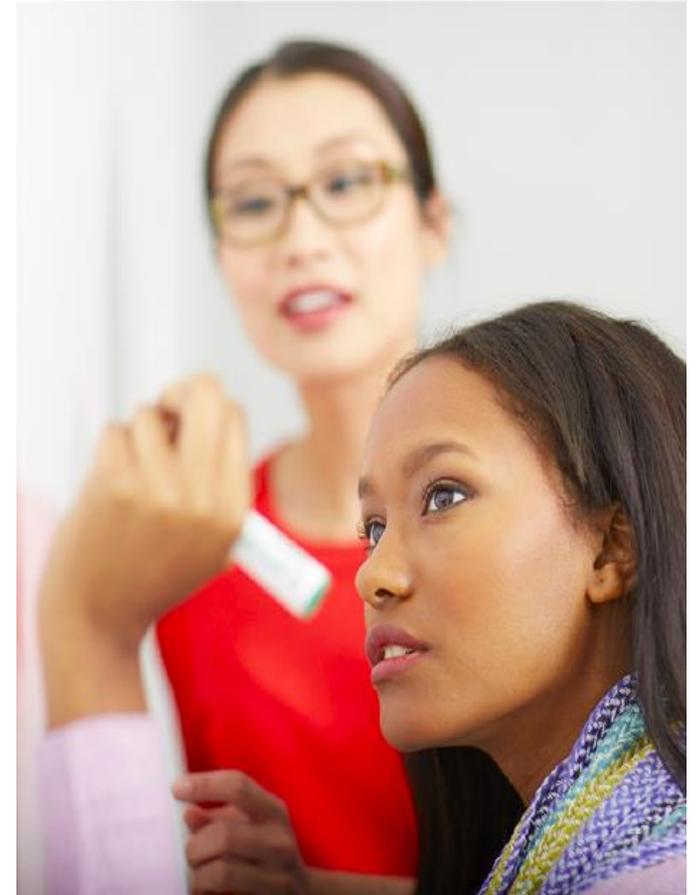


**Unrelated
Component**



Promising Practices: Diversify the Admissions Committee

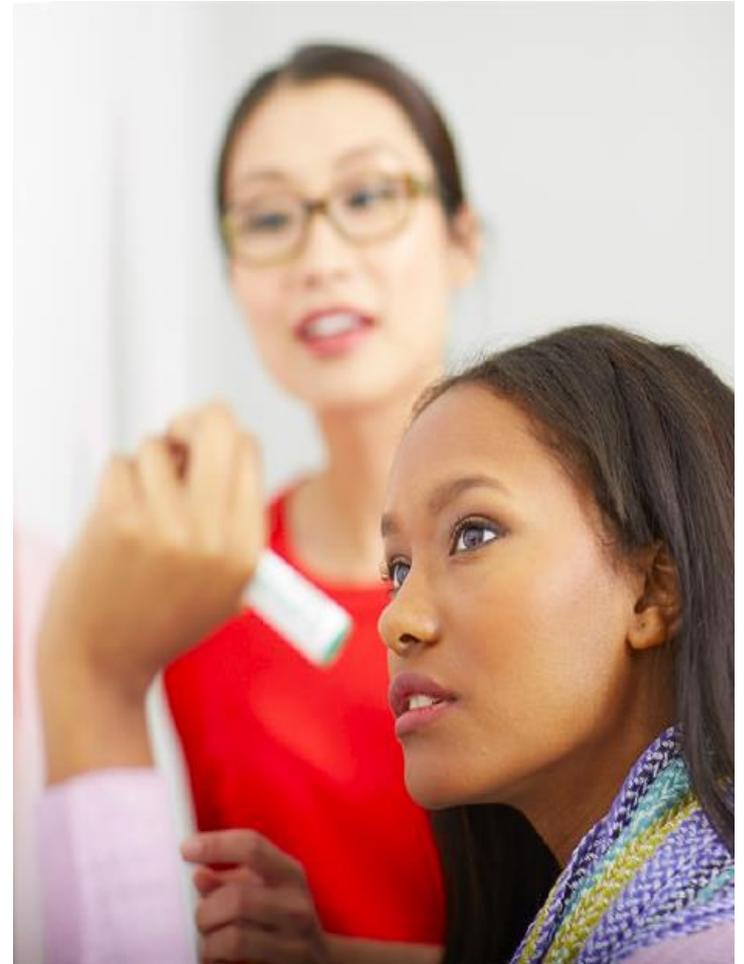
Institutions that make a commitment to diversity and inclusion could consider the composition of the admissions committee so that diverse perspectives and experiences are represented and reflected.



Promising Practices: Diversify the Admissions Committee (continued)

What can help: Providing Context

- Faculty opportunities to:
 - Learn about less familiar undergraduate schools, especially minority-serving institutions and those with large first-generation student populations.
 - Work with undergraduates from underrepresented groups.



Promising Practices: Screen In

- Consider ways to set criteria that would allow applicants to be included in the review, rather than excluded
- Ask programs to commit to focusing on at least **three** screen-in criteria. If using *GRE*[®] scores and GPA to make first cut, add at least one more criteria
- Each applicant, then, has at least **three** opportunities to be placed into the review pool, helping to ensure that qualified applicants aren't overlooked due to performance on just one measure



Promising Practices: Screen In (continued)

What can help: An example

- One graduate school made two changes to their application:
 - Request applicants provide information about specific educational experiences
 - Request recommenders rate applicants on a specific set of skills and applicants
- This information can be used in the screen-in process to create the applicant pool for review.



Promising Practices: *GRE*[®] Scores as a Positive Indicator



Consider GRE scores a useful, positive indicator of an applicant's preparedness for graduate study

- Scores should only be used in consultation with other materials
- Consider the amount of emphasis placed on scores if GRE scores are not consistent with other materials
- GRE scores provide the most valuable information when they are required of all applicants and can be especially helpful when the undergraduate institution is unfamiliar to reviewers

Public support for using *GRE*[®] scores as part of holistic admissions

Excerpted from *INSIDE HIGHER ED*

“ Coming from an undistinguished college where I lacked access to famous letter-writers, I hoped the GRE would be an equalizer for me... it's not clear to me that, on balance, the GRE confers significant advantages to high-income students, given that (i) high-income students are more likely than low-income students to attend [liberal arts colleges] or well-regarded research schools, which already serve as proxies for excellence; (ii) because high-income students are more likely to attend selective schools, they're more likely to have famous letter-writers... ”

Undergraduate student

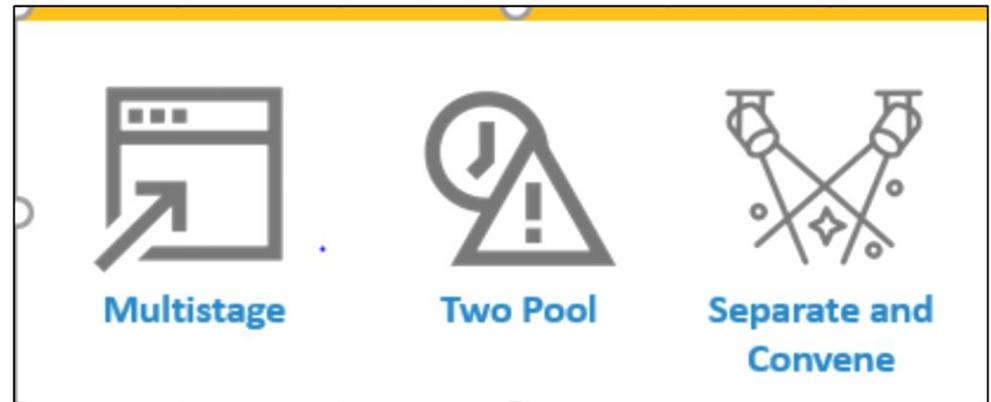
“ I had somewhat poor grades as an undergraduate for a variety of good and bad reasons. I think I had somewhat strong letters from somewhat known people. I also had notably strong GRE scores. My impression is that the scores helped significantly when applying to grad school, since without them the strong letters and the poor grades would have sort of cancelled each other out. I think I was a relatively strong grad student and, in any case, I now have tenure. ”

Faculty member

www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/09/17/decision-penns-philosophy-department-renews-debate-about-gre

What can help...

- Alternate review processes, such as “separate and convene”
- Holistic scorecard or rubric



| Component | Maximum Points |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Research | 5 |
| Recommendations | 3 |
| Work experience/CV | 3 |
| Undergrad curriculum | 2 |
| GPA | 4 |
| Personal statement | 3 |
| GRE® scores | 5 |
| Total | 25 |

| Component & Max Points | Points Values |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Research Max = 5 | 3 – 1 yr UG + work/internship research 2 – 1 year of UG research 0–1 – less than a year <i>1–2 extra for publications, posters, awards, etc.</i> |
| LORs Max = 3 | 3 – high on all 6 attributes 2 – high on 5 attributes 1 – high on 4 attributes |
| Work exp./CV Max = 3 | 2 – 2+ years related work exp. 1 – 1–2 years related work exp. <i>1 extra for volunteer work</i> |
| UG curriculum Max = 2 | 1 – extensive science coursework <i>1 extra for high UGI challenge</i> |
| GPA Max = 4 | 4 – 3.8 to 4.0 3 – 3.5 to 3.79 2 – 3.2 to 3.49 1 – 3.0 to 3.19 |

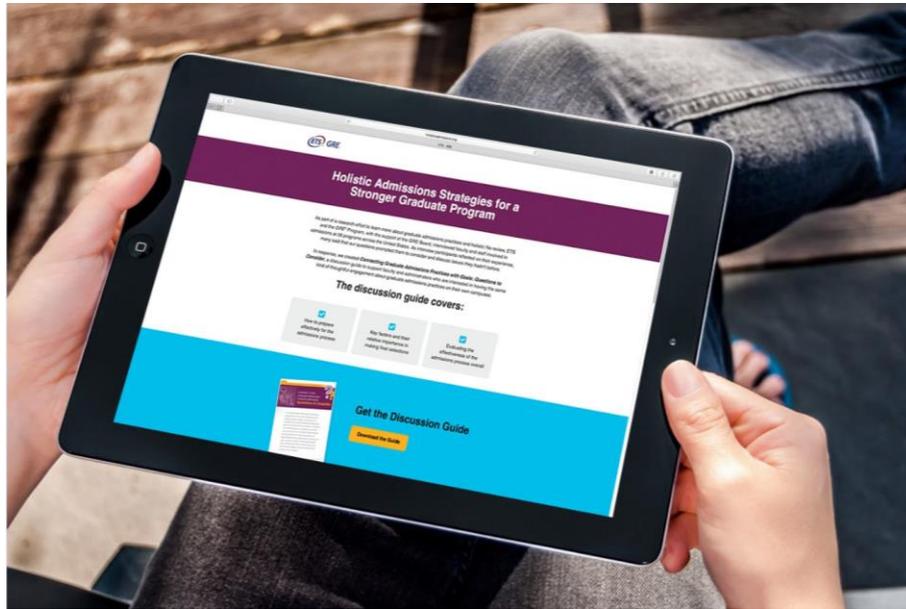
| Component & Max Points | Points Values |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Personal statement Max = 3 | 1–2 – quality of writing, maturity <i>1 extra for overcoming challenges, contribution to diversity</i> |
| GRE® Quant Max = 2 | 2 – 164–170 1 – 160–163 -1 – less than 142 |
| GRE AW Max = 2 | 2 – 5.0–6 1 – 4.0–4.5 -1 – less than 3 |
| GRE Verbal Max = 1 | 1 – 150–170 0 – <149 |

Total Score: 20–25 – Strong admit
17–19 – Admit
14–16 – Probable admit
10–13 – Probable deny
0–9 – Deny

Sample rubric for illustrative purposes



Resources to help you get started at www.holisticadmissions.org



Slideshow

Does Testing Serve a Purpose in Holistic Application Review?

Learn more about our research on graduate admissions practices and appropriate GRE® score use. This presentation provides ideas and options for you to consider, whether your institution already has a holistic review process, or is yet to embark on this journey. Discover leading approaches for holistic graduate admissions: goal setting, test score use, engaging stakeholders and

GRE® Test Validity: Putting It in Perspective

By Brent Briggeman and Harrison Kull

There are many myths that are widely thought of as true, but actually are not. And yet other, actual facts are treated as myths. A good example is the myth that the combination of GRE® scores with grades are as low as to suggest that the GRE® General Test is of no value. This myth may come from the perception of some academics that the correlations between GRE scores and graduate GPA should be as high among some academic disciplines as they are in others, such as medical research, aeronautics or

Four Facts about the GRE® General Test

A focus on the utility and importance of standardized testing in graduate admissions

Are you considering changes to your admissions processes? This document pulls together useful information—including findings from the largest, most relevant studies—that shows the GRE® General Test's unique value in helping programs ensure that prospective students have the critical thinking skills needed to meet program requirements.

1. The GRE® General Test successfully measures an applicant's readiness for graduate-level academic work.
2. A meta-analysis by researchers at the University of Minnesota using data from 82,659 graduate students across multiple disciplines, concluded that the GRE® General Test is a valid and reliable measure of an applicant's readiness for graduate-level academic work.
3. Only 8 percent in the top quartile of GRE scores were in the top quartile of academic performance.
4. A meta-analysis by researchers at the University of Minnesota using data from 82,659 graduate students across multiple disciplines, concluded that the GRE® General Test is a valid and reliable measure of an applicant's readiness for graduate-level academic work.

If You're Not Using GRE® Analytical Writing Scores, You Might Be Missing Out

Understanding and Improving Graduate Program Retention Rates

Using GRE® scores successfully

Guidelines for identifying the best applicants

1. Use multiple criteria, including GRE® scores, to inform admissions decisions. The GRE® General Test measures knowledge, skills, and abilities.
2. Be more inclusive by avoiding the use of a cut score. GRE scores help you compare applicants, but if you use a cut score as a criterion, you could miss an applicant who would be a great asset to your program.
3. Consider scores on the three GRE® General Test measures independently. The level of actual measuring practices (writing and analysis of issues) may vary by institution and discipline, so some may make a stronger contribution to your institution's success than others.
4. Use percentile ranks to compare applicants. To use percentile ranks to compare applicants across different admissions tests, use GRE scores. Use the appropriate GRE Comparison Data to scores on SAT scores.
5. To get information about using GRE scores, score interpretation resources, holistic admissions and best practices, barriers and quality information, and more, visit ets.org/institutions.

Coming this fall: Holistic Admissions Digital Guide

To Get More Information

- *GRE*[®] Tests and Services
 - Visit www.ets.org/gre/institutions
- Holistic Admissions Strategies
 - Visit www.holisticadmissions.org
- If you have questions:
 - Email: jshurts@ets.org or gretests@ets.org
 - Phone: **1-609-683-2002**