**Proposal for College of Business GMAT Waiver**

The College of Business is requesting a change to its current GMAT waiver policy for the following reasons:

* To include the College’s newest master’s program, the Master of Science in Business Analytics, in the waiver policy.
* To remove ambiguity in the current policy related to whether the policy covers graduates of FSU.
* To clarify an inconsistency about the definition of a 3.0 GPA to define it as upper-division to be consistent with the University admissions metrics.
* To clarify an inconsistency related to the language of the LSAT portion of the waiver to make is consistent with other parts of the waiver policy.
* To expand the GPA-related waivers for business students to all FSU undergraduate business majors for consistency.
* To include undergraduate business graduates meeting the GPA thresholds from AACSB accredited schools to the policy for overall consistency and fairness.

These changes will help achieve the following goals:

* Help to retain and attract the brightest students from high quality business schools around the world including Florida State University.
* Create a single GMAT waiver policy, consistent across the College of Business.

**Background**

The current College waiver policy has been developed in three phases. The first phase created the base of the policy for the MBA, Master of Science in Risk Management, and Master of Science in MIS programs. The waiver was focused on work experience, prior academic success, and those that had shown aptitude with other significant tests such as the CPA or LSAT.

In the last two years, the College of Business has made two key additions to its GMAT waiver policy. First, the College added a provision to allow Florida State undergraduate accounting students with an overall GPA of at least 3.4 and an upper-division accounting GPA of at least 3.2 to have the GMAT waived for entrance to the Master of Accounting program. The upper-division accounting GPA is based on the eight required upper-division ACG/TAX courses completed at the time of application (ACG 3101, ACG 3111, ACG 3341, ACG 4201, ACG 4401, ACG 4632, TAX 4001, and TAX 4011). The program has seen an increase in its ability to retain Florida State’s top undergraduate accounting students for the program. Also, the students with the waiver have performed in a manner as consistent or stronger than students entering with the GMAT.

Most recently, we created a similar policy for Florida State University undergraduate students in finance who wanted to enter the Master of Science in Finance program. Students with an overall GPA of at least 3.4 and an upper-division finance GPA of at least 3.2 can now qualify to have the GMAT test requirement waived. The upper-division finance GPA is based on the six required upper-division FIN courses completed at the time of application (FIN 3244, FIN 3403, FIN 4424, FIN 4504, and any two FIN 4000-level finance electives). The policy was put in place for students beginning the program in summer 2018. It has increased our ability to retain top undergraduate students in Finance. We are confident that these students will perform well in the classroom.

These additions have raised several questions. First, we have a new combined program for top-performing real estate undergraduate students wishing to enter the Master of Science in Finance program. Unless these students are double majors in finance, they are not eligible for the same waiver as their peers. Additionally, students entering our MBA program and other Master of Science programs from a variety of business majors have questioned the rationale for not having a GMAT waiver for those programs. Based on the initial success with the Master of Accounting and Master of Sciences in Finance programs, we feel that this is a proven strategy to retain our best undergraduate students.

Additionally, there are several gray areas in the current policy that we would like to clarify with this revision. First, there is a gray area in the current policy related to what happens for graduates of our programs with respect to the GMAT waiver. The current policy seems to read that they must be an undergraduate student. Obviously, there is merit to students working before starting graduate school so we would like to explicitly include graduates in the policy. Second, the previous waiver policy stated a 3.0 or better GPA from an accredited university. When entering GPAs for admissions, the upper division is used. This creates some ambiguity if both the overall and upper division GPAs are not over 3.0. We would like to change the policy to make the metric consistent with the University admissions guidelines. Finally, the LSAT option did not include the same language related to needing a 3.0 from an accredited undergraduate institution that is in other parts of the policy. This is added for consistency across the policy.

Finally, the College has a new Masters in Business Analytics that is not covered by the GMAT waiver.

**Analysis**

To better understand the potential impact of the waiver policy, we completed several analyses. We examined the most recent 5 years of admissions data. This included over 2,200 applications across our existing programs.

Our first analysis looked at the performance of existing students that would have been granted the new GPA-related GMAT waiver. We did this for FSU business graduates as well as AACSB business graduates in our sample. In every case, the groups of students that would have been admitted with this GPA-based waiver had higher average graduate GPAs than the admitted students that would not have qualified for this GPA-related waiver. This was consistent for the total population of graduate students as well as students in each program. It is also consistent for both the GPA-related waiver for FSU graduates and for AACSB business graduates.

We also did an analysis to determine if this would change admissions decisions. Based on the sample, under 2 percent of students that would have received the GPA-related waiver were denied admission.[[1]](#footnote-1) This result was fairly stable across programs with the exception of one program with only 3 observations in the sample. With respect to one other program with a 5 percent denial of GPA-related GMAT waivers, we were unable to verify if the denials were based on incomplete applications or academic and admissions factors. For many of our programs, there were no cases where the students with GPA-related GMAT waivers were denied.

Based on this analysis, we are comfortable that our admission decisions will remain consistent with the implementation of the new policy. Also, based on the performance of prior students, we feel that the students will be able to perform well in our programs. Not only should this increase our ability to retain top Florida State University business graduates, but it also should help attract business graduates from AACSB institutions around the world. It is important that we have limited the waiver to only AACSB accredited business school graduates. Approximately 3 percent of business schools in the world hold this level of accreditation. The standards mandate that certain levels of scholarly academic faculty are teaching in the programs. The standards also limit the number of adjunct faculty that can be used to teach the students. Further, a rigorous process of continual improvement must be followed and documented. This includes continual improvement and measurement of learning outcomes. These criteria should help to ensure that students received a quality education at their former institutions. Allowing students from these peer schools to have the same access to the waiver policy as Florida State students should expand our ability to attract top business students from around the world.

**Proposed Policy (with new wording or changes in italics)**

The GMAT/GRE requirement may be waived for outstanding applicants *to our masters programs if the applicant* *meets* at least ONE of the following criteria:

* *A 3.4 (or better) overall GPA and a 3.2 (or better) upper-division GPA\* in a business major from Florida State University or another AACSB accredited university. In addition, applicants to the Master of Science in Finance must also have a 3.2 (or better) upper-division finance GPA.\*\*\* Applicants to the Master of Accounting must also have a 3.2 (or better) upper-division accounting GPA.\*\*\*\**
* Eight years of management experience that includes significant budgetary and leadership responsibility and a 3.0 (or better) *upper-division* undergraduate GPA from an accredited institution**\*\***
* A completed Masters, J.D., M.D. or Ph.D. degree with a 3.0 (or better) GPA from an accredited institution**\*\***
* LSAT score of 160 or higher *and a 3.0 (or better) upper-division undergraduate GPA from an accredited institution\*\**
* Pass on all 4 parts of the CPA exam and a 3.0 (or better) *upper-division* undergraduate GPA from an accredited institution\***\***
* Pass on the PE exam and a 3.0 (or better) *upper-division* undergraduate GPA from an accredited institution\***\***

***\*****Computation of the upper-division GPA includes**the entire term in which the student earned his/her 60th semester hour, for all coursework (excluding community college work) from that term until completion of the bachelor’s degree*.

\*\*AACSB accreditation for business programs; LCME or COCA for medical programs; ABA for law programs; ABET for engineering, computer science, and information systems programs; others on a case-by-case basis.

\*\*\*The upper-division finance GPA is based on the following upper-division FIN courses (or the equivalent) completed at the time of application (FIN 3244 Financial Markets, FIN 3403 Financial Management, FIN 4424 Problems in Financial Management, FIN 4504 Investments, and any FIN 4000-level finance electives).

\*\*\*\* The upper-division accounting GPA is based on the required upper-division ACG/TAX courses (or the equivalent) completed at the time of application (ACG 3101 & ACG 3111 Financial Accounting and Reporting I and II, ACG 3341 Cost Accounting, ACG 4201 Financial Accounting and Reporting III, ACG 4401 Accounting and Information Systems, ACG 4632 Auditing Theory and Application I, TAX 4001 & TAX 4011 Federal Tax Accounting I and II).

Approval of a GMAT waiver does not guarantee admission. Prospective students must still apply and meet all other admissions requirements.

1. Note this did remove a small number of decisions that were originally coded as denied but turned out have been denied due to incomplete applications rather than academic or other admissions criteria. In most cases, these applications are cancelled instead of denied. Including those applications, the percentages of applicants from AACSB schools that would have had GPA-related GMAT waivers rose to 2.99 percent. For the FSU related GPA waiver, 1.55 percent of students with GPA-related waivers were denied. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)