

School of Communication GRE Waiver Request for Master's Programs

The School of Communication offers three Master's degree programs: Integrated Marketing Communication, Media and Communication Studies, and Public Interest Media and Communication. We are requesting permission to waive the GRE admissions requirement, in limited circumstances, for select students who apply to these three programs. Currently, when we evaluate Master's student applications, the GRE is just one of several factors we consider in our decision making. As noted on our website, all application materials are reviewed holistically, and strong consideration is given to other components such as undergraduate major, GPA, personal statement, letters of recommendation, related field experience, writing sample, CV or resume, etc.

Criteria

The School of Communication requests to offer a waiver of the graduate admissions entrance exam (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MAT) requirement for Master's students who meet the following criteria:

The Graduate Admissions Entrance Exam requirement will be waived for outstanding applicants meeting at least ONE of the following criteria:

1. A completed Master's, JD, MD, PhD, or other comparable terminal degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher from a North American accredited institution.
2. Five years of professional communication-related experience and a 3.0 or higher upper-division undergraduate GPA from a North American accredited institution.
3. FSU undergraduate communication majors (main campus) with an upper-division communication GPA of 3.6 or higher and an overall GPA of 3.6 or higher.

Applicants must provide evidence to satisfy the criteria being applied. Note: Applicants with a competitive GRE score will still be able to apply to the program and will not be held to these additional criteria.

Rationale

A growing body of research has demonstrated that the GRE may, at best, predict student success during the first semester of graduate study, but more importantly, it may limit the number of highly capable women and underrepresented racial/ethnic candidates admitted into programs (see for example Benderly, 2017; Fedynich, 2017; Miller & Stassun, 2014; Moneta-Koehler et al., 2017). As Fedynich (2017) found in her review of research analyzing the use of the GRE as a predictor of success, "The overall consensus in the majority of the studies advised admission committees to contemplate reducing the dependence on entrance examination scores as a predictor as to how graduate students would fare in graduate school" (p. 1). The GRE and other

standardized tests used as admission criteria for graduate programs do not test arguably more important factors for student success, such as creative and practical ability and motivation (Fedynich, 2017), skills that can be cultivated in upper level undergraduate courses and through professional field experience. Even the “Educational Testing Service (ETS), which administers the GRE, advises restrained use of general test scores for admissions and discourages the use of a cutoff score” (Moneta-Koehler et al., 2017, p. 1).

Several peer or aspirational communication graduate programs either do not require the GRE at all or permit applicants to waive the GRE requirement in lieu of other criteria. These institutions include American University,¹ Boston University,² Emerson,³ George Washington,⁴ MIT,⁵ Syracuse University,⁶ UC Berkley,⁷ University of Colorado Denver,⁸ and University of Nebraska Omaha.⁹ Given the reputation of these institutions that already waive or do not require the GRE, we see no threat to the perceived rigor and esteem of FSU or the School of Communication should we be permitted to do the same. We also believe waiving the GRE requirement for students who meet the criteria above could give us a competitive advantage, attracting high caliber students who may not otherwise apply or even consider graduate school because of the GRE requirement.

Criteria Rationale

1. A completed Master's, JD, MD, **PhD, or other comparable terminal** degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher from a North American accredited institution.

Waiving the GRE for applicants who have already earned a professional degree will allow us to admit students who have already demonstrated their success in professional schools and are likely to continue their success in our Master's programs.

2. Five years of professional communication-related experience and a 3.0 or higher upper-division undergraduate GPA from a nationally accredited institution.

In their study of professional experience as a predictor of graduate school success, Gibson et al. (2007) found that students in a Master of Public Administration program with standardized test waivers “have slightly higher grade point averages than their non-waiver counterparts, indicating that the absence of standardized test scores for a specified applicant profile does not compromise overall student quality. In fact, it demonstrates the need for greater flexibility in what is required in an admissions application” (p. 872). Potential students with at least five years' experience in

¹ <https://www.american.edu/soc/admissions/graduate-apply.cfm>

² <http://www.bu.edu/met/programs/graduate/advertising/>

³ <https://www.emerson.edu/graduate-admission/apply/apply-strategic-communication-for-marketing>

⁴ <https://www.programs.gwu.edu/graduate/media-and-public-affairs>

⁵ <https://www.media.mit.edu/graduate-program/apply/>

⁶ <https://newhouse.syr.edu/admissions/graduate/apply>

⁷ <https://journalism.berkeley.edu/faq/>

⁸ <https://clas.ucdenver.edu/communication/programs/master-arts/admissions>

⁹ <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-communication-fine-arts-and-media/communication/graduate-programs/admissions.php#a>

the field of communication, including but not limited to advertising; marketing; public relations; communication directors for private, public, public interest, or NGO organizations; journalists; digital media production; broadcasting, cable, telecommunications, film, music industries; social media analysts; etc., who meet the GPA and other admission criteria would be considered for the GRE waiver.

3. FSU undergraduate **communication majors (main campus)** with an upper-division communication GPA of 3.6 or higher and an overall GPA of 3.6 or higher.

As our undergraduate programs are limited access, limited enrollment, our students are expected to have and maintain a high GPA. At the same time, we know the strengths and rigor of our undergraduate programs. The average GPA of our undergraduates at time of graduation is 3.6, which is why we would argue that students with a 3.6 or higher in upper-division communication courses and overall GPA will most likely be successful in our graduate programs if they meet the other criteria in our application process. Further, the GRE waiver would let our top students know that we want them to continue their studies at FSU and that we have confidence in their ability to complete our challenging and valuable Master's programs.

References

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