

From: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
To: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
Subject: Considering our admissions successes, and the future of the GRE requirement
Date: Monday, May 3, 2021 8:27:14 AM

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TO: GRADUATE DEPARTMENT AND GROUP CHAIRS

CC: GENERAL CAMPUS DEANS
GENERAL CAMPUS ASSISTANT DEANS
GRADUATE ADVISORS
GRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATORS

FROM: JAMES ANTONY, Dean of The Graduate Division

SUBJ: Considering our admissions successes, and the future of the GRE requirement

UC San Diego continues to be a destination for the world's top graduate and professional program applicants. This year's incoming cohort is spectacular, as illustrated by this broad summary of the admissions cycle we just completed:

- For a third year in a row, we can expect to exceed 25,000 applications to our graduate and professional programs. This number places us among the top for research universities, nationally.
- Compared to Fall 2020, the Fall 2021 doctoral applicant yield increased 19 percent; compared to Fall 2019, our doctoral applicant yield is 24 percent greater.
- And, we are welcoming our most diverse cohorts ever:
 - Applications from historically underrepresented applicants increased 24 percent compared to last year, and nearly 30 percent compared to two years ago;
 - Admits from historically underrepresented applicants increased 18 percent compared to last year, and 46 percent compared to two years ago;
 - Acceptance of admission offers among applicants who are historically underrepresented increased 50 percent since last year, and 54 percent since two years ago.

Of course, this success is principally because of the quality of your programs. I applaud you for your efforts communicating with applicants, and helping them feel welcome as future UC San Diego students.

Because it is never too early to think ahead, I hope you will engage in conversation with one another about the successes of this year's admission cycle and also the merits of the GRE requirement. Because of the pandemic, many of our programs temporarily waived the GRE. I invite you to talk about this, while the most recent admission process is fresh on your minds. In an effort to aid your discussions, our institutional research team put together some dashboards (https://tableaupublic.ucsd.edu/views/GREGPAandApplications/PubApps?:origin=card_share_link&:embed=n) that compare basic data from before and after GRE waivers were put into place, to show the impact on both the academic quality of admitted students and the first-year academic success of those who enroll at UC San Diego. For simplicity, these dashboards focus on doctoral applicants. Please note you must be on VPN if accessing the dashboards from off-campus.

- The first tab (seen in the upper left corner, and called "PubApps") shows overall applications, and allows you to select by program/department. At the bottom of this page, you can sort the counts by broad student categories.
- The second tab (seen in the upper left corner, and called "gpa table") highlights three specific programs that have, for more than one admissions cycle, eliminated the GRE requirement. This tab presents those programs' numbers of new students, the average first quarter GPA of those cohorts, and the year-over-year retention statistics for those cohorts.

Take a look at these data. Perhaps they might help your conversation. But, overall, talk about your program's admission experience. If your program temporarily waived the GRE, what was your impression of your applicant pool? Did your admission process gain or lose anything as a result? Many programs have indicated that their use of a holistic admission process, guided by a faculty-developed rubric, made the absence of a GRE score a non-issue. Perhaps it would be helpful to collect another year or two of data before making a permanent decision; if so, consider extending the GRE waiver period for additional admissions cycles to better understand the impact. You may recall in May 2020 the UC Board of Regents [suspended the standardized test requirement \(ACT/SAT\)](#) in freshman admission decision making until 2024, allowing more time to measure the impact. Whether to require the GRE is at the discretion of programs--it is not mandated by The Graduate Division. So, talk about it and decide what your program wants to do.

If you decide to waive the GRE for the first time, extend your existing waiver, or permanently eliminate the program's GRE requirement, The Graduate Division will facilitate your request, and share it with The Graduate Council. **Requests should come from the Program Director and Department Chair by email to abjornsen@ucsd.edu no later than June 1, 2021.** To assist you, we have developed a webpage that offers [sample text and instructions](#) for drafting these requests.

From: Dean of the Graduate Division
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 9:06 AM
To: Dean of the Graduate Division <graduatedean@ucsd.edu>
Subject: Consideration to waive or eliminate the GRE requirement for the upcoming admissions cycle

July 9, 2020

TO: CAMPUS DEANS
ASSISTANT DEANS
DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

CC: GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORS
GRADUATE ADVISORS
GRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATORS

FROM: JAMES ANTONY, Dean of The Graduate Division

SUBJ: Consideration to waive or eliminate the GRE requirement for the upcoming admissions cycle

Dear Colleagues,

As I indicated in my June 5 2020 message to campus, The Graduate Division is committed to examining and addressing the systemic biases that are too often weaved into the fabric of graduate education. Ample evidence has emerged over the last few years suggesting that reliance on standardized test scores in the graduate admissions process may impede our ability to recruit the most talented and diverse cohorts of graduate students.

Scholars from across an array of disciplines are engaged in broad national discussions regarding the general GRE as a requirement for admission into graduate programs. Many of you, for example, have probably read papers and engaged in conversations about the [racial and gender differences for the quantitative test of the GRE \(Nature, 2014\)](#). Other research papers and commentaries on this topic have been published, and I point to some below:

- [The Problem With the GRE \(The Atlantic, 2016\)](#)
- [The Problem in Graduate Admissions is Culture, Not Testing \(ETS\)](#)
- [Typical physics Ph.D. admissions criteria limit access to underrepresented groups but fail to predict doctoral completion \(Science Advances, 2019\) and a response \(2020\)](#)

- [Multi-institutional study of GRE scores as predictors of STEM PhD degree completion: GRE gets a low mark \(PLOS ONE, 2018\).](#)

Given these national conversations, I ask all of you to consider engaging in an open discussion within your programs about the continued utility of the GRE. My hope is that you might use these discussions to determine whether temporarily waiving, or permanently eliminating, this requirement makes sense.

As a reminder, the requirement of the general GRE is established by individual graduate programs; the GRE is not a formal requirement at UC San Diego, nor is it a requirement of The Graduate Division. Any program that currently requires the general GRE can request to the Graduate Council to waive or permanently eliminate this requirement. In the case of a waiver, the program would set the length of time for the waiver, after which the GRE would again become required.

Numerous programs, including Philosophy, Biology, Computer Science and Engineering, Education Studies, History, Bioengineering, Nanoengineering, Neurosciences, and Biomedical Sciences have already received Graduate Council approval for waivers or eliminations. In the case of those programs that did this a year ago, several experienced an enhanced admissions cycle this year--overall application numbers increased, as did the numbers of applicants from backgrounds historically underrepresented in those disciplines. Your faculty may wish to reach out to a colleague in one of those programs to learn about their concerns, outcomes, and general experiences on this topic.

If you decide to waive or eliminate the GRE, a request should be sent to the Graduate Council via my office. The Graduate Council has no meetings scheduled for the summer, but has agreed to consider waiver or elimination requests for Fall 2021 admissions until the end of July. **Thus, if your program would like to waive or eliminate the general GRE requirement for the next round of admissions, the Program Director and Department Chair should email a request by July 27, 2020. We have provided [sample text and instructions for these requests](#).** For Programs that would like to waive or eliminate the GRE requirement for subsequent cycles (FA22 and beyond), requests can be submitted in the 20-21 academic year.

The Graduate Division is committed to the elimination of obstacles that might lead to admission bias against groups of individuals. Earlier this year, UC San Diego became a campus partner with the National Science Foundation-funded [C-CIDE, the California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education](#). Many of our faculty have participated and will continue to participate in C-CIDE workshops that focus on holistic admissions and other aspects of an inclusive education. This project has stressed the importance of using holistic admission approaches, including leading conversations about the impacts of reliance upon the GRE in graduate admissions. Our staff is happy to work with programs that might want to learn more about C-CIDE. We are also happy to assist you in enhancing the use of holistic admission evaluation processes, including working with you to consider alternative assessment methods that will aid in admissions decision making should you decide to waive or eliminate the GRE. Toward that end, we are currently assembling resources that will soon be posted on our Graduate Division webpage.

I fully respect and support the decision that individual graduate programs make in terms of the GRE and other requirements. As always, my team stands ready to work closely with your faculty and staff to help recruit and admit the brightest and most diverse group of talented scholars.