Holistic Admissions

What is Holistic Review?

Holistic review refers to the consideration of a variety of variables when evaluating a candidate for admission into a graduate degree program. Admissions committees may consider academic, nonacademic, and contextual factors in the review process with the goal of identifying students who are most likely to succeed in their programs. The Council of Graduate Schools publishes a helpful guide book that outlines many of the nuances of holistic review at the graduate level and issues ongoing guidance on this topic.

The UC San Diego Graduate Division is committed to eliminating obstacles that might lead to admission bias against groups of individuals. As outlined in the June 2020 Memo, Dean James Antony encourages all graduate programs at UC San Diego to adopt holistic admissions practices and The Graduate Division staff is available to assist programs who are interested in learning more about holistic admissions or adopting a holistic review process for their program.

Since 2019, UC San Diego has been a campus partner in the National Science Foundation-funded California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education (C-CIDE). Many of our faculty have participated and will continue to participate in C-CIDE training workshops that focus on holistic admissions and other aspects of inclusive education. This project has stressed the importance of using holistic admission approaches, including leading conversations and conducting research on the impacts of reliance upon the GRE in graduate admissions. The Graduate Division staff is available to work with programs that might want to learn more about C-CIDE or become involved with the project. We also are ready to assist programs in enhancing the use of holistic admission evaluation processes, including the consideration of alternative assessment methods should a program decide to waive or eliminate the GRE.

Holistic Admissions Resources & Articles

Please note you may need to log-in with a UC San Diego credential in order to access some articles. Do you have a helpful resource on holistic review that you'd like to share here? Email it to Tamara Schaps.

- What Does Performance in Graduate School Predict? Graduate Economics Education and Student Outcomes
- The Case for Noncognitive Assessments
- Why We Should Use Noncognitive Variables With Graduate and Professional Students
- Evaluating MBA-Program Admissions Criteria: The Relationship Between Pre-MBA Work Experience and Post-MBA Career Outcomes
- Roadmap to Excellence: Key Concepts for Evaluating the Impact of Medical School Holistic Admissions
- Toward Inclusive Excellence in Graduate Education: Constructing Merit and Diversity in PhD Admissions
- Inclusive Graduate Education Network (IGEN) Equity in Graduate Education

Additional Information & Next Steps

- Holistic Admissions Training Sessions
  - Clinical Psychology Holistic Review Training 11/30/20
  - Fundamentals: Equity in Graduate Admissions, 11/30/20, Cornell University
  - Excerpts from C-CIDE-UCSD Strategies for Holistic Review Slides 08/26/20
- Rubric Development Information & Templates
- GRE Information
  - GRE Resources & Articles
  - Requesting a Change of GRE Requirements
    - Requesting a Permanent Change of GRE Requirements - Letter Template
    - Requesting a Temporary Change of GRE Requirements - Letter Template
  - Waived GRE - Participating Departments
- Letters of Recommendation: How to Write, Read and Solicit Letters for Equity