

From: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
To: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
Subject: Consideration to waive or eliminate the GRE requirement for the upcoming admissions cycle
Date: Thursday, July 9, 2020 9:05:57 AM

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.