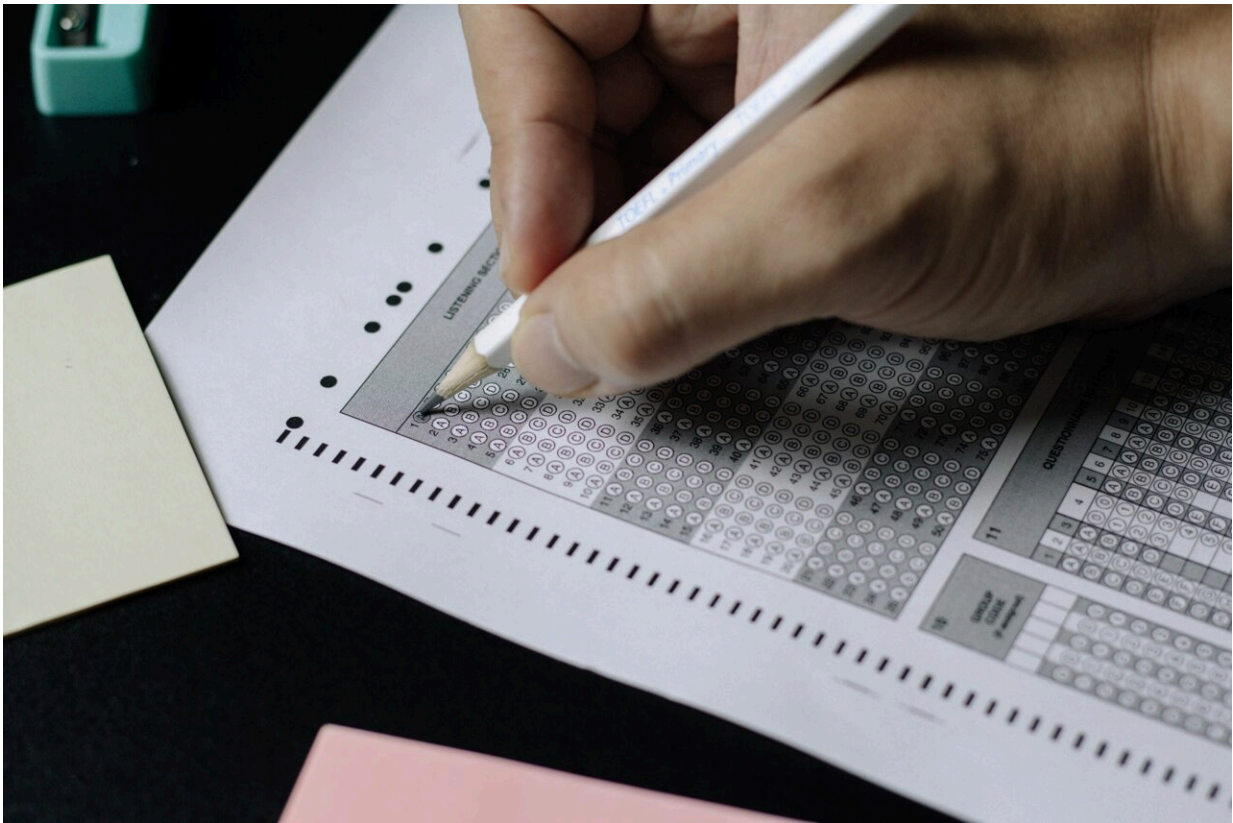


Study: Removing GRE requirement does not undermine student success

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In 2019, Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) eliminated the Graduate Record Examination as a requirement for admission to the school's graduate programs for a pilot period of three years.

The [school](#)'s decision was fueled by a growing body of data that indicated that the GRE is costly, biased, a poor predictor of academic success, and a barrier to admission for historically underrepresented [students](#).

Proponents of standardized testing have long argued that the GRE provides an objective measurement of students' academic capability and potential to succeed in their graduate programs. But now, a new BUSPH analysis reveals that eliminating the GRE as an admissions requirement did not diminish the quality nor performance of students at the school, which is currently ranked 6th in the nation among schools and programs of public health.

Published in *Public Health Reviews*, the analysis and policy brief presents data on student diversity and success in the BUSPH Master of Public Health program, for a total of six admission cycles between 2016-2021—three years before and three years after BUSPH stopped requiring GRE scores from [prospective students](#). The BUSPH study was led by Dr. Lisa Sullivan, associate dean for education and professor of biostatistics, and was coauthored by Amanda Velez, executive director of educational initiatives; Nikki Longe, registrar; Ann Marie Larese, assistant dean for admissions; and Dr. Sandro Galea, dean and Robert A. Knox Professor.

After removing the GRE, the school observed an increase in African American/Black and Hispanic applicants, rising from 7.1% and 7%, respectively, when the exam was required, to 8.5% and 8.2% after the GRE was eliminated. There was also no difference in student performance in the MPH program; 94.5% of students earned passing grades in required core courses after the GRE was eliminated, compared to 93.5% of students prior to the GRE removal.

Furthermore, the academic quality of BUSPH applicants, measured by

undergraduate grade point averages, remained 3.4 throughout all six admission cycles, and graduate employment also remained unchanged, with more than 93% of students becoming employed within six months of graduation.

Based on these results, BUSPH will permanently omit the GRE from its admissions requirements, and the authors recommend that other academic institutions consider this move, as well.

"The decision to eliminate the GRE was based on evidence of bias and structural barriers that we as a school aim to eliminate to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational programs," says Sullivan.

In the paper, the authors detail the burdens that many students, particularly underrepresented students, face to take the GRE. For one, it's a [financial burden](#), costing more than \$200 plus additional fees to submit scores to institutions, and potentially thousands more for those who enroll in GRE tutoring courses. The authors also point to systematic bias within standardized testing, as data from the Educational Testing Service shows that women score on average 80 points lower than men, and African American test takers score around 200 points lower than their White counterparts. They also highlight the lack of evidence connecting GRE scores with demonstrated improvement in student presentations and publications, or time it takes to receive their graduate degree.

"We are encouraged, but not satisfied, by the modest increase in diversity of applicants, and thus, will continue to monitor and adjust as needed to ensure that we are a school that welcomes and supports students from all backgrounds," Larese says.

Even with BUSPH's permanent removal of the GRE as an admissions

requirement, the authors say there is more work that the school can do to support a diverse student body.

"Eliminating the GRE is one step of many that are needed to create a welcoming and supportive environment to all students," says Velez. "Our programs are better and stronger with a more diverse student body, and we will continue to add to our programming to support all students."

Caroline Adamson, a BUSPH student in the school's BS/MPH dual-degree program, applauded the school's decision to remove the GRE requirement permanently.

"It's really exciting to know that my education has been designed to include a wide and diverse range of experiences from my peers," says Adamson, who is studying program management and [health](#) policy and law. She says her class discussions are deeply enriched by her classmates' contributions.

"Throughout the first four weeks of class alone, I have had the opportunity to hear the experiences my peers have had working for various government agencies, non-profit organizations, and healthcare facilities, and I think that omitting the GRE requirement for admission has only fueled these contributions and therefore, everyone else's learning experience."

More information: Lisa M. Sullivan et al, Removing the Graduate Record Examination as an Admissions Requirement Does Not Impact Student Success, *Public Health Reviews* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/phrs.2022.1605023](https://doi.org/10.3389/phrs.2022.1605023)

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