No GRE Required: Online Graduate Programs That Waive Entry Exams

By Vicky Phillips

Get Educated Blog, 2013

SOURCE: http://www.geteducated.com/online-degree-programs/399-masters-admission-requirement

Graduate schools often require students to take admission tests. The GRE (Graduate Record Exam) is the most commonly required test. The MAT (Miller Analogies Test) is another. Preparing for these tests can be time consuming—and expensive.

Fortunately, most accredited online graduate programs do *not* require the GRE. That's right—no GRE required!

In fact, a 2012 national study by Get Educated revealed that among 1,300+ accredited online master's degree programs, **the majority—932 programs—require no GRE exam.**

Graduate students who want to avoid the GRE or MAT should compare online master's programs carefully. It is possible to find a high quality distance learning program that does not require the GRE or a related admission test.

Online Masters Programs without GRE Saves Time

Cecilia Parmar, 43, of central New Jersey, chose two online master's degree programs with no GRE required.

"As a working mother, my time is valuable, and having to prepare and take the GRE—which was a requirement of some of the other programs I considered—would just have been another obstacle in my pursuit of a graduate degree," she says.

Parmar holds a master of arts in humanities from California State University at Dominguez Hills, which she earned through distance learning from her home in New Jersey. She is currently working on an online master's degree in library and information science from San Jose State University.

Not having to take the GRE was, for her, "a bonus," says Parmar.

"If the two online degree programs I selected had required the GRE, I believe I still would have applied because all the other elements were there—but my application would have been delayed by at least a year as I prepared for and arranged to take the GRE."

GRE Valid for Adult Online Students?

The GRE is a three- to four-hour exam that covers verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and writing skills. To prepare for the test, some students opt to take GRE prep courses, which cost about $160.

Results of the GRE expire after five years, which can be a problem for non-traditional adult students.

Shirley Rowe, a Texas higher education career counselor and web coordinator, already holds one master's degree from the University of Texas at Brownsville, which she earned with a straight-A average. She would like to return to school for an online master's or online doctoral degree—but says she is "holding back" because her old GRE test results have expired, and she doesn't want to take the admission test again.

"I've already proven I'm capable of completing master's level work but I have to jump through hoops to continue my education," she says. "It does not make sense to me."

Nonetheless, some online graduate schools do require the GRE or other standard admission tests, such as the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). The MAT measures reasoning via analogy. It is shorter and less expensive than the GRE—but not as widely used for graduate school admission.

The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), another type of standardized admission test, is used primarily by business schools.

Online Masters Degree with NO GRE?

If your online graduate school doesn't require a standardized admission test, such as the GRE, does this mean your school has low rankings or may be seen as less prestigious?

Not necessarily.

Online graduate students tend to be older (average age late-30s). And studies have not shown tests like the GRE to be all that useful in predicting academic success when used with older non-traditional students.

Barbara Brittingham, director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (a regional accrediting agency), does not see an admission test, like the GRE, as essential to qualify for online degree programs.

When Brittingham's agency assesses a school to see if it meets regional accreditation standards, admissions tests aren't required. However, the school must use some method to determine that "students admitted to graduate degree programs are demonstrably qualified for advanced academic study."

This master admission requirements might include an admission test or portfolios of work, past coursework, previous master's degrees earned or other methods.

Students should see what are common admission requirements for their fields when checking out colleges, advises Brittingham.

However, she says, "In some disciplines, where you see some schools require tests and others don't, I wouldn't automatically conclude that the ones that require admission tests are better. It would depend on the field, and how common it was, and whether the institution had done its own research and found admission testing was not adding validity to the students."

She described one particular school that studied admission tests for students returning to school after a long period of time—which is common for online and non-traditional adult learners. The college, which Brittingham declined to identify, found that admission tests for these students "didn't add any value"—that they weren't essential to the admissions process.

Brittingham's advice to students evaluating online master's degree programs? If a school says it doesn't require the GRE or MAT, ask "what else do you look at?" Make sure that the lack of an admission test doesn't mean the school is cutting admissions corners—and then apply with confidence.

List of Online Masters Degree Programs — No GRE

To discover the specific admission requirements for any of more than 1,200 online master's degree programs in Get Educated's online university database, use the Find Degree tool.

 [Vicky Phillips](#) was cited in 2009 by US News & World Report as "for 20 years the leading consumer advocate for online college students." In 1989 she designed America's first online counseling center for distance learners on AOL. In 1998 she authored the first print guide to online graduate degrees, *Best Distance Learning Graduate Schools* put out by the Princeton Review. She is also the author of *Never Too Late to Learn: the Adult Student's Guide to College*.