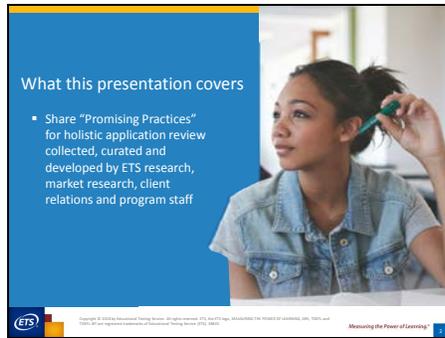


Slide 1



The *GRE*® Program at ETS is delighted to welcome you to our presentation “Does Testing Serve a Purpose in Holistic Application Review?”

Slide 2



In this presentation, we will share a sampling of promising practices that aim to address the hurdles that prevent institutions from implementing a truly holistic application process. Some of these practices were developed from our research of existing challenges and practices and curated by ETS based on our own experiences, and some practices were shared with us by deans and faculty at institutions that are successfully using them now. The practices being shared here cover three areas — goal setting, increasing understanding and application review. You can periodically check this website, www.holisticadmissions.org, where we will continue to share additional promising practices as they become available.

Slide 3

Promising Practices” for holistic application review

Project Goals

- Learn more about current admissions practices and the challenges facing those involved in the admissions process
- Understand how the GRE® General Test and other tests are being used
- Curate and develop practices that admissions committees can use to move toward a more holistic graduate admissions process

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Let’s start with some background. In our research, we had three main project goals:

- Learn more about current admissions practices and the challenges facing those involved in the admissions process
- Understand how the *GRE*® General Test and other tests are being used
- Curate and develop practices that admissions committees can use to move toward a more holistic graduate admissions process

Slide 4

We conducted extensive research about admissions practices and test use

Campus visits
71 interviews with deans and faculty in the following disciplines:

- Life sciences
- Physical sciences
- Engineering
- Social sciences
- Arts & humanities
- Education
- Business

Literature review
Examined published works related to graduate admissions from early 1950s to present

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To develop our promising practices, we conducted extensive research about admissions practices and test use. We would like to thank GRE Board Members for being kind enough to grant us access to their faculty and staff to inquire about their admission processes.

Over the past year, the GRE program team, along with our colleagues in ETS Research & Development, Marketing, Market Research and Client Relations, conducted 71 in-person interviews at eight institutions. Of the 71 interviews, 13 were with deans and staff from the graduate schools’ admissions teams, and 58 were interviews with faculty in life sciences, physical sciences, engineering, social sciences, arts and humanities, education, and business programs. Interviews included between one to

five participants and averaged about an hour.

We also conducted an extensive literature review of works that describe admissions processes dating back to the early 1950s and including some of the latest works that have emerged about holistic file review. We present this information for you to consider how these curated practices and examples might reflect or differ from the practices at your institution.

Slide 5



Our literature review research, and campus visit market research, focused on these five key areas:

1. The types of materials that are collected as part of the application process
2. The variety of admissions models that are used to make admissions decisions
3. The decentralized nature of graduate admissions
4. Training and tools used by graduate admissions committees to support the admissions process
5. Program perspectives on admitting diverse applicants

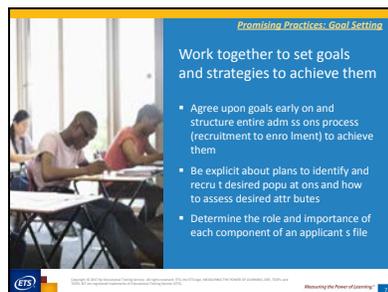
Slide 6



We understand that the admissions period is hectic, to say the least. During our research, we heard about many challenges and constraints. For some institutions, the volume of applications seems to increase year over year, but the number of available faculty and staff to review applications does not. Lack of time and need for careful spending further constrain the situation. Other institutions faced a lot of communication challenges due to the decentralized nature of their admissions process.

Our promising practices came from institutions that are facing these challenges and constraints, and so our recommendations also keep them in mind. We understand that each institution is unique. For that reason, we provide a range of ideas and options for you to consider, whether your institution already has an established holistic review process, or has yet to begin its journey toward creating such a process.

Slide 7



Let's talk about Goal Setting — working together to set goals and strategies to achieve them.

Our campus visits were so informative because we were able to talk with so many people with various perspectives from the administration and program viewpoint. Despite the best intentions to communicate well by all parties, the lack of time to adequately plan, prepare for and engage in various admissions activities left the potential for knowledge gaps

regarding how institutional goals should connect to and be reflected in the admissions process at the program level.

By starting early, before the admissions period, and working together to establish enrollment goals, each program faculty committee can create guiding principles for the entire admissions process, from recruitment through enrollment.

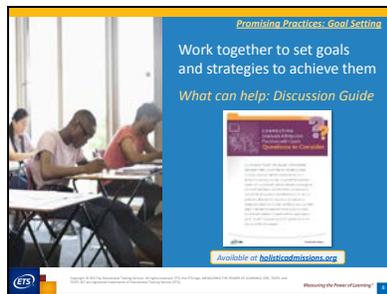
Then set the strategies for how to achieve those goals. For example, if your institution wants to increase enrollment of a certain population, such as international learners, what process will your institution follow to identify and recruit that population? Or if your program wants to enroll more people with a certain type of work experience or who possess a particular personal attribute, how will your institution find those people and recruit them. And then how will those skills or attributes be measured?

Your guiding principles can outline the role and importance of each component of an applicant's file. For example, if you're looking for that certain type of work experience, perhaps the applicant's work history should be more important than their undergraduate GPA or test scores. Or if you're determined to enroll more people who are motivated and self-sufficient, perhaps the personal statement and letters of recommendation should rate higher.

Once you have established goals and guiding principles, you can use them

to inform every step of the process, and then check from time to time to make sure everything ladders up as it should.

Slide 8



We have a new resource to share with you that can help with goal setting and facilitate the conversations needed to connect your admission practices to those goals. During our campus visits, we posed about 25 questions to the administration and faculty teams involved in the admissions process. A number of our interviewees said that our questions prompted them to consider and discuss issues they hadn't before, or hadn't in a long time. In response, we created this discussion guide that you can use to reflect upon the admissions process at your institution and engage your colleagues in a thoughtful discussion. You can download your complimentary copy at www.holisticadmissions.org

Slide 9

Promising Practices: Increasing Understanding

Determine and communicate the application review and selection process so all decision makers understand:

- Enrollment goals, strategy and process
- How to evaluate each component of the application
 - Role and importance
 - Order of review
 - What inferences can be made
- How to mitigate unconscious bias
- How disagreements will be resolved

Implicit to Explicit

Center for Diversity and Inclusion

University of Texas at Austin

Supporting the Student Experience

Now let's move on to promising practices around Increasing Understanding.

One thing that came up in our campus visits was the importance of communicating early in the admissions cycle and ensuring all members of the admissions committee receive training on important information each year. This is particularly important since membership to admissions committees can change year over year.

Getting together to make sure everyone understands the application review and selection process seems to be essential to having a successful admissions period. Those involved in the application review process need to understand the role and importance of each component of the application, but also in which order those components should be reviewed. Reviewing a set of application materials in a different order can have a meaningful impact on the resulting decision due to the framing effect, in which reviewers may react to a particular choice in different ways depending on how it is presented. Reviewers should be aware of appropriate and inappropriate inferences that can be made about each component of the application, and an example of this will be provided in a moment. All participants should be reminded of the role that unconscious or implicit bias can play in the review and selection processes and how to mitigate it, and what the process is to resolve any

disagreements about an applicant's file that may arise within the review committee.

On a related note, the efforts that institutions make toward clarifying expectations, processes and desired outcomes as suggested through our "promising practices" can lay the groundwork to make expectations, processes and desired outcomes more transparent to applicants as well. In her book, *Making the Implicit Explicit: Creating Performance Expectations for the Dissertation*, [cover image shown on slide] Barbara Lovitts advocates that doctoral programs share rubrics with their graduate students to clarify performance expectations and, through that transparency, help them achieve higher levels of accomplishment.

Slide 10

Promising Practices: Increasing Understanding

Determine and communicate the application review and selection process so all decision makers understand:

What can help: An example

- Desired Attribute
- Related Component
- Unrelated Component

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Continuing with the promising practices around Increasing Understanding, let's look at an example of appropriate and inappropriate inferences that can be made about each component of the application.

If your institution is determined to recruit more people with a desired attribute, such as grit, you might determine that you're going to look for signs in the application that this person has the motivation to keep moving forward despite the hurdles encountered in life. To make sure that the application addresses this attribute, you decide to specifically call out this request in the letter of

recommendation template: *Please rate this person from 1 to 5 on the attribute of grit and describe the likeliness that this person will be motivated to overcome hurdles or challenges to be successful. Please provide examples if possible.* The letter of recommendation now becomes a component that is related to the desired attribute you're seeking. It's just as important to identify which components are unrelated to the attribute. For example, a person shouldn't be determined not to have grit because they didn't demonstrate that characteristic in their personal statement, if the instructions for writing the personal statement didn't make that explicit request.

Slide 11



Promising Practices: Application Review

Review multiple components even when narrowing the pool and don't over rely on any one component

- If using cut scores, add another component
- Quantify traditionally qualitative components
- Align rubric weighting to goals
- Review components in order of priority based upon enrollment goals
- Consider an alternative review process

ETS

Let's move on now to promising practices around Application Review.

Admissions test scores, like GRE scores, can enable institutions to be more inclusive in their admissions decisions by allowing objective comparison of students from different backgrounds. However, programs that receive a large number of applications need to narrow the applicant pool to a more manageable size often use the GRE test to set a cut score. This set of promising practices suggest alternate ways to review applications without overreliance upon this single factor.

The first suggestion is to add another component besides GRE scores to your cut score standard. So for example, instead of only considering GRE scores, add in another

component or two, such as GPA and Letters of Recommendation. This is beneficial because it lessens the reliance upon the GRE test. And if you add a measure like Letters of Recommendation, you're also including some measure of noncognitive skills or personal attributes in the initial criteria for narrowing the applicant pool. Unless your goal is to recruit students who purely fulfill a cognitive requirement, it makes sense to ensure that initial pool narrowing takes your other goals into consideration.

The next suggestion is to quantify traditionally qualitative components. Using the Letter of Recommendation as an example again, many institutions attempt to quantify part of it by asking reviewers to rate applicants on a number of skills and attributes, such as analytical ability, breadth of knowledge, verbal and written expression skills, perseverance, maturity, imagination and creativity, and potential as a scholar or researcher.

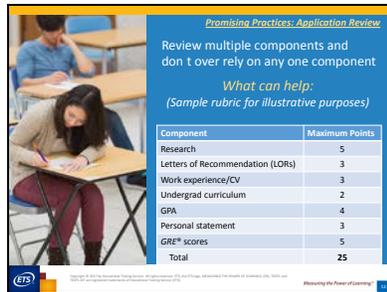
Another promising practice is to use a rubric that weights each component in alignment with your enrollment goals. An example will be provided in the slides that follow.

Regarding the order in which components are reviewed, the campus visit research and literature review identified instances of GRE scores being considered at the end of the review process so that application reviewers would not overweight GRE

scores and neglect data that is more qualitative in nature.

And finally, we'll share a few suggestions regarding ways that you can alter your review process to make sure you're meeting your goals.

Slide 12



Promising Practices: Application Review

Review multiple components and don't over rely on any one component

What can help:
(Sample rubric for illustrative purposes)

Component	Maximum Points
Research	5
Letters of Recommendation (LORs)	3
Work experience/CV	3
Undergrad curriculum	2
GPA	4
Personal statement	3
GRE® scores	5
Total	25

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Here is a sample rubric, for illustrative purposes, which shows one way to compare and consider applications, while reviewing multiple components without reliance on any one component. This example is for a school that would prefer to enroll students who have already had some experience with research, either as an undergraduate student or through work or internship experience. And so the sample rubric reflects the high value that the institution places on research. In this example, you can also see some of the other components of the application and the maximum points that applicants can receive for each:

Component/Maximum Points

- Research: 5
- Letters of Recommendation (LORs): 3
- Work experience/CV: 3
- Undergrad curriculum: 2
- GPA: 4
- Personal statement: 3
- GRE® scores: 5

Slide 13

Component & Max Po nts	Po nts via uses	Component & Max Po nts	Po nts via uses
Research Max = 5	3 - 1 yr UG + work/internship research 2 - 1 year of UG research 0-1 - less than a year 1-2 extra for publications, posters, awards, etc.	Personal statement Max = 3	1-2 - quality of writing, maturity 1 extra for overcoming challenges, contribution to diversity
LORs Max = 3	3 - high on all 6 attributes 2 - high on 5 attributes 1 - high on 4 attributes	GRE® Quant Max = 2	2 - 164-170 1 - 160-163 -1 - less than 142
Work exp./CV Max = 3	2 - 2+ years related work exp. 1 - 1-2 years related work exp. 1 extra for volunteer work	GRE AW Max = 2	2 - 5.0-6 1 - 4.0-4.5 -1 - less than 3
UG curriculum Max = 2	1 - extensive science coursework 1 extra for high UG challenge	GRE Verbal Max = 1	1 - 150-170 0 - <149
GPA Max = 4	4 - 3.8 to 4.0 3 - 3.5 to 3.79 2 - 3.2 to 3.49 1 - 3.0 to 3.19	Total Score	20-25 Strong admit 17-19 Admit 14-16 Probable admit 10-13 Probable deny 0-9 Deny

Sample rubric for illustrative purposes

Now if we look at this expanded version of the sample rubric, for illustrative purposes, we can see that the program has assigned points values. So if the student has at least one year of undergraduate research and has done research through a work or intern experience, that person gets three points. If the candidate also has publications, posters, awards and/or presentations, he or she can earn an extra point or two. In the Undergraduate Curriculum row, you can see how someone might get an extra point for going to an undergraduate institution with particularly challenging coursework.

In the right column, the institution is showing that it values quantitative and analytical writing skills above verbal reasoning skills by the way that the points are allocated. This institution set the maximum points for the GRE quantitative measure at two. You can tell by the score band that this institution is looking for higher scores. Reviewers should also deduct a point for scores under the 142 mark at this institution. On the other hand, the institution shows that it values quantitative reasoning less by setting the maximum point possible at one and allowing scores that receive one point to fall within a much broader band of scores. No negative points are given. This doesn't mean that this institution doesn't care about this measure at all, but rather that given these other factors, it's less important.

The bottom-right, dark blue box clearly indicates the Total Score ranges

where reviewers make recommendations for admittance.

Slide 14

Promising Practices: Application Review

Review multiple components and don't over rely on any one component

What can help:
Alternate review processes

Multistage Two Pool Separate and Conquer

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Reviewing the Power of Experience

Another idea to consider regarding promising Application Review practices is adjusting the process a program uses to evaluate applications.

The multistage process might be helpful to institutions that want to target certain populations who typically do not score as well on the GRE test. The multistage process uses an initial set of criteria to narrow the pool of candidates. Then, from the group that didn't make the initial cut, reviewers identify additional candidates who exhibit other desired skills or attributes. Both groups are reviewed holistically.

The two-pool process acknowledges that multiple institutions will likely target the populations you've identified as desirable, so it's best to act quickly to extend them offers for admission. In the two-pool process, programs first pull files for target populations to accelerate the holistic review of those applications. Then the program focuses on the remaining population.

The separate and convene process acknowledges and seeks to avoid the framing bias. In this process, separate committee members review different components of the application then convene to discuss the applicant. For example, Committee Member A reviews components of the application that contain cognitive (GPA, GRE scores, transcript) factors and Committee Member B and Committee Member C review components of the application that contain non-cognitive factors (lab/research experience, Letters of Recommendation, statement of purpose, and/or CV). When the two groups convene, applicants who received high marks from both groups should sit high in the consideration set.

Slide 15



We hope that some of the practices shared in this presentation will inspire you to reflect on your own institution's admissions process and perhaps even spark a change. Change is never easy. It takes time and it takes leadership, but there are many benefits to adopting some of the practices shared here, for the students, the programs and the institutions.

Slide 16



On the holisticadmissions.org web page, where you accessed this presentation, you'll also find these additional resources to get you started, including:

- our newest infographic for using GRE scores during your admissions process
- the discussion guide mentioned earlier

Slide 17



We will continue to populate www.holisticadmissions.org, as noted earlier, with additional information about holistic review, including other promising practices. And if you have practices at your institution that you consider promising — and they address challenges and constraints that other institutions face — please share them with us. We would like to make our promising practices repository as robust as possible, representing a range of ideas to address the challenges and constraints in holistic admissions practices today.

Slide 18



We are always ready to help. Our team can be reached at gretests@ets.org or 1-609-683-2002, to respond to your inquiries and consider your comments, ideas and suggestions. We would also be delighted to arrange to have this presentation delivered on your campus by a member of our GRE team. We look forward to hearing from you!