

## New GRE General Test to be Introduced

Ann Willard, *Educational Testing Service*

The Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board has announced plans to introduce a new GRE General Test, possibly as soon as 1997–98. The current three-measure format of the GRE General Test will be replaced by a General Test with five measures. The new General Test will include revised versions of the current verbal, quantitative, and analytical measures, as well as two new tests—writing and mathematical reasoning. At the point that there are five General Test measures, the new General Test will be offered in two packages. Graduate departments will select the package that is most appropriate for graduate study in their particular field.

The introduction of two new measures to the GRE General Test represents the most significant change to the test itself since the addition of the analytical measure in the early 1980s. The GRE Board feels strongly that the new test will improve graduate admission testing by providing graduate admission committees with a broader range of tools to assess applicants' reasoning skills.

### Why Is the GRE Program Changing?

The GRE testing program is changing in response to the evolving needs of the graduate community. In particular, since the present test was designed in the 1950s, graduate education has grown enormously, master's education has mushroomed, and cultural diversity has become a crucial issue. Further, technological capabilities have improved dramatically to the point where it is technically possible and financially feasible to computerize the GRE. New technology allows for the introduction of question types in the new GRE that go beyond multiple-choice testing.

### The New GRE General Test

A brief description of the components of the new General Test is provided below. Although most of the major features of the new General Test have been determined, the test is in the midst of a lengthy development process, and thus the information provided here is preliminary.

**Writing Test.** The Writing Test is intended to provide graduate departments with an indication of their applicants' general writing ability. The test will not assess specific content knowledge. The Writing Test will contain a 45-minute writing task, "Present Your Views on an Issue," in which examinees are asked to demonstrate that they can produce a well-focused, coherent discussion of an issue using relevant examples to support their position. The test may contain a second 30-minute writing task, "Critique An Argument," that will require examinees to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of an argument. A final decision on whether or not to include this second writing task will be made when data from a research study currently underway are available and analyzed.

The Writing Test will be delivered via computer, but examinees will choose whether to handwrite or type their essay response. Examinees will be presented with two "issues" topics and asked to choose one on which to write. The issues topics will be published in advance to ensure that all examinees have equal access to the essay questions.

Essays will be scored holistically; that is, they will be judged on the overall quality of the response. Each essay will receive two independent readings by readers who have been trained to apply the scoring standards approved by the GRE Program. Readers will be an

interdisciplinary group of college and university faculty.

At the outset, graduate departments will receive copies of the applicants' essays and scores. It is likely, however, that departments will eventually have a choice as to whether they want to receive copies of the essays.

**Mathematical Reasoning Test.** The current quantitative measure is based on high school mathematics and, as a result, is too easy for students in the sciences and engineering. The new Mathematical Reasoning Test is being developed to allow quantitatively able students to demonstrate a broader range of mathematical ability. The test is targeted at students in such fields as engineering, physics, chemistry, computer science, mathematics, economics, and some biological sciences.

The Mathematical Reasoning Test will measure an examinee's ability to *reason* using the techniques of calculus and other college-level mathematics. The mathematical background assumed includes calculus, functions and their graphs, probability and statistics, geometry, and finite mathematics. The reasoning skills tested are likely to focus on mathematical modeling, problem-solving strategies, logical reasoning, estimation and approximation, and recognition and investigation of patterns and similarities. New question types requiring examinees to *produce* a response, rather than simply identify it from a list of possible options, are under investigation.

**Revised Quantitative Reasoning Test.** The revised Quantitative Reasoning Test will measure an examinee's ability to reason within quantitative domains. It is intended to serve the needs of students in fields where some degree of quantitative reasoning is important, but extensive mathematical training is not required. Targeted fields in-

clude those in the social sciences, life sciences, education, humanities, and professional programs such as library and archival sciences, social work, public administration, nursing, and public health.

The content of the test will focus on precollege algebra, basic geometry, and elementary statistics.

There will be decreased emphasis on routine computation and algebraic manipulation, while the emphasis on data interpretation and reasoning will increase. As with the new Mathematical Reasoning Test, examinees will be required to generate their own response for some questions.

#### *Revised Verbal Reasoning Test.*

The revised Verbal Reasoning Test will measure the ability of examinees to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information from it. There will be an increased emphasis on critical reading and the inclusion of context in test questions.

Most of the current question types—sentence completion, reading comprehension passages, ant-

onyms, and analogies—will be included in the revised test, although the relative proportion is likely to change. Further, the introduction of new question types such as multiple-passage reading comprehension sets and synonyms in context is being investigated.

#### *Revised Analytical Reasoning Test.*

The Analytical Reasoning measure is being revised to incorporate a greater emphasis on informal reasoning. Thus, the portion of the test that measures an examinee's ability to analyze and evaluate arguments, identify central issues and hypotheses, draw sound inferences, and identify plausible causal explanations is expected to increase.

New question types that take advantage of the computer are expected to supplement the current question types.

### General Test Package Options

Before the introduction of the new General Test, graduate schools

and departments will need to select the package of measures that is most appropriate for students applying for admission to their particular program. The two packages are: Verbal, Analytical, Writing, and Quantitative Reasoning; or Verbal, Analytical, Writing, and Mathematical Reasoning.

It is important that graduate departments make this decision in concert with the publication deadlines for their graduate catalogs.

### Additional Information

For more information about the new GRE General Test, please contact the GRE Program via telephone at (609) 951-1551 or via Internet at [gre-info@ets.org](mailto:gre-info@ets.org).

### About the Author

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## International Forum for Democratic Studies Established by the National Endowment for Democracy

Marc F. Plattner and Larry Diamond, *International Forum for Democratic Studies*

Never has there been a time when understanding what helps or hinders the advancement of democracy around the world has been more critical for international peace, political stability, and human progress. The spread of democracy to many countries around the world has brought unprecedented freedom and opportunity to millions of people and has diminished the threat of war and other forms of violent conflict. At the same time, however, a number of authoritarian regimes remain firmly entrenched and many new democracies are functioning poorly, with questionable institutional designs

and a daunting array of other political, social, and economic obstacles to consolidation.

In response to the need for sustained and serious study of democracy's problems and prospects, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) established the International Forum for Democratic Studies in April 1994. The International Forum is a center for analysis and discussion of democratic ideas, experiences, theories, and practices worldwide. It will also serve as a clearinghouse for information on the varied activities and programs of groups and institutions working to achieve and maintain democracy

around the world. Thus it will fill an important institutional void in the field of democratic studies at the same time that it complements and enhances the democratic programs of NED and other donor and civic organizations.

The Forum has initiated three interrelated programs: a research and conferences program, a Democracy Resource Center, and publication of an expanded *Journal of Democracy*. The Forum is also laying plans for a visiting fellows program that will enable a small number of distinguished scholars and democratic activists from around the world to spend three