

If You're Not Using GRE® Analytical Writing, You Might Be Missing Out



If you're involved in graduate admissions and you're not using GRE® Analytical Writing in your decision-making process, you are probably missing out.

It turns out that of the three section scores that the GRE General Test provides — Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning and Analytical Writing — how well students perform on the Analytical Writing section is frequently the best or second-best predictor of their future GPA. This is the case for most programs at both the master's and doctoral levels.

"I think institutions tend to discount Analytical Writing scores when they're looking for evidence of a candidate's academic proficiency. Perhaps being on a smaller score scale gives the impression that it's less important," says Brent Bridgeman, Distinguished Presidential Appointee at ETS's Academic to Career Research Center. "Not only is the Analytical Writing score often the best or second-best predictor of student success, but it also provides evidence that candidates can both think critically and clearly express their reasoning in writing. These two skills are essential across programs."

The Analytical Writing section requires test takers to complete two writing tasks — one that analyzes an issue and one that analyzes an argument. The tasks measure test takers' ability to:

- articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively
- examine claims and accompanying evidence
- support ideas with relevant reasons and examples
- sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion
- control the elements of standard written English

Correlations Between Graduate GPA and GRE Sections for Eight Program Areas¹

Seeking Master's Degrees

	Education	Engineering	English Language & Literature/ Letters	Biological & Biomedical Science	Mathematics & Statistics	Psychology	Health Professions & Clinical Science	Business Management, Marketing
Verbal Reasoning	.15	.14	.32	.20	.12	.09	.22	.14
Quantitative Reasoning	.12	.14	.16	.15	.21	-.01	.21	.15
Analytical Writing	.16	.16	.33	.20	.17	.23	.20	.15

Seeking Doctoral Degrees

	Education	Engineering	English Language & Literature/ Letters	Biological & Biomedical Science	Mathematics & Statistics	Psychology	Health Professions & Clinical Science	Business Management, Marketing
Verbal Reasoning	.23	.08	.09	.30	.20	.27	.15	
Quantitative Reasoning	.30	.24	.10	.22	.41	.39	.24	
Analytical Writing	.19	.10	.11	.27	.18	.32	.23	

"When considering applicant scores, it's important to have your program goals in mind, and also an understanding of which GRE sections are the best predictors of student success for your type of program," Bridgeman continues. "If I were evaluating master's candidates for my biological and biomedical science program based on the information in the chart above, I would want to look at all three scores, but might weight Analytical Writing and Verbal Reasoning scores more, and Quantitative Reasoning scores less. If I were recruiting candidates to my doctoral health professions and clinical sciences program, I would weight Quantitative Reasoning and Analytical Writing scores higher than Verbal Reasoning scores, as long as that decision is in line with my program's goals."

For those interested in giving Analytical Writing scores another look, there's another reason to do so: institutions can view their applicants' actual Analytical Writing responses through the [ETS® Data Manager](#) — a service that's free for institutions with a GRE score reporting code.

"Analytical Writing responses give faculty committees another piece of information about their applicants. And unlike with personal statements, because the GRE General Test is administered in secure testing environments, Analytical Writing responses cannot be coached or edited by parents or other advisors," Bridgeman says. "Analytical Writing responses give faculty committees a good indication for how the candidate would analyze an issue or an argument and present those analyses in a form that could be understood by others. These are things they'll need to do at some point in any graduate program and certainly in their careers."

For more information about Analytical Writing scores, visit the [GRE site](#) or consult the [GRE® Guide to the Use of Scores](#).

¹ Correlations were first computed within each university program and adjusted for multivariate range restriction (in order to estimate what the correlation would be among all potential applicants not just for students actually enrolled). Then the correlations were weighted by the sample size in each program and an across-program average computed. The table contains simplified data excerpted from two larger tables on pages 20 and 24 in [New Perspectives on the Validity of the GRE® General Test for Predicting Graduate School Grades](#).