UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Susan Detmer, chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: March 19, 2020

SUBJECT: Admissions Qualifications change – Master of Arts (M.A.) in Applied Social Psychology

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council approve the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications for the Master of Arts (M.A.) in Applied Social Psychology, effective the 2021-22 admissions cycle

PURPOSE:

Changes to admissions qualifications require approval by University Council and confirmation by University Senate.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is seeking to remove the requirement of a Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for admission to the Master of Arts program in Applied Social Psychology. The program has found that the GRE scores have low predictive value of graduate students’ success, disadvantages international students, and the use of the GRE for this program is inconsistent with other graduate programs in the department.

The Academic Programs Committee considered the request for the removal of the GRE as a requirement for admission to the MA in Applied Social Psychology by email. The committee was very supportive of the proposal and agreed with rationale provided by the proponents. The committee voted to recommend that Council approve this change to the admissions qualifications.

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

University Senate will be asked to confirm this decision at its April 25, 2020 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Changes to Admission Requirements – Master of Arts in Psychology, Applied Social Psychology concentration
MEMORANDUM

To: Academic Programs Committee of University Council

From: Office of the Associate Dean, CGPS

Date: February 26, 2020

Re: Changes to Admission Requirements – Master of Arts in Psychology, Applied Social Psychology concentration

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is recommending that the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) no longer be required for admission to the Master of Arts program in Applied Social Psychology. The proponents have noted that it does not provide value in their assessment of student applications, and it is not a requirement for admission to similar programming in the department.

The proposal was supported by the Graduate Programs Committee on February 12, 2020, and the Executive Committee of CGPS on February 18, 2020.

Attached please find the proposal with support from the review committees.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Clement at kelly.clement@usask.ca or 306-966-2229
MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of CGPS

From: Graduate Programs Committee

Date: February 12, 2020

Re: Change to Admission Requirements: Master of Arts in Psychology, Applied Social Psychology concentration – remove GRE admission requirement

On January 17, 2020, and February 12, 2020, the Graduate Programs Committee considered a request to remove the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) requirement for admissions to the Master of Arts in Psychology, Applied Social Psychology concentration. The committee noted that the proponents had provided good justification to remove the requirement, and the committee had no concerns.

The following motion was passed unanimously:

To recommend approval of removing the requirement for submission of the General Record Exam for admissions to the Master of Arts in Psychology, Applied Social Psychology concentration.

Tanaka/Morrison CARRIED

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Clement at kelly.clement@usask.ca or 306-966-2229
February 3, 2020

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral studies

RE: Request for the admission requirement change

Master of Arts: Applied Social Psychology

Admission Requirements (with proposed change marked up)

- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Scores (General) (requested to be removed)
- Language Proficiency Requirements: Proof of English proficiency may be required for international applicants and for applicants whose first language is not English.
- a cumulative weighted average of at least a 70% (U of S grade system equivalent) in the last two years of study (i.e. 60 credit units)
- a four-year honours degree, or equivalent, from a recognized college or university in an academic discipline relevant to the proposed field of study

The rationale for the change:

1. GRE scores have low predictive validity of graduate students’ success
2. ASP’s GRE requirement puts ethnic minorities and international students from developing countries at a disadvantage.
3. Other non-clinical programs in our department (CHHD and Cognition and Neuroscience) do not require the GRE
4. There are better ways to evaluate applicants' knowledge and preparedness for graduate studies.

1. GRE scores have low predictive validity of graduate students’ success.

Numerous studies, mostly based on the meta-analysis of large samples of students from different universities and disciplines, unequivocally indicate that the GRE scores have low predictive validity regarding graduate students’ success (Golberg et al., 1992; Kincel et al., 2010; Morrison et al., 1995). Other studies reported that undergraduate GPA is a better predictor of Graduate GPA (GGPA) than GRE for both MA and Ph.D. students (Feeley et al., 2005). It was also discovered that the GRE validity coefficients vary depending on disciplines (Thornell, et al., 1985).
As some researchers indicated (Feeley et al., 2005; Goldberg, 1992), one of the main problems for investigating the predictive power of the GRE is the choice of criterion variable: what indicator should be used to measure graduate studies' success? Currently, researchers use GGPA, first-year GPA, faculty ratings, and degree attainment. Even with this limited list of indicators, it is evident that graduate success is a multidimensional parameter that depends on several factors where the GRE scores (reasoning and the level of knowledge of discipline) serving as only one of them. Other factors include students’ motivation, their organizational and time-management skills, intelligence and creativity, their psychological and physical wellness, the culture of research in the institution, relationships with a supervisor, relationships with fellow students and other faculty, economic conditions, family issues and some others. Our own experience indicates that, for years, when we used the GRE as an admission criterion, we rarely if ever used its scores for admission decision making. Other parameters, such as UGPA, reference letters, personal interviews, conference presentations and publications are considered to be more informative for this purpose.

2. **ASP’s GRE requirement puts ethnic minorities and international students from developing countries at a disadvantaged position.**

There is evidence that the GRE may be a barrier for ethnic minority applicants entering academic studies (Wolf, 2014). Our observations confirm these data; namely, that students from developing countries may have economic limitations to pay for the exams and/or travel to the site of the examination where it is required. Consequently, some of these students did not complete their application and were unable to pursue their graduate education. There are also data indicating that, although the GRE scores are on average lower for international students than for domestic students, their success may be substantial and even exceed domestic students’ achievements (Feeley et al., 2005). These data also indicate a differential predictive validity of the GRE scores for international versus domestic students.

5. **Other non-clinical programs at our department (Cognition and Neuroscience and Culture, Health and Human Development) do not require GRE.**

Other comparable programs in our department have never used the GRE scores as their admission requirement and, yet, they still manage to accept high-quality students as evidenced by the students’ publication record, performance in graduate courses, and receipt of tri-council funding. The fact that our program has this requirement discourages some students from pursuing their degree in applied social psychology.

6. **There are other ways to evaluate applicants' knowledge and preparedness for graduate studies.**

If the ASP has concerns about the level of subject and general intellectual preparedness of an applicant, there are several means to ensure that these students have
the potential to succeed in graduate studies. The program may admit those students conditionally depending on their successful completion of one or two required undergraduate courses or such students may be requested to pass a qualifying examination. We believe that these forms of competency testing are more valid and allows faculty to better assess an applicant's capability for graduate studies.

In conclusion, based on the provided arguments, the Applied Social psychology program requests to remove the GRE admission requirement for an MA degree in applied social psychology.

References


Accepted at the ASP faculty meeting on January 27, 2020

Program co-coordinator:

Valery Chirkov
March 4, 2020

College of Graduate and Postgraduate Studies

Academic Programs Committee

Re: Notes regarding the CGPS Academic Program Committee comments on the GRE requirement removal from the Applied Social Psychology admission criteria.

To Whom It May Concern:

Members of the Committee have commented on the outdated publications that we used to justify our decision to remove the GRE requirement from the ASP admission criteria. They expressed a concern that more recent data on using GRE for graduate students’ admission may demonstrate different relations between the GRE scores and graduate students success. We selected several relatively recent publications on this topic. The majority of them studied non-psychology students, so it is difficult to generalize their results. But still, as Peterson et al., (2018) concluded, “Our results suggest that GRE scores are not an effective tool for identifying students who will be successful in completing STEM doctoral programs.” (p. 1). Wang (2013) found the predictive validity of the GRE scores for engineering students when GGPA was used as an indicator of students’ success. Mupinga & Mupinda (2005) discovered that international students perceived that the GRE exam is biased against international students. Peterson et al. suggested developing more effective and inclusive admission strategies.

These results support, in general, our conclusion about the low predictive validity of the GRE scores for successful completion of graduate studies and that other more effective criteria should be used for students’ admission.

References


