

**Official Memorandum of Action – MOA-16/10**  
**Revise Graduate Catalog Admission Requirements to Specialist Programs**

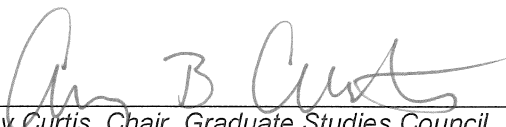
Name of Council/Committee  
Graduate Studies Council

Approval Date  
26 May 2016

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Implementation Date  
Upon Administrative Approval

Revise to the *Graduate Catalog/Admissions/Admissions Requirements/Specialist Program Applicant* to allow specialist programs, which require the completion of a master's degree prior to admission, to decide whether to require a Graduate Record Exam (GRE) score or not for admission into a Specialist Degree.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Amy Curtis, Chair, Graduate Studies Council* *5/26/16* *Date*

Approve                                       Disapprove                                       Return to Council/Committee  
**Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Suzan F. Ayers, Faculty Senate President* *Date*

Approve                                       Disapprove                                       Other action  
**Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Timothy J. Greene, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs* *Date*

Approve                                       Disapprove                                       Other action  
**Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*John M. Dunn, WMU President* *Date*

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**Revise Graduate Catalog Admission Requirements to Specialist Programs**

**RATIONALE**

Western Michigan University's policy requires all educational specialist (Ed.S.) applicants to submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. The question has arisen whether faculty within graduate programs that require the completion of a Master's degree prior to admission to the Ed.S. program, and thus have this Master's Degree GPA as a measure of success, should be allowed to decide if the GRE scores should be required or not for admission.

As the number of nontraditional students return for graduate degrees in the U.S., a growing number of studies are raising concerns about the use of GRE scores. These problems have focused on the test's inability to have predictive validity for groups such as females, minorities, international and nontraditional older students. Researchers recommend using writing samples and/or Master's GPA as better criteria.

Indeed, data has revealed that older GRE test takers have lower scores since they have had little recent exposure to formal schooling, have been away from the academic world longer, and have gotten out of the practice of taking tests (House, 1989; Orlando, 2005; Perez, 2011). Research reveals GRE scores were less predictive of success for minority and non-traditional age women (Sampson & Boyer, 2001), and females often complete their program with a higher GPA than what was predicted on the GRE, and this under-prediction was also true for groups that were marginalized because of race, ethnic or international status (Perez, 2011). Other researchers have found that the context and content of the test is culturally biased, and does not reflect the abilities of second and third language speakers (Mupinga & Mupinga, 2005; Wao, Ries, Flood, Lavy, & Ozbeck, 2016).

Even Educational Testing Service, the company that develops and sells the GRE, notes the following within their technical report on the use of scores: "Special care is required in interpreting the GRE scores of students who may have had educational and cultural experiences somewhat different from those of the traditional majority...Available samples of students from underrepresented groups have been very small" (ETC, 2015, p. 15).

When examining policies of other universities, half (7) of the 14 peer and/or competitor universities do not require the GRE for their educational leadership Ed.S. programs: Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, Northern Michigan University, Ohio University, and University of North Dakota. Thus it is recommended that the policy be changed for WMU, whereby those programs which already require a Master's Degree prior to admission (and thus has the Master's GPA as a predictor of success) be allowed to decide whether to require the GRE or not.

**RATIONALE REFERENCES**

- Educational Testing Services. (2015). *GRE guide to use of scores 2015-2016*. Princeton, NJ: Author.
- House, J. D. (1989). Age bias in prediction of graduate grade point average from graduate record examination scores. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 49, 663-666.
- Mupinga, E., & Mupinga, D. (2005). Perceptions of international students toward GRE. *College Student Journal*, 39(2), 402-409.
- Orlando, J. (2006). The reliability of GRE scores in predicting graduate school success. *Ubiquity*, 6, 1-8.
- Perez, K. (2011). *GRE as a predictor of graduate student success at a Hispanic serving institution of higher education* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text.
- Sampson, C., & Boyer, P. (2001). GRE scores as predictors of minority students' success in graduate study: An argument for change. *College Student Journal*, 35, 271-279.

Wao, J. O., Ries, R., Flood, I., Lavy, S., & Ozbeck, M. E. (2015). Relationship between admission GRE scores and graduation GPA scores of construction management graduate students. *International Journal of Construction Education and Research*, 12(1), 37-53.

### **RECOMMENDED REVISION**

Given that the GRE was developed as a predictor assessment for an applicant's **initial** graduate program, and the research demonstrating concerns with GRE use for nontraditional students, it is proposed WMU allow educational specialist programs, which require the completion of a Master's degree prior to admission, to decide whether or not to require a GRE score.

It is further proposed that such programs can make such a change to their admissions requirements via notification to the Graduate College and the Registrar's Office, and not be required to go through the full curriculum review process (since program requirements once admitted are not changing, simply the application requirements).

### **GRADUATE CATALOG**

#### **ADMISSIONS**

##### **Admission Requirements**

##### **Specialist Program Applicant**

##### **(REVISIONS IN BOLD AND DELETIONS WITH STRIKETHROUGH)**

In addition to the minimum requirements for admission to a specialist program listed below, the University's single Specialist in Education (Ed.S.) program asks applicants to submit letters of recommendation and an autobiography; to present evidence of having completed specific courses with specific grades or of having specific kinds of work or life experiences; and may require the applicant to schedule a personal interview with departmental faculty. For more specific information on the specialist program in educational leadership, read the admission requirements section of the educational leadership, research and technology program's listing in this catalog or contact the program's graduate advisor or department office.

1. Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, indicated on an official transcript.
2. One official transcript from each institution attended since high school.
3. An overall grade point average of at least 3.0 in the last two years of undergraduate work, if applying with a bachelor's degree and no graduate work, and an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 for all graduate work undertaken beyond the bachelor's degree.
4. Scores on the GRE General Test (**unless the program requires the completion of a Master's Degree, prior to admission at which point the program can decide if a GRE score is required for admission**).
5. Evidence of having met any additional admission requirements stipulated by the individual specialist degree program.
6. Acceptance by the academic unit offering the specialist program and endorsement of the acceptance by the graduate dean.

Additionally, a specialist student's academic performance, professional development, research progress, and, where applicable, professional/ethical behavior will be reviewed annually to determine the student's eligibility to continue in the program. Upon the student's initial enrollment, the department shall provide a document to the graduate student outlining the annual review criteria and procedures. The review will assist the student in measuring timely progress toward completion of the program of study and in providing documentation for awards or assistantships or, if deficiencies are apparent, note them and indicate corrections necessary. Uncorrected deficiencies and/or unsatisfactory progress, performance, or behavior may result in a student's dismissal from the program