

Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment



Analysis of TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores for International Graduate Students Applying to the University of Texas at Austin

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January 26, 2004

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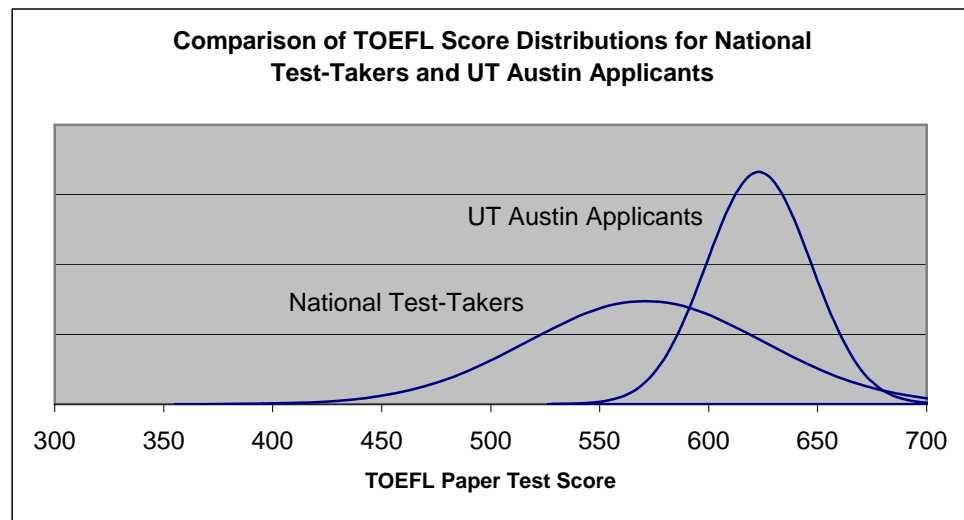
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Executive Summary

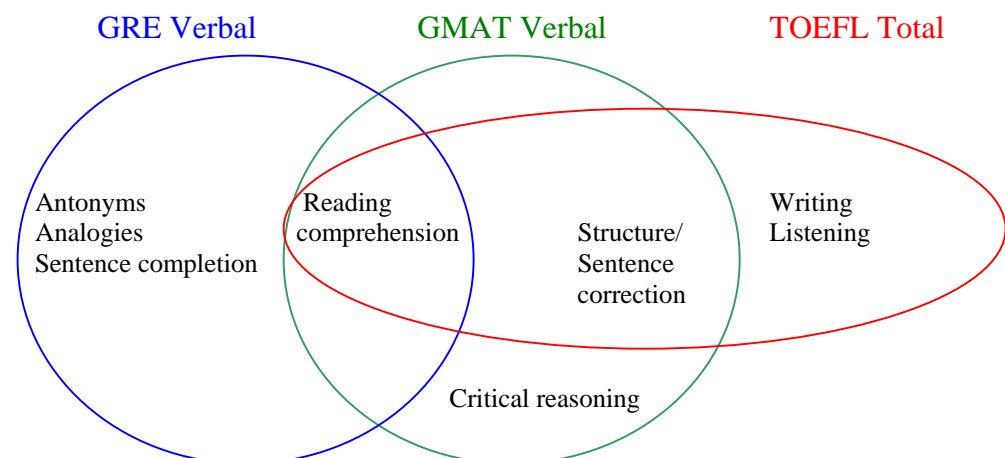
Staff of the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) requested assistance from the Measurement and Evaluation Center (MEC) in evaluating the soundness of minimum admissions requirements based on standardized tests for international graduate students applying to the University of Texas at Austin. In particular, GIAC staff expressed concerns about using the Graduate Record Examination Verbal exam score as a substitute, or waiver, for a score from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). MEC's research resulted in two principal findings and three recommendations.

Findings

- The national distribution of test scores for the TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores is wider than that for UT Austin international graduate student applicants. This indicates that, on average, UT Austin applicants have higher scores with less variability than the national pool of test takers. This disparity for the TOEFL exam can be seen in the figure below:



- The correlation is low between TOEFL total test score and GRE Verbal score, and moderate between TOEFL total test score and GMAT Verbal score. The higher correlation between the TOEFL and GMAT Verbal results from a greater overlap of content in these two exams, as graphically represented below:



Recommendations

- The most valid and defensible decision is to eliminate the use of the GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal scores as bases for waivers for TOEFL exam scores.
 - The waivers, particularly based on the GRE Verbal score, are problematic because the GRE exam does not cover the same content as the TOEFL exam, and therefore provides only partial approximations of the communicative competence skills and abilities measured in the TOEFL exam. This disparity will become even more evident when a speaking portion is added to the TOEFL exam in September 2005.
- If the GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal scores waivers are continued, the qualifying scores selected should be based on both national and UT Austin percentile ranks that are most appropriate for the applicant pool.
 - For example, the current GRE Verbal waiver threshold of 400 is at the 30th percentile nationally and the 15th percentile for UT Austin international graduate student applicants. A more appropriate waiver threshold might be 500, which is at the 26th percentile for UT Austin international graduate student applicants.
- Consideration should be given to raising the TOEFL minimum qualifying score for either all international graduate student applicants or for those considering or planning to serve as teaching assistants.
 - Because graduate students who will be teaching assistants at UT Austin need a high level of communicative competence to perform their duties, higher admission standards for these applicants may be warranted.

Introduction

On October 7, 2003 Measurement and Evaluation Center staff met with Patricia Ellison, Deana Williams, and Robert Watkins from the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) regarding questions about the minimum admissions requirements on standardized tests for international graduate students applying to the University of Texas at Austin.

Currently, all international graduate students are required to submit an official score from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A score of 550 (paper test) or 213 (computer-based test, or CBT) on the TOEFL is considered the minimum acceptable for admission to UT Austin. In addition, international graduate students are also required to submit an official score from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or, if they are applying for a degree within the School of Business, from the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).

The TOEFL requirement may be waived for applicants with a minimum score of 400 on the verbal portion of the GRE or a minimum score of 35 on the verbal portion of the GMAT (for MBA students). GIAC staff reported that UT Austin college and departmental representatives have expressed concerns that the GRE Verbal waiver threshold may be too low and, as a result, international graduate students may not have the English proficiency skills necessary to be successful in graduate work. Because of these concerns, GIAC asked MEC to investigate the appropriateness of the minimum waiver score and make recommendations for possible changes.

National Averages for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Exams

National averages for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
National Descriptive Statistics for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores

Exam	Sample Size	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
TOEFL Total¹ (CBT scale)	278,378	17	300	222	43
TOEFL Total² (paper scale)	85,834	310	677	571	54
GRE Verbal³	1,072,186	200	800	469	199
GMAT Verbal⁴	676,604	0	60	27	9

¹Based on the performance of candidates who took the computer-based TOEFL exam between July 2001 and June 2002 and who indicated that they were applying for admission to colleges or universities as graduate students.

²Based on the performance of candidates who took the paper-based TOEFL exam between July 2001 and June 2002 and who indicated that they were applying for admission to colleges or universities as graduate students.

³Based on the performance of all examinees who tested between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2002. Data located at <ftp://ftp.ets.org/pub/gre/994994.pdf>

⁴Based on the performance of all examinees tested from January 2002 through December 2002 (including repeaters).

National percentile ranks for five score points on the TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
National Percentile Ranks for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores

Percentile Rank	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
~30 th	213	550	400	23
~36 th	220	560	420	24
~50 th	237	580	460	28
~66 th	250	600	520	32
~80 th	260	620	580	36

UT Austin Averages for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Exams

For comparison with the national samples, UT Austin averages for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
UT Austin Descriptive Statistics for TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores for UT Austin Applicants⁵

Exam	Sample Size	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
TOEFL Total (CBT scale)	5,235	113	300	258	23
TOEFL Total (paper scale)	1,824	513	677	623	24
GRE Verbal	6,264	200	800	578	134
GMAT Verbal	855	11	47	32	6

⁵Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes applicants admitted and denied admission.

UT Austin percentile ranks for six score points on the TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
UT Austin Percentile Ranks for TOEFL (Concorded Scores)⁶,
GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores

Percentile Rank	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
3rd	213	550	300	18
15th	237	580	400	25
26th	247	597	500	28
27th	250	600	510	28
50th	260	620	610	32
66th	270	637	660	35

⁶Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for Fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission. Concorded scores (paper to CBT) based on values provided by Educational Testing Service.

Comparison of National and UT Austin Applicant Averages on TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Exams

A comparison of national and UT Austin averages is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Comparison of National and UT Austin Applicant Averages for
TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores

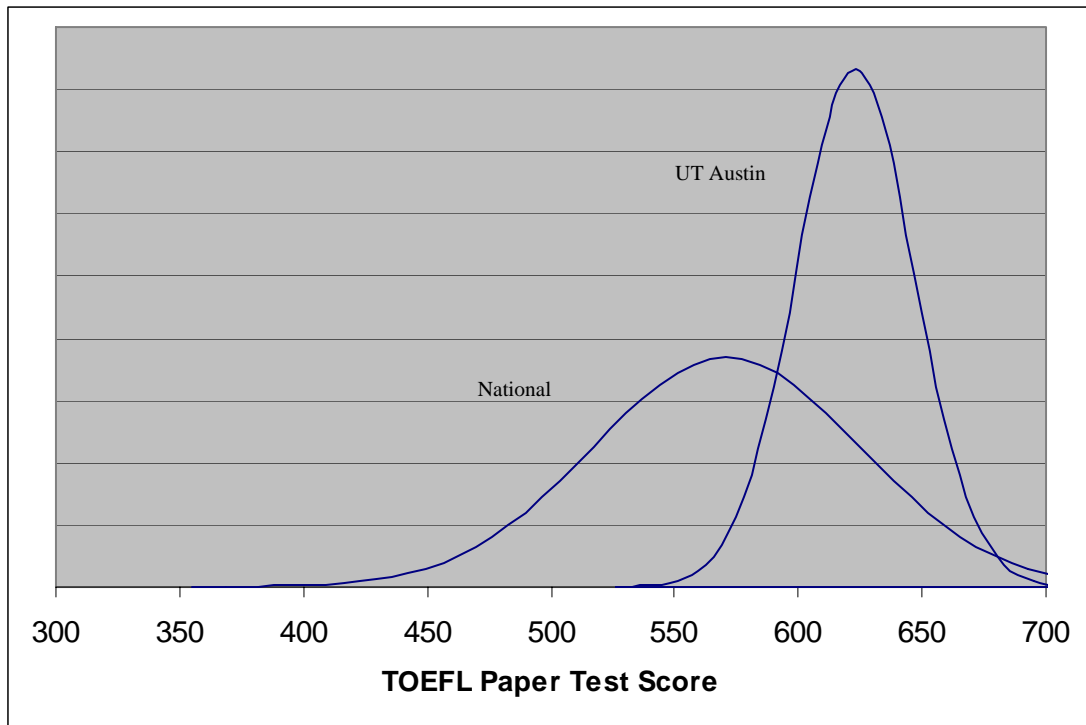
Exam	TOEFL Total (CBT scale)	TOEFL Total (Paper scale)	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
Mean Standard Deviation N				
National scores⁷	222 (43) 278,378	571 (54) 85,834	469 (199) 1,072,186	27 (9) 676,604
UT Austin scores⁸	258 (23) 5,235	623 (24) 1,824	578 (134) 6,264	32 (6) 855
Point Difference (UT – National)	+36	+52	+109	+5
S.D. Difference [(UT-National)/ National S.D.]	+0.84	+0.96	+0.55	+0.83

⁷Based on the performance of candidates who took either the computer-based or paper-based TOEFL exam between July 2001 and June 2002 and who indicated that they were applying for admission to colleges or universities as graduate students.

⁸Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission.

A graphical comparison of the TOEFL score distributions for the national sample and for UT Austin international graduate applicants for fall 2003 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Comparison of National and UT Austin Applicant TOEFL Total Test Score Distributions



Comparison of UT Austin Applicant Averages on TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Exams by College and Region

In order to further detail the performance of UT Austin applicants, comparisons were made of TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores based on applicants' anticipated college of study. The results are shown in Table 6, ordered from highest to lowest TOEFL CBT score for colleges with more than 30 applicants. Shaded rows have small sample sizes (less than 30 applicants) and, therefore, are not suitable for valid comparisons.

Comparisons were also made of TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores based on applicants' geographic region. The results are shown in Table 7, ordered from highest to lowest TOEFL CBT score for regions with more than 30 applicants. Shaded rows have small sample sizes (less than 30 applicants) and, therefore, are not suitable for valid comparisons.

Table 6
UT Austin Applicant Performance on TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal across College⁹

College	Mean (Standard Deviation) Sample Size	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
Business	266 (17) N = 722	629 (22) N = 226	624 (117) N = 135	32 (6) N = 829	
Natural Sciences	259 (25) N = 997	621 (24) N = 467	587 (135) N = 1464	---	
Engineering	259 (23) N = 2253	620 (23) N = 703	581 (127) N = 2955	27 (8) N = 5	
Liberal Arts	258 (21) N = 529	628 (26) N = 184	562 (141) N = 712	29 (8) N = 4	
Intercollegial	257 (24) N = 45	617 (28) N = 37	575 (141) N = 82	---	
Pharmacy	255 (24) N = 49	618 (18) N = 26	582 (135) N = 75	---	
Communication	254 (24) N = 174	632 (25) N = 43	577 (143) N = 217	24 --- N = 1	
Law	251 23 N = 44	632 (25) N = 16	587 (158) N = 59	34 --- N = 1	
Architecture	246 (24) N = 166	602 (23) N = 50	555 (136) N = 216	---	
Education	241 (21) N = 161	622 (28) N = 41	551 (151) N = 202	15 --- N = 1	
Fine Arts	246 (28) N = 28	599 (40) N = 3	493 (148) N = 31	---	
Nursing	214 (26) N = 18	633 --- N = 1	437 (174) N = 19	---	
School of Information	247 (31) N = 21	625 (17) N = 20	573 (125) N = 41	---	
Social Work	243 (38) N = 17	633 (14) N = 2	526 (168) N = 19	---	
No college specified	252 (25) N = 11	632 (20) N = 5	549 (132) N = 14	30 (10) N = 4	
TOTAL	258 (23) N = 5235	623 (24) N = 1824	578 (134) N = 6241	32 (6) N = 845	

⁹Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission.

Table 7
TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Performance across Region¹⁰

Region	Mean (Standard Deviation) Sample Size	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
Europe	266 (19) N = 149	622 (39) N = 5	433 (112) N = 142	33 (6) N = 12	
Africa	264 (21) N = 43	644 (9) N = 2	465 (123) N = 41	25 (8) N = 6	
Middle East	260 (21) N = 293	633 (18) N = 5	394 (99) N = 276	33 (6) N = 24	
Asia	258 (23) N = 4408	622 (24) N = 1804	597 (123) N = 5581	32 (6) N = 651	
Latin America/ Caribbean	258 (23) N = 336	620 (38) N = 8	418 (99) N = 195	29 (6) N = 152	
North America	287 (16) N = 4	---	660 (54) N = 4	---	
No region specified	270 (24) N = 2	---	570 (311) N = 2	---	
TOTAL	258 (23) N = 5235	623 (24) N = 1824	578 (134) N = 6241	32 (6) N = 845	

¹⁰Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission.

It is notable that applicants from Asia had one of the lower average TOEFL CBT scores in comparison to the other regions (although still well above the national average of 222). However, on the basis of GRE Verbal scores, Asian applicants far outranked the other regions. This is further evidence that the TOEFL and GRE Verbal exams measure different skills and abilities.

Because the Asian region provided a majority of the international graduate student applicants (88%), comparisons were made across individual countries within this region. The results are shown in Table 8, ordered from highest to lowest TOEFL CBT score for Asian countries with more than 30 applicants. Shaded rows have small sample sizes (less than 30 applicants) and, therefore, are not suitable for valid comparisons.

Table 8
TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Performance Across Asian Region by Country¹¹

Asian Country Mean (Standard Deviation) Sample Size	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
India	275 (15) N = 1687	653 (16) N = 5	588 (106) N = 1552	35 (5) N = 147
Pakistan	269 (19) N = 34	649 (19) N = 3	501 (124) N = 34	31 (8) N = 4
China, Peoples Republic of	261 (17) N = 219	623 (24) N = 1780	652 (83) N = 1800	34 (4) N = 204
Hong Kong	261 (11) N = 30	617 --- N = 1	469 (133) N = 27	31 (3) N = 4
Japan	254 (21) N = 136	612 (54) N = 4	351 (92) N = 74	29 (5) N = 67
Korea, Republic of	246 (19) N = 1492	569 (48) N = 4	609 (115) N = 1370	30 (6) N = 128
Thailand	245 (22) N = 72	---	368 (88) N = 57	26 (5) N = 15
Taiwan	241 (22) N = 653	615 (64) N = 4	509 (152) N = 596	27 (6) N = 62
Afghanistan	277 --- N = 1	---	590 --- N = 1	---
Bangladesh	272 (24) N = 15	---	500 (144) N = 11	34 (9) N = 4
Indonesia	249 (19) N = 22	610 --- N = 1	382 (108) N = 19	25 (5) N = 5
Kazakhstan	259 (25) N = 4	---	503 (265) N = 3	29 --- N = 1
Korea (North)	253 --- N = 1	---	690 --- N = 1	---
Macao	287 --- N = 1	---	440 --- N = 1	---
Malaysia	264 (28) N = 5	---	542 (186) N = 5	---

Table 8 (continued)

	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
Mongolia	---	630 (28) N = 2	620 (99) N = 2	---
Nepal	261 (21) N = 6	---	565 (150) N = 6	---
Philippines	270 (16) N = 12	---	499 (114) N = 8	32 (10) N = 4
Singapore	283 (12) N = 11	---	620 (108) N = 7	40 (4) N = 6
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	262 (35) N = 3	---	450 (175) N = 3	---
Uzbekistan	217 (19) N = 2	---	305 (7) N = 2	---
Vietnam	257 (5) N = 2	---	340 (14) N = 2	---
TOTAL	258 (23) N = 4408	622 (24) N = 1804	597 (123) N = 5581	32 (6) N = 651

¹¹Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission.

As shown in Table 8, the top ranking Asian countries on the TOEFL CBT are India, Pakistan, the Peoples Republic of China, and Hong Kong. Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Taiwan complete the list of Asian countries with more than 30 applicants.

Correlations among TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores for UT Austin Applicants

The results of a correlation analysis of the relationship among TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores of UT Austin applicants are shown in Table 9.

As evident in column one of Table 9, the TOEFL total score has a higher correlation with the GMAT Verbal score compared to the GRE Verbal score. For applicants who took the TOEFL computer-based test, the correlations are 0.35 with GRE Verbal and 0.68 with GMAT Verbal. The TOEFL paper test correlations should be interpreted cautiously because of small sample sizes, especially with the GMAT Verbal exam.

Content Analysis of TOEFL, GRE Verbal and GMAT Exams

In order to investigate why the TOEFL total score has a higher correlation with the GMAT Verbal score compared to the GRE Verbal score, the nature of the three exams was investigated. Table 10 shows the results of that comparison, including a comparison of the verbal sections for each exam.

Table 9
Correlations Among Total TOEFL, GRE Verbal Scores, and
GMAT Verbal Scores of UT Austin Applicants¹²

	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper	GRE Verbal	GMAT Verbal
TOEFL CBT	1.00			
N	5,235			
TOEFL Paper	---	1.00		
N		1,824		
GRE Verbal	0.35**	0.30**	1.00	
N	4,568	1,673	6,264	
GMAT Verbal	0.68**	0.40**	0.69**	1.00
N	687	158	28	855

** Significant at the $p < .01$ level (2-tailed)

¹²Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes admitted applicants and those denied admission.

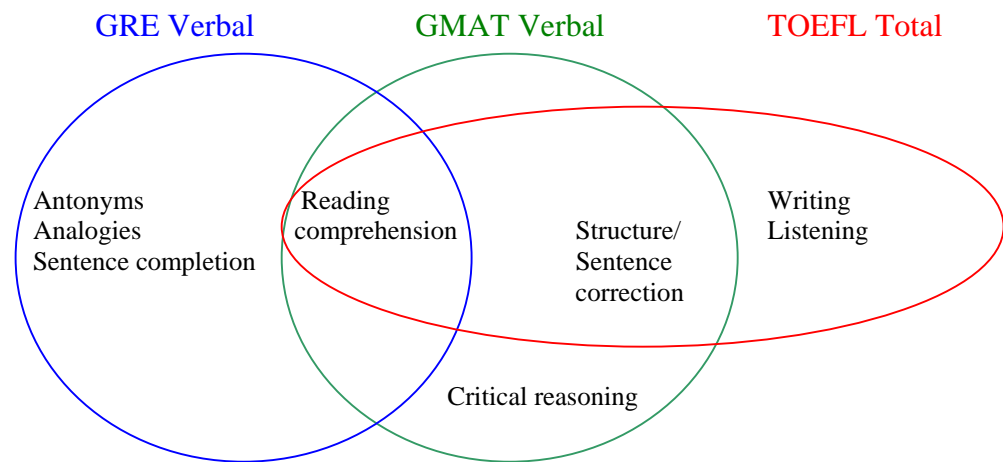
Table 10
Comparison of the Purpose and Content of the TOEFL, GRE, and GMAT Exams

	TOEFL	GRE	GMAT
Purpose	A measure of general English proficiency in reading, structure, writing, and listening	A measure of analytical writing, verbal, and quantitative reasoning abilities	A measure of basic verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills
Reading/ Verbal section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Measures ability to read and understand short passages o 70-90 minutes o 44-55 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Measures ability to: analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it; analyze relationships among component parts of sentences; recognize relationships between words and concepts o Question types: antonyms, analogies, sentence completion, reading comprehension o Up to 30 minutes o Variable number of questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Measures ability to: read and comprehend material; reason and evaluate arguments; correct written material to conform to standard written English o Question types: reading comprehension, critical reasoning, sentence correction o 75 minutes o 41 questions
Other sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Structure: Measures ability to recognize language appropriate for standard written English o Writing: Measures ability to write in English o Listening: Measures ability to comprehend spoken North American English 	Although both the GRE and GMAT have writing sections, these scores are not used in the waiver requirement for the TOEFL Total test score.	Although both the GRE and GMAT have writing sections, these scores are not used in the waiver requirement for the TOEFL Total test score.

The TOEFL total score comprises four sections: reading, structure, writing, and listening. The TOEFL reading section contains reading comprehension questions; the GMAT verbal section also contains reading comprehension questions, as well as critical reasoning and sentence correction questions. That latter content appears equivalent to material in the TOEFL structure section. Thus, the GMAT Verbal score seems to reflect content similar to what is indicated from the TOEFL Reading and Structure sections. The GMAT Verbal score, however, does not reflect writing and listening content areas, two sections that are also included in the TOEFL total test score.

The GRE Verbal section contains antonym, analogy, sentence completion, and reading comprehension item types. Only the reading comprehension items seem to correspond to the item types in the TOEFL reading section. Additionally, the GRE Verbal section does not contain the structure, writing, or listening items that are a part of the TOEFL total test score. So, to use the GRE Verbal score in lieu of the TOEFL total test score is to appear to use a score that reflects only part of the content of the TOEFL reading section plus other verbal skills such as those necessary to deal with antonyms, analogies, and sentence completion, skills not addressed in the TOEFL. Given the larger overlap of content area, it is not surprising that the GMAT Verbal score has a higher correlation with TOEFL total test score than does the GRE Verbal score. This overlap is graphically represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Content area overlap between TOEFL Total score, GRE Verbal score and GMAT Verbal score

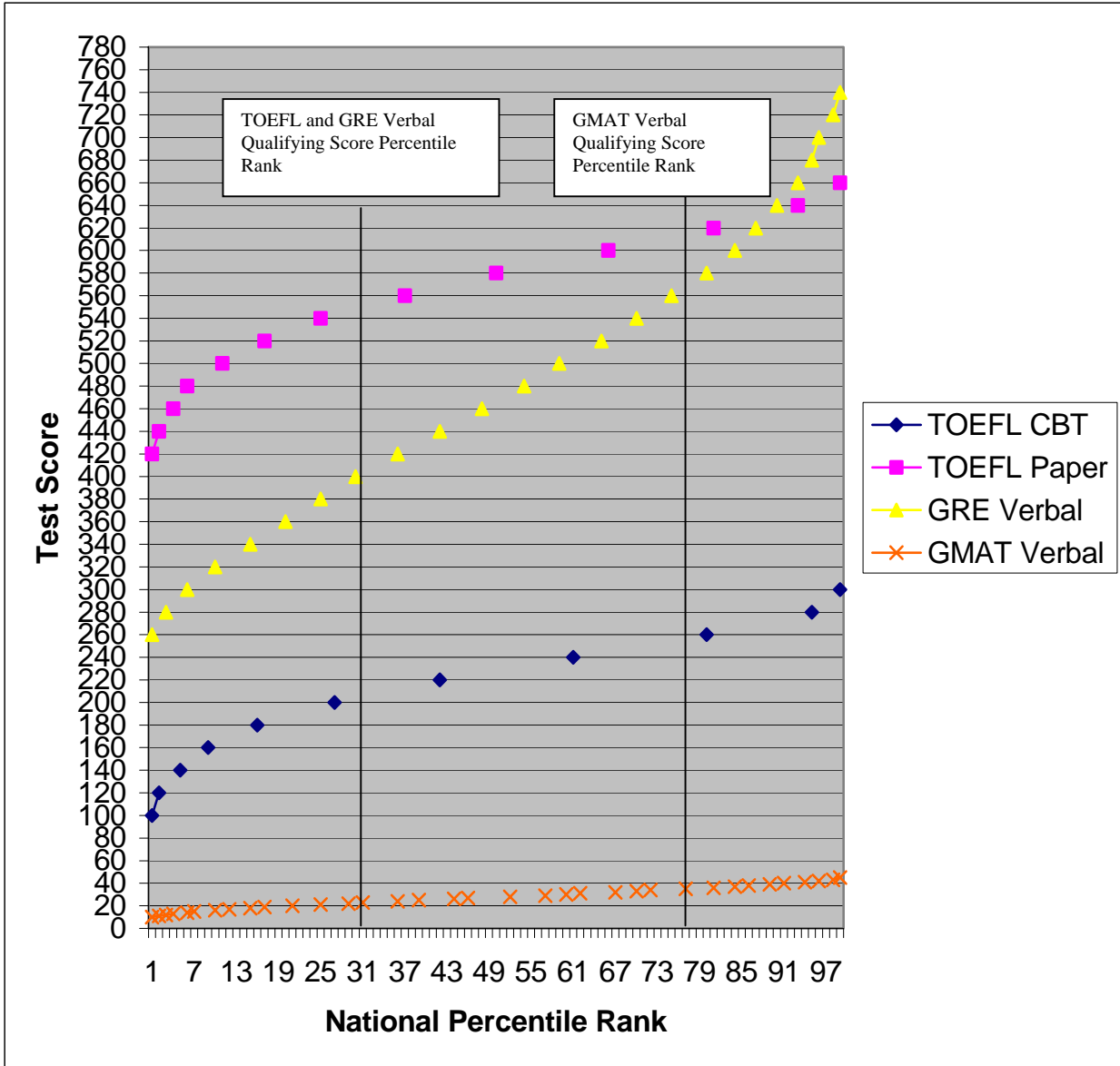


Minimum Scores Currently Used as Bases for Waivers

Figure 3 presents graphically a comparison of the national percentile ranks of the minimum qualifying TOEFL score and the minimum GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal scores that are bases for waivers at UT Austin. As shown in Figure 3, the current TOEFL requirement of 550 ranks at the 30th percentile in the national distribution of scores, as does the GRE Verbal waiver score of 400. However, the GMAT Verbal waiver score of 35 ranks at the 77th percentile nationally. So, the GMAT not only aligns more closely with the TOEFL test score in terms of content, but students must rank significantly higher than their peers nationally on the GMAT Verbal exam in order to receive the waiver for the TOEFL exam. Given this, it is not surprising that the GMAT-based waiver seems to function better than the GRE-based waiver.

As shown in Table 11, the distribution of UT Austin applicant percentile ranks for the TOEFL exam is narrower than the national distribution. So, using the existing minimum TOEFL qualifying scores of 550 (213 computer), 30 percent of national TOEFL test takers fall at or below this minimum score, whereas 3 percent of UT Austin international graduate student applicants fall below this minimum. Similarly, 30 percent of national GRE Verbal test takers fall at or below the minimum score of 400, whereas 15 percent of UT Austin international graduate student applicants fall below this minimum. For the GMAT Verbal minimum score of 35, nationally 77 percent of test takers are at or

Figure 3
Comparison of National Percentile Ranks for Minimum Qualifying TOEFL and
Minimum Waiver-Basis GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal Scores



TOEFL Qualifying score of 213 (CBT) / 550 (Paper):
 GRE Verbal Qualifying score of 400:
 GMAT Verbal Qualifying score of 35:

30th percentile
 30th percentile
 77th percentile

Table 11
Comparison of National and UT Austin Applicant Percentile Ranks for TOEFL (Concorded Scores), GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal Scores

	Score	National Percentile Rank¹³	UT Percentile Rank¹⁴
TOEFL CBT	213	~30	3
	220	42	5
	240	61	18
	260	80	50
	280	95	85
	300	99	99
TOEFL Paper	550	~30	3
	580	50	14
	600	66	27
	620	81	50
	640	93	70
	660	99	90
	677	99	99
GRE Verbal	300	6	3
	400	30	15
	420	36	17
	460	48	22
	480	54	24
	500	59	26
	520	65	28
	580	80	42
	600	84	48
	620	87	50
GMAT Verbal	23	31	10
	24	36	12
	25	39	15
	28	52	27
	32	67	50
	35	77	66
	36	81	77

¹³Based on the performance of candidates who took either the computer-based or paper-based TOEFL exam between July 2001 and June 2002 and who indicated that they were applying for admission to colleges or universities as graduate students.

¹⁴Based on the performance of international graduate students who applied to the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2003 admission. Includes applicants admitted and denied admission. Concorded scores (paper to CBT) based on values provided by Educational Testing Service.

below this score and 66 percent of UT Austin international graduate student applicants are at or below this score. These comparisons indicate that UT Austin international graduate student applicants, on average, have higher scores on these three standardized exams than do test takers nationally.

Recommendations

This report has provided details about how national and UT Austin samples compare on TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal scores, including score correlations and the content overlap of the TOEFL, GRE Verbal, and GMAT Verbal exams. This information should be used when determining 1) whether the GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal scores should be used as bases for waivers of the TOEFL exam and 2) what the appropriate minimum scores should be if the GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal exam scores are used as waiver bases.

There are four options to consider:

- 1) Eliminate the use of the GRE Verbal and/or GMAT Verbal score as a basis for a waiver
- 2) Raise the minimum score for the GRE Verbal-based waiver
- 3) Raise the minimum score for the TOEFL qualifying score
- 4) Raise the minimum score for the TOEFL qualifying score and GRE Verbal-based waiver

1) Eliminate the use of the GRE Verbal and/or GMAT Verbal as a waiver

Eliminating the GRE and GMAT verbal scores as waiver bases would affect few students. A total of 7,091 international graduate students applied to UT Austin in fall 2003. As shown in Table 12, 147 of those students had a TOEFL test score under the current requirement of 213 for the CBT TOEFL or 550 for the paper TOEFL. Of those 147 students, 48 would have been eligible for admission using the 400 or better GRE Verbal waiver. So, eliminating the GRE Verbal waiver would have affected 48 students in the fall 2003 applicant pool.

Table 12
GRE Verbal and GMAT Verbal Scores for UT Austin Applicants with TOEFL Scores
Below the Existing Qualifying Score (CBT = 213; Paper = 550)

	Score Range	TOEFL CBT < 213	TOEFL Paper < 550
GRE Verbal	200 – 390	94	5
	400 – 490	10	0
	500 – 590	10	2
	600 – 690	17	3
	700 – 800	6	0
	TOTAL	137	10
GMAT Verbal	11 – 25	5	0
	26 – 34	0	0
	35 – 60	0	0
	TOTAL	5	0

With respect to the GMAT Verbal, there were five applicants without a qualifying TOEFL score, and none of them met the GMAT minimum waiver of 35. So, no students who did not meet the current TOEFL requirements would have been eligible for admission using a GMAT Verbal score waiver.

Impact:

- Eliminating the use of the GRE and GMAT verbal scores would affect approximately 0.7 percent of international graduate student applicants, denying them eligibility for admission.

2) *Raise the minimum score for the GRE Verbal waiver*

Raising the GRE Verbal score waiver would affect a small number of students. If the GRE Verbal waiver were raised to 500, 10 students who did not have the minimum TOEFL score would have been eliminated from the eligible group, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13
GRE Verbal Scores for UT Austin Applicants with TOEFL Scores
Below the Existing Qualifying Score (CBT = 213; Paper = 550)

	Score Range	TOEFL CBT < 213	TOEFL Paper < 550
GRE Verbal	200 – 390	94	5
	400 – 490	10	0
	500 – 590	10	2
	600 – 690	17	3
	700 – 800	6	0
	TOTAL	137	10

Impact:

- Fifteen percent of fall 2003 international graduate student applicants fall below the current GRE Verbal qualifying score of 400. If this qualifying score were raised to 500, approximately 26 percent of international graduate student applicants would fall below this level.
 - However, approximately 0.10% of applicants would be affected by raising the GRE Verbal qualifying score from 400 to 500, because most students who had GRE Verbal scores under 500 met the minimum TOEFL score requirement.

3) *Raise the minimum TOEFL qualifying score*

Raising the TOEFL minimum qualifying score would affect more students than raising the GRE Verbal waiver score. As shown in Table 14, 1,764 (25%) of the fall 2003 applicants had a TOEFL test score under the proposed increased score of 250 for the CBT TOEFL or 600 for the paper TOEFL. The proposed increase to 250/600 was selected because it is the score at the 27th percentile of UT Austin applicants, which is nearly equal to the national percentile rank for the existing qualifying score of 213/550.

However, assuming the GRE Verbal waiver score were still used, 1,224 applicants would have been eligible using the 400 or better waiver. So, approximately 69% of the applicants who would not meet the increased TOEFL requirements would be eligible using a GRE Verbal score waiver of 400.

One alternative in raising the TOEFL qualifying score is to maintain the existing qualifying score for all applicants but require a higher minimum for those applicants considering or planning to become a teaching assistant. GIAC staff report that many concerns about applicants' communicative competence center on international graduate students who function as TAs. If the role of a teaching

Table 14
Fall 2003 UT Austin Applicants with TOEFL Scores below
Proposed Qualifying Score (CBT = 250, Paper = 600)

	Score Range	TOEFL CBT < 250	TOEFL Paper < 600
GRE Verbal	200 – 390	525	15
	400 – 490	204	27
	500 – 590	220	53
	600 – 690	384	107
	700 – 800	169	60
	TOTAL	1502	262
GMAT Verbal	11 – 25	53	3
	26 – 34	17	4
	35 – 60	1	2
	TOTAL	71	9

assistant requires a higher level of communicative competence, it may be reasonable to require a higher standard for these applicants.

With respect to the GMAT Verbal, there were 80 students who had a TOEFL test score that did not meet the TOEFL 250/600 minimum. If the GMAT Verbal waiver of 35 were still used, three of the 80 would have met the minimum waiver score.

Impact:

- Three percent of fall 2003 international graduate student applicants fall below the current TOEFL qualifying score of 213/550. If this qualifying score were raised to 250/600, approximately 25 percent of international graduate student applicants would fall below this level.
 - If the current GRE Verbal waiver of 400 were maintained, the number of ineligible applicants would be reduced to approximately 17 percent.

4) Raise the minimum score for the TOEFL qualifying score and GRE Verbal waiver

As shown in Table 15, of the 1,764 applicants with a TOEFL score under 250/600, 993 would have been eligible using a GRE Verbal waiver of 500 or better. Approximately 56% of the students who would not meet the increased TOEFL requirements would have been eligible if the GRE Verbal waiver were raised to 500.

Impact:

- Eight percent of fall 2003 international graduate student applicants fall below the current proposed TOEFL qualifying score of 250/600 and GRE Verbal waiver score of 400 (540 applicants). If the GRE Verbal waiver score were raised to 500, approximately 22 percent (771 applicants) of international graduate student applicants would fall below this level.

Table 15
Fall 2003 International Graduate Student Applicants with TOEFL Scores below the Proposed Qualifying Score (CBT = 250, Paper = 600) and GRE Verbal Waiver Score of 500

	Score Range	TOEFL CBT < 250	TOEFL Paper < 600
GRE Verbal	200 – 390	525	15
	400 – 490	204	27
	500 – 590	220	53
	600 – 690	384	107
	700 – 800	169	60
	TOTAL	1502	262

Overall recommendation

The disparity between national and UT Austin score distributions, low correlations, lack of content overlap, and relatively small number of students impacted all suggest that the best approach is to not use GRE Verbal or GMAT Verbal scores as bases for waivers of the TOEFL exam. Educational Testing Service, the developer of all three exams, recommends that the exams not be used interchangeably, because the content and goals of the exams emphasize different skills and knowledge. The GMAT Verbal waiver is a better approximation of the TOEFL exam; however, this exam still lacks coverage in writing, listening, and a soon-to-be-added TOEFL component, speaking. Among the three exams considered in this research the TOEFL exam is the only truly valid comprehensive test of English language proficiency for international graduate student applicants. Thus, what requires consideration is whether the existing TOEFL qualifying score is functioning well or if it should be raised for some or all applicants.