

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 511 Graduate Program Admissions

SPONSOR(S): Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee, Holcomb

TIED BILLS: None. **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** CS/SB 494

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee	16 Y, 0 N, As CS	Blalock	Kiner
2) Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee			
3) Education & Employment Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The bill requires an institution of higher education to waive the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) for servicemembers and for persons who served in the United States Armed Forces, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Reserve Forces and were discharged or released under any condition other than dishonorable.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact. See Fiscal Comments.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Graduate Record Examination

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is the world's most widely used admissions test for graduate and professional schools.¹ The GRE General Test and GRE Subject Tests are taken by individuals applying to graduate, business, and law programs. For more than 70 years, GRE scores have been used by admissions and fellowship panels at thousands of graduate programs around the world to supplement an applicant's undergraduate grades and other qualifications for graduate study.²

The GRE General Test measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills. The test closely aligns with the types of skills that are required for success in today's demanding graduate programs, including business and law.³

The GRE Subject Tests measure achievement in specific subject areas and assume undergraduate majors or extensive background in those disciplines. These tests are available in Mathematics, Physics, and Psychology.⁴

The GRE General Test fee is \$220. The GRE Subject Test fee is \$150.⁵

Graduate Management Admission Test

The Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) was established in 1953 to solve a common problem schools faced: the need for a standardized exam to accurately assess a candidate's ability to perform in the rigors of a graduate management degree program. After thorough research and development, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) exam was created by business schools for business schools. It was specifically designed to assist with the business school admissions process.⁶ The GMAT is the most widely used exam for admission to graduate business and management programs.⁷

The GMAT exam is designed to test skills that are highly important to business and management programs. It assesses analytical writing and problem-solving abilities, along with the data sufficiency, logic, and critical reasoning skills that are vital to real-world business and management success. Additionally, the GMAT exam assesses Integrated Reasoning, a section designed to measure a test taker's ability to evaluate information presented in new formats and from multiple sources—skills necessary for management students to succeed in a technologically advanced and data-rich world.⁸

The GMAT Exam fee is \$275 if taken at a test center and \$300 if taken online.⁹

Graduate Program Admissions

¹ ETS, *GRE*, <https://www.ets.org/gre.html> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

² ETS, *GRE Information Bulletin* (2023), available at <https://www.ets.org/pdfs/gre/gre-info-bulletin.pdf>, at 4.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ ETS, *GRE Test Takers*, <https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers.html> (last visited Jan. 12, 2024).

⁶ Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), *GMAT History*, <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/about/gmat-history> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

⁷ GMAC, *GMAT Exam*, <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

⁸ GMAC, *About the GMAT Exam*, <https://www.gmac.com/gmat-other-assessments/about-the-gmat-exam> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

⁹ GMAC, *Exam Payment*, <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/register/exam-payment> (last visited Jan. 12, 2024).

The State University System of Florida (SUS)¹⁰ offers opportunities for graduate study in over 1,000 academic programs.¹¹ The Board of Governors has established that it is the responsibility of the universities and university boards of trustees to establish their own standards for graduate school admission.¹² Admission decisions for graduate programs are typically made at the program or department level, in concert with the admission criteria adopted by each university. These criteria are typically published on the university admissions office website.¹³

GRE and GMAT Waivers

As a response to the COVID pandemic, many SUS institutions temporarily waived GRE requirements for the majority of graduate programs' admission criteria. This temporary waiver is still in effect for many of the SUS institutions. For example, Florida Atlantic University will waive the GRE and GMAT scores for all applicants seeking entry to most graduate programs, up to and including the entry term of Spring 2024.¹⁴ Florida State University (FSU) is extending its temporary GRE waiver through Fall 2026 for most Master's and Specialist's programs.¹⁵

Additionally, some graduate programs offer GRE or GMAT waivers for applicants who fulfill specified criteria, typically involving meeting certain academic, research, or work-related benchmarks. Applicants for the Master of Science in Management program at the University of South Florida (USF) can request a GRE/GMAT waiver if the applicant has 3 years of professional or managerial experience or has earned a bachelor's degree from USF, a Florida preeminent institution, or an Association of American Universities (AAU) school and has a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher.¹⁶

At FSU, for business school master's degree programs, GRE or GMAT scores are accepted but not required. This broader policy follows the university waiving the GMAT requirement for highly qualified applicants with stellar academic backgrounds or significant work experience. The GMAT is still required for those applying for doctoral degrees within the College of Business.¹⁷

At the University of Florida, for the full-time MBA program, applicants are still required to submit a GMAT or GRE test score, with the GMAT preferred. For a professional MBA program (Executive, Online, South Florida, and Weekend Professional), a GMAT or GRE score is not required, but applicants may submit a score if they feel that doing so will make their application more competitive. If a test score is submitted, the admissions committee will use the score as an additional data point for consideration. An applicant will not be penalized if a test score is not provided or if a submitted test score is below the admissions range. Instead of requiring a test score, the admissions committee will rely on other indicators of ability when reviewing an applicant's file, including, but not limited to, career trajectory and professional success, leadership experience, and previous academic performance. All applicants are reviewed holistically and the most competitive applicants showcase strength in all areas.¹⁸

GRE and GMAT Waivers for Military Applicants

¹⁰ Section 1000.21(8), F.S.

¹¹ State University System of Florida (SUS), *Graduate & Professional Admissions*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/admissions-transfers/graduate-professional-admissions/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹² Board of Governors Regulations 6.001 and 6.003. SUS, *Active Regulations: Chapter 6*, https://www.flbog.edu/regulations/active-regulations/?fwp_chapters=chapter-06 (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹³ SUS, *Graduate & Professional Admissions*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/admissions-transfers/graduate-professional-admissions/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹⁴ Florida Atlantic University, Graduate College, *Prospective Graduate Students*, <https://www.fau.edu/graduate/admissions/prospective-graduate-students/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹⁵ Florida State University (FSU), The Graduate School, *Master's Degree Programs*, <https://gradschool.fsu.edu/academics-research/degree-programs/masters-degree-programs> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹⁶ University of South Florida, Muma College of Business, *Application Process*, <https://www.usf.edu/business/graduate/ms-management/application-process.aspx> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹⁷ FSU, College of Business, *GMAT Now Optional for All Business Master's Programs*, <https://business.fsu.edu/article/gmat-now-optional-all-business-masters-programs> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

¹⁸ University of Florida, Warrington College of Business, *Apply to UF MBA*, <https://warrington.ufl.edu/mba/apply/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

In addition to GRE and GMAT waivers available for all applicants, many universities nationwide provide waivers specifically for military applicants. The universities with GMAT waivers for military applicants recognize that military service provides real-world leadership and decision-making experience that may serve as a better indicator of likely success in an MBA program than a test score. MBA programs require teamwork and collaboration, as does military service.¹⁹ The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business offers a GMAT/GRE waiver for military candidates and cites the value of "the leadership and diverse perspective veterans and active-military provide."²⁰

Waivers exempting military applicants from GRE requirements for graduate program admissions are not as prevalent as GMAT waivers. However, some graduate programs like the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago provide waivers for applicants who have completed five years of active duty national military service.²¹ Similarly, the School of Computing and Information Science at the University of Maine offers a GRE waiver for some graduate degree programs for military members and veterans with five or more years of military experience, provided they meet academic minimums.²²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill requires an institution of higher education to waive the GRE and GMAT for servicemembers who apply for admission to a graduate program that requires the examination. The bill also requires an institution of higher education to waive the GRE and GMAT for persons who served in the United States Armed Forces, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Reserve Forces and were discharged or released under any condition other than dishonorable and who apply to a graduate program that requires such examination.

The bill provides definitions, including:

- "Graduate program" means an advanced academic degree program in a specialized field of study, including, but not limited to, a master's or doctoral degree program, which degree is pursued after one has obtained a bachelor's degree.
- "Institution of higher education" means a state university.²³
- "Servicemember" means any person serving as a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces.²⁴

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Creates s. 1004.032, F.S.; defining terms; requiring an institution of higher education to waive certain examination requirements for a servicemember or a person who served in the United States Armed Forces, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Reserve Forces and was discharged or released under any condition other than dishonorable and who applies for admission to a graduate program that requires such examination.

Section 2: Providing an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

¹⁹ Veterans.com, *GMAT Waivers for Military & Veterans*, <https://veteran.com/gmat-waivers/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

²⁰ The Ohio State University, Fisher College of Business, Graduate Programs, *Military & Veterans*, <https://fisher.osu.edu/graduate/military-veterans> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

²¹ The University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy, *GRE Requirements and Waivers*, <https://harris.uchicago.edu/admissions/blog/gre-requirements-and-waivers> (last visited Jan. 15, 2024).

²² The University of Maine, School of Computing and Information Science, *GRE Waiver Request* (2019), available at <https://online.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/72/2019/11/GREWaiverRequestInSCIS.pdf>.

²³ Section 1000.21(5) and (8), F.S. provides a list of all Florida College System institutions and state universities, respectively.

²⁴ Section 250.01(19), F.S.

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

See Fiscal Comments.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

See Fiscal Comments.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

See Fiscal Comments.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill may have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on servicemembers due to the cost savings associated with the waiver of the GMAT and GRE requirement. This cost savings is estimated at \$275-\$300 per servicemember applying to a graduate program that requires the GMAT and \$220 per servicemember applying to a graduate program that requires the GRE. The bill may have a corresponding indeterminate negative fiscal impact on testing providers of the GMAT and GRE.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On January 25, 2024, the Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- removes reference to a Florida College System institution from the definition of “institution of higher education;” and
- expands the GRE and GMAT waivers to include graduate program applicants who served in the United States Armed Forces, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Reserve Forces and who were discharged or released under any condition other than dishonorable.

The analysis is drafted to the committee substitute adopted by the Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee.