

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Postsecondary

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BILL: SB 494

INTRODUCER: Senator Avila

SUBJECT: Graduate Program Admissions

DATE: January 8, 2024

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Jahnke	Bouck	HE	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			MS	
3.			RC	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 494 requires an institution of higher education to waive the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) for servicemembers who apply for admission to a graduate program that requires the examination.

The bill is effective July 1, 2024.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Graduate Record Examination**

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is the world’s most widely used admissions test for graduate and professional schools.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ETS, *GRE*, <https://www.ets.org/gre.html> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

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

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

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.<sup>4</sup>

### **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.<sup>5</sup> The GMAT is the most widely used exam for admission to graduate business and management programs.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

### **Graduate Program Admissions**

The State University System (SUS) offers opportunities for graduate study in over 1,000 academic programs.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

### ***GRE and GMAT Waivers***

As a response to the COVID pandemic, many SUS institutions temporarily waived GRE requirements for the majority of graduate program 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 graduate programs up to

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

<sup>5</sup> MBA.com, GMAT Exam, *GMAT History*, <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/about/gmat-history> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> MBA.com, Exams, *GMAT Exams*, <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Graduate Management Admission Council, *About the GMAT Exam*, <https://www.gmac.com/gmat-other-assessments/about-the-gmat-exam> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> State University System, *Graduate & Professional Admissions*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/admissions-transfers/graduate-professional-admissions/> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Board of Governors Regulation 6.001 and 6.003.

<sup>10</sup> State University System, *Graduate & Professional Admissions*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/admissions-transfers/graduate-professional-admissions/> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

and including the entry term of Spring 2024.<sup>11</sup> Florida State University is extending the temporary waiver through Fall 2026 for most Master's and Specialist's programs.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, some graduate programs offer GRE/GMAT waivers for applicants who meet specified criteria. 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 AAU school, and has a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher.<sup>13</sup>

### ***GRE and GMAT Waivers for Military Applicants***

In addition to the temporary GRE waivers still available for all applicants, many universities nationwide provide GMAT waivers for military applicants. The universities with GMAT waivers for military applicants recognize that military service provides veterans with real-world leadership and decision-making experience. These real-world experiences often serve as a more reliable indicator of success in an MBA program compared to solely relying on GMAT scores.<sup>14</sup> Universities with MBA programs that waive GMAT requirements include:<sup>15</sup>

- University of Arizona
- Ohio State University
- Western Michigan
- Xavier
- North Carolina State University
- Purdue
- University of Miami
- Syracuse University

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.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the School of Computing and Information Science at the University of Maine offers a GRE waiver for military members and veterans with five or more years of military experience.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Florida Atlantic University, Graduate College, *Prospective Graduate Students*, <https://www.fau.edu/graduate/admissions/prospective-graduate-students/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Florida State University, *Master's Degree Programs*, <https://gradschool.fsu.edu/academics-research/degree-programs/masters-degree-programs> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> University of South Florida, Graduate, *Master of Science in Management*, <https://www.usf.edu/business/graduate/ms-management/application-process.aspx> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Veterans.com, *GMAT Waivers*, <https://veteran.com/gmat-waivers/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> 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. 4, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> University of Maine, *GRE Waiver Request* (2019), available at <https://online.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/72/2019/11/GREWaiverRequestInSCIS.pdf>.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 494 creates s. 1004.032, F.S., which requires an institution of higher education to waive the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) for servicemembers who apply for admission to a graduate program that requires the examination.

The bill provides definitions, to include:

- A “graduate program” as 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.
- An “institution of higher education” as a Florida College System institution or a state university.<sup>18</sup>
- A “servicemember” as 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.<sup>19</sup>

The bill is effective on July 1, 2024.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

#### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

#### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

#### D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

#### E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

### V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

#### A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

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<sup>18</sup> Section 1000.21(5) and (8), F.S., provides a list of all Florida College System institutions and state universities, respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Section 250.01, F.S.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The bill requires Florida College System (FCS) institutions to waive the examination requirement for graduate program admissions. FCS institutions are only approved to offer postsecondary programs up to the baccalaureate degree level and are not authorized to offer graduate programs.<sup>20</sup> The bill sponsor may want to remove this reference from the bill.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 1004.32 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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<sup>20</sup> Section 1001.60(2), F.S.