

Structure of the U.S. Education System: Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are scientifically normed and machine-graded instruments administered to students and adults under controlled conditions to assess capabilities, including knowledge, cognitive skills and abilities, and aptitude. They are used extensively in the U.S. education system at all levels to assist with admissions, placement, and counseling decisions. Some of these tests include a written portion that is hand-graded.

Some of the more common standardized tests that international students may encounter are described below.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTS

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a proficiency test designed to measure knowledge and skill in understanding and using written English. It is required of international students whose native language or previous language of instruction was not English, and some U.S. institutions will accept TOEFL scores in lieu of other test scores.

FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE APTITUDE TESTS

Dental Admission Test (DAT) is a knowledge and aptitude test administered to students seeking to enter accredited first professional degree programs in dentistry. The DAT measures knowledge and skills in biology, general and organic chemistry, and quantitative methods plus skills in reading and spatial perception and coordination.

Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is an aptitude test administered to holders of a bachelor's degree seeking to enroll in accredited graduate programs in business administration and management. The GMAT measures analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is an aptitude test administered to students seeking to enter accredited first professional degree programs in law. The LSAT measures reading and verbal reasoning skills.

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a knowledge and aptitude test administered to students seeking to enter accredited first professional degree programs in allopathic medicine, osteopathic medicine, and podiatric medicine. The MCAT measures knowledge and skills in the biological sciences, physical sciences and verbal reasoning plus requires a writing sample.

Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT) is a knowledge and aptitude test administered to students seeking to enter accredited first professional degree programs in pharmacy. It measures verbal, written, and quantitative abilities plus knowledge of biology and chemistry. The PCAT can be required of secondary students, students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, or bachelor's degree holders depending on the nature of the program and institutional requirements.

GRADUATE STUDIES APTITUDE TESTS

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is an aptitude test administered to holders of the bachelor's degree to help determine capability for advanced study and research. It is divided into two parts, the GRE General Test measuring verbal and quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical writing skills; and the GRE Subject Tests, which measure knowledge in selected subjects.

Miller Analogies Test (MAT) is an aptitude test consisting of a series of partial analogies that must be completed in a set time frame. The MAT measures idea relationships, English fluency, and content skills in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and mathematics. It is accepted in some programs as a substitute for the GRE.

Document 11.1 Information to Be Presented in a One-Page Flyer

Source: Based on U.S. Network for Education Information, 2008
<www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-evaluation.html>.



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