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Five Ways the GRE® Test Helped Me Actualize My Law School Dream

My journey to law school has been neither easy nor traditional. I hail from a modest, single-mother household in St. Louis, Missouri. I was educated in public schools, I worked throughout undergrad and in addition to currently working full time, I am enrolled as a second-year evening student in the Georgetown University Law Center Evening Program. As a first-generation, minority law student, the fact that I have reached where I am today feels like the exception rather than the rule, but there are ways to change that.

I also belong to an increasing population of students who were admitted to law school using the GRE® test rather than the Law School Admission Test® (LSAT®). While this policy is relatively new, my hope is that by sharing my narrative I will shed light on some of the ambiguities that may be faced by similarly situated nontraditional applicants. So, here are five reasons why I feel the GRE is a great option for law school applicants:

1. The GRE Test is Now Accepted at a Growing Number of Schools

When I took the GRE test in 2018 and applied during the 2019–2020 admissions cycle, I was an early adopter of a pilot program wherein several law schools permitted applicants to submit GRE scores in lieu of the LSAT. In November 2021, the American Bar Association® — the organization that accredits law schools — **voted in favor of formally allowing law schools to accept GRE scores in the law school admissions process**, deeming it a credible alternative to the LSAT. The GRE test is now accepted at a growing number of law schools, many of which include those in the highest ranks of *U.S. News & World Report*.

2. Program Versatility

After I graduated from college, I knew that I wanted to attend graduate school one day, but unsure of my career goals, I decided to hold off and work for a few years as I took time deciding on my next steps. I attended college in Washington, D.C. and majored in political science. I vacillated between the idea of earning a Master's in Public Administration (MPA), a Master's in Public Policy (MPP), or a Juris Doctorate (JD).

I found myself at a crossroad when I began exploring application requirements. At the time, the LSAT was the standard for law school, but the master's programs I was considering required the GRE test. Daunted by the idea of preparing for two rigorous standardized tests, I was put at ease when I learned that many law schools were beginning to accept the GRE test. Taking the GRE test would enable me to figuratively “kill two birds with one stone.” I opted to take it because I could use my scores to apply to all the programs in which I was interested. Although my interest in an MPA and MPP feigned in comparison to a JD, it was helpful to have this versatility in my decision-making process.

3. Dates, Times and Locations

In addition to almost universal acceptance for my postgraduate goals, the GRE test offered a range of flexibilities that fit into my busy professional and personal schedule. For those who are familiar with the LSAT, the test is only offered a limited number of times per year and testing locations often fill up months in advance. Given these complications, if I took the LSAT I would have to register for a testing date months before I felt ready, at a location that might not be easily accessible. Further, it was also only distributed early in the morning, which would require me to take time off of work in the middle of the week.

The GRE test was a friendly option because it offered flexible logistics and planning. When I was applying, I was working two jobs, so my test preparation often came at the end of a 60-hour work week. I needed the flexibility to take the test when I felt ready and during a time that would not require me to take significant leave. Unlike the LSAT, the GRE test was offered during an almost unlimited range of times, locations and dates. I was able to not only schedule my testing location from a wide range of options that were easily accessible, but I was also able to choose a testing date with minimal notice, once I felt prepared to perform my best. I was also able to schedule my test at the end of the day and week, so that I would face minimal interruption from work.

4. Writing in Law School

In addition to flexibilities, the GRE test measures skillsets that I feel are vital to law school success. As many law school students learn during their first year of exams, writing effectively and clearly under time constraints is required. Accordingly, I find the scored writing section of the GRE test to be uniquely relevant.

Similar to law school exams, the writing section of the GRE test requires test takers to quickly digest a prompt, organize a response, and write an analytical and structured answer. In comparison, the writing section of the LSAT felt like a condensed, simple version of a traditional law school “issue spotter” exam, where law students are prompted to quickly digest a fact pattern, organize a response, and write an argumentative and analytical essay.

5. Scholarship Consideration

Aside from relevant preparation, one of the most common questions I receive when I discuss my law school admissions process is whether my choice to take the GRE test affected my scholarship considerations. While I cannot speak on this without a definitive view of my application from the perspective of an admissions counselor, I can proudly report that just like many LSAT applicants before and with me, I received a merit scholarship for two-thirds of my education as a GRE applicant. While it is possible I could have received more scholarship consideration under different circumstances, I feel that my scholarship offer was competitive and helped me choose to attend Georgetown University Law Center.

I am glad that the GRE test is now an option for law school applicants, particularly those from backgrounds similar to my own. As it grows in acceptance, it will likely offer the versatility, flexibility, preparation and scholarship considerations that both traditional and nontraditional law school applicants need in a process that is increasingly competitive and demanding.

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