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require the GRE?

For those who don't know, the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is a standardized (you guessed it) multiple test that is required as a part of the admissions process for many graduate programs. Those of you who are familiar with LSATs and GMATs understand these to be tests where you use a number two pencil (whatever that is) to record your answer on an answer sheet. This is what GRE refers to as the "paper and pencil" version of the GRE.

The "paper and pencil" GRE, LSAT and GMAT are written on the same day (usually early Saturday mornings) approximately four times a year throughout the world. Test takers write in the company of hundreds of other test takers in facilities that can be far from optimal. To add insult to injury, you now have to wait four to six weeks to receive your

score. (This anxiety will take four to six years off your life.) Sound rigid? It is.

Well, the transition has begun. Effective this year the traditional "paper and pencil" version of the GRE is being phased out in favour of a Computer Adaptive Test or CAT. For the average GRE testers the CAT offers tremendous advantages. First, instead of having to wait for the GRE to come to you (by the way this year's "paper and Pencil" GREs are on October 8, December 10, April 8 and June 3.) The CAT can be written at your convenience almost any day of the year! Second, you will do the CAT in the company of small number of like-minded test takers. Third, the facilities are likely to be more pleasant. Fourth, you can do the test later in the day than 8:30 a.m. and during the week. Fifth, you will be given an instant score. By the way

you can schedule an appointment by calling (416) 236-2629.

Although there are clear logistical advantages to the CAT you should know how the CAT differs from the GRE. All test takers writing the GRE are exposed to the same questions. Furthermore, each of these questions are graded equally. You don't get any extra credit for answering a hard question. This is not so with CAT. The designation of the "Computer Adaptive" means more than questions appearing on a screen. If you take the CAT you will not be exposed to the same question as other test. The CAT pulls questions from a large question bank and determines what questions you will receive based on your answers to previous questions. The computer will offer you your next question based on your responses to the previous questions, i.e. if you get a question wrong your next question will likely be easier. If you get it right your next question will likely be harder. Furthermore, you will get more credit for correctly answering a hard question than for correctly answering an easier question. In addition, in order to receive a score you must answer at least 80% of the questions the computer gives you.

JOHN RICHARDSON
Special to *the newspaper*

Thinking of grad school in the U.S.? Thinking about any of the Canadian graduate programs that

September 14, 1994



GRAD SCHOOL BOUND™

Don't be Penny Wise and Pound Foolish when Applying to Grad Schools

JOHN RICHARDSON
Features Bureau

"If you think the cost of education is expensive, try the cost of ignorance." -Derek Bok, Past President of Harvard.

In other words, if you think the cost of applying to a lot of grad schools is high, try the cost of applying to far too few!

Applying to professional school and/or graduate school is costly and time-consuming. In my experience, most students resent the cost and time the process takes. This is understandable, given that the results of applying are often uncertain. Generally, the result is that students who should be successful in the application process are not because they allow the twin considerations of time and money to dictate how they approach the process.

COST

There are two kinds of outflows of money. The first is a frivolous expenditure. Yes this should be minimized. The second is investment. Surely, monies expended toward the development of your future should

be treated as an investment! Students frequently apply to far too few schools! This approach often results in taking an involuntary year off. Believe me, school is better than work!

It is best if you can apply to schools in three categories. First, those you perceive as being difficult to get into, but desirable to go to. Second, those that are quite possible for you to get into and that are desirable to go to. Third, schools that you are very likely to get into. After all, in many programs, it is possible to transfer to another school after a first year. In the case of law, there is no reason to not apply to each of Canada's 15 law schools. Catherine Purcell, author of the Professional Fact Sheet, in advising students to apply to all the Canadian law schools makes the point that:

"Initially, applying to all the law schools might seem too costly because the application fees add up..., and the fact that you may not want to move outside your home province. Would you give up the opportunity to be admitted to law school...to save \$500 in application

fees? Limiting your choice of schools also limits your chances of acceptance. Think of the expense as a long-term investment in your future."

I would suggest the same reasoning applies to applications to any graduate or professional school!

Avoid refraining from applying to schools because you think you may not get in. Remember that it is the admissions committee that is making the decision of whether to admit you! Not you! After all, all schools have to admit somebody. Why not you? As a wise old man I know once said:

"Only those who have the courage to lose can ever win!"

In future articles I will discuss the importance of letters of reference, autobiographical statements and how to do a better job on the application form itself!

John Richardson, B.A., L.L.B.,J.D., is the author of *Law School Bound - How to Get Into Law School and Become a Lawyer in Canada and the U.S.* and *Mastering the LSAT - How to Prepare Effectively and Successfully.*



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Dr. E. David Cook, Director
Whitefield Institute, Oxford

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