BBQ Process for Selection of Graduate Students
October 1, 2020

Currently, an application consists of the following information:

- Information on the application
- List of academic honors, election to honorary societies, distinctions, scholarships, fellowships, publications, professional society memberships.
- List of relevant courses taken.
- Curriculum Vitae
- Statement of Purpose
- Undergraduate and where appropriate graduate transcripts
- GRE Scores (optional for 2020)
- TOEFEL Scores (for international students)
- 3 Names of people who can write letters of recommendation
- Identified potential advisor in BBQ

GREs

This year (2020) GRE scores are optional. We made these optional out of a concern of differential access to the GRE. A challenge that arises from the selection side is that this can create a situation where some applications contain GRE scores and some do not.

There is empirical evidence that GRE scores carry some predictive validity (and this predictive validity does not vary by race or gender). In particular, in a meta-analysis containing 82,659 graduate student applications GRE was shown to be a predictor of graduate grade point average, 1st-year graduate grade point average, comprehensive examination scores, publication citation counts, and faculty ratings. Correlations between GRE and degree attainment and research productivity were also consistently positive (Kuncel et al., 2001). Based on this research, we have in the past used GRE scores as one piece of information from the larger portfolio when evaluating applications.

With this in mind, this year, if students submit their GRE scores, we will use this information in the selection process. So as to not differentially bias against students who do not submit GRE scores and to help insure that no single component of the application is used to select students, we will assume the GRE scores are missing at random and fill in missing GRE scores with the average of the average GRE score for each test (see p. 4 from https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/snapshot_test_taker_data_2019.pdf) and the average GRE score of applicants to the KU BBQ program from the past two years. To help minimize the chances of recognizing the score as imputed, we will add a normal random variable to the imputed score based on reported standard deviations from ETS. All calculations will be made so that faculty and graduate students are blind to who did or did not submit GRE scores during the selection process. Furthermore, to minimize impacts of random variability in the imputed score, an imputed score will be calculated for each application and this will be redone for each faculty member/graduate student who evaluates the applications.

As one graduate student will serve on the selection committee, we will ask one other graduate student to help blind materials and impute missing scores for the applications.

We will use a five-step process. The process will be steered by a BBQ graduate student selection committee made up of 2 BBQ faculty members and 1 BBQ graduate students. At all stages the BBQ will use a holistic process to evaluate candidates. At each stage, applicants will be rated on a 5-point scale:

1. ***An outstanding prospect.*** There is little chance that we could do any better.
2. ***A very good prospect.*** I would have no objection to having an offer made to this candidate.
3. ***A good prospect.*** Probably a more than adequate prospect, but I have one or more reservations, as noted in the comments section.
4. ***A fair prospect.*** There are one or more reservations regarding this individual which should be addressed before extending an offer to this person. (Please specify reservation(s) in comments section.)
5. ***A poor prospect.*** There are solid grounds for rejecting the candidate as noted below in the comments section.

Selection Process

Stage 1:
- 2 or 3 faculty and 1 graduate student evaluate the candidates based on their application and rule in anyone that they judge suitable for a shortlist.
- Each evaluation will be done holistically and done blinded, to the extent possible, to name, gender, race, ethnicity, and affiliation.

Stage 2:
- Then all BBQ faculty will be shown the entire list of applicants and ask to approve the list. If any objections are raised about an application excluded from the short list that application will be moved to the short list.

Stage 3
- At the short list stage, we will contact the people identified for letters of recommendation and ask for them to submit them.
- Then the identified BBQ advisor, 1 additional BBQ faculty member, and 1 graduate student will conduct a structured phone interview of the applicant. When possible, a common faculty member will be present across all phone interviews. The interview will focus on evaluating the applicant in terms of knowledge, skills, fit, potential, and motivation.
- The phone interview will rate the candidate again and make a recommendation for an in-person interview or not.

Stage 4
- Students invited for an in-person interview will be invited for an on-campus interview to meet with all the BBQ faculty, graduate students.
- Each person will rate the applicant a final time.
- In case on-campus interviews are not possible, alternative live phone interviews will be arranged.

Stage 5
- Final decisions will be made in consultation of the ratings, the identified advisor, and the BBQ graduate student selection committee.

References

Kuncel, N. R., Hezlett, S. A., & Ones, D. S. (2001). A comprehensive meta-analysis of the predictive validity of the graduate record examinations: implications for graduate student selection and performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*(1), 162-181. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.1.162