

Philosophers Excel on Standardized Tests

Philosophy students have higher average scores on entrance exams for graduate and professional schools than most other students. This suggests that the study of philosophy develops a set of skills important for success in a very broad range of fields.

GRE scores from 1988–1991 show that philosophy majors had:

- the highest mean verbal score of students in all majors
- the 2nd highest mean analytic score of students in all majors
- a higher mean quantitative score than ALL other humanities and social science majors

Mean LSAT score for philosophy majors is:

- higher than for both political science and non-philosophy pre-law majors
- the 5th highest for all humanities and social science majors according to a 1994 study

GMAT scores from 1991–1996 show that:

- the mean score is higher for philosophy majors than for any type of business major
- outside of hard sciences, philosophy had either 1st or 2nd highest mean GMAT score each year
- including hard sciences, mean GMAT score for philosophy majors is tied for 4th among all majors

Performance on Graduate Admissions Tests by Major

Percentage by which the mean score of test-takers from specific undergraduate majors differs from the mean score of all test-takers.

Major	LSAT	GMAT	GRE verbal	GRE Quant.	Average
Mathematics	+12.8%	+13.3%	+2.7%	+26.3%	+13.8%
Philosophy	+8.7%	+11.0%	+17.6%	+4.6%	+10.5%
Chemistry	+7.6%	+7.5%	+2.1%	+18.3	+8.9%
Biology	+4.0%	+3.3%	+5.4%	+8.0%	+5.2%
English	+5.6%	+4.1%	+14.5%	-5.7%	+4.6%
History	+2.9%	+4.6%	+10.8%	-5.5%	+3.2%
Foreign Langs.	+5.7%	+3.3%	+7.9%	-4.2%	+3.2%
Gen. Humanities	+4.7%	+1.8%	+7.3%	-5.0%	+2.2%
Psychology	+0.9%	+0.8%	+3.1%	-4.0%	+0.2%
Political Science	-1.6%	+0.06%	+3.5%	-5.0%	-0.8%
Arts & Music	-.05%	-1.2%	+1.7%	-8.4%	-2.0%
Business Admin	-4.5%	-0.8%	-9.1%	-2.3%	-4.2%
Management	-5.4%	-7.7%	nr	nr	-6.6%
Speech	-2.7%	nr	-6.0%	-14.3%	-7.7%
Sociology	-7.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-15.0%	-8.0%
Education	-8.7%	-4.2%	-10.4%	-15.8%	-9.8%
nr=not reported					

Performance by Students Majoring in Philosophy and Students Majoring in Other Areas on LSAT, GMAT, and the GRE (Verbal and Quantitative)

A recent comprehensive study of college students' scores on major tests used for admission to graduate and professional schools shows that students majoring in philosophy received scores substantially higher than the average on each of the tests studied.

The study compared the scores of 550,000 college students who took the LSAT, GMAT, and the verbal and quantitative portions of the GRE with data collected over the previous 18 years and was conducted by the National Institute of Education and reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

The performance of philosophy majors on all 3 tests was remarkable. On the LSAT, for instance:

Philosophy majors received higher scores than students in all other humanities areas, and
Higher scores than all social and natural science majors except economics and
mathematics, and
Higher scores than all applied majors.

Moreover, the differences are in most cases substantial.

Philosophy majors scored 10% better than political science majors on the LSAT.
Philosophy majors outperformed business majors by a margin of 15% on the GMAT and
outperformed every other undergraduate major except mathematics.
Philosophy majors' scores on the verbal portion of the GRE were higher than in any other
major, even English.

Although several science majors showed higher averages in the quantitative portion of the GRE, philosophy majors scored substantially higher than all other humanities majors and were alone among humanities majors in scoring above the overall average.

GRE Performance by Major

The GRE data of interest are for those 579,447 students tested nationally between October 1, 1990, and September 30, 1993, of whom 3,517 were intent on philosophy.

Rank	Area	Number
1st	Physics and Astronomy	1910
2nd	Mathematical Sciences	1850
3rd	Materials Engineering	1827
4th	Chemical Engineering	1814
5th	Other Engineering	1811
6th	Philosophy	1811
7th	Economics	1782
8th	Mechanical Engineering	1779
9th	Electrical & Electronics	1775
10th	Chemistry	1763
11th	Computer/Info. Services	1762
12th	Other Humanities/Art	1724
13th	Civil Engineering	1712
14th	Earth/Atmosphere/Marine Science	1709
15th	Industrial Engineering	1705
16th	Biological Sciences	1695

17th	English Language/Literature	1683
18th	History	1667
19th	Anthropology & Archaeology	1664
20th	Other Natural Sciences	1663
21st	Political Science	1663
22nd	Foreign Language/Literature	1642
23rd	Architecture/Environment Design	1634
24th	Secondary Education	1631
25th	Arts: History, Theory, Critical	1631
26th	Banking and Finance	1598
27th	Library and Archival Science	1592
28th	Religion and Theory	1588
29th	Agriculture	1582
30th	Other: Business	1561
31st	Arts: Performing and Studio	1558
32nd	Curriculum and Instruction	1554
33rd	Psychology	1548
34th	Higher Education	1535
35th	Business Admin. & Mgmt.	1532
36th	Sociology	1524
37th	Communications	1519
38th	Evaluation & Research	1509
39th	Health & Medical Science	1505
40th	Other: Social Sciences	1504
41st	Elementary Education	1486
42nd	Other: Education	1470
43rd	Public Administration	1458
44th	Accounting	1445
45th	Special Education	1437
46th	Administration	1431
47th	Student Counseling/Personnel Service	1427
48th	Early Childhood Education	1415
49th	Social Work	1405
50th	Home Economics	1400

Note: I cut and pasted these statistics, including the tables and text, from the Washington State University Philosophy Department website, here:

<http://libarts.wsu.edu/philo/overview/index.asp>