

Validity of the Analytical Writing Measure

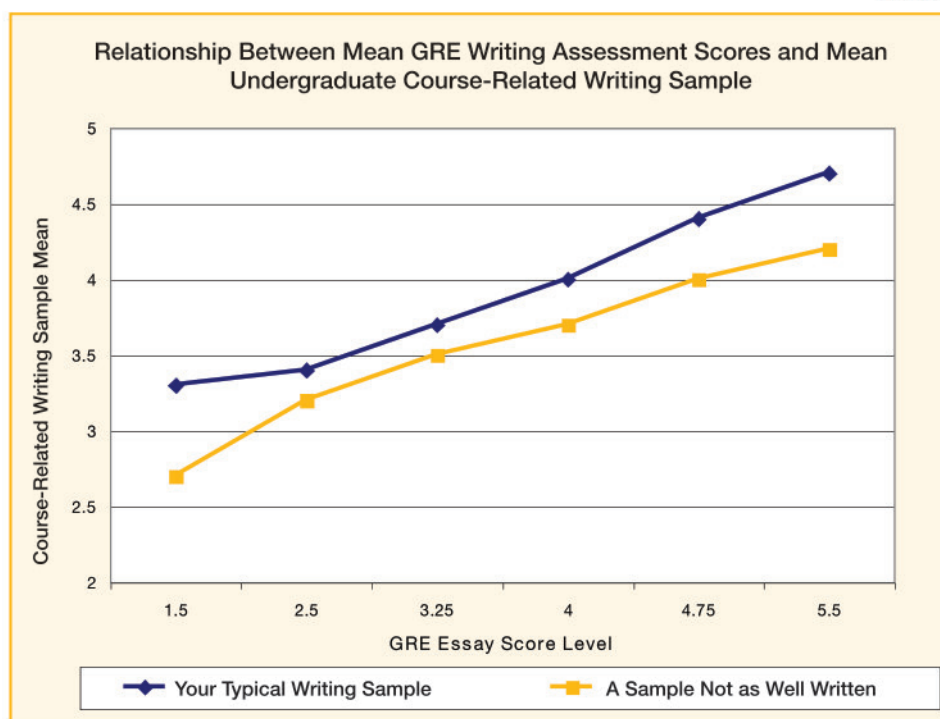
Because the Kuncel *et al.* meta-analysis was conducted before the Analytical Writing (AW) measure was introduced into the GRE *General Test*, it may be useful to include validity information for this measure. The two tasks that comprise the AW are both considered essential in many fields of graduate study. These two tasks are complementary in that the first requires the writer to construct his/her own argument about an issue, and the second requires a critique of someone else's argument by assessing its claims. For virtually all disciplines, AW adds value to the GRE *General Test* because it provides unique information about test-taker abilities over and above skills measured in the Verbal and Quantitative measures.

Demonstrating the construct validity of the writing measure can be done by showing how AW correlates with other measures it is intended to resemble. As an illustration, AW correlates positively with other samples of academic writing produced by examinees³ as shown in the figure below. Examinees in this study were asked to provide two writing samples: one representing their typical written work and one not quite as well written.

This graph shows that there is a strong positive relationship between the GRE essay scores and both of the writing samples from examinees. It should be noted that the AW correlates with these other indicators of writing skill more closely than does the personal statement that many students submit with their applications.⁴

Furthermore, data indicate that AW has a low correlation (.21) with the quantitative measure and a moderate correlation (.60) with the verbal measure — a finding that is consistent with the structure and intent of those measures.⁵ Thus, AW is providing unique and valuable information beyond the multiple-choice GRE *General Test* measures.

Figure 2.



Summary

Because faculty want to make the best possible admissions decisions about graduate school applicants, it is important to look objectively at the predictive value of the GRE *General Test*. The Kuncel *et al.* study used all existing data to arrive at the study's conclusions that the GRE *General Test* is a valid predictor of many criteria of graduate school success. In addition, other research has demonstrated that the Analytical Writing section of the GRE *General Test* can provide valuable information about applicants' abilities to produce analytical essays. For these reasons, the GRE *General Test* is a valuable asset in the graduate admissions process.

3 Powers, D.E., Fowles, M.E. and Welsh, C.K. (1999) Further validation of a writing assessment for graduate admissions. GRE Research Report 96-13. Princeton, NJ: ETS.

4 Powers, D.E., and Fowles, M.E. (1997) The personal statement as an indicator of writing skill: A cautionary note. *Educational Assessment*, 4 (1), 75-87.

5 The correlation between the Verbal and Quantitative measures is .36.