

Holistic Review: A Quick Primer

What is Holistic Review?

Holistic review is a university admissions strategy that assesses an applicant's unique experiences alongside traditional measures of academic achievement such as grades and test scores. It is designed to help universities consider a broad range of factors reflecting the applicant's academic readiness, contribution to the incoming class, and potential for success both in school and later as a professional. Holistic review, when used in combination with a variety of other mission-based practices, constitutes a "holistic admission" process.

The Four Core Principles of a Holistic Admission Process

Core Principle One

Selection criteria are broad-based, are clearly linked to school mission and goals, and promote diversity as an essential element to achieving institutional excellence.

Core Principle Two

A balance of applicant experiences, attributes, and academic metrics (E-A-M) is used to assess applicants with the intent of creating a richly diverse interview and selection pool and student body; is applied equitably across the entire candidate pool; and is grounded in data that provide evidence supporting the use of selection criteria beyond grades and test scores.

Core Principle Three

Those who participate in the admissions process give individualized consideration to how each applicant may contribute to the school's learning environment and to the profession, weighing and balancing the range of criteria needed in a class to achieve the outcomes desired by the school.

Core Principle Four

Race and ethnicity may be considered as factors when making admission-related decisions only when such consideration is narrowly tailored to achieve mission-related educational interests and goals associated with student diversity, and when considered as part of a broader mix of factors, which may include personal attributes, experiential factors, demographics, or other considerations.¹

Adapted from the Association of American Medical Colleges (2013) [Roadmap to excellence: Key concepts for evaluating the impact of medical school holistic admissions](#)

The Holistic Review Framework

The holistic review framework is comprised of several core tenets that function synergistically to ensure that admission practices, processes, and policies support the school's mission, goals and diversity interests.

¹ Under federal law (and where permitted by state law)

Holistic admission practices, processes and policies are:

- Grounded in institutional mission and goals
- Promote diversity as essential to educational excellence
- Strategically aligned to yield a school's desired educational and workforce outcomes, and
- Are regularly informed by outcomes data

Fundamentally, holistic review is about mission-driven admissions.

Conducting holistic review encourages reflections about which characteristics are

most relevant and important for future nurses, and how to sustain a learning environment that fosters these characteristics.

Virtually all schools conduct holistic review of applicants at some point in the admission process.

However, a school with a holistic admission process does more than incorporate elements of holistic review into certain aspects of admissions.

A holistic admission process embodies each of four core principles.

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