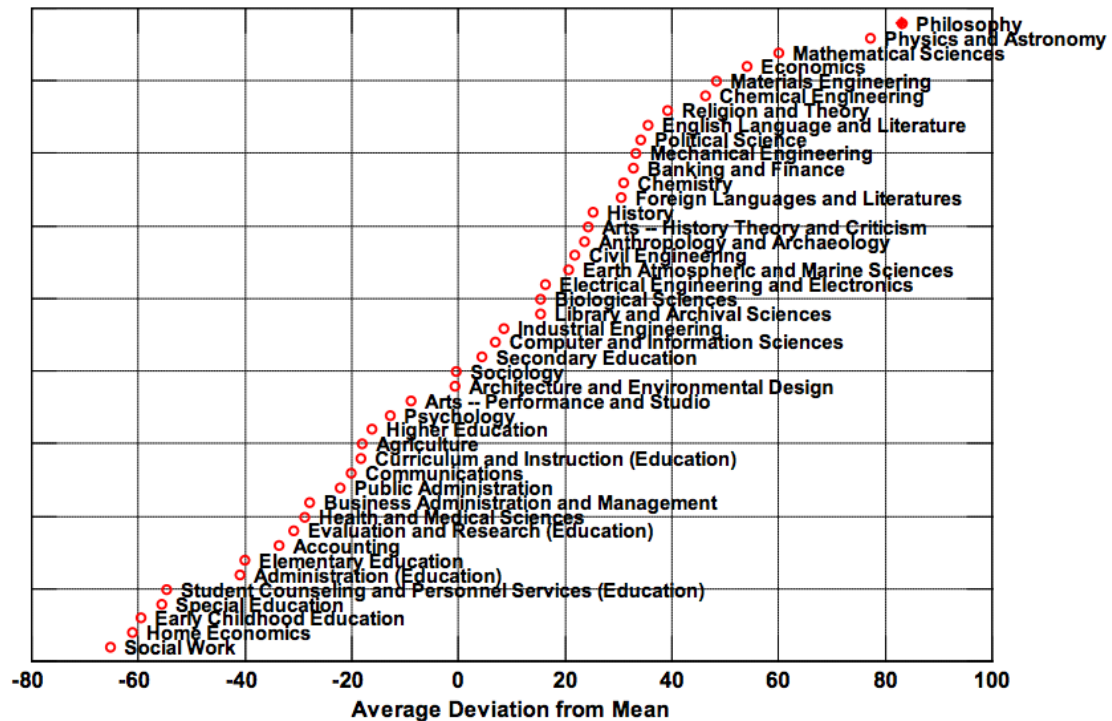


# Philosophy Student Performance on the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)

Philosophy majors consistently perform best or near best on graduate school admission exams, year after year and across various sections compared to other majors. As is clear from the following data, the success of philosophy graduates on the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) is persistent, and despite changes in the content and scoring, students of philosophy regularly outperform their peers.

GRE Scores by Intended Major:  
Average deviation from the mean\*



\* Average deviation across the verbal, quantitative, and analytic writing sections. Deviation from the mean scores in these sections for all examinees. Analytic writing scores normalized to 800. Original data from the *Graduate Record Examination's Guide to the Use of Scores 2010-11* by the Educational Testing Service. Based on performance of all examinees who tested between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2009. Calculations by H. M. Aumann, University of Maine.

Graph created by North Michigan University: [http://www.nmu.edu/sites/DrupalPhilosophy/files/UserFiles/Files/Pre-Drupal/SiteSections/Resources/GRE\\_Scores\\_by\\_Intended\\_Major.pdf](http://www.nmu.edu/sites/DrupalPhilosophy/files/UserFiles/Files/Pre-Drupal/SiteSections/Resources/GRE_Scores_by_Intended_Major.pdf), retrieved 12/06/12.

"Intended Major" refers to the subject that undergraduate senior students and recent graduates who have taken the exam intend to pursue in graduate school. In the graph above, horizontal distance between points indicates well intended majors of different subjects performed relative to each other, while vertical distance is standardized. The graph uses a single score that includes the performance across the three sections of the GRE (verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing).

As the graph clearly indicates, intended philosophy majors performed best of all fields. In addition, distance between philosophy and the next best scoring majors (Physics, Math, & Economics) is a significantly wider gap than the distance between most points, indicating philosophy graduate majors not only performed best overall, but they did so with a wide margin over other fields.

## Mean GRE Score by Intended Graduate Major

*Based on the performance of seniors and nonenrolled college graduates  
who tested between August 1, 2011, and April 30, 2012*

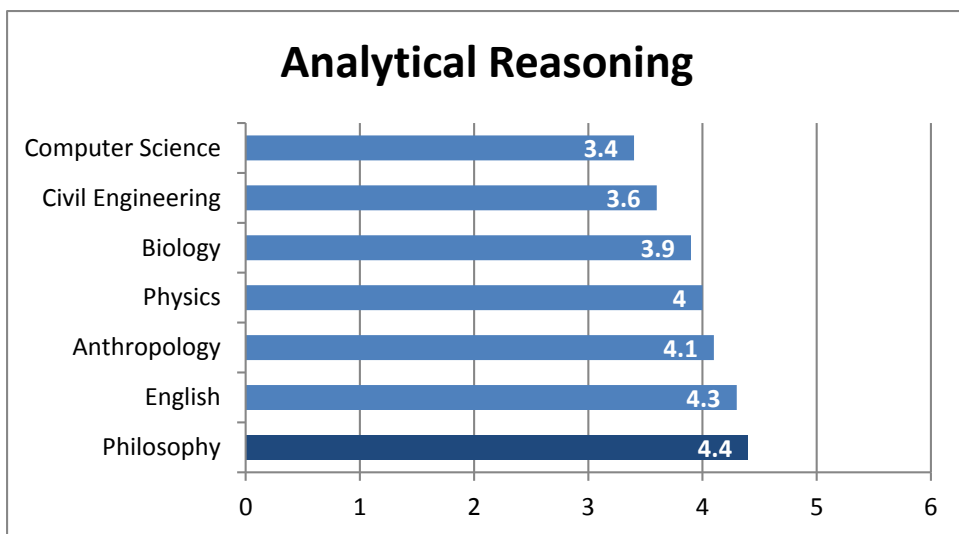
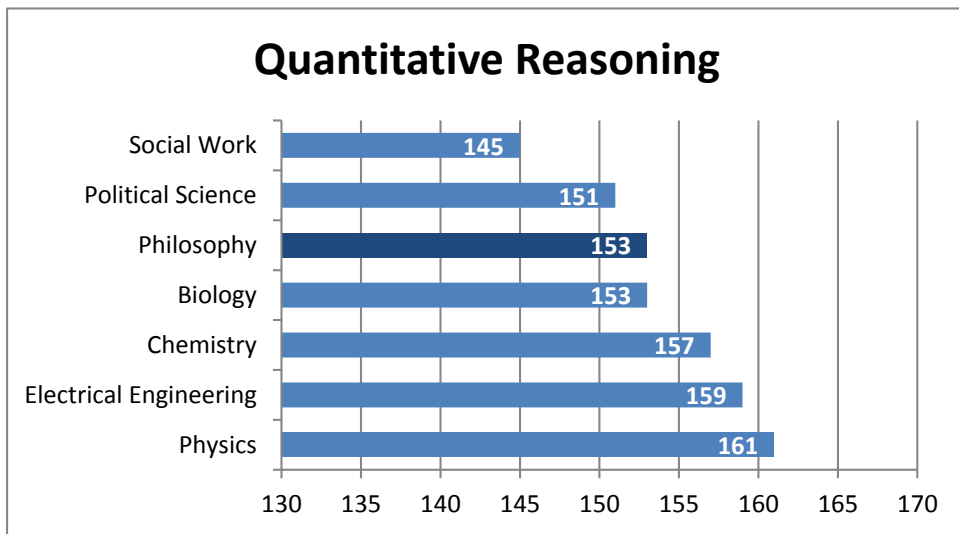
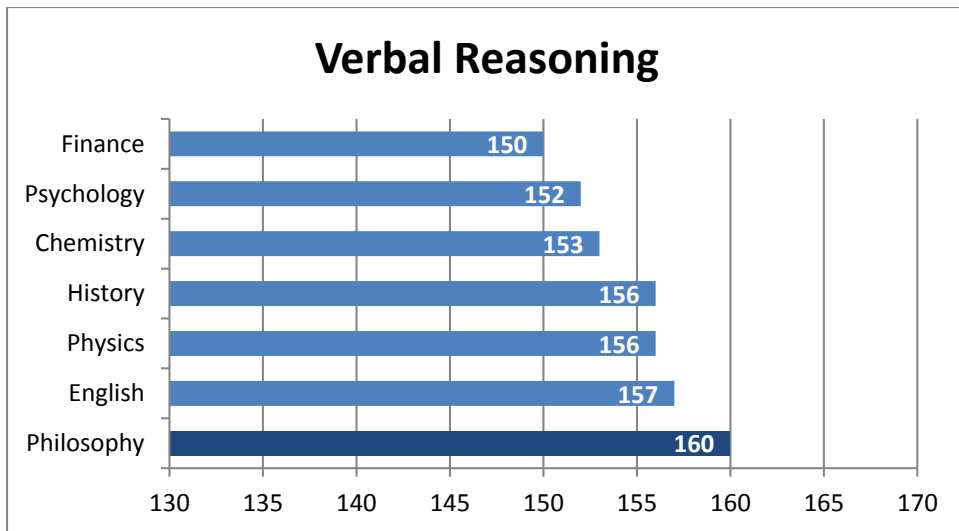
VERBAL			QUANTITATIVE			ANALYTICAL WRITING		
#	Field	Mean Score	#	Field	Mean Score	#	Field	Mean Score
1	<b>Philosophy</b>	<b>160</b>	1	Mathematical Sciences	161	1	<b>Philosophy</b>	<b>4.4</b>
2	Other Humanities and Arts	158	2	Physics and Astronomy	161	2	English Language and Literature	4.3
3	English Language and Literature	157	3	Materials Engineering	161	3	Other Humanities and Arts	4.3
4	Library and Archival Sciences	157	4	Chemical Engineering	160	4	Religion and Theory	4.3
5	Religion and Theory	157	5	Banking and Finance	160	5	Political Science	4.2
6	Physics and Astronomy	156	6	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	159	6	Arts – History, Theory, and Criticism	4.2
7	Anthropology and Archaeology	156	7	Industrial Engineering	159	7	History	4.2
8	Political Science	156	8	Mechanical Engineering	159	8	Anthropology and Archaeology	4.1
9	Arts – History, Theory, and Criticism	156	9	Other Engineering	159	9	Higher Education	4.1
10	History	156	10	Economics	159	10	Secondary Education	4.1
11	Foreign Languages and Literatures	155	11	Computer and Information Sciences	158	11	Library and Archival Sciences	4.1
12	Earth, Atmospheric, and Marine Sciences	154	12	Civil Engineering	158	12	Physics and Astronomy	4
13	Mathematical Sciences	154	13	Chemistry	157	13	Economics	4
14	Economics	154	14	Earth, Atmospheric, and Marine Sciences	154	14	Psychology	4
15	Secondary Education	154	15	Biological Sciences	153	15	Sociology	4
16	Biological Sciences	153	<b>16</b>	<b>Philosophy</b>	<b>153</b>	16	Foreign Languages and Literatures	4
17	Chemistry	153	17	Accounting	153	17	Biological Sciences	3.9
18	Chemical Engineering	153	18	Architecture and Environmental Design	153	18	Chemistry	3.9
19	Materials Engineering	153	19	Other Humanities and Arts	152	19	Earth, Atmospheric, and Marine Sciences	3.9
20	Other Engineering	153	20	Other Business	152	20	Mathematical Sciences	3.9
21	Arts – Performance and Studio	153	21	Agriculture	151	21	Other Engineering	3.9
22	Psychology	152	22	Natural Sciences – Other	151	22	Education Evaluation and Research	3.9
23	Sociology	152	23	Political Science	151	23	Communications	3.9
24	Higher Education	152	24	Secondary Education	151	24	Public Administration	3.9
25	Agriculture	151	25	Arts – Performance and Studio	150	25	Health and Medical Sciences	3.8
26	Natural Sciences – Other	151	26	Foreign Languages and Literatures	150	26	Natural Sciences – Other	3.8
27	Mechanical Engineering	151	27	Business Admin and Management	150	27	Chemical Engineering	3.8
28	Other Education	151	28	Religion and Theory	150	28	Materials Engineering	3.8

VERBAL			QUANTITATIVE			ANALYTICAL WRITING		
#	Field	Mean Score	#	Field	Mean Score	#	Field	Mean Score
29	Communications	151	29	Health and Medical Sciences	149	29	Other Social Sciences	3.8
30	Public Administration	151	30	Anthropology and Archaeology	149	30	Arts – Performance and Studio	3.8
31	Health and Medical Sciences	150	31	Arts – History, Theory, and Criticism	149	31	Education Administration	3.8
32	Civil Engineering	150	32	Education Administration	149	32	Education Curriculum and Instruction	3.8
33	Other Social Sciences	150	33	Education Curriculum and Instruction	149	33	Elementary Education	3.8
34	Education Administration	150	34	Higher Education	149	34	Special Education	3.8
35	Education Curriculum and Instruction	150	35	Other Education	149	35	Student Counseling and Personnel Services	3.8
36	Elementary Education	150	36	Psychology	148	36	Other Education	3.8
37	Education Evaluation and Research	150	37	Sociology	148	37	Home Economics	3.8
38	Banking and Finance	150	38	English Language and Literature	148	38	Agriculture	3.7
39	Business Admin and Management	150	39	History	148	39	Early Childhood Education	3.7
40	Architecture and Environmental Design	150	40	Education Evaluation and Research	148	40	Banking and Finance	3.7
41	Computer and Information Sciences	149	41	Library and Archival Sciences	148	41	Business Admin and Management	3.7
42	Industrial Engineering	149	42	Public Administration	148	42	Other Business	3.7
43	Special Education	149	43	Other Social Sciences	147	43	Architecture and Environmental Design	3.7
44	Student Counseling and Personnel Services	149	44	Elementary Education	147	44	Social Work	3.7
45	Accounting	149	45	Communications	147	45	Civil Engineering	3.6
46	Other Business	149	46	Early Childhood Education	146	46	Industrial Engineering	3.6
47	Home Economics	149	47	Special Education	146	47	Mechanical Engineering	3.6
48	Social Work	149	48	Student Counseling and Personnel Services	146	48	Accounting	3.6
49	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	148	49	Home Economics	145	49	Computer and Information Sciences	3.4
50	Early Childhood Education	148	50	Social Work	145	50	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	3.4

Data Source: [http://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_guide.pdf)

The above chart depicts the average score for each of the three sections in the GRE. Philosophy is the best performing major overall, ranking first in the verbal and analytical writing sections of the test and 16<sup>th</sup> in the quantitative portion. And these data are consistent from year to year, both before and after the recent revision of the GRE. (Tests taken beginning August 1, 2011, score the verbal and quantitative portions of the exam on a scale of 130-170. Tests prior to that date score those sections on a scale of 200-800.) [Data from 2001 through 2004](#) and [from 2006 through 2009](#) show philosophy students ranking first in the verbal and analytical writing sections, and 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in the quantitative section, respectively.

Data also show philosophy students outperforming their peers by wide margins in the verbal section, by at least thirty points prior to the 2011 GRE revision and by three points after the revision. The charts on the following page illustrate this in data from 2011 and 2012, showing that philosophy students, on average, consistently do best overall, best relative to other fields, and best in both verbal reasoning and analytical writing specifically, as measured by GRE scores.



*Data for tests taken August 2011 to April 2012, from ETS.*

*Charts based on Physics Central blog post "[Best Majors for GRE Scores: Still Physics and Philosophy](#)," August 20, 2012.*