

## An Evaluation of IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> Essay Scoring System Using Responses to GMAT<sup>®</sup> AWA Prompts

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The Graduate Management Admission Council<sup>®</sup> (GMAC<sup>®</sup>) has long benefited from advances in automated essay scoring. When GMAC<sup>®</sup> adopted ETS<sup>®</sup> e-rater<sup>®</sup> in 1999, the Council's flagship product, the Graduate Management Admission Test<sup>®</sup> (GMAT<sup>®</sup>), became the first large-scale assessment to incorporate automated essay scoring. The change was controversial at the time (Iowa State Daily, 1999; Calfee, 2000). Though some may still find it controversial, automated essay scoring is now widely accepted as a tool to complement, but not replace, expert human raters.

Starting in January 2006, ACT, Inc. will be responsible for GMAT<sup>®</sup> test development and scoring, and a new automated essay scoring system will be utilized in conjunction with the ACT contract. ACT included the IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> Essay Scoring System of Vantage Learning as part of their initial proposal. Before approving the Vantage subcontract, GMAC<sup>®</sup> wanted assurance that the IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> (IM) System could scoreably approximate the scores provided by human raters on the GMAT<sup>®</sup> Analytic Writing Assessment.

This paper provides an overview of the GMAT<sup>®</sup> Analytic Writing Assessment and part of the results of an evaluation of IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup>. The evaluation is twofold. An initial evaluation examines the performance of IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> based on a sample of responses to six essays. Results for IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> are compared to individual human raters, a primitive Bayesian system using simple word counts, and a weighted probability model. A second evaluation is based on the comprehensive system reliability demonstration presented by Vantage to both ACT and GMAC<sup>®</sup>. This second evaluation relies solely on comparisons to scores calculated by human raters, as such agreement will be the prime measure of performance during operational use of IntelliMetric<sup>™</sup> in 2006.

### Background

#### The GMAT<sup>®</sup> Analytic Writing Assessment

The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) is designed as a direct measure of the test taker's ability to think critically and communicate ideas. The AWA consists of two 30-minute writing tasks—Analysis of an Issue and Analysis of an Argument.

For Analysis of an Issue prompts, the examinee must analyze a given issue or opinion and explain their point of view on the subject by citing relevant reasons and/or examples drawn from experience, observations, or reading.

For Analysis of an Argument prompts, the examinee must read a brief argument, analyze the reasoning behind it, and then write a critique of the argument. In this task, the examinee is not asked to state their opinion, but to analyze the one given. The examinee may, for example, consider what questionable assumptions underlie the thinking, what alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion, or what sort of evidence could help strengthen or refute the argument.

For both tasks, the examinee writes their response on the screen using primitive word-processing functions built into the GMAT<sup>®</sup> test driver software. Scratch paper or erasable notebonds are provided at the test center for use by examinees in planning their responses. Because there is no one right answer, all GMAT<sup>®</sup> prompts are available on-line for candidates to review prior to taking the test.

Prompts are initially scored by two human raters following detailed scoring rubrics. If the two reviewers differ by more than one score point on a 0 to 6 point scale, a third reader adjudicates scores. Once a sufficient number of responses to a given prompt have been hand-scored, an automated essay scoring model is developed and evaluated for the prompt. If an acceptable model can

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