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U.S. | U.S. EDUCATION NEWS

Yale Reinstates Standardized Test Scores for Admissions

School shifts from test-optional to test-flexible, and will accept IB, AP scores along with SAT, ACT

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Yale is the second Ivy League school to bring standardized tests back after a pandemic-related hiatus. PHOTO: STEVEN MOLINA CONTRERAS FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Yale University will once again require prospective students to submit standardized test scores after making tests optional for the past four years.

The reinstated requirement, which affects students applying this fall for the class of 2029, makes Yale the second Ivy League school after Dartmouth College to bring standardized tests back after a pandemic-related hiatus. In a departure from past practice, however, Yale said Thursday it will be “test-flexible” by

accepting not only the SAT and ACT exams, but scores from the International Baccalaureate as well as Advanced Placement exams.

The New Haven, Conn., school made the decision after it found that standardized test scores from all four of the exams were more predictive of academic success than high school grades.

The school cited its internal data as well as a study that found that students with the same high school GPA earned significantly higher grades during their freshman year in college if they scored 1600 on the SAT as compared with 1200.

The study, by faculty from Dartmouth and Brown University and published in January by Harvard University's Opportunity Insights research center, also found that students who didn't submit an SAT or ACT score earned lower college grades at elite schools. Dartmouth cited the same research in its decision earlier this month to reinstate standardized tests.

It found that students who didn't submit scores earned college grades equivalent to students who earned a 1307 or an ACT of 28. The average scores at highly selective schools generally top 1500 on the SAT and 34 on the ACT.

"Over the past four years, we learned that our admissions committees can function without test scores. But when operating a process that requires you to make predictions about the future with incomplete information, more evidence is better than less," said Jeremiah Quinlan, Yale's Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid.

Yale dropped its test-score requirement in 2020 during the pandemic, along with more than a thousand other colleges.

This year, more than 80% of colleges are test-optional, according to FairTest, a nonprofit organization that advocates for more limited use of standardized testing in schools. In addition to logistical challenges, some schools noted longstanding concerns about the correlation between test scores and family income.

After relaxing testing policies, high-profile schools were inundated with applications. That led to lower acceptance rates, which in turn pushed the next class of prospective students to send out even more applications, driving a

significant drop in acceptance rates in recent years and an increase in student anxiety.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology said in 2022 that it would return to requiring test scores. MIT cited internal research and a goal of identifying more qualified low-income students who perhaps couldn't afford to participate in many extracurricular activities or whose schools didn't offer many rigorous courses.

Yale cited similar concerns.

“For students attending high schools with fewer resources, applications without scores can inadvertently leave admissions officers with scant evidence of their readiness for Yale,” Quinlan wrote. “When students attending these high schools include a score with their application—even a score below Yale’s median range—they give the committee greater confidence that they are likely to achieve academic success in college.”

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