

**ANALYSIS : CAT 2006**

**EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!**

That's what you come to think of, when you see the CAT finally jump out of the bag! CAT is renowned for springing surprises, and this year the scenario was no different! The 2006 paper pattern was unlike any past CAT paper in several respects. The first thing students may have expected would have been to face a Goliath of a paper since there was more time to solve the paper. This is where the catch lay. Everyone was so well prepared for a killer paper that the actual CAT they faced was quite un-predatory! With the time having been increased to two and a half hours for the first time, and the number of questions having dropped to an all-time low figure of 75, CAT-2006 provided tremendous scope to score well. But the way in which students were shocked by the numerous changes associated with the paper, it looks like the cut-offs will not be very high for the relatively easy CAT 2006 paper.

**IMPORTANT FACTS**

With only 75 questions in all, there was not much choice. However, the lack of differential marking also reduced the pressure to some extent. Negative marking was also moderate at  $\frac{1}{4}$ , which meant that for every right answer one stood to gain four marks, while losing only one mark if it went wrong. This made up (to an extent) for the dearth of options!!! An interesting thing to be noted was that this time the number of answer options given had increased from a conventional 4 to 5, in number.

**Key changes in CAT 2006**

- Reduction in number of Questions to 75. CAT 2005 had 90 Questions.
- 4 marks per question.
- 5 answer options for each question.
- Negative marking at  $\frac{1}{4}$ th

**The above changes imply;**

- Better spread of scores, which will ensure better differentiation among students.
- Scores will have integral values & not decimals.

**SECTION I (Logic and Data Interpretation)**

The difficulty level of the Logic and Data Interpretation (DI) section of CAT 2006 was at par with the one which can be observed in the last 2-3 years' CAT papers. This time all the questions were in case-lets form. No independent questions and no questions on Data Sufficiency were observed. The motive of the paper setters to examine the Reasoning & DI skills of the students is reflected throughout the section.

The section had only 5 case-lets with 5 questions each which evaluated the Reasoning and DI skills of the students. Among those, two case-lets were based on DI, two on analytical reasoning and one on a combination of Reasoning & Data Interpretation.

Usually, the selection of the case-lets is very important in CAT and so was in this paper also.

There were three case-lets which could be easily attempted if the time allotted for the test (2.5 hours) was equally distributed for attempting all the three sections. So one could easily solve atleast 12 questions. If the probability of marking the correct answers is assumed to be 70%, one could have easily obtained 33 marks from the section, which means he / she could clear the possible cut-off for the same.

## SECTION II (Verbal Ability)

The people at the IIMs went back 12 years to replicate the 1994 pattern in the form of questions on Critical Reasoning! The other question types in this section included Reading Comprehension and Paragraph Completion and not a single question on vocabulary or grammar (unlike the last few years, where these have been the focus!!).

Of the 25 questions that the English section contained, 15 were RC-based, carrying a total of 60 marks. The questions were largely specific detail questions, with a couple of inference based ones thrown in for variety. This means that a score of at least 20 - 24 is achievable in this part itself.

5 Reasoning based questions, all inductive in nature, were a little confusing as the evaluation of answer options in these question types tends to be subjective.

The 'Fact, Inference and Judgment' based questions were not easy on the eye unless students were prepared for this question type, which had occurred only in 1994. Average attempts in this section should be at least 3-4 in number fetching an average of 08-11 marks after negative marking.

We also had 5 Paragraph Completion questions, which had the concluding statement missing. In order to solve these, a clear link from the last statement, and an understanding of the entire paragraph was required to identify the context. For those of you who attempted all, you stand a good chance of managing at least 10 marks out of 20.

For an average test taker, let's take a look at what, maybe, one could have done in this section, which turned out to be one of the key factors to get calls from the top b-schools

- The paragraph completion questions should have been priority, since the time requirement is less for this question type than the others. Also, the difficulty level was manageable, which means that out of 5, an ideal number of attempts would have been at least 3, preferably 4.
- Next, in the order of attempt would be the RC passage on 'Dogmatic Attitudes'. This passage was slightly tougher to comprehend than the one on 'Communism', however the questions were Largely Specific Detail in nature (3 out of 5), which means that accuracy would be better with this passage.
- The critical reasoning section dealt with Fact, Inference and Judgement; so in this section, a minimum of 3 attempts would have been respectable!
- The passage on 'Communism' was easy to understand, and even though the questions were in the main part implied (4 out of 5), this was also highly attemptable.
- And last, time permitting, would be the passage on 'Justice as Fairness'. This would be at the end since difficulty level in both understanding the passage and attempting the questions was very high, leading to an increased risk of inaccuracy.

Assuming that one was not able to attempt all the questions, at least 16-18 questions should ideally have been managed. With an accuracy rate of 60%, it was eminently possible to clear cutoffs for the English section (34+), which means that the IIMs need no longer be a dream... look forward to reality!!

**SECTION III (Quantitative Aptitude)**

In CAT-06 paper probably the Quantitative Aptitude section was the easiest of all the three sections and also among the last 8 years' papers. A student who perceives himself to be average in Math would have been able to attempt 12 - 14 questions in this section in about 30 min. Most of the questions were based on elementary mathematical concepts and the language of the questions was to the point and answers could also be generated instantaneously.

All the questions from Numbers were easy and could be solved in 9-10 minutes. The percentage of Numbers based problems went down from previous year but could play a big role in increasing the score. Questions from Algebra were a bit difficult & could entrap the students if he/she made any haste. Geometry did appear in the paper with moderate difficulty in it. The composition of the section was quite balanced. Apart from a varied selection of topics in Maths, there was a good mix of easy & difficult questions.

The purpose of this CAT combination seemed that the additional time (30 minutes) given could assist students to increase their scores with proper time Management between various sections. The sectional scoring for this section will be higher than the other two sections. This section was the maximiser of the paper. To optimize the score, one should have given 50 minutes to this section so as to attempt 16-18 questions with 70% accuracy.

Projected cut offs for the IIMs:

- Quantitative Ability: 35+
- Verbal Ability: 34+
- Logic & Data Interpretation: 33+

Overall cut-off should be 110+ at 98.6 percentile

Projected cutoffs for other CAT allied Institutes:

- Category I: IMT, MICA, MDI etc. should be 80+ marks at 94+ percentile
- Category III: TAPMI, FORE, UBS etc. should be 65+ marks at 86+ percentile
- Category IV: All others institutes would be less than 86 percentile

The 2.5 hours span of the test, demanded students to perform under pressure and maximize their points by applying their skills. So, to manage oneself in this CATmosphere is the key to affirm one's candidature for getting into top B-schools in India.

Overall, this was a CAT paper which could be "cracked".

The 4 marks per question did not imply a higher difficulty level. Those students who could keep their cool and did not get intimidated by the 4 marks would definitely score well. It would not be surprising if some of the top scores turn out to be more than 180!!