

XAT 2006 to 2008 comparative analysis

Overall Paper Pattern: After CAT, one of the difficult exams. The paper saw a major change in 2005 to 2006, but since 2006 for the last 3 years, the paper has remained almost consistent in the level of difficulty and number of questions. However, XAT did spring quite a few surprises with the type of questions, sectional skills, and number of choices per question.

One factor that sets this exam in a league of its own is its length, higher difficulty, differential marking, and higher negative marking scheme. The emphasis of the exam is on highest accuracy.

Overall Pattern over the last 3 years

Particulars	2008	2007	2006
Duration	120 Min (2 hrs) + 20 Min for Essay	120 Min (2 hrs) + 20 Min for Essay	120 Min (2 hrs) + 20 Min for Essay
Total Number of questions	120	130	127
Verbal Ability/Reading Comprehension	38	41	40
Reasoning + Decision making	38	40	--
Reasoning + Data Interpretation	--	--	43
Problem Solving	--	--	44
Quantitative Ability + Data Interpretation + Data Sufficiency	44	49	--
Negative Marking	1/4 th for the first 6Q in each section 1/2 for rest of the questions in each section	1/3 rd for first 5Q in each section 1/2 for rest of the questions in each section	
Number of choice per question	5	5	4

Few pointers to look out for:

- Unlike CAT, the exam consists of quite a few higher math questions. The exam is tougher than CAT because of its length and higher negative marking. Students must concentrate on accuracy. 97 percentile last year was a score of 39. So, it has usually been a low scoring paper.
- One is not sure about the weightage given to the essay. Yet, it is imperative that students make a decent attempt in this.
- XLRI is known for its preference to good sectional scores in the QA skill. Hence, students must try and maximize their score here if trying for XLRI.
- Do not unduly stress / neglect a section. One must try to maximize on strengths and attempt minimum accurate attempts in the weaker section to clear the sectional cut off to maximize the overall score.
- The Reasoning and QA section has gone through quite a few changes. DI has been a part of QA in the last two years and the reasoning section has a new kind of question, namely, decision making question. So, one needs to have gone through this type of questions before hand to increase the attempts in this section,
- The reading comprehension also has had an interesting use of caselets that test the students on similar lines as CR questions.

Comparative analysis of difficulty level of each sub-skill

Quantitative Ability:

The Quantitative ability section is a combination of QA + DS + DI. This combination of skill set does provide the student with some selection. Yet, the DI section can be time consuming and QA section can have the higher math questions that make the section difficult.

The exam had a different type of questions “Derive the conclusion” that required the students to arrive at the answer.

Sub-skill break up

Type of Question	2007	2006	2005
Overall	44	36	44
Number System	2	5	2
Arithmetic	3	5	3
Simple calculations of fractions etc	0	0	0
Average, %age, SI-CI, PLD	1	2	1+1
Ratio proportion, Average	1	1	0
Speed Time Distance, Work	1	2	1
Algebra	13	14	20
Equations & Inequalities	2	3	6
Functions	3	4	7
Maxima minima	1	2	5
Series, sequences & progressions	2	4	2
Graph	1	1	0
Misc Type	4	0	0
Geometry	6	4	3
Plane geometry	5	3	3
Mensuration	0	0	0
Co-ordinate geometry	1	1	0
Permutation & Combination	1	0	1
Probability	0	1	3
Mathematical reasoning	3	2	2
Set Theory	2	1	4
Higher Math (Limit, Differentiation, Integration)	0	0	2
Data Sufficiency	2	4	4
Data Interpretation	12	13	18
Table	9(2 sets)	11 (3 Sets)	13 (3 sets)
Pie Chart	0	0	5
Line Chart	3	0	0
Table + Bar Diagram	0	2 (1 Set)	0

A general look at this section will reveal that algebra and geometry has been the paper setters' favorite. The number of questions and type of questions from the arithmetic skill has been fairly consistent. Students not too comfortable with the algebra, geometry, or higher math must be prepared for very less selection options and be thorough with other concepts such as DS and DI, still DI can be termed difficult.

DI can be time consuming and so need to be good at speed calculation and approximation. Even a look at the DI reveals that Tables have been favored over others, so a question from this is possible – will be good for a student to have a close look at tables and combination tables.

Since, this section on the whole has always remained tough – the approach should be to look for the right number of questions and concentrate on accurate attempts limiting the number of questions and allotting extra time per question sufficient enough to clear the sectional cut-off. It is important to look for the easy sitters.

Verbal Communication (Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension)

This section is usually above average. The emphasis of the exam has shifted from direct vocabulary questions and grammar to more a reasoning based section in the last 2 years. Para jumbles and Critical Reasoning has remained the favorite consistently.

The reading comprehension passages are of medium length. The topics have been varied from psychology, philosophy, sociology, Business /Economy/ Management. Most of questions are inference based yet there are quite a few vocabulary based and fact based questions.

Sub-skill break up

Type of Question	2008	2007	2006
Overall	38	41	40
Verbal Ability	18	18	16
Vocabulary: Synonyms	0	3	0
Vocabulary: Antonyms/ Inappropriate Usage	0	2	0
Vocabulary: Analogies	0	0	0
Vocabulary: Usage-based	0	0	6
Fill in the blanks	5	0	3
Para Jumbles	3	4	3
Critical Reasoning	10	5	4
Reading Comprehension	4 passages (20 Qs)	4 passages + 1 poem (23 Qs)	5 passages (24 Qs)

A general look at the pattern of the exam shows that off and on some sub-topics are dropped and others that were dropped in the previous year makes a come back. So, ideally students should be prepared with basics in all the three sub-skills of EU. In the RC, students must make an attempt to skip passages and identify those easier ones (vocabulary and fact based) where possible and if necessary.

Reasoning

In the past, this section is known for its surprise element. The reasoning section in 2006 had DI as part of it. The section has been of moderate to high level of difficulty. One must be judicious in the selection of questions, as the section is a mix of easy and difficult questions, to maximize the attempts in this section. The decision making ability section looks more like a B-school case study. The analytical reasoning can be time consuming and students may not be well versed the decision making ability section. So, the section can become very difficult.

The best way is to practice the previous 2 / 3 years paper and be conversant with the new concepts tested in this skill set.

Cut-offs

The cut-off for the top colleges XLRI, XIMB, GIM, and LIBA are above the 90%ile. SP Jain however looks at an average of 85%ile and above. Last year cut-offs were

XLRI – 97%ile (usually selection is above the 98)

XIMB – 93.12

LIBA – 91.5

GIM – 90.10

A good score for XLRI is usually around 1/4th of the paper between 33 and 42 followed by others. So ideally depending on the student's strength and weakness – one should look for a score around 29+, which means the attempts should be around 40 to 50 questions across all the sections with a very good accuracy level – considering the higher negative marking – one should avoid going for the kill and stick to limited attempts.

Regular advice remains: Do not neglect a section; Allot time according to strengths but avoid undue emphasis at the cost of other sections.

Essay Writing

The XAT essays can be in general classified as one that deals with contemporary topics or abstract topics.

Let us look some of the topics that have appeared in last 9 years

2000 – Ships are safer in the harbour. But they are not meant for the same.

2001 – Economic Growth without distributive justice can only lead to violence

2002 – Indian Economy in the Post WTO Era.

2003 – To give real service, one needs to add something that cannot be bought or measured, like sincerity and integrity.

2004 – Asked at the age of 83, as to which of his project would he choose as his master piece, Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect answered, “The next one”

2005 – More than one billion Indians: A gigantic problem or a sea of opportunities.

2006 – India has one of the largest pool of talented manpower, but few innovations and patented products.

2007 – Economic growth without environmental damage – a mirage or a reality.

2008 – The consequence of gender imbalance – The Third World War.

A possible approach can be:

The most important thing to be kept in mind is that students are not supposed to write research papers on topics related to the Business / Economy / Contemporary topics. If they can approximately capture few major correlates of the topic, the job is done for them. Even if they miss few points, it should not bother them much.

The only suggestion is that out of the allotted 20 minutes, spend at least 5 minutes to recall, plan and organize what you intend to write. Use remaining 15 minutes to write 150-200 words in a cogent and coherent manner using grammatically correct English. Avoid flowery, language.

Abstract topics like those, which appeared in 2003 and 2004, the major problem with them is that students get in awe of the flowery and twisted language used in them, and cannot figure out what to write in them.

Following guidelines may be helpful:

- a. Once again spend 5-7 minutes to interpret and understand what the author implies? Are there any subtle nuances intended?
- b. It is very important to understand that there may be more than one interpretation possible for the given topic. But all interpretations are equally valid provided the student rationally explains it, and logically takes it forward.
- c. Thus the student should clarify how he understands/ interprets the given topic, clearly stating his reasons for doing so, right in the very beginning. The student may also disagree with the given statement.
- d. Next the student should build his case in support of his interpretation. Use of anecdotes, daily life examples, Fables etc., are very helpful in this regard.
- e. Lastly, the student should conclude, and end on a definite and concrete note.

All the best.