

XAT 2009 Analysis

XAT 2009 lived up its name and produced a tough exam. Knowing that this is going to be most difficult exam after CAT in terms of its difficulty level, progressive negative marking – one should have scanned before selecting questions – as this would have yielded some good questions that would have maximised the score.

As the trend has been, XAT 2009 was a low scoring paper with the likely cut-off for the XLRI (BM) to be around 32-35. Ideally, an attempt of around 45 questions across the section with a good accuracy would have been a good attempt to secure a call.

This year paper consisted of reduced questions (104 compared to 120 last year), all other pattern remained the same. The paper consisted of 3 sections – Verbal Ability (35Q), QA + DI + DS (38Q), and Analytical Reasoning and Decision Making (31Q).

Verbal Ability

Terming this section as tough could be a under statement after seeing this year CAT paper. Normally, this section has remained tough – yet, this year paper gave a real blow.

Total of 35 questions that yielded just about 12- 13 average questions spread across the board. Though this section offered varied sub-skill questions ranging from grammar, critical reasoning, para-jumble, and literary interpretation - the critical reasoning and literary interpretation were difficult to say the least. Emphasis on Vocabulary has continued this year too with focus on good inference skills.

While the para-jumble was difficult, the grammar and some of the critical reasoning questions were attemptable. The literary interpretation, which required students to identify figures of speech, left most students speechless with a lone question in analogy that was attemptable.

The Reading comprehension section had 3 passages with a total of 10 questions. The passages were short but the style of writing, the inference based questions made it reading intensive and hence difficult. The topics were also abstruse consisting of The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis - linguistics, Organisational Ecology, and Green Parties in Politics. One of the three passages should have been attempted (depending on the students familiarity with the topic if any), most likely the one on Green Parties in Politics.

An attempt of 12 – 16 questions was possible. Since, the accuracy might suffer with an average accuracy of 75 – 80% a score of 9 – 12 will be good.

Quantitative Ability, Data Interpretation, and Data Sufficiency

This section also was tough as the level of difficulty was high and most of the questions were calculation intensive and time consuming.

There were 26 QA questions. While arithmetic questions were more (10Q), it was spread evenly across the other sub-skills, namely, geometry, algebra, and modern maths. This section was no surprise and was more or less on the same pattern as last year.

Scanning and selection would have helped identify easier questions in geometry and permutation and combination apart from the usual selection of arithmetic questions consisting of time/speed, profit and loss.

There were 10Q in the Data Interpretation. The sets were time consuming but were attemptable with some quick thinking and speed calculations. Students should have attempted at least one of the single (table) or the combination (line graph and table) sets.

There were 2Q in Data sufficiency and both were easy and should have been attempted.

Spending 40 min and allotting more time per question with an aim for higher accuracy should have helped select 13 – 15 questions (2 DS, 2-3 in DI and 10 in QA) for a return of 9 – 10 marks.

Analytical Reasoning and Decision Making

After the VA and QA – this section was a breather of sorts and offered respite and possible outlet to maximise the overall score.

Most of the questions were straight forward and tested students on arrangements (both linear and matrix) and puzzles based questions. Students strong in their fundamentals should have been able to get higher accuracy in this section. The questions on Names and Professions, Digit set, Word Game, and One from the matrix arrangement could possibly have been attempted.

Since decision making questions have now been there for the past 2 years – the questions consisted of easy to understand cases. The questions were more or less situation specific and hence did not require too much reliance on the fundamentals.

Overall, an attempt of around 15 – 18 questions (8 – 10Q from AR and 6 – 8 Questions from DM) for a return of 10 -13 marks should have been good.

Essay

The essay topic this year was “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” Though the essay does not count towards the overall scoring or getting calls, this does play a role at the time of personal interview. An easy topic to relate to in terms of current global and domestic situation and one could have written it well if planned properly as per the guidelines provided in the comparative analysis.

A basic understanding of the two differing ideologies, their effect on global politics and economies alike would have helped to most extent to structure one’s essay. It would have been better if the student was able to elucidate a bit on the background of capitalism or its

appeal and the resultant inequality giving raise to socialistic theories of Karl Marx and the like. Though the capitalist society raises inequality, it offers a sustainable long term growth and one can draw a parallel here of various world economies such as US, the economic fall down of Russia or the latest embracing of capitalistic principles by China and conclude on the continuing success of capitalism.

The clues are there in the topic – it would have been interesting if the student was able to write home the point that equal sharing of misery did not offer respite from one's misery as seen from the failure of socialist government in Russia and other similar economies.