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What it takes to get into IBA, DU

One question most of my mentors used to ask me was, “What other places are you trying for besides IBA?” This question is built upon layers of societal and psychological realities. We tend to put a premium on certain institutions, which makes the DU-IBA admission test a high-stake situation. Stakes tend to be higher if you have invested all your time and effort into this one exam.

NOUSHIN NURI

When I look around my class at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University (DU), I see people with diverse admission journeys.

Some of them, like my friend Abdullah Al Faiaz, prepared only for the IBA entrance exam. Some, like me, wanted to play things safe and made sure we secured seats elsewhere like in DU's D-unit. Many went through the brunt of engineering admission tests before they started preparing for IBA. Then there's another bunch who didn't prepare for IBA at all but still managed to ace the admission test.

With the admission test being extremely competitive and the question pattern different from most other public admission tests, students are often left asking what it really takes to get into IBA, DU.

Based on my own experience and that of the people around me, here are some factors that can impact your odds of getting in.

Science, Commerce, and Arts – does it matter?

The IBA admission exam is basically an aptitude test. The exam topics – Math, English, and Analytical Ability – are not derived from any of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) curriculums. Instead, they focus on a student's core mathematical, language, and analytical skills. Hence, students from all backgrounds (Science, Arts, and Commerce) can apply and have an equal chance.

In practice, an overwhelming number of IBA students come from a Science background. Since science subjects tend to be comparatively math-heavy, there is a gap that exists between the mathematical skills of the average student in science and those in other curricula. Given the competitive nature of the exam, students

who haven't taken many quantitative subjects in the past few years should put in some extra effort to get comfortable in working with numbers. Being fast is particularly important because it helps tackle the biggest challenge in the IBA admission test.

The time constraint

Students get 90 minutes to answer around 75 MCQs followed by 30 minutes of descriptive writing. This leaves them with one minute for each question. But many of these questions, especially some from maths and analytical ability, will take longer. A common fix to this problem is being quicker in the English section to invest more time in the other two.

Having a plan about the order in which you will approach the section is important. Start with the subject you're most comfortable with and then get into the more difficult ones. Ample time should be allocated for all three sections as each of them need to be passed separately.

The passing bar differs yearly according to the difficulty level of the entrance exam.

Negative marks

For every wrong answer, 0.2 is deducted from your total obtained marks. So, avoid marking a question unless you're sure about it. However, educated guessing – used in moderation – can help elevate your score.

Practice

Practice will help you increase your speed and accuracy. It will also help recognise your mistake patterns and you can learn to minimise errors.

Sitting for mock exams is important. In addition to the MCQ sections, consider including the descriptive writing part in your mock exams. It will teach you to be more organised in the writing section.

Vocabulary

Being able to answer vocabulary-related

questions correctly gives you confidence. Since these require less thinking compared to the other question types, time is freed up to be invested elsewhere.

Rote memorisation of word meanings won't be useful. The questions are designed to test your knowledge of not only the meaning of the words but also their correct usage. This makes it important to be more involved with the new words you're learning. Constructing sentences with these words is a practice I and many others included in our IBA admission study routine.

The psychological aspect

One question most of my mentors used to ask me was, “What other places are you trying for besides IBA?” This question is built upon layers of societal and psychological realities. We tend to put a premium on certain institutions, which makes the IBA, DU admission test a high-stake situation. Stakes tend to be higher if you have invested all your time and effort into this one exam. The pressure to get in increases and can negatively impact your performance during the admission test.

Since the IBA, DU entrance exam takes place late in the admission phase, securing a place in some other university you might want to study in helps in being more confident going into the IBA admission test.

The secret ingredient

Despite all your efforts to increase the odds of getting into IBA, the odds can choose to not be in your favour. And there's nothing you can do about it.

So, besides a great deal of preparation, you need a bit of luck too.

Noushin Nuri is an early bird fighting the world to maintain her sleep schedule. Reach her at noushin2411@gmail.com

A definitive guide to the digital SAT

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

The SAT, or the Scholastic Assessment Test, is a standardised test conducted by the College Board that is needed for undergraduate university admissions in the United States. Until very recently, the SATs were taken by paper. However, a few years back, the College Board announced its intentions of fully digitalising the SATs and the very first digital SAT was administered internationally on March 11, 2023.

If you are thinking of applying to universities in the US and are confused about the new SATs, here are a few guiding points for you.

The key differences between the digital and paper SAT

While the previous SATs required students to physically solve the paper and write in the answers on an answer sheet, the digital SATs are conducted through an app named Bluebook where you can digitally access the paper and input your answers.

The paper SAT consisted of an English section and a Math section, with them being divided into two sub-sections each – Reading and Writing, and Calculator and Non-calculator. The digital SATs also consist of two sections but they are divided into two modules each and the two modules have no difference between them in regard to the pattern of questions. Both the English modules have 27 questions each and both are 32 minutes long. The Math modules have 22 questions each, and are both timed at 35 minutes.

A major reason behind students struggling with the previous SAT was its length of over three hours. The digital SAT is comparatively shorter at 2 hours and 14 minutes, and there is a 10-minute break between the Math and English sections.

The digital SAT also claims to be adaptive, which means how well you do on the first module for each section determines the difficulty level of your questions on the second module.

The style of questions is a little different now. Instead of focusing on Reading and Writing skills separately, the digital SAT tests your evidence-based reading and language skills simultaneously. The English section, which previously had long passages with multiple questions from each passage, has been altered so that it contains smaller passages and only one question per passage. This makes it easier for people who struggle to keep their attention perfectly attuned to stay focused and means that you will likely find the answer to your evidence-based question with less searching.

The Math section doesn't have many differences in terms of question pattern. The big change is



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the fact that students can use calculator in both the modules as opposed to before when its use was restricted to one module. The app, Bluebook, in fact has a built-in graphing calculator that students can use in addition to their own approved calculator. The percentage of student-generated responses as compared to multiple choice answers is also higher now in the Math section. The key skills required to excel at the SATs remain roughly the same as before.

How exactly do you sit for the SATs?

In order to register for the SATs, you have to head over to the College Board website, create an account, select a session and then proceed to fill in a form and pay a fee (USD 100 for the March session). A few different test centres are available and you get to choose a location which is convenient for you.

During registration, they provide you with the necessary information about your testing device. You have to bring your own testing device – a laptop or a tablet – to the physical testing centre. If you don't have a device of your own, you can request a device from College Board and the testing centre will arrange one for you. My testing centre had charging portals available, but it is advisable that you take a fully charged device with a battery life of at least three hours. You will be provided with scratch paper by the invigilator.

How can you prepare for the digital SATs?

The best way to prepare for a test that is as dependent on your time management skills as the SAT is to practise. Khan Academy, in collaboration with College Board, has an official digital SAT prep course that is free of cost. Four full-length mock tests are available on the Bluebook app. Once you take them, the app marks them digitally and provides you with a score from 400-1600. Doing these will give you a better idea of the question pattern as well as the areas where you may need to put in more effort.

Zaima hopes she did well on her SATs. Wish her luck at zaima2004adrита@gmail.com

Cambridge Majlis celebrates South Asians and Anti-Colonial history

The Cambridge Majlis is a student society at Cambridge founded in 1891 as a platform for discussion of social and political issues in South Asia. The Majlis moulded some of South Asia's most influential political figures and leaders like India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen. Figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, E.M. Forster, and Bertrand Russell also addressed the Majlis.

Over the past few years, Majlis members have uncovered much of the society's long-neglected history. An archival exhibition at the Wren Library in Trinity College showcases many of the region's leaders and thinkers. It highlights how Majlis members played an active role in the Indian independence struggle in the 1930s and 40s. Archives from the British Library show that the Majlis' "seditious activities" and "communist leanings" led the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard to begin monitoring its activities.

The Majlis debated and discussed issues such as the Government of India Act and Britain's policy of divide and rule and also engaged in political action to further the independence movement. Protests were held, petitions were signed, and money was raised to "Get the British out of India". In response to a proclamation



by Gandhi that Indian students should hold monthly demonstrations and meetings to demand the release of political prisoners, the Majlis held a gathering at St. John's College, Cambridge on February 10, 1945. The Cambridge Majlis received wires from both Gandhi and Nehru, thanking them for their contribution to the Indian Independence movement.

One of those under scrutiny in this period, Subrata Ray Chowdhury, went on to become a leading constitutional lawyer in India. Scotland Yard's recently declassified records include his correspondence with

Irish nationalist leaders expressing support for freedom fighters against the British Raj. Chowdhury also reportedly travelled to Ireland where he was expected to meet Seán O'Kelly, the new President of Ireland and De Valera, who had a leading role in introducing the 1937 Constitution of Ireland.

Chowdhury also met with both Seán and Irish republican, revolutionary and suffragette Maud Gonne MacBride on this visit. MacBride was also a long-time love interest of the poet W.B. Yeats. Her son Seán MacBride, the Irish independence activist and

later politician, founded Amnesty International. Interestingly, reinforcing the ties to South Asia, Seán MacBride later formed part of the "people's commission of enquiry" created in September 1980 to investigate the circumstances impeding the prosecution of those responsible for the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members.

In the 1950s, as ideas of state-building, economic policy and modes of government dominated discourse, the Majlis provided a way for South Asian students to directly engage with public and political life in the post-colonial, post-partitioned world. Majlis members during this period went on to become influential policymakers in their respective countries.

The Majlis stopped its activities after 1971, reportedly following the rising tensions between Indians and Pakistanis at Cambridge over Bangladesh's war of Independence. After almost five decades, following Mahid Qamar and Sahil Baid's rediscovery of the Archives, the Majlis returned to being a centre of South Asian intellectual and cultural life at Cambridge.

Since its revival, it has had presidents from India (Sara Saloo, 2021), Pakistan (Mahid 2019 and Sahil 2020) and now, Bangladesh (Laleh Bergman Hossain 2022).