

# Should CMAT be held once a year?



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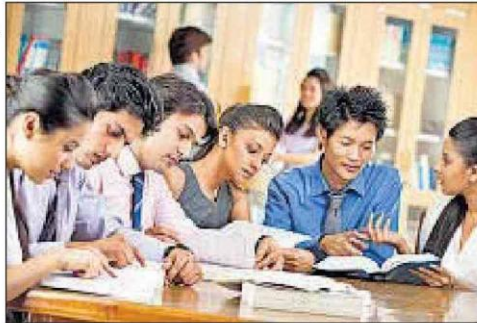
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The move by All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to conduct the Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) once a year has left many test aspirants confused.

The September 2015 edition of the test has been scrapped, AICTE said in a recent notification. The first yearly CMAT is going to be held in January 2016. It will continue to be conducted in the online version for admission to AICTE-approved MBA/PGDM courses starting in 2016.

Students and experts are divided over the move. There are more than 3,500 AICTE-approved B-schools which are expected to take CMAT scores, translating to availability of over four lakh seats for a CMAT test-taker. CMAT also gives them a shot at tier-2 B-schools of the country such as Sydenham College, KJ Somaiya and Institute of Management Technology, among others.

According to experts, having the test once a year is a logical move. "The rationale behind it is to have a fairer assessment of the relative standing of the students as conducting it twice meant judging the students on the basis of two different papers, which would be unfair for those making only one attempt," says Prashanth Nair, director, Triumphant



■ The scrapping of September 2015 edition of CMAT has evoked mixed response from students.

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Institute of Management Education, Mumbai.

Another important reason to conduct the test once a year is that the February edition of CMAT has had a higher number of test-takers as compared to the September edition of the test. "So conducting it once a year will have less logistical overheads for the AICTE," adds Nair.

This move will affect the students to quite an extent. "The September CMAT was an online test held before the CAT. A number of students give a lot of importance to the CAT and the September CMAT proved to be a good experience for them in terms of online-test taking, before going for the CAT. The February CMAT was like a second chance for the students, especially for those who couldn't perform well in the September version, as a majority of the B-Schools till now considered best of the two scores. Now the students will have only one

shot at the exam," says Nair.

Looking at the positives, the level of difficulty of the CMAT differs from CAT. Also, the mode of preparation is slightly different considering the fact that the student has to prepare for general awareness. "This diverted a student's preparation from the CAT towards the CMAT in the month of September, which ideally should be the peak preparation time for CAT, so the good part is that the student can now fully focus on the CAT, which is considered to be the mother of all entrance exams," says Nair.

"On the flip side, the CMAT taking place in January, after the results of most MBA exams are declared, clearly implies that most of the aspirants who would have aced the other entrance exams by then would not be taking CMAT. This provides an opportunity for the remaining aspirants to obtain a high percentile in CMAT. Aspirants must not

forget that CMAT is still one of the easiest exams of the season and all the emphasis needs to be on the basics," says Gautam Puri, vice chairman and MD, CL Educate.

Arya Kumar, director, Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, says that holding the CMAT once a year would put more pressure on students. "Why can't we have an online test that is held round-the-year on the lines of GMAT? It is unfair to judge a student based on his performance on a single day," he says.

Aspirants have mixed views on the development. "One attempt at CMAT is enough for a serious aspirant to score a great percentile. Till last year, CMAT's September version was like the unofficial start of the MBA season. CMAT is more than just a ceremonial season-starter and this time my strategy would be to go full force and create a good backup option among the top CMAT score accepting B-schools," says Darpan Saxena, a student.

For Manisha Kaushik, September was a little too early and February a little too late for an MBA exam. "For me, January would be a good time to take CMAT as I would have built momentum after dealing with a high pressure exam like XAT. It would be exciting to see whether or not CMAT plays around with its difficulty level," Sahil Jain, an aspirant from Mumbai, is disappointed with the move. "We were preparing for the September CMAT keeping aside our CAT preparations and suddenly got the news that it had been scrapped," says Jain.