

## SimCAT 13: The Experts' Take

### TEST OVERVIEW

<u>Section</u>	<u>Cut-off</u>
Verbal Ability-Reading Comprehension	35
Data Interpretation-Logical Reasoning	43
Quantitative Ability	43
Overall	148

You are now nearing the end of the SimCAT season and the D-day is less than one month away. You have seen SimCATs at various levels of difficulty so far. Some have been easy, while some have been difficult. This SimCAT was marked by a somewhat difficult VA-RC section and mostly medium level of difficulty DILR and QA sections.

Following table shows the marks required to score different percentiles in the three sections as well as overall.

Percentile	Score VA-RC	Score DI-LR	Score QA	Overall Score
99%	54	63	63	162
95%	45	53	54	138
90%	39	47	48	125
80%	32	40	39	108
70%	28	35	33	93

### Overall analysis

With VA-RC section marginally tougher than the one in the previous SimCAT, we had expected the cut-off to drop slightly. However, the cut-off in this SimCAT is more or less the same. This can be partly attributed to slightly easier DI-LR section than the one in the previous SimCAT. However, more importantly, it seems that students have now become more adept at seeing the surprises in the form of level of difficulty of different sections and are channelizing their test taking strategy accordingly. Our aim is to train students on how to face exam at CAT level of difficulty. We, at IMS are delighted to see this.

Rest assured that if you are well prepared to handle the surprises in SimCATs, you will be better prepared to face the actual CAT.

In the following paragraphs, you will see the analysis of individual sections in SimCAT-13.

### Verbal Ability- Reading Comprehension

SimCAT 13 RC and VA Section maintained the difficulty level of SimCAT 12.

Almost fifty per cent of the total number questions were of moderate difficulty. The difficult questions and the moderate ones put together constituted 60 to 70% of the test. That made the test look difficult. And, the easy questions, though several, almost became non-decisive. Just what you can expect in the CAT!

We maintained the level of difficulty of VA and RC section in this SimCAT (didn't make it easier), so that you are prepared for all eventualities in the actual CAT. So, don't worry too much if your actual score has dropped. Go strictly by the percentile.

If you are in the 90 to 99 percentile bracket, you are right on track, and you are already a very competitive candidate in the CAT. The SimCATs are an accurate barometer!

SimCAT 13 also had the familiar and anticipated pattern of 24 RC questions in MCQs and 10 VA questions in TITA. Critical Reasoning Questions (2), Summary Questions (3) Paragraph Jumble questions (3) were not *very* difficult. Out of these 8 questions one could easily score in 5. And if you could score in one of the 2 grammar questions – it would be a bonus.

We would like to remind you that grammar and vocabulary questions are not something that you should rely on for the marks in the CAT. This is not to say that you don't study grammar and vocab. You should study as much as possible. However, to rely on these questions for the marks in the exam will not be wise. However much you may prepare in these areas, it is always possible that the principle in grammar that is tested, or the particular word that appears in the test, is still unfamiliar to you. If you are able to score in these questions, it is very good. But if you are not able to score, it should not affect your overall score or confidence so much, because you have made up for these lost opportunities in RC and Reasoning.

So, scoring in 5 or 6 TITA questions in SimCAT 13 was eminently possible. These 15 to 18 marks should come in, in around 15 to 20 minutes. In the remaining 40 minutes you could attempt around 18 questions in RC. Assuming 70 to 80% accuracy, you could score between 35 and 54 marks. So an overall score of 50 and above is not only possible but also expected from a serious candidate. And we do not expect the cut off to fall below 35 marks. The above analysis is based completely from the point of view of strategy. The results corroborate this, as the cut off is 36.

The selection of passages was not very important in SimCAT 13. There is no passage we would recommend as a must-attempt or must-leave. The passages did not differ much in readability

or the difficulty level of the questions. The difficult, medium, and easy questions were almost equally distributed through passages. There was no risk of losing marks because you chose the writing passage! You could choose the passages depending on how comfortable you felt in reading each passage. The only decision you had to make was, after choosing 2 passages with 6 questions each, you could choose the third passage with 6 questions or 2 passages with 3 questions each. This is because any attempt below 18 (in RC) would not be acceptable in SimCAT 13. Passages were on Technology, Cosmology, Innovation and Capitalism, Art, and Religious unbelievers. Neither the topic nor the sentence structure posed any problem.

Notwithstanding your performance in SimCAT 13, your task now in SimCATs 14 and 15 and in the TakeHome SimCATs is to maximise your score in the VARC section.

Solve RC passages everyday – at least one passage for complete accuracy.

Every week:

- solve as many reasoning, grammar, and vocab questions as possible (in that order of priority),
- take as many section tests as possible,
- take at least one more Full Length Test in addition to the SimCAT, and
- do a thorough analysis of the tests.

This will stand you in good stead in the actual CAT.

### **Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning**

As mentioned earlier, this section was overall easy. The set on vegetarians-non vegetarians (Q.13 to 16) and the set on examination with two sections (Q.25 to 28) were slightly challenging. On the other hand, the set on trains (Q.21 to 24) required patient reading of the data. However the remaining sets were rather straightforward. You needed to attempt around 5 sets with 80-85% accuracy to clear the cut-off. For maximizing your score, you could have attempted one or more of these slightly challenging sets.

As you can imagine, there can be really limitless topics and ideas on which DI-LR sets can be based. During last 2-3 years, the DI sets in CAT have become more logical in nature. The best way to get yourself acquainted with these various types of sets is to practise. We suggest you to practise as many DI-LR sets as you can. Pick up sets from Application Builder. Solve proctored and take-home SimCATs. Analyze all the sets well. See if you can develop any set solving approach through this analysis. This will help you on the D-day.

### **Quantitative Ability**

This section appeared marginally tougher than the one in the previous SimCAT. This impression was created because first about 8 questions in the section were somewhat tough. Moreover in Q.4, the options involved not so-user friendly numbers such as  $\sqrt{\frac{41}{5}}$ ,  $\sqrt{\frac{39}{5}}$  etc. As we have stated

earlier, students have become more adept at identifying the questions they want to attempt and also the ones they want to leave.

However, when you see a series of 8 tough questions one after the other, right at the beginning of the section, you may tend to think that the section is tough. When you see the remaining questions in the section, you realize that the section as a whole is not really difficult.

The idea is to apply A-B-C analysis, as we have outlined earlier, no matter how easy/difficult the section is. If the section is easy, you will have to up your ante and have to attempt more questions. On the other hand, if the section is difficult, you may still score higher percentile with lower attempts.

### **Selection of questions**

In order to clear the cut-off for section 1 comfortably, about 18 questions could have been solved with 80% accuracy. To do the same for section 2, about 20 questions could have been solved with 80% accuracy. To do the same for section 3, about 20 questions could have been solved with 80% accuracy. In order to clear the overall cut-off, you would have to solve about 10 more questions with 80% accuracy. Given below are the questions you should have solved.

<u>Sec.</u>	<u>Must-Solve Questions*</u>	<u>Potential Score Improvers**</u>	<u>Total Qs</u>
VA-RC	2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 16, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 30	6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34	26
DI-LR	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32	2, 8, 11, 28	22
QA	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34	5, 30	24

\* Questions that have been attempted by a majority of the top 10 %ile students, with an accuracy of at least 80%.

\*\*Questions that have been attempted by a majority of the top 10 %ile students, with an accuracy of 50-80%.

## **LEARNINGS**

Every SimCAT offers you some learnings. These learnings can help you focus your preparation in a better way so that you will be best prepared on the D-day and clear the cut-offs of top b-schools.

### **Learning 1: Be prepared to see surprises**

As we have stated multiple times, be prepared to face surprises in CAT. On our part, we have tried our best to expose you to different possibilities that you may face in the actual CAT. Take this experience in your stride. The surprise may come in any form. It may come in the form of level of difficulty of different sections or it may come in the form of number of questions.

Whatever it is, remember that whatever is the structure of the CAT, it will be same for all students. So the difficulty level by itself will not affect your percentiles. However, if you become nervous on seeing a different exam pattern or a section with higher level of difficulty than expected, it will affect your percentiles.

In CAT-2015 and CAT-2016, DI-LR section was rather tough. This made some students nervous and it affected their performance in the QA section that followed. As a result, some of our good students were unable to clear the cut-off of QA section.

In CAT-2008, QA and DI-LR sections had 25 questions each and VA-RC section had 40 questions. This changed pattern caught some of our good students by surprise. They were not able to cope with the new changed pattern. As a result, those good students were not able to perform as well as they had expected.

If CAT throws surprises in any form (in terms of level of difficulty or pattern), don't panic. Keep your cool no matter what happens. This ability will go a long way in cracking the CAT.

### **Learning 2: If you see a series of difficult questions at the beginning of the section**

As we have outlined earlier, QA section had first 8 questions that were challenging. In the past, by design we included some tough questions right at the beginning of the section. However, you may not have seen as many as 8 such challenging questions right at the beginning of the section. You may not know that the remaining questions are easy and may be inclined to believe that the section is tough. How can you react to that situation?

Remember what you are seeing is being seen by everybody else. As you know, what matters in the CAT is your percentiles (i.e. how well you perform as compared to others) and not your absolute score. The fact that first few questions appear difficult should not affect your percentiles. However, what may affect your percentiles is your reaction to that situation. If you panic, that may affect you more and put you at disadvantage with respect to those who manage to keep their cool. Ensure that you don't become a victim of such a situation.

Remember the CAT is a test of your managerial aptitude. In your post MBA work life, you will face so many situations. An essential quality of a manager is to keep calm in such situations. Otherwise solution to the problem will only elude you. CAT will test you on this essential quality. Keep your calm even in challenging situations and show to the world that you have that in you what it takes to win.

### **SimCAT-13 is over. What next?**

In this Experts' take, we have given you some important tips about the importance of keeping calm. Make sure that you follow these tips if CAT throws some surprise for you.

If you have not read the expert take on the previous SimCAT, make sure that you refer to it now.

All the Best for SimCAT-14!

