SimCAT 15: The Experts' Take

TEST OVERVIEW

Section	Cut-off
Verbal Ability-Reading Comprehension	36
Data Interpretation-Logical Reasoning	42
Quantitative Ability	46
Overall	145

This was the final SimCAT of the season. Like every SimCAT, this SimCAT had its own surprises. You have seen a number of SimCATs with relatively easy VA-RC and QA sections and difficult DI-LR sections. This was consistent with the pattern of CAT-2015 and CAT-2016. However in this SimCAT, we decided to throw a surprise in the form of a difficult VA-RC section.

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%	56	60	66	161
95%	46	51	55	138
90%	41	45	50	123
80%	33	38	42	105
70%	29	33	36	93

Overall analysis

As mentioned earlier, this SimCAT was marked by a difficult VA-RC section, medium DI-LR section and a relatively easy QA section. As usual, the selection of sets was the key in DI-LR section. Majority of the questions in QA section were also doable.

We have received reports from different IMS centers that some students found QA section difficult as well. We will elaborate more on that in this experts' take.

Verbal Ability- Reading Comprehension

SimCAT 15 gave you a well-balanced VA RC section. Following the CAT 2016 pattern closely, SimCAT 15 was carefully crafted to give you a feel of the actual CAT.

The overall difficulty of SimCAT 15 bordered on the **Difficult.**

30 per cent of the questions were difficult; 30 per cent were moderate; and 40 per cent of the questions were Easy. Since 60 per cent of the question-set consisted of difficult and medium difficulty questions, some of you must have found the test as a whole, difficult.

And, for those who are aspiring to calls from the top IIMs (if it were the actual CAT) there were about 10 Decisive questions, which most other candidates might have either left or answered incorrectly. We have always analysed the SIMCATs from the point of view of the must-attempt and the score-maximiser questions, in order to enable and enhance your performance in the tests.

We hope you will bear this in mind, in any test!

Thus, we designed SIMCAT 15 in such a way that it prepared you for the competition in the severely-competitive CAT, which is just 3 days away.

Reading Comprehension passages and TITA questions were interspersed almost evenly in this test. TITA questions consisted of 4 Parajumbles, (3 were easy, 1 was difficult); 3 summary questions (2 were difficult and 1 was medium), and 3 Out of context sentence questions (2 were medium and 1 was easy). This distribution gave ample opportunity to a serious candidate not just to score but to maximise the verbal score. It is rational to expect a serious candidate to score in at least 5 questions in TITA in about 15 minutes.

The passages were a mix of easy and difficult. The first two passages on Animalcules and on Predictions were easy to read and answer questions. Of the 9 questions on these passages 5 were difficult, 3 were medium and only 1 question was easy. The other passages on Academic Consultancy, Bitcoins, and Homo Economicus, put together, had 8 easy questions, and 4 difficult questions and 3 medium difficulty questions. Bitcoins was a must-attempt passage because not only was the passage highly readable, the questions were also easy. Between Academic Consultancy and Homo Economicus, you could choose either, depending on your comfort in reading. Both had the formal opinion article style and easy readability.

In 45 minutes it was possible to attempt 18 questions spread through four passages with high accuracy. We expect a score of 45 and upwards in the 95 to 99 percentile range. Cut off could drop to 34 marks. (Your performance corroborates these estimates)

This analysis is not complete without our recommendations about what to do in the CAT this weekend.

First, bring compete attention of the mind, and unflinching concentration, to the entire test.

Next, assess the section before you start answering.

In VARC, as you look at the questions also have a cursory look at the passages – skim through the first paragraph. Mentally choose the four passages that you would attempt – or the one passage you may prefer not to attempt! Make a note in the rough pad. For example, questions - 6 to 11 etc.

Note the TITA questions similarly, where and what they are.

Attempt most of the TITA questions first, reserving a few questions for the last 10 minutes.

Then hit RC. Time manage well. Attempt maximum no. of questions. Either all questions from some passages or some questions from all passages; the idea is to attempt maximum no of questions possible, with maximum accuracy. Work systematically. Leave a passage only if forced to.

In the last five minutes or so, come back to the remaining TITA questions and attempt all of them before the clock ends!

Wish you the very best on Sunday. As an IMS student, you have been a pleasure to associate with. Wish you success in everything you do.

Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning

As usual, the best strategy is to attempt the easy sets, wherever they are located, pocket those marks and then worry about the other time-consuming sets.In general LR sets were on easier side as compared to DI sets. The LR set on the number of children (Q.21 to 24) and the number of cars with 5 individuals (Q.29 to 32) were the easiest among the section. These were must do sets. Especially the last set could have been done in less than 5 minutes. Just imagine the kind of confidence you would have got had you got 2 sets correct in first about 15 minutes.

Out of the remaining sets, the set on the arrangement of 11 numbers and the sets on 6 students taking the entrance test could have been attempted. Anyone who attempted these 4 sets at high accuracy would have been in the striking distance of clearing the cut-off for the section. After attempting these sets, you could have attempted one more set among the remaining to ensure that you comfortably cleared the cut-off and scored more.

Quantitative Ability

In QA section, as usual some questions were included to act as speed breakers right at the beginning. For example, Q.1 and 2 definitely fell in that category. Q.8 was not difficult per-se but it was a lengthy question so it gave an impression of a difficult question. Similarly most of the students found Q.13 also difficult.

Majority of other questions in the QA section were doable. However, as mentioned earlier, we have received reports from different IMS centres that some students found QA section also difficult. At this point, we suggest you to go through the entire section again. We are sure that you will find enough easy and doable questions in the section. Moreover the cut-off of this section is higher than the cut-offs of VA-RC and DI-LR sections.

This is a suggestion specifically to students who found this section difficult. We sincerely hope that you did not find that section difficult because of memories of VA-RC section that was more difficult than expected. We have highlighted several times so far that you need to treat individual section as if it were a separate test. Don't let your performance in one section affect your performance in the following sections.

Selection of questions

In order to clear the cut-off for section 1 comfortably, about 16 questions could have been solved with 80% accuracy. To do the same for section 2, about 19 questions could have been solved with 80% accuracy. To do the same for section 3, about 24 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.

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

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: Don't let the level of difficulty of one section affect your performance in other sections

We have stressed this aspect several times so far. Therefore we will not elaborate that here again. However we want you to remember this all the time till your CAT is over.

Last minute tips

You must have tried out different strategies for test taking in different SimCATs and by now you should have found out the strategy that suits you best. This strategy should include time management and the order of solving questions. If you can perfectly implement your strategy in the actual CAT, that would be great. However, remember that the CAT has thrown up surprises in the past and you never know what is in store for you in the actual CAT. So be willing to make changes and be prepared to be flexible in your strategy depending on the nature and the requirements of the question paper.

Remember that the CAT is a test of aptitude. Every student has some innate aptitude. You have worked on your CAT preparation for almost one year now and you are where you are today thanks to your preparation. Solving back to back full length tests in quick time from this point onwards may not yield any incremental benefits from your current level of preparation. Furthermore, if any of the multiple tests that you solve happens to be a difficult test and you see your score dipping, then your confidence level could take a serious hit. In any case, don't solve any full length test the day before the CAT. Make sure you relax completely the day before the test. Watch your favourite movie or listen to songs or do whatever that helps you relax.

As we had stated earlier, don't go to the test with a preset idea of attempting 'N' number of questions in each section in order to clear the cut-off. If the test is easy, you may have to attempt more questions. On the other hand, if the test is difficult, fewer questions may suffice to clear the cut-offs.

You should be in the best frame of your mind when you go for the test. Last two days is not the time to do anything that might possibly put you under stress. Don't attempt any full length test in the last two days. Similarly don't try to learn anything new now. Now is the time to consolidate what you already know and not the time to learn anything new.

Make sure you know your test center and how to reach there in a comfortable manner. When you start from home, make sure that you keep a sufficient buffer in terms of time to take care of unforeseen circumstances like traffic jams or vehicle breakdowns. Also be sure to carry all the identification documents as specified in the CAT registration form.

We, at IMS have thoroughly enjoyed this SimCAT season. It was really a great feeling to see students improve their performance as we progressed further into the season. Make sure to implement all the learnings from the previous SimCAT experts' takes in your actual CAT.

May all your aspirations come true and may you land a place in your dream B-school in June 2018!!

All the Best for CAT!!