



CAREER
CHOICE
360

XAVIER APTITUDE TEST (XAT HANDBOOK)

XAT EXAM HANDBOOK

2026 Edition



Career Choice 360 Mentors

ABOUT THE EXAM

The Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT) is India's second-largest MBA entrance exam, conducted annually by XLRI Jamshedpur on behalf of the Xavier Association of Management Institutes (XAMI). With over six decades of history, XAT is widely respected for its rigour, particularly its unique Decision Making section, which sets it apart from all other management entrance tests in the country.

Jan 4

2026 (SUNDAY)

180

MINUTES

95

TOTAL QUESTIONS

1.42L+

(2026) CANDIDATES
REGISTERED

ELIGIBILITY:

A 3-year Bachelor's degree from a UGC-recognised university in any discipline. No minimum percentage is prescribed for XAT. Final-year students may also apply. There is no age limit.

BLUEPRINT (EXAM PATTERN & SYLLABUS)

XAT 2026 follows a structured four-section format. A key change from 2025 onwards: the Analytical Essay Writing (AEW) has been removed from the main exam and shifted to the GD/PI rounds. GK does not count towards your overall percentile but is factored into the final selection process.

DETAIL	SPECIFICS
Conducting Body	XLRI Jamshedpur
Mode	Computer-Based Test (CBT)
Frequency	Once a year (January)
Colleges Accepting XAT	800+ institutes across India
Essay Writing (AEW)	Now conducted during GD/PI rounds, not in the main exam

DETAIL	SPECIFICS
Official Website	xatonline.in

SECTION	KEY TOPICS	MARKING
Verbal & Logical Ability (VLA)	Reading comprehension, critical reasoning, para jumbles, vocabulary, verbal logic	+1 / -0.25
Decision Making (DM)	Business caselets, ethical dilemmas, HR & operations scenarios, analytical reasoning	+1 / -0.25
Quantitative Ability & Data Interpretation (QA&DI)	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, probability, charts, tables, caselets	+1 / -0.25
General Knowledge (GK)	Current affairs, business & economy, static GK, science & tech, sports	No negative marking

NEGATIVE MARKING RULE:

You may leave up to 8 questions unattempted (excluding GK) without penalty. For every additional unattempted question beyond 8, a deduction of 0.10 marks applies. For wrong answers, 0.25 marks are deducted.

PREPARATION

XAT is considered one of the toughest management entrance exams in India. A structured, disciplined preparation plan of at least 4–6 months is strongly recommended. Here is a proven phase-wise approach.

PHASE 1 — FOUNDATION

Month 1-2

Understand the syllabus, study XAT exam pattern, build conceptual clarity in QA, VA and DM fundamentals

PHASE 2 — SKILL BUILDING

Month 3-4

Topic-wise practice, solve previous years' papers (especially DM), strengthen weak areas, build reading habit for RC and GK

PHASE 3 — MOCK & REVISION

Month 5-6

Take full-length mock tests weekly, analyse mocks section-wise, revise formulas and concepts, work on speed and accuracy

PHASE 4 — FINAL SPRINT

Last 2-3 weeks

Daily mocks, solve the official XLRI mock test, review GK, avoid learning anything new, focus on only revision

- Allocate dedicated time daily — at least 3–4 hours for a 6-month plan
- Prioritise the Decision Making section — it is uniquely XAT-specific and most aspirants underestimate it
- Read newspapers and business magazines daily for GK and RC readiness
- Solve at least 10 years of previous XAT question papers for authentic practice
- Register for the official XLRI mock test when released — it mirrors the exact interface

STRATEGY

Scoring well in XAT is as much about smart test-taking as it is about preparation. Unlike CAT, XAT's Decision Making section requires judgment and contextual thinking , not just formulaic answers. Here is a section-wise strategy used by high scorers.

SECTION	STRATEGY
VLA	Attempt RCs first as they carry the most weight. Skip lengthy inference-heavy questions if time is tight. Practice dense, academic-style passages , XAT RCs often draw from philosophy and economics.
Decision Making	Read the caselet fully before answering. Look for the most balanced and ethical option — XAT rewards managerial judgement, not extreme choices. Practice 3 full DM sets daily in the peak prep phase.
QA & DI	Prioritise accuracy over speed. Attempt simpler arithmetic and DI first. Avoid spending more than 2 minutes on any single question. Skip and return if stuck.
GK	Attempt all GK questions since there is no negative marking. Spend the last 15–20 minutes of the exam on this section. Focus on business news, economy and current affairs of the past 12 months.

TIME ALLOCATION TIP:

Aim to spend roughly 60 min on VLA, 50 min on DM, 50 min on QA&DI, and the remaining 20 min on GK. Adjust based on your mock test performance.

- ❌ Do not attempt questions blindly , every wrong answer costs 0.25 marks
- ❌ Do not over-skip , beyond 8 unattempted questions, you lose 0.10 marks each
- ❌ Do not ignore sectional cutoffs , clearing each section's cutoff is mandatory for XLRI shortlisting

CUT OFF

XAT cutoffs are released institution-wise after the result is declared. XLRI Jamshedpur sets the benchmark, and other colleges publish their own cutoffs accordingly. Cutoffs vary by programme, gender, and category. A score of 36+ out of 75 is generally considered competitive for top-tier institutes.

PERCENTILE RANGE	SUITABLE INSTITUTES
99+ percentile	XLRI Jamshedpur (BM Programme)
95–99 percentile	XLRI HRM, SPJIMR Mumbai, XIM Bhubaneswar
90–95 percentile	IMT Ghaziabad, MICA Ahmedabad, IMI Delhi
80–90 percentile	TAPMI Manipal, KJ Somaiya Mumbai, Great Lakes Chennai, FORE Delhi
70–80 percentile	GIM Goa, IFMR Chennai, XLRI Delhi
60–70 percentile	IPE Hyderabad, Christ College Bangalore, BIM Trichy
50–60 percentile	Various AICTE-approved PGDM colleges across India

XLRI also has section-wise cutoffs. Male candidates for the BM programme generally need 96+ overall percentile. Cutoffs vary by gender and category — always check the official XLRI website after results.

BEST COLLEGES ACCEPTING XAT

Over 800 management institutes across India accept XAT scores. Here are the most prestigious and highly-ranked ones, grouped by their expected percentile cutoff.

XLRI Jamshedpur JAMSHEDPUR, JHARKHAND <hr/> 95–99+ percentile	SPJIMR MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA <hr/> 95+ percentile	XIM University BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA <hr/> 90–95 percentile
IMT Ghaziabad GHAZIABAD, UP <hr/> 85–90 percentile	MICA Ahmedabad AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT <hr/> 85–90 percentile	IMI New Delhi NEW DELHI <hr/> 80–85 percentile
TAPMI Manipal MANIPAL, KARNATAKA <hr/> 80–85 percentile	Great Lakes CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU <hr/> 80–85 percentile	KJ Somaiya MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA <hr/> 80–85 percentile

BEST BOOKS

Always choose the latest editions aligned to the current XAT syllabus. For Decision Making in particular, past XAT question papers remain the single best resource available.

ALL SECTIONS · OVERALL PREP

Jabbing the XAT (with solved papers)

R.K. Jha

QA & DI

Quantitative Aptitude for Competitive Examinations

R.S. Aggarwal

QA & DI

How to Prepare for Quantitative Aptitude for CAT

Arun Sharma

MOCK & PRACTICE

25 Years XAT Solved Papers

Disha Experts

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Manorama Year Book

Mammen Mathew (Ed.)

For Decision Making, no book substitutes practicing actual XAT past papers. Attempt at least 5–7 years of papers under timed conditions.

LAST NOTE

A WORD BEFORE YOU BEGIN

XAT is not just a test of what you know — it is a test of how you think. The Decision Making section, which no other exam replicates, asks you to make managerial judgements under uncertainty. That is precisely the skill XLRI and other top schools are hiring for.

Prepare with consistency, not desperation. A disciplined 4-month plan beats a frantic 2-week sprint every time. Do not ignore GK — it can be the deciding factor when two candidates score identically on the main sections.

And remember: cutoffs are not your target. Your target is the best possible score, and the cutoffs will follow. Mock tests are the closest thing to exam-day practice — take them seriously, review every mistake, and track your improvement section by section.

Arrive at the exam well-rested, with a calm mind and a clear strategy. You have prepared for this.

Trust your process.