

## **TESTING .....TESTING - LNAT, BMAT AND UCAT.**

Candidates for certain first degree courses at some universities must submit not only their UCAS application, but also their score on a test designed to measure their suitability for it. In theory, the test itself need be no barrier, as the result is viewed alongside other information. However, few institutions (if any) deny it carries weight within their selection procedure. The tests most taken are for courses in law, biomedical sciences, and medicine/dentistry, and best-known by their abbreviations - LNAT, BMAT, and UCAT.

### **LNAT (The National Admissions Test for Law).**

Introduced in 2004 at the instigation of Oxford University, who were finding a growing pool of applicants holding excellent A-level grades increasingly hard to choose from, the LNAT claims to assess four competencies:

- verbal reasoning,
- capacity to understand and interpret information,
- inductive and deductive reasoning, and
- ability to draw conclusions.

The test is in two parts. Section A lasts 95 minutes, is computer-based, and normally consists of over 40 multiple-choice questions, answers to which are either correct or incorrect. A candidate's total on this section alone counts as their LNAT score. Most Section A passages run to several hundred words, and the topics cover serious issues. The LNAT website suggests how to approach them, but candidates may adopt any strategy they please.

Section B involves an essay, for which 40 minutes are available. The instruction on one recent sample paper reads 'your answer should be a reasoned and sustained argument which justifies your response to the question'. Here are four examples of recent essay titles, sample answers to which are also offered on the website.

- 1) How should judges be appointed?
- 2) Does it matter if some animal and plant species die out?
- 3) Should the law require people to vote in general elections?
- 4) What is political correctness, and why does it matter?

Only a handful of universities oblige students to take the LNAT; however, these are among those which enjoy the highest reputation.

## **BMAT (The Biomedical Admissions Test).**

This facility, developed by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, aids judging applicants for undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, and biomedical sciences, and is used by a limited number of UK institutions. It lasts 2 hours, and is in 3 sections, normally broken down as follows.

Section 1 allows 60 minutes for 35 questions intended to test problem-solving skills, understanding arguments, and data analysis and inference. Typically, this involves deciding which of several statements is true. These relate to passages which describe a scientific phenomenon, or current issue subjected to research scrutiny. Though most passages are short, the information they contain can be dense, and easily misunderstood. Other questions may require data to be arranged in sequence, or percentages or ratios calculated. Some questions are visual, inviting comparison of several very similar shapes or diagrams, only one of which is correct.

Section 2 tests the scientific knowledge candidates may be expected to possess by age 16, and applying this to 27 questions in 30 minutes.

Section 3 invites candidates to select, develop, organise and communicate ideas concisely and effectively in one written task normally chosen from 3. This final section also lasts 30 minutes.

## **UCAT (The University Clinical Aptitude Test).**

Known as the UKCAT until slightly re-named in 2019, the test is used by the majority of UK universities offering undergraduate courses in medicine and dentistry. It, like the BMAT, lasts 2 hours.

The first of the test's two parts has 4 multiple-choice subsections. Tables, charts, diagrams and graphs plus texts may be used to assess verbal, abstract, and quantitative reasoning, as well as decision-making.

The second part lasts 27 minutes, and poses around 60 questions on 20 or more scenarios relating to medical ethics.

While all three tests clearly demand sustained concentration, and the ability to focus on widely differing problems, there is no set 'pass' score, and one which elsewhere appears modest may yet earn the continued consideration of the selectors.

Test fees are about £50, payable in advance, but normally waived for recipients of certain state benefits. Anyone applying for a bursary should allow at least a week for administration.

Candidates with a disability and/or special requirements will find relevant instructions on the test website. Proof (e.g. a doctor's letter) of any declared condition is normally required at the centre on test day. Cancelling or re-scheduling a test without charge should be possible provided arranged at least 48 hours

ahead. You must check carefully what can be taken into the test - dictionaries and calculators are usually prohibited.

Test websites strongly recommend that candidates practise papers under exam conditions, and remind them that the curriculum on which questions are based may change from year to year.

On test day, you should arrive at least 15 minutes early, as latecomers may not only miss the test, but also be charged for a re-arranged one. Evidence of identity (from an approved list) is usually required, along with a printed or electronic copy of the test confirmation e-mail or letter.

The availability of the results can vary considerably, and actual or likely dates should be checked carefully.

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