

# CAT Diaries

**DTU Times interviewed Nilabh Jha, EE, Class of 2022, who secured a 99.9 percentile in the CAT 2021 examination**

**Why did you feel inclined towards preparing for the CAT out of all the different options available to you?**

The decision to pursue an MBA was the key behind opting for CAT. Once I was sure about the first part, the list of potential exams boiled down to CAT and GMAT. MBA from abroad usually requires work experience and the situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic also acted as a deterrent. Therefore, I decided to prepare for CAT and complete my studies in India itself.

**Briefly take us through your preparation journey. What is it that you feel you did differently from others?**

I started my preparation around the beginning of 2021 and joined Alchemist, a coaching institute. To begin with, I attempted a couple of actual CAT papers (2019 Slot 1 and 2020 Slot 3) to gauge my ability without any formal preparation. I focused on improving the flaws I discovered through this until May. After that, I gave mock tests from Alchemist and IMS till November. In terms of what was unique in my journey, I tailored the course according to my strengths and weaknesses instead of studying everything equally. The other thing that I did well, in my opinion, was that I took as many mock tests as I was comfortable with, contrary to the popular advice of a set number that an aspirant has to attempt per week on the basis of the proximity to the real exam.

**How would you advise a candidate to approach the test?**

My advice would be to attempt a few actual CAT papers in the beginning. If you are able to score over 50%, then just mock tests from any reputed coaching institute would suffice. If not, jot down the mistakes and look for recurring patterns. Start your preparation from the topics you are weak at and move towards your strengths. There is no best way that exists to attempt a section or the whole paper, so you will have to figure out the intricacies before building your own way of taking the exam through mock tests and their analyses.

**What are your future plans after achieving such a phenomenal score?**

In terms of my immediate future, I want to study at one of the top 3 IIMs or XLRI. Beyond that, management



consulting intrigues me but I am still open to other options based on my interaction with the students, teachers and the subjects that will be taught in the above-mentioned colleges.

**What advice would you like to give to your juniors who wish to pursue the same career path as yours?**

Be determined about your decision to prepare for CAT or any other other entrance exams, as it will take up a lot of effort and pursuing MBA from one of India's (or any other nation's) top B-Schools is a significant financial investment. There will be a lot of uncertainty in your preparation phase regarding the mock test scores but take it as practice before a battle. The more you bleed here, the better you will be when you face the real test.

College placements will be a crucial period since a lot of your friends will be getting selected at top companies; treat it as motivation for your journey instead of letting it affect your focus. Apart from all this, the one thing you need to trust the most is your ability to make decisions and execute them. There will be a lot of noise around; block most of it, listen to some good advice and trust yourself.