

GMAT Preparation FAQs for International Graduate Applicants

Website-ready content based on the current GMAT examination.

1. What is the GMAT?

The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is an admissions examination designed primarily for MBA, Master's in Management, Master's in Finance and other graduate business programmes.

It assesses the analytical, numerical, verbal and data-literacy skills needed for graduate-level management education. The examination is administered by the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).

2. Do all international graduate applicants need the GMAT?

No. GMAT requirements vary by university and programme. A business school may classify the GMAT as:

- compulsory;
- recommended;
- optional;
- eligible for a waiver; or
- not required.

Applicants should check the requirements of each programme. Even when the GMAT is optional, a strong result may improve an application or support a scholarship request.

3. Which programmes commonly accept the GMAT?

The GMAT is commonly accepted for:

- Master of Business Administration (MBA);
- Executive MBA;
- Master's in Management;
- Master's in Finance;
- Master's in Accounting;
- Master's in Business Analytics;
- Master's in Marketing;
- Master's in International Business; and
- other management-related graduate programmes.

Applicants to non-business courses should confirm whether the programme accepts the GMAT, GRE or another examination.

4. What is the current GMAT format?

The GMAT contains three sections, 64 questions and one optional ten-minute break. The total examination time is approximately **2 hours and 15 minutes**.

Section	Questions	Time
Quantitative Reasoning	21	45 minutes
Verbal Reasoning	23	45 minutes
Data Insights	20	45 minutes
Total	64	2 hours 15 minutes

Candidates may select the order in which they complete the sections. See the official [GMAT exam structure](#).

5. Does the current GMAT include an essay?

No. The current GMAT does not include an Analytical Writing Assessment or essay section. It assesses candidates through Quantitative Reasoning, Verbal Reasoning and Data Insights.

Applicants using older preparation materials should ensure that those resources match the current examination.

6. What does Quantitative Reasoning assess?

The Quantitative Reasoning section measures your ability to use arithmetic and elementary algebra to solve problems logically and efficiently.

It contains 21 Problem Solving questions. A calculator is **not permitted** in this section. Successful preparation should therefore include mental calculations, numerical estimation and efficient problem-solving methods.

7. What does Verbal Reasoning assess?

The Verbal Reasoning section measures your ability to:

- understand written material;
- identify main and supporting ideas;
- draw logical inferences;
- evaluate arguments;
- identify assumptions; and
- assess the strength of evidence.

It includes Reading Comprehension and Critical Reasoning questions. The current examination does not include the Sentence Correction questions found in older GMAT materials.

8. What does Data Insights assess?

Data Insights evaluates your ability to analyse information from different sources and make evidence-based decisions.

Question types may include:

- Data Sufficiency;
- Multi-Source Reasoning;
- Table Analysis;
- Graphics Interpretation; and
- Two-Part Analysis.

An on-screen calculator is available for Data Insights. Applicants should practise interpreting tables, charts, ratios, percentages and information presented across multiple sources. [Official GMAT content guide](#)

9. How is the GMAT scored?

Result	Score range
Total Score	205–805
Quantitative Reasoning	60–90
Verbal Reasoning	60–90
Data Insights	60–90

Total scores end in five and are reported in ten-point intervals—for example, 625, 635 or 645. All three sections are weighted equally when calculating the Total Score.

The score report also includes percentile rankings, showing how the candidate performed relative to other test takers. [Official GMAT scoring information](#)

10. What is a good GMAT score?

There is no universal passing score. A competitive result depends on:

- the selected business school;
- the programme's ranking and selectivity;
- the average score of previously admitted students;
- the applicant's academic and professional background; and
- whether the applicant is seeking a scholarship.

Applicants should use each programme's published class profile as a reference rather than assuming one score is suitable for every university.

11. Can current GMAT scores be compared directly with older scores?

Not reliably. The current GMAT uses a **205–805** scale, while the previous edition used a **200–800** scale. Direct numerical comparisons may therefore be misleading.

Applicants and universities should use percentile rankings or the official GMAC concordance information when comparing results from different editions.

12. How long should I prepare for the GMAT?

GMAC recommends at least six weeks of consistent study, and many candidates prepare for 60 hours or more. In practice, international applicants may require **eight to twelve weeks**, particularly if they need to improve academic English, mathematics or data-analysis skills.

Preparation time should be based on:

- the initial diagnostic score;
- the target score;
- weekly study availability;
- previous mathematical education; and
- familiarity with English-language reasoning questions.

13. How should I begin my GMAT preparation?

Begin with the following steps:

1. Research the GMAT expectations of your target programmes.
2. Take an official diagnostic examination.
3. Compare your initial result with the target score.
4. Identify weaknesses by section and question type.
5. Create a weekly study plan.
6. Learn the concepts before beginning intensive timed practice.
7. Maintain an error log.
8. Complete full-length practice examinations under realistic conditions.

14. What is an effective weekly study plan?

A balanced study week could include:

Study session	Main activity
Session 1	Quantitative concepts and untimed practice
Session 2	Critical Reasoning
Session 3	Data Insights and data interpretation
Session 4	Reading Comprehension
Session 5	Timed Quantitative and Verbal practice
Session 6	Mixed questions and error review
Session 7	Mock section, revision or rest

The plan should give additional time to weaker areas without neglecting stronger sections.

15. What is a GMAT error log?

An error log records:

- the question type;
- whether the answer was correct;
- time spent;
- the reason for the mistake;

- the correct method; and
- the lesson to apply to future questions.

Common causes of mistakes include concept gaps, misreading, careless calculations, poor time management and using an inefficient method. Reviewing these patterns is one of the most effective ways to improve performance.

16. How important is time management?

Time management is essential. The GMAT applies a score penalty for unanswered questions, so candidates should attempt to complete every section.

Effective strategies include:

- establishing pacing checkpoints;
- avoiding excessive time on one difficult question;
- making an informed selection when necessary;
- flagging uncertain answers for review; and
- reserving time to use the Review and Edit feature.

17. Can I review and change my answers?

At the end of each section, candidates can review as many questions as they wish, provided time remains. However, they can change a maximum of **three answers per section**.

This feature should be used strategically. Candidates should not rush through the entire section expecting to correct every uncertain answer later.

18. Can I choose the order of the sections?

Yes. Candidates can select the order in which they complete the three sections.

A suitable order depends on the individual. Some candidates begin with their strongest section to build confidence, while others begin with their weakest section when concentration is highest. Test different orders during full-length practice examinations before deciding.

19. What GMAT preparation materials should I use?

Begin with current official GMAT resources because they most accurately represent the real examination.

The free GMAT Official Starter Kit includes:

- more than 70 official questions;
- two full-length practice examinations;
- the official scoring algorithm;
- study-planning tools; and
- performance insights.

Applicants can access the [official sample questions and Starter Kit](#) through mba.com. Avoid relying on outdated materials containing essay or Sentence Correction tasks.

20. How should international applicants prepare for Verbal Reasoning?

International applicants should combine GMAT practice with regular academic reading. Effective activities include:

- reading business, economics and analytical articles;
- identifying the author's main conclusion;
- separating evidence from opinion;
- recognising assumptions;
- summarising paragraphs in one sentence;
- learning vocabulary in context; and
- practising under timed conditions.

The GMAT tests reasoning more than memorisation. Learning long vocabulary lists alone will not be sufficient.

21. How should I prepare for Data Insights?

Data Insights preparation should include:

- reading tables and charts quickly;
- comparing information from different sources;
- working with ratios, percentages and probability;
- distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information;
- practising Data Sufficiency logic;
- using the on-screen calculator efficiently; and
- completing timed sets containing mixed question types.

Candidates should learn to evaluate whether the available information is sufficient—not merely calculate an answer.

22. Can I take the GMAT outside my home country?

Yes. The GMAT is delivered at test centres worldwide and may also be taken online from an eligible private location. Appointments are available throughout the year, subject to local availability.

Before selecting online delivery, applicants should check:

- university acceptance policies;
- equipment and internet requirements;
- room and workspace requirements;
- identification rules; and
- local test availability.

[Official GMAT registration information](#)

23. What identification do international applicants need?

Identification requirements vary by testing location. A valid international passport is required when taking the GMAT outside your country of citizenship.

The identification document must generally:

- be current and government-issued;
- be the original document;
- contain a recognisable photograph and signature; and
- match the name, date of birth and citizenship information used during registration.

Failure to present acceptable identification may result in losing the examination fee. Check the official [GMAT identification requirements](#) before booking.

24. How much does the GMAT cost?

Fees vary according to the country, local taxes and whether the examination is taken at a test centre or online. Current general pricing is approximately:

- **US\$275** for a test-centre appointment;
- **US\$300** for an online appointment.

Country-specific fees may differ. Rescheduling, cancellation and additional score-reporting charges may also apply. Applicants should confirm the exact amount on the official [GMAT payment page](#).

25. When should I take the GMAT?

Ideally, take the examination at least **two to three months before the earliest application deadline**. This provides time to:

- receive the official score;
- evaluate the result;
- prepare for a retake if necessary;
- send scores to programmes; and
- complete the remaining application documents.

Applicants should consider scholarship and early application deadlines, which may be earlier than the final admission deadline.

26. When will I receive my GMAT result?

Unofficial section and Total Scores are displayed immediately after completing the examination. Candidates must not photograph, record or print this screen.

The Official Score Report is normally available through the candidate's mba.com account within **three to five days**, although it may occasionally take longer. The report includes scores, percentile rankings and detailed performance insights. [Official score-report guidance](#)

27. How long is a GMAT score valid?

GMAT scores are valid for **five years**. This allows applicants to take the examination before finalising their university applications.

Candidates should nevertheless check whether a particular business school applies a more restrictive score-age policy.

28. How are scores sent to universities?

Candidates can review their Official Score Report before selecting recipients. The examination fee includes score reports for up to **five programmes**, provided the programmes are selected within 48 hours of the official result becoming available.

After this period, or for additional programmes, a reporting fee applies. Once a report has been sent, the action cannot be reversed. [Sending GMAT scores](#)

29. What is the GMAT Superscore?

For candidates with more than one valid attempt, GMAC automatically calculates a GMAT Superscore using their highest valid section results across different examination attempts.

The Superscore and the contributing section scores, test dates and delivery methods are included in the Official Score Report. Applicants should confirm how each intended business school considers the Superscore in its admissions process.

30. Can I retake the GMAT?

Yes. Candidates must wait at least **16 calendar days** between appointments and may take the GMAT up to **five times in a rolling 12-month period**. Online and test-centre attempts count towards the same limit.

Before retaking, candidates should analyse their performance report and complete targeted preparation. Simply repeating the examination without changing the study strategy is unlikely to deliver a substantial improvement.

31. Is the GMAT a substitute for IELTS or TOEFL?

No. The GMAT measures reasoning, quantitative ability and data literacy. IELTS, TOEFL and similar examinations demonstrate English-language proficiency.

International applicants may need both examinations unless the university grants an English-language exemption.

32. Does a high GMAT score guarantee admission?

No. Business schools normally consider the complete profile, including:

- academic qualifications;

- professional and leadership experience;
- statement of purpose or essays;
- references;
- interview performance;
- English-language proficiency; and
- GMAT results.

A strong result can improve an application and may support scholarship consideration, but it cannot replace all other admission requirements.

33. How can IEC support GMAT applicants?

IEC Edu Consultancy can provide:

- initial profile and diagnostic assessment;
- personalised GMAT preparation planning;
- Quantitative, Verbal and Data Insights support;
- mock examinations and performance analysis;
- MBA and business-school selection;
- CV, essays and application guidance;
- scholarship application support;
- interview preparation; and
- visa and pre-departure guidance.

Call to action:

Planning to apply for an MBA or graduate business programme? Book an initial assessment with IEC Edu Consultancy to evaluate your profile, establish your target GMAT score and create a personalised preparation and application plan.

Important: Examination fees, policies and university requirements may change. Applicants should confirm current information with GMAC and their intended business schools before registering.