

Candidates' Survey Summary

February 2011



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Cambridge Assessment's Admissions Tests team surveyed both candidates and centres in November – December 2009, via an online questionnaire. 1,429 candidates responded out of 11,216 total, giving a response rate of 12.7%.

Selected findings from the survey are summarised below, along with descriptions of the actions taken in response to candidates' needs:

- In terms of where test candidates originally found out about the test, the most-mentioned sources of information were university or UCAS websites/publications, as well as university prospectuses. The centre's careers/HE advisor and university open days were also mentioned by approximately a quarter of respondents. In terms of 'other' responses – 'word of mouth' was strong here, with over 30% finding out about the tests from friends or family members. 11 respondents mentioned the Medlink event.

Action taken: The Admissions Tests team has attended and had information stands at university open days in 2010 wherever feasible. The Admissions Tests team also attended the Medlink exhibition day in December 2010, to inform and advise regarding the BMAT.

- After the candidate has initially found out about the test, their mode of seeking further information is again online, with the admissions tests website being the most mentioned (over 80% of respondents used this to access information) followed by the relevant university's website (35.2%). At this stage in the information-seeking process, the relevant subject teacher and exams officer become more important, in terms of advising the candidate and the practical process of entering them for the test. In terms of 'other' responses – the 'word of mouth' factor was still prevalent, with information being sought from older students or university students who had taken the test, including via online student forums such as The Student Room. A related factor is candidates' usage of The Student Room forums, with over 85% of respondents using this website.

Action taken: The Admissions Tests team continues to work with stakeholder universities and UCAS to ensure the information about Cambridge Assessment's admissions tests is fully up-to-date on their websites. The Student Room online informational campaign 2010, which ran from September – November, had more targeted page impressions and an extra homepage feature, in order to successfully reach candidates using The Student Room forums.

- In preparing for the test, over three-quarters of candidates did practice papers independently, most of which they accessed online. Nearly half had used the 'Preparing for the BMAT' official guide.

Action taken: Two more BMAT past papers were made available for free download on the official admissions tests website. A new, updated edition of 'Preparing for the BMAT: the official guide to the BioMedical Admissions Test' was published in

September 2010 to reflect the change in mark scheme for Section 3 of the test and changes to the National Curriculum (Key Stage 4) Science content.

- Nearly a third of those who took the survey added a comment in the final 'other comments' section. The majority of these comments concerned the freer availability of past papers. There were also comments about BMAT Section 3 needing a specific veterinary medicine-focussed essay question. International students wanted more information available to them, as they had little knowledge of the UK university application process and the part admissions tests played in this.

Action taken: More BMAT past papers have been published on the admissions tests website. A fourth, veterinary medicine-focussed essay question was added to BMAT Section 3 for November 2010. The Admissions Tests team is also looking at further ways in which it can better communicate with overseas test candidates, in addition to the channels and informational materials currently used.

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