THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF THE LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST

AACRAO
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DIRECTOR OF TEST DEVELOPMENT
LSAC

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION COUNCIL

TOPICS COVERED

- Early History of LSAT
- Current Design of LSAT
- Recent Developments within LSAC
- Future Directions of LSAT

EARLY HISTORY OF THE LSAT

- American legal education: post graduate law school
- Admission to law school: prior to 1948, no standard admission test
- Prior to 1948, no reliable way to predict candidate's law school grades

EARLY HISTORY OF THE LSAT

- First administered in 1948
- Promoted access to law schools for those with varied backgrounds
- Understood as a fair, objective measure (as opposed to grades)
- Used in *conjunction* with other criteria

HISTORY, CONTINUED

- Designed from the outset to predict first-year grades in law schools
- Served to “professionalize” legal education
- Created as a test to predict success in law school
  - Measured skills, not background knowledge
  - Designed to measure skills deemed essential for success in law school
  - Did not presuppose knowledge of the law

BASIC SKILLS MEASURED

- Read and understand complex texts with accuracy and insight
- Organize and manage information and draw inferences from it
- Reason critically
- Analyze and evaluate the reasoning and argument of others

DESIGN OF FIRST LSAT

- February, 1948: first operational administration
- 10 sections
- Full day of testing
- 9 types of questions

DESIGN OF FIRST LSAT: QUESTION TYPES

- Sentence Completion
- Paragraphs (Paragraph Reading)
- Word Classification
- Reading Comprehension (2 sections)
- Verbal Analogies
- Figure Classification
- Debates
- Contrary and Irrelevant Statements
- Reasoning

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1948

- Design Evolved
- Significant Dates
- Current Design

THE THREE TYPES OF LSAT QUESTIONS

- Analytical Reasoning (AR)
  - 22-24 questions
    - Set-based: 4 passages; 5-7 questions each
- Logical Reasoning (LR)
  - 2 sections, 24-26 questions each
- Reading Comprehension (RC)
  - 26-28 questions
    - Set-based: 4 passages; 5-8 questions each

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ANALYTICAL REASONING

Assesses the ability to:

- Understand a structure of relationships
- Draw conclusions about that structure
- Determine what follows deductively from a series of constraints

AR QUESTIONS ASSESS THE ABILITY TO ...

- evaluate ordering relationships
- evaluate set or grouping relationships
- evaluate the combination of ordering and grouping relationships
- determine what “can” or “could” be the case based in a set of conditions
- determine what must be the case based on a set of conditions

LOGICAL REASONING

Assesses the ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and draw inferences from short arguments

LR QUESTIONS ASSESS THE ABILITY TO ...

- recognize the conclusion of an argument
- recognize an issue in dispute
- draw reasonable conclusions from given evidence or premises
- identify or apply principles
- identify the structure or method of an argument or chain of reasoning

LR QUESTIONS ALSO …

- detect and identify reasoning errors and misinterpretations
- identify assumptions that are required by an argument or that would allow a conclusion to be drawn from a set of premises
- assess how additional evidence would affect the strength of an argument
- identify explanations and recognize resolutions of conflicting facts or arguments

READING COMPREHENSION

Assesses the ability to read, with understanding and insight, fairly lengthy passages of dense and logically or rhetorically complex prose

RC QUESTIONS ASSESS THE ABILITY TO ...

- recognize the main point in a passage
- recognize what is explicitly said in a passage
- understand the meaning or purpose of words or phrases from their context
- grasp the logical or rhetorical organization and structure of the passage

RC QUESTIONS ALSO …

- draw appropriate inferences from the passage
- extend the information in the passage to new contexts
- draw analogies or principles from a passage
- assess the impact of additional evidence on the information or views in the passage

THE TEST DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- Test specifications developed
- Questions written
- Questions reviewed and edited
- (Surviving) Questions assembled into pretests
- Pretests administered
- Questions/specifications re-evaluated
- Tests assembled and reviewed
- (Tests reassembled as necessary)
- Tests administered
- Tests scored

TEST SPECIFICATIONS

- Blueprint for writing test
- Key to building test specifications is to first answer:
  What is the purpose of the test?
- The answer to this key question will drive many of the decisions, including:
  - What skills/knowledge are to be measured?
  - How are they going to be measured?

LSAC®

TEST SPECIFICATIONS, CONTINUED

- General Test Specifications
  - Number of Questions
  - Number of sections
  - Question format
  - Psychometric/statistical characteristics of Questions
- Detailed Test Specifications
  - Question types to be used and quantity
  - Question subtypes to be used and quantity
  - Subject-matter distributions

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TEST VALIDITY: 4 KINDS

- Construct Validity
- Predictive Validity
- Face Validity
- Consequential Validity

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT LSAC

- LSAC's international mandate
- High-level strategy
- Reach of the LSAT®
- Collaborative projects, including translation experiments
- LSAT—India™
- Auxiliary activities
- Some numbers
- The Future

INTERNATIONAL MANDATE

Board Resolution, December 2007

> "… the Board … authorized management … to make all necessary expenditures … to quickly and thoroughly explore potential business opportunities overseas."
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INTERNATIONAL MANDATE

LSAC Strategic Plan (2010)

Strategic Mission: The Law School Admission Council will be a global leader in promoting innovative assessments, administrative services for schools and students, educational programs, diversity initiatives, and other activities.

Objective: Develop new products and services that produce alternative sources of revenue in order to address price elasticity; uncertain volumes; current challenges to market share; the possibility of paradigm shifts in the economy, legal education, and the legal profession; and other concerns.

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HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGY

First preference: Expanded use of the LSAT

- standard date
- standard test form
- standard online registration
- standard fee
- standard score reporting

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Alternatives: Adaptation

Collaboration

REACH OF THE LSAT

Traditional market has been JD admissions in US and Canada, but there has been recent expansion

- Central European University, Budapest (2001)
- Melbourne University, Australia (2007)
- American University of Armenia (2008)
- Peking University School of Transnational Law, Shenzhen, China (2008)

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Collaboration has occurred in contexts where the primary language is not English

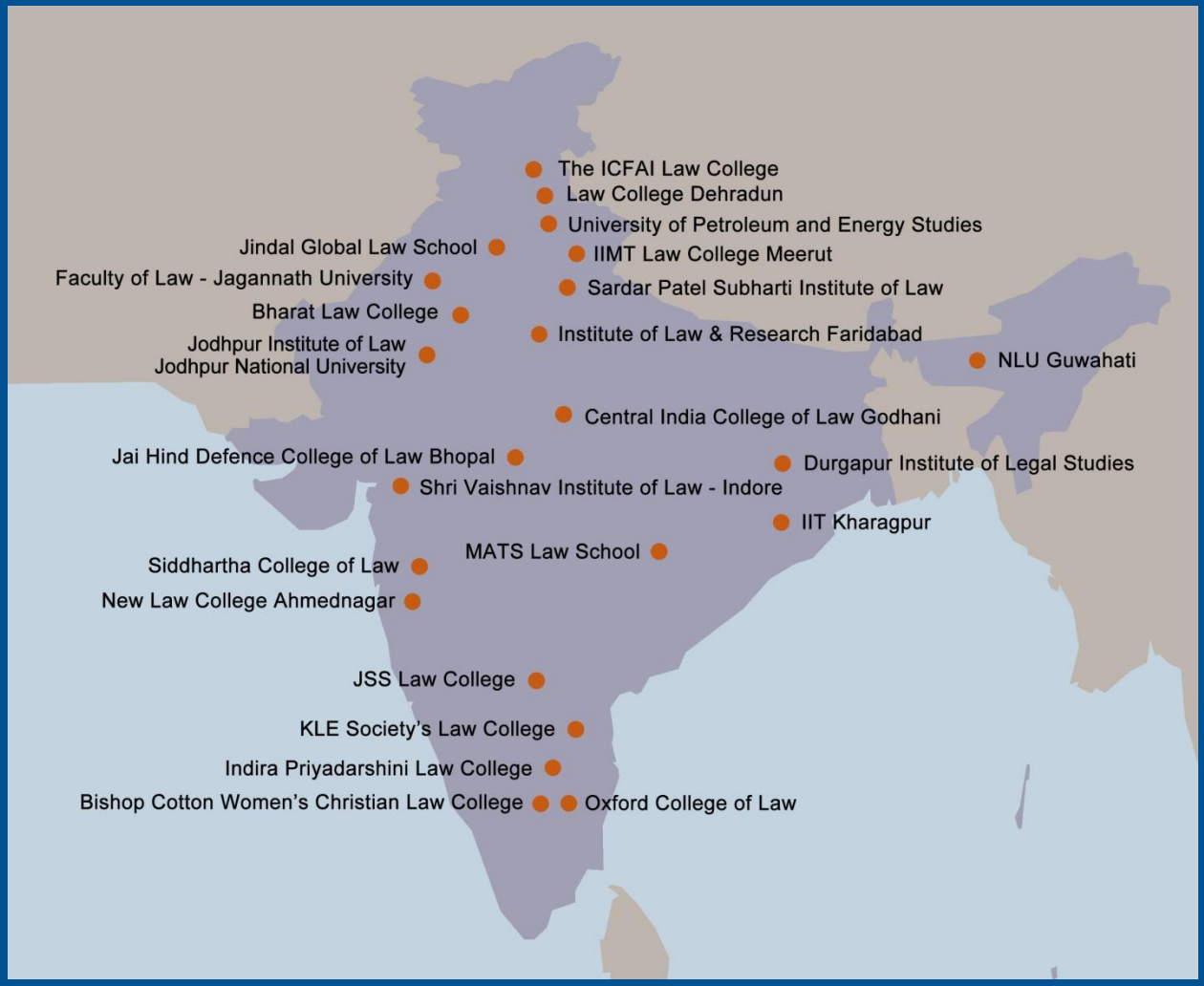
- Japan Law Foundation (2001)
- National Institute of the Magistracy, Romania (2006)
- Korean Association of Law Schools (2010)

LSAT—INDIA™

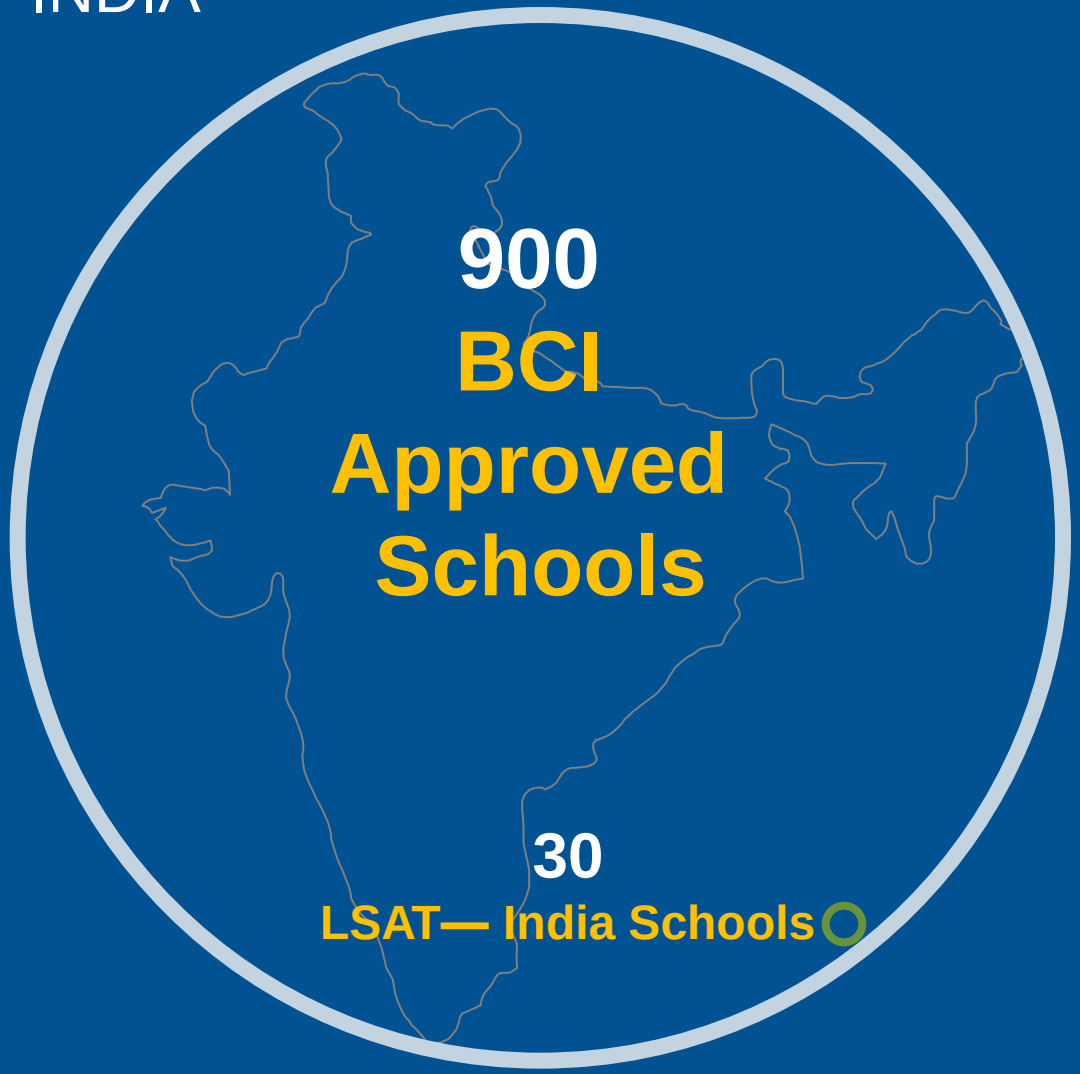
Adaptation of the LSAT, to better fit local context

- Undergraduate and graduate programs, in English
- Operations challenges
- Business-model challenges
- One law school in 2009; five in 2010; 30 in 2011
- Modest adaptation
- Sensitivity reviews
- Marketing challenges
- Lessons learned

LSAT—INDIA™


The ICFAI Law College
Law College Dehradun
University of Petroleum and Energy Studies
Jindal Global Law School
IIMT Law College Meerut
Faculty of Law - Jagannath University
Sardar Patel Subharti Institute of Law
Bharat Law College
Institute of Law & Research Faridabad
Jodhpur Institute of Law
Jodhpur National University
NLU Guwahati
Central India College of Law Godhani
Jai Hind Defence College of Law Bhopal
Durgapur Institute of Legal Studies
Shri Vaishnav Institute of Law - Indore
IIT Kharagpur
MATS Law School
Siddhartha College of Law
New Law College Ahmednagar
JSS Law College
KLE Society's Law College
Indira Priyadarshini Law College
Bishop Cotton Women's Christian Law College
Oxford College of Law

LSAT—INDIA™



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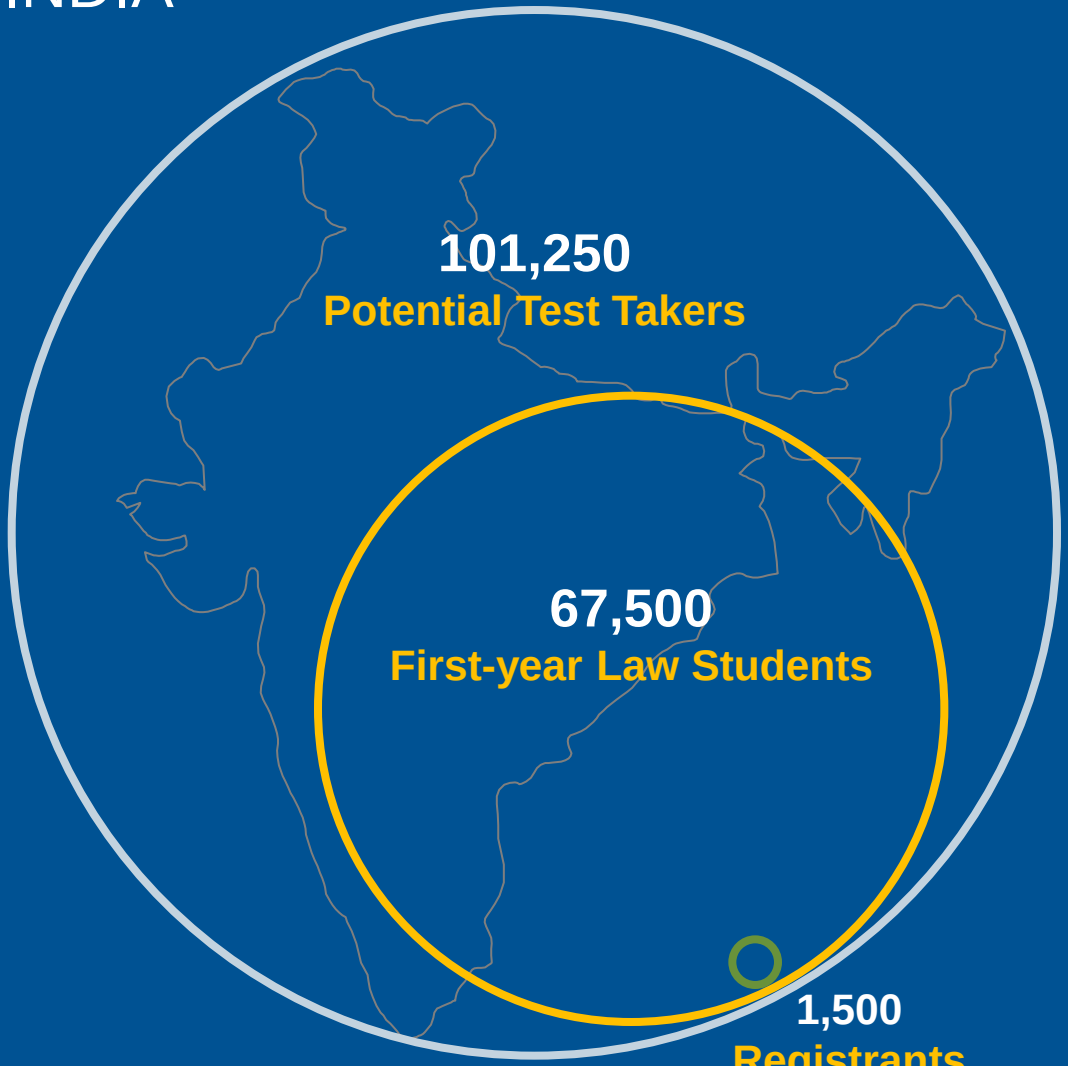
101,250
Potential Test Takers
67,500
First-year Law Students
1,500
Registrants

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY—DELHI

AUXILIARY ACTIVITIES

- Growth in Number of Overseas LSAT Centers (44 to 85)
- EducationUSA and Edu-Canada
- International Association of Law Schools
- NAFSA
- Association of Test Publishers
- International Bar Association

SOME NUMBERS

Relationships with first-year program performance

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Romania					
Eliminatory Test	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.21	
Critical Thinking Test	0.13	0.34	0.38	0.35	
Interview	0.23	0.12	0.21	0.10	
Admission Average	0.20	0.21	0.24	0.36	
CEU (Hungary)					
LSAT	0.35	0.47	0.37		
Peking					
LSAT				0.58	0.54
Writing				0.36	0.31
U.S.A. and Canada					
LSAT	0.34	0.33	0.33	0.34	0.35
Undergraduate Grades	0.28	0.28	0.29	0.29	0.29

THE FUTURE

- Keep our traditional market happy
- Revise the business plan for international activities
- Incorporate international issues into overall strategy discussion
- Be ready for expansion in Australia and China
- Assess the future of the LSAT—India™ (2013)

  Possible evaluation criteria:
  - Financial viability
  - Potential for further growth within India
  - Potential for export to other markets
- Assess other markets