The GMAT launched a new section called “Integrated Reasoning” in June 2012. The idea was to install a part that measures the candidates’ ability to evaluate information from multiple sources.

The GMAT test was introduced for the first time in February 1954, when 1,300 students sat the test. Since then it has gradually asserted itself as a reliable tool for assessing some of the essential skills of business school candidates. It was developed in the previous year by an association of nine schools that later became known as the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). Columbia, Harvard, North-Western, Rutgers, Seton Hall, the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania and Washington University wanted to create a unified entrance examination. At the time, its name was The Admissions Test for Graduate Study in Business and in 1976 it was changed to the Graduate Management Admission Test.

The minimum score that the examinees can receive in the test is 200 and the maximum is 800. However, if they are aiming at reputable schools, the average results of their country or of the institution they apply to should not be taken as a benchmark for good performance.

In 2015, the average score for MBA candidates in the top 11 US schools for highest GMAT score was 715, reported the US News. Stanford came first with 733 points, followed by Wharton with 732, Booth - 726, Harvard - 725, and Kellogg with 724.

**What does the test consist of?**

For candidates to achieve good results, they need to know the test very well. The pre-Next Generation GMAT comprises three parts. The first is Analytical Writing Assessment and it consists of analysis of an argument. The second part is Integrated Reasoning that deals with multi-source reasoning, graphics interpretation, two-part analysis, and table analysis. It also lasts for 30 minutes. Part three and part four of the GMAT are called respectively the Quantitative and Verbal sections and each of them lasts 75 minutes. As the name suggests, the former evaluates one’s quantitative reasoning abilities. There are two types of questions in this section. The first is problem-solving and includes the use of basic mathematical skills and concepts and solving quantitative problems. The second type consists of data-sufficiency questions which measure the candidate’s abilities to analyse quantitative problems, assess the relevance of the information and evaluate whether there is enough information to solve the problem. The verbal section consists of reading comprehension questions and critical reasoning questions.

**What’s the newest part of the GMAT?**

On 5 June 2012, a new section called Integrated Reasoning was integrated into the test. It measures skills in integrating information from different sources, solving problems, interpreting data, evaluating tradeoffs, assessing the likelihood of outcomes and the ability to convert quantitative data between graphic and verbal formats. Candidates have 30 minutes to answer 12 questions in the different areas of Integrated Reasoning. The sections include graphics interpretation, two-part analysis, table analysis, and multi-source reasoning. A calculator is available for candidates in the IR section. The new section is not computer adaptive, meaning that your response to one question does not affect the next question you receive. However, students cannot skip questions or go to a previous screen to change their answers.

GMAC advises candidates to plan to take the exam at least 20 days before any deadline for submitting an Official Score Report.

**Why were the changes adopted?**

Before introducing IR in the GMAC, Ashok Sarathy, vice-president of the GMAT programme, explained the motives behind it: “In a recent survey, 740 academic staff members from management programmes worldwide identified an emerging set of skills that the business community is telling them are, and will continue to be, essential to success on a management and executive level. The schools told us that they needed evidence that incoming students could demonstrate their ability in these emerging skills as the schools themselves began to develop coursework to develop and strengthen them.”
In a business school “you are much more likely to have to analyse an integrated set of data than you are to do a geometry problem,” noted Andrew Mitchell, director of pre-business programmes at Washington Post Co.’s Kaplan Test Prep., quoted by The Wall Street Journal.

The GMAT lasts for 3 hours and 30 minutes, and one of the essays in the analytical writing assessment section (issue analysis) has been scrapped. The Quantitative and Verbal sections remain unchanged, each lasting 75 minutes. IR is 30 minutes long. Again they have scores, as do the Analysis of the Argument essay and Integrated Reasoning. The first break starts after Integrated Reasoning and the second one after the Quantitative section.

The GMAT is the preferred test for entering business schools today. It can be taken in more than 110 countries and at more than 530 centres. The examination is a means to an end: it is only one of the important elements for admission to a good MBA programme. Recently more and more schools waive the GMAT or replace it with another test. However, in the overall picture, it still remains a serious factor for the ultimate success of an MBA application. Enrolment at a business school could lay the foundations for a stable and successful career, and this is indispensable for professional and personal fulfilment.