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### Welcome step for pharmacy graduates

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) will conduct an exclusive Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT) from this year for M.Pharm. admissions to pharmacy institutes across the country. ABDUL LATHEEF NAHA takes a close look at this new initiative.



#### Future perfect: GPAT is likely to help more pharmacy graduates secure MHRD scholarships and fellowships

Students aspiring for Master's programme in Pharmacy (M.Pharm.) have every reason to cheer. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) will conduct an exclusive Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT) from this year for M.Pharm. admissions to pharmacy institutes across the country.

Till last year, the scores of Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineering (GATE) were used for M.Pharm. admissions and for awarding of fellowships and scholarships to pharmacy graduates.

Although the decision of the GATE organising committee to delink pharmacy graduates from it without suggesting any alternative had evoked lots of criticism last year, the announcement of GPAT by the AICTE has brought cheers back on the faces of pharmacy students.

Academicians of this discipline opine that GPAT will help reorient the pharmacy screening for the Master's programme.

"I am sure the entrance test will now be more focused. And the integrity of the pharmacy examination will be upheld," says R. Saraswathy, principal of Al Shifa College of Pharmacy, Perinthalmanna.

Earlier, pharmacy graduates never used not to get the right orientation when they were part of a common pool created by the GATE scores. There were complaints that the questions lacked proper orientation.

Experts point out that the problems aggravated in the past few years with a spurt in pharmacy colleges in the country. At present, as many as 990 pharmacy degree colleges have been recognised by the AICTE. About 700 of them are more than three-years old.

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The AICTE decision to conduct GPAT has come at a time when thousands of pharmacy graduates were facing the problem of undergoing a generic selection process for a specialised programme like M.Pharm. "Therefore, it is definitely a welcome move," says K.G. Revikumar, principal of Amrita School of Pharmacy, Kochi.

AICTE has formed a National Monitoring Committee (NMC) to monitor various issues pertaining to the policy as well as conduct of GPAT examination.

As per the NMC recommendation, AICTE has entrusted the conduct of examination to Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. In the coming years, other centres of excellence for pharmacy like Banaras Hindu University, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Mohali, Delhi Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research (DIPSAR), and B.V. Patel Pharmaceutical Education and Research Development (PERD) Centre, Ahmedabad, are likely to be given the job of conducting GPAT examination.

"Personally, I do not like the idea of entrusting different institutes every year," says Dr. Revikumar. "AICTE ought to do it on its own by devising a foolproof system of its own." The M.S. University of Baroda, the sole authority for the conduct of the examination, will hold GPAT 2010 on May 2. B.Pharm. degree holders and final year students can apply for GPAT 2010. GPAT-2010 will be held in 61 cities across the country. There will be only two centres in Kerala—Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi.

The other examination centres in South India are Chennai, Bangalore, Warangal, Thirupathi, Thiruchirapally, Mangalore, Guntur, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Chidambaram, Visakhapatnam, Vijaywada, and Khammam.

Application forms are available either from the GPAT office at M.S. University, Vadodara, or from designated branches of the Bank of Baroda.

One needs to pay Rs.1,000 for the application form. However, SC/ST and physically challenged candidates need to pay only Rs.500.

They should attach a copy of a certificate proving their eligibility for concession. The three designated Bank of Baroda branches in Kerala are at Pallimukku, MG Road, Kochi ; Kozhencherry, Kozhikode and East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram.

Application forms will be issued until February 20. The last date to submit completed OMR application form is March 18. The GPAT 2010 examination will be held on May 2 along with JAM 2010, the joint admission test for M.Sc. and other post-B.Sc. programmes of IITs. The results will be announced on May 24 evening.

For details and results, candidates can log on to [www.msubaroda.ac.in](http://www.msubaroda.ac.in) or [www.gpat.in](http://www.gpat.in).

#### Aptitude

Pharmacy experts point out that the multiple-choice questions will be meant to evaluate a candidate's aptitude and subject knowledge of pharmacy field, which may involve basic principles, facts, formulae/laws, understanding of the fundamental ideas, and application or drawing observations of the fundamentals of pharmacy discipline. The offline examination will consist of a single paper of three hours duration. There will be 100 questions carrying a maximum of 100 marks. Each question will have four choices for the answer.

There will be negative marking for wrong answers. Each wrong answer will deduct 1/3 (one third) negative marks. GPAT 2010 examination will be similar to that of GATE 2009 examination, where the candidate will mark the correct answer out of four options in an Optical Response Sheet by darkening the appropriate bubble.

Printed GPAT-2010 scorecard will be made available to the qualified candidates in due course of time.

The GPAT-2010 scorecard will consist of actual marks obtained by the candidate (the GPAT-2010 score), percentile score and all India rank (AIR).

Scorecard will be sent only to the qualified candidates. The GPAT- 2010 score would be valid for a year from the date of announcement of the result.

According to Dr. Saraswathy, GPAT is likely to help more number of pharmacy graduates to get MHRD scholarships and fellowships. As per the directives of the MHRD, the candidate is to be selected through interview for postgraduate programmes, minimum 70 per cent weightage is to be given to the GPAT performance and the remaining 30 per cent weightage can be given to the candidate's academic record and performance in interview, with MHRD scholarship.

Most colleges indicate that GPAT qualification is mandatory not only for MHRD scholarships but also for M.Pharm. admission. Although there are about 50,00 M.Pharm. seats all over India, the number of seats in Kerala is less than 100. Only six pharmacy colleges in the State are offering Master's programmes.

The GPAT 2010 syllabus covers such areas as natural products, pharmacology, medicinal chemistry, pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical jurisprudence, pharmaceutical analysis, biochemistry, microbiology, and clinical pharmacy.

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