

Options for UG admissions (May 1st, 2012)

The committee appointed by Chairman, Senate, to come up with a proposal for JEE reforms had submitted its preliminary report on 17th April, 2012. The report suggested a large number of options, which were broadly classified into three groups. These three classes were:

1. Exclusive use of ISEET for admission.
2. Exclusive use of JEE for admission.
3. Combined use of ISEET and JEE for admission.

The committee requested Senate to provide guidelines on what options should this committee pursue for its final proposal. During the discussion in the Senate, there were divergent views about these options. However, it appeared that the preference was to continue JEE for UG admissions in 2013, and starting next year (2014), using ISEET as a screening test, followed by a changed format of JEE for a smaller number of candidates.

Since the views were divergent, and also Senate desired to get an input from all faculty members and students, it was decided that two discussions be organized – one with all faculty, and the other with all the students. Only after these views are also presented to Senate, would it take a final decision on what should be submitted to IIT Council.

One formal meeting of the committee (and several invitees) was held on 27th April. However, due to exams and grading, not many members could attend. Hence this document is not a formal document from the committee. The Convener of the committee has prepared this document based on inputs in the meeting of 27th, and several other inputs on email, phone and individual meetings. So, even though, attempt has been made to include views of all committee members, it cannot be claimed to represent the collective views of the committee. A formal document will be prepared after the open house, and submitted to Senate for its next meeting on 5th May, 2012.

JEE 2013

The Joint Entrance Examination should take place in 2013 largely in the same format as has been happening in recent years. Any minor change can and should be done by the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) and Joint Admissions Board (JAB), as has been happening from time to time.

However, the committee suggests one change regarding the eligibility based on 12th class board marks. Currently, that eligibility stands at 60 percent and 55 percent, depending on the category of the student. Senate may consider suggesting that the eligibility condition be made higher, and be based on a normalized score (like percentile). To the extent a higher focus on 12th class board performance will impact school education, increasing the

eligibility condition in this way will have the same impact (though perhaps to a different degree).

However, this should be considered only if we can get complete data from all boards in 2012, which enables us to study the normalized marks of all JEE selected candidates in 2012. If such data can not be made available in 2012, then this change should not be considered for 2013.

In case complete data can be obtained at least for all selected candidates, JEE could look at the percentile scores of all selected candidates in a particular category. It should then find out the lowest percentile score amongst all selected candidates, and then decide the 2013 percentile cutoff for that category to be marginally higher. The eligibility based on 12th class marks should not be so low that every one selected in JEE is guaranteed to be above that cutoff. At the same time, it should not be so high that a good student selected by JEE should fall prey to the poor-quality grading by the boards.

The committee also suggests another significant change in terms of counseling. At the time of admission, the student should be admitted to the Institute, and not to a specific program. It has been felt that it is not fair to assign programs based on an exam where 50 to 100 students may get different ranks on the same total score. The “error margin” is just too high to justify such fine grained counseling. The Institute should try to convince other IITs through JAB of not allocating programs at the time of admission. However, if all IITs do not agree to this, IIT Kanpur should still go ahead and do it for students admitted to IIT Kanpur. This would continue to be the case in the new model of admission from 2014 onwards.

Combined use of ISEET and JEE from 2014 onwards

The committee felt that the following process could be used starting 2014:

1. JEE shall be held around 15th May in each year.
2. For JEE 2014, there will be two screening tests: ISEET held in Nov/Dec 2013, and ISEET held in April, 2014.
 - a. However, April, 2014 ISEET will be a screening test, only if the result of this test is guaranteed to be declared by 30th April, 2014. JIC and JAB will monitor ISEET in April 2013 to decide whether it can be trusted that the results will indeed be available on 30th April.
 - b. While in the steady state, the number of candidates allowed to give JEE should be about 5 times the number of seats available in the IIT system, in the first year (2014), the number of candidates should be about 10 times the total number of seats. This is to ensure that we are not missing out on good students due to some issues with ISEET that we cannot predict as of

now. Once, ISEET has established itself, and we have studied correlation between ISEET selections and JEE selections, and if we notice that most of our selections are from higher ranks in ISEET, JIC/JAB can decide to slowly decrease the number of candidate screened for JEE, and if everything goes smoothly, we shall reach a steady state of JEE candidates being five times the number of seats within IIT system.

- c. The number of candidates screened from two ISEETs will be in proportion to the number of candidates sitting for the two exams. However, if ISEET comes up with a standardized score, where by the performance of multiple exams can be compared; a cutoff based on this standardized score may be decided.
3. A student is eligible to give JEE twice, once in the year of passing 12th class, and second, in the year following the year of passing 12th class. A student who is screened by ISEET in the year of passing 12th class, will not need to give ISEET the next year, and will be able to give JEE again.
4. The rank of the candidate will be based solely on the basis of performance in JEE.
5. As proposed for JEE 2013, the eligibility in terms of board performance should be in terms of normalized score (percentile) and should be kept high enough that the candidates are required to pay some attention to the board exams, but not so high that poor grading practices of the board could cause harm to an otherwise good student. The exact cut-off will have to be determined by starting with a liberal cutoff, studying the data over the first few years, and if data permits, slowly making the eligibility condition tighter.
6. Since JEE will be held for a smaller number of candidates (maximum 1 lakh as opposed to 5-6 lakh currently), it will allow IIT system to do it in a very different way. In particular, it would be possible to include questions which require a descriptive answer, as opposed to MCQ based test that we currently have.
7. While IITs should determine the number of candidates based on the intake of IIT system, if others (including other CFTIs) want to admit students from JEE, the results will be made available to them.
8. IIT Kanpur should provide all necessary help and expertise to make ISEET a high-quality national test.

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