



The HPAT – an Introductory Guide

The HPAT-Ireland examination is a test of general reasoning ability and is designed to provide a measure of your aptitude for the study of medicine. HPAT-Ireland is not based on learned material, on curriculum content or on the study of particular subjects. It tests your ability to understand and respond to a set of questions and scenarios. Universities in the Republic of Ireland combine your HPAT-Ireland score with your Leaving Certificate points, and the total determines whether you are successful in your application to study medicine. The maximum score for Leaving Certificate students applying for Medicine has now been amended to 560 points. The following table equates the old points system with the new, in the wake of the introduction of the HPAT-Ireland examination.

HPAT Leaving Cert Points comparison Table

Leaving Cert Points	Leaving Cert Points - Applying to Medicine
545	545
550	550
555	551
560	552
565	553
570	554
575	555
580	556
585	557
590	558
595	559
600	560

We know that the HPAT-Ireland exam is a new challenge. It is important that you are as well-prepared as possible, and develop your thinking style and test-taking strategies in the lead-up to the exam in order to perform to your potential on the day. It is equally important, however, to remember that while 560 points are available from the Leaving Certificate, only 300 points are theoretically available from the HPAT-Ireland exam. In reality, those candidates who scored 200 and above in the 2009 and 2010 HPAT-Ireland exams were placed in the top 1-2% of all candidates in the country. For this reason the Leaving Certificate remains a cornerstone of any application to study undergraduate medicine. Most students can enhance their HPAT-Ireland test score to a certain extent with effective preparation, but for most the level of improvement will be limited by their



inherent abilities. In contrast, there really is no substitution for consistent, structured study throughout the Leaving Certificate cycle to maximise one's points tally. The message is clear: those who spend excessive amounts of time preparing for the HPAT-Ireland exam to the detriment of their Leaving Certificate studies may undermine their efforts to secure a place in undergraduate medicine. For this reason, it is vital that the Leaving Certificate remains your top priority, and that you do not allow your HPAT-Ireland preparations jeopardise your Leaving Certificate performance.

The purpose of this article is to introduce you to some of the question styles you may expect to be confronted with in the exam, and provide you with practical tips on how to approach questions.



HOW HPAT IS STRUCTURED & WHAT EACH AREA MEASURES

Section 1 – Logical Reasoning and Problem Solving: 44 questions to be answered in 65 minutes.

Section 2 – Interpersonal Understanding: 36 questions to be answered in 45 minutes.

Section 3 – Non-Verbal Reasoning: 30 questions to be answered in 40 minutes.

All questions are in multiple choice format with four or five possible responses. There is only one correct answer for each question asked.

A guide to answering the different types of questions in the HPAT

It is essential to note that in each of the following examples we provide a useful approach method. Of course, you may have alternate methods that are more effective for you. Methods presented in this article are designed to help you in your performance but are not to be taken as the exclusive way to interact with each question type.

Ultimately, you should adopt the approach that works best for you.



Section 1 – Logical Reasoning and Problem Solving

These questions assess your ability to identify relevant facts, analyse information, identify omitted / supplementary information, create and evaluate possible hypotheses, and infer rational conclusions.

Example 1

The following question type tests your numerical understanding and ability to read data, graphs and charts. Questions of this style vary in their level of difficulty, ranging from those that simply require you to add numbers in a table, to more difficult questions involving percentages and averages.

Sample Test Question:

Frequency Pupils Eat in School Cafeteria	Percentage of Pupils
Never	6%
Once every three months	5%
Once a month	10%
Once every two weeks	8%
Once a week	11%
Several times per week	28%
Every day (5 times per week)	32%

According to this table which of the following is true:

- A** On average, pupils eat in the cafeteria 8 times per month.
- B** 89% of the pupils eat in the cafeteria at least once every three months.
- C** 71% of the pupils eat at least four times per month in the cafeteria.
- D** Less than 11% of the pupils eat 12 times or less per year in the cafeteria.

Option A: The table does not give sufficient information to determine the average number of times pupils eat in the cafeteria, so it can be discarded.



Option B: The percentage of students that eat in the cafeteria at least once every three months is $(5+10+8+11+28+32) = 94\%$, not 89%. So B can be discarded.

Option C: The percentage of students that eat in the cafeteria at least four times per month is $(11+28+32) = 71\%$. So C is correct.

Option D: The percentage of students that eat in the cafeteria 12 times or less per year is $(10+5+6) = 21\%$, which is more than 11%. So D can be discarded.

Example 2 - Verbal Reasoning

The following question type tests whether or not you are able to extract important information from a short piece of text. Again, questions vary in their difficulty - some are quite straightforward whereas others are very technical or subject-specific. It is important that you quickly absorb all the information and draw logical conclusions from the information provided.

Sample Test Question

High levels of dioxins in goats are caused by neglect during the production of goat feed. Recent studies have shown that if proper care is taken, the risk of dioxins finding their way into goat feed is close to zero. However, if the production process is unsupervised, certain risks exist which are a possible danger to the health of the whole population.

This information indicates that:

- A** Goats are the sole transmitter of dioxins.
- B** We should avoid drinking goats' milk.
- C** A danger to our health only exists if goat feed has been prepared improperly.
- D** The whole population is at risk because of the high levels of dioxins found in goats.

The answer is C.

It has to be answer C, as neither A, B or D are supported by the information provided in the text.



Section 2: Interpersonal Understanding

This section tests your ability to perceive beliefs, emotions, motivations and reactions of other people from a short text or conversational piece.

This section requires a mix of verbal comprehension and interpretation of matters of a personal or human nature. While the items seek to identify your ability to understand various human situations, they are still constructed in such a way that the information required to answer a question correctly is always provided, but in some cases will be phrased in different ways.

Note: Although there is only one correct answer to any given question, you should make sure you check all alternatives in the interpersonal understanding section as there may sometimes be two or three options that make sense in the context of the piece. In these instances you must ensure you select the most appropriate option!

Sample Test Question

The following conversation is between a father and a child whose wife/mother has just passed away. The child was very close to his mother.

Child: Why did mother have to leave?

Father: Your mother did not make that decision; it was made for her.

Child: I think she didn't love me.

Father: She loved you more than anything in the world. You have to understand that she did not choose to leave this world.

Child: With mother gone, I feel lonely. You are always working now and are never home.

Father: I have to work more, now that we only rely on one salary. I know this isn't an easy time for you, but if I want to take care of you I have to work more.

Child: If you want to take care of me, you should stay at home with me.



1 What best describes the father's reaction to his child's criticism of him not being at home?

- A** Defensive
- B** Hurt
- C** Aggressive
- D** Insecure

2 Who is the child most likely to blame for the passing away of his mother?

- A** His dad
- B** His mother
- C** Himself
- D** Everyone else

Answer 1:

The answer is A – Defensive. The father says "I have to work more, now that we only rely on one salary. I know this is not an easy time for you, but if I want to take care of you I have to work more." It should be clear that this reaction to the child's criticism would not be best described as hurt, aggressive or insecure. He immediately goes on the defensive and even backs his reasoning up. The best-fit answer is A.

Answer 2:

The answer is C – himself. If you look at the third line of the conversation, the reasoning behind this answer becomes clear. The child states that he believes that his mother did not love him, and sees this as a legitimate reason for her departure.

In the text, the child does not blame the loss of his mother on her or anyone else. The dad is only blamed for not being at home, not for the mother's death.

Section 3: Non-Verbal reasoning

There are three different question types in Section 3: Next in Series, Missing Segment, and Middle of Sequence. All three involve a similar approach.

You would not come across these question types on a regular basis in a school setting, and they can appear quite abstract. Some students are able to approach these questions intuitively; for many others it is important have a practical, methodical method.

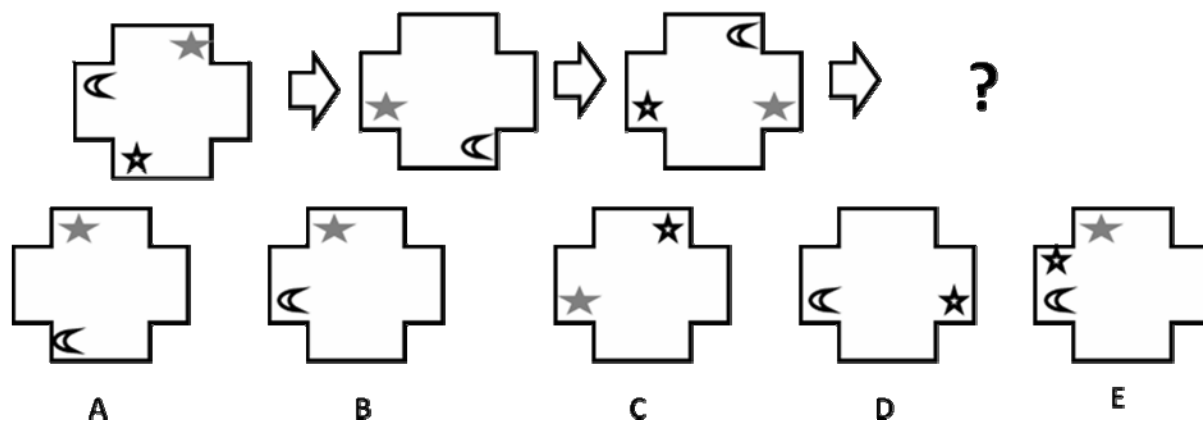
In each question type, the answer is found by identifying rules or patterns that put the elements into a coherent sequence. Once you have identified these it is straightforward to derive the correct answer.

The approach we suggest is to: 1) quickly identify what rules or patterns are present in the sequence, then 2) test the rules against the answer options to see which one fits logically.

Next in the series

This type of non-verbal reasoning question requires you to work out the item that follows a certain sequence and rule. There are two question styles in this part of section 3. The first involves a series of four items, with the fourth item missing; the second involves a series of five items with the fifth item missing. You have five answer options (A to E).

Example:



The answer is B.

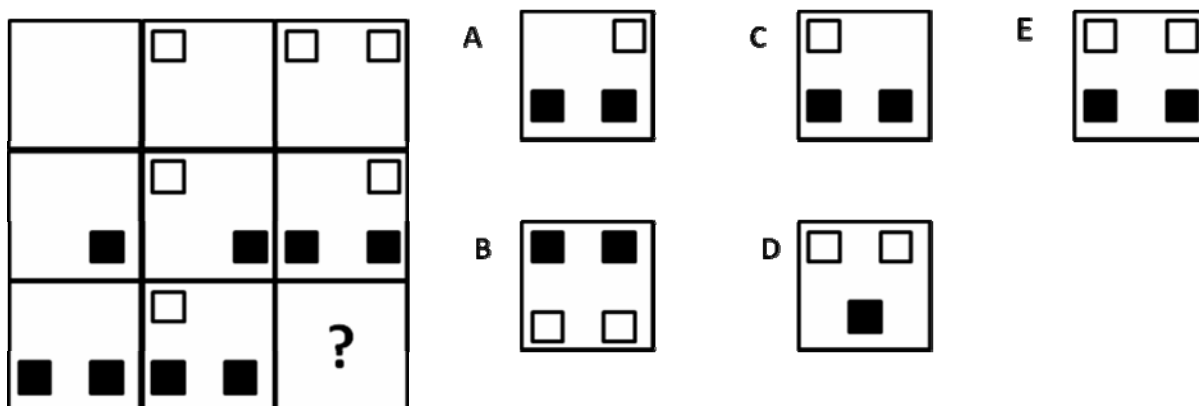
Once you have identified the rule the answer becomes clear. In each successive step, the moon shape and the grey star move three corners anticlockwise. The white star disappears every second step.

Because the white star should be absent in step 4, you can immediately rule out C, D and E. You can also rule A out because the moon moves four corners anticlockwise, which breaks our pre-established rules.

Missing Segment

This type of question requires you to figure out the rules or follow a pattern that connects the items, then apply the rules or pattern to the answer options and select that option that follows the rules/pattern.

Example:



In the above example, the first rule is established by looking across the rows from left to right or down the columns from top to bottom - one square is added in each step. Thus, there must be four squares in our answer. This immediately rules out A, C and D.

The second rule is revealed in the colour pattern in the puzzle – white squares are always on top, while black squares are always on the bottom. The answer is E, as it is the only option that satisfies both rules.

More information on HPAT Preparation and The Institute of Education HPAT course is available at

www.ioe.ie