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IIMs change eligibility criteria, aspirants hit

Charu Sudan Kasturi

Studying at the bedside of his parents as they both battle cancer, 25-year-old Dipesh Kaien secured a 99.27 percentile in the 2010 Common Admission Test (CAT), the entrance examination conducted by the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). That places him in the top 1% of IIM aspirants, but he's not eligible for the next steps in the admissions process — group discussion (GD) and personal interview (PI). Neither are dozens of others.

After the CAT results were released last month, four of the B-schools changed the eligibility criteria while the remaining six used norms that were hidden till then.

Though the CAT prospectus clearly stipulated 50% marks in the bachelor's degree as the eligibility requirement, the four new IIMs in Shillong, Rohtak, Trichy, Raipur are using a 65% score in the bachelor's degree as their minimum eligibility criteria.

The six older IIMs — Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Lucknow, Indore and Kozhikode —are screening students for the GD and PI based on a weightage they are assigning to CAT scores, class X, XII and degree marks.

While the B-schools had said they would consider parameters other than CAT scores, the often decisive weightages given to these criteria were only disclosed after the CAT 2010 results were released last month.

An exact count of the number of students affected is difficult because each IIM employs different rules.

"I have lost out because of the weightage given to school and bachelor's degree scores. Had I known the criteria they would use, I would not have wasted a year of my life, apart from money, to prepare for CAT," said Kaien, who is planning to file a public interest litigation in the Supreme Court.

IIM Ahmedabad Dean HS Jajoo, however, argued that at least the older IIMs had not changed any criteria after the exam.

"I sympathise with the students, but there has been no change in criteria employed by us," Jajoo told