

How to crack PI-WAT: “It’s all about maintaining your calm and staying confident,” says Sakshi Khurana of Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon

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Updated On: 06 Mar 2018 11:21 AM IST



How to crack PI-WAT: Personal Interview (PI) and Written Ability Test (WAT) carry almost equal or sometimes even more weightage than the entrance exam itself when it comes to admissions in well-known B-schools in India. So, knowing how to deal with these two selection rounds is very crucial. Sakshi Khurana, an MBA student at [Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon](#), shares her PI-WAT experience to help the management aspirants who are gearing up to appear for PI-WAT. She believes that since this is a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous world, it is essential to be updated thoroughly to survive the cut-throat competition. In this interview with Careers360, she talks about her preparation strategy and how she managed to tackle the questions thrown at her during her PI round at the institute. She believes that as WAT preparations require a focused approach, it is very important that you possess

good knowledge along with a strict timeline practice. An ardent traveller who has been on many international trips, Sakshi enjoyed answering the questions pertaining to her hobbies and also mentions that some questions when asked, help the candidate to pave the path and add value to the discussion and one should have a knack for picking up such moments.

Careers360- What is the selection procedure at Great Lakes Institute, Gurgaon?

Sakshi- Selection procedure at Great Lakes is very structured and organized. The process started by filling a common application form for both the campuses (i.e. Gurgaon & Chennai). Great Lakes accepts [CAT/GMAT/XAT/CMAT](#) scores. The applications are screened and call letters are sent to the shortlisted candidates who are then called for the Personal Interview round. The interview round comprises of an Essay writing followed by PI. The student is judged on her/ his overall profile which is based on 10th, 12th marks, bachelor's degree along with prior work experience. Once the process is complete the results are announced within 2 weeks.

Careers360- What was your overall experience of attending the selection procedure at Great Lakes?.

Sakshi- The overall experience of the selection procedure at Great Lakes I must say was an amazing journey for me. Right from filling the application form till getting the final call. I applied for both the campuses of Great Lakes. The mail updates regarding the application form were shared as per the prescribed time schedule. The essay writing process which is also called as Written Ability Test (WAT) was not only a test for writing skills but also for time management skills. This was the most tedious and gruelling part of the process for me. WAT was followed by the PI round where two senior professors took my interview. It was very well organized and the entire process was wrapped up by lunchtime. The kind of efforts put in by me created a tremendous impact and paved the journey for me to be here at Great Lakes, Gurgaon.

Careers360- Which other B-Schools' selection procedure did you appear for? How was your experience in other institutes vis a vis in your institute?

Sakshi- I also appeared for selection procedure at **S P Jain School of Global Management**. The PI was taken by alumni at SPJ-GM, however, at Great Lakes, the interview was taken by professors. The process at SP Jain took an entire day. There was a very long waiting time for the interview. On the other hand, the entire process was wrapped up in the first half at Great Lakes.

Also, one unique thing that Great Lakes did is, that on the PI day, before the process starts the students are addressed by a senior faculty of Great Lakes, who attends to all students queries and informs them about the programmes, faculty, placements, campus life etc.

Careers360- What about your WAT topic? How difficult or easy would you say your topic was?

Sakshi- There were 3 topics given from different fields which included technology, politics and business. One of the three topics had to be selected and written within specified word limit in a span of 20 minutes. My topic for WAT was "The importance of payment banks post demonetization". The essay was supported by facts along with the source from where the data was collected. The major difficulty was the time crunch. It was a cumbersome task to gather all thoughts and present in a well-knit form in such a short span of time. But I guess, that is the purpose of the test, to judge how well the candidates are able to articulate their thoughts and present them in a limited time period.

Careers360- How did you prepare for WAT? When did you start your preparations for PI-WAT rounds?

Sakshi- For WAT, I had gone through the last 6 month newspapers and read current affairs thoroughly. Apart from this, I also read about the latest technologies changing the world like SMAC, IoT, Big Data, Cloud etc. I started preparing six months in advance for the PI-WAT rounds. As I believe that, this is a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world and it is essential to be updated thoroughly to survive the cut-throat competition.

Careers360- Do you think that a separate preparation strategy is required for WAT?

Sakshi- Yes, WAT preparation requires a focused approach. We need to be updated with current affairs at the same time understand how to structure the information we possess and represent it in a form of a story. The preparation strategy should also include the time barrier so that the thoughts can be penned down within the stipulated time. Hence, good knowledge along with strict timeline practice would help to achieve better results.

Careers360- Please share the WAT topics which you were asked during the admission rounds last year?

Sakshi- The topics I got for WAT were as follows:

- The importance of payment banks post demonetization
- The current state of Indian Economy
- The technological innovation "Electric Cars"

Careers360- How should one tackle a WAT topic, if s/he does not have any knowledge about it?

Sakshi- One should select the most general topic if s/he is clueless how to proceed. Try to define the topic given in the essay and mould a story with your viewpoints.

Also, adding some facts and statistical data always help to get an edge over others in essay writing.

Careers360- What must be the approach, Dos and Don'ts for WAT?

Sakshi- The possible Do's and Dont's for WAT according to me are

Do's

- The essay should be well structured, with an introduction, body and conclusion
- Should be supported by facts, data and examples
- Correct use of sentence and grammar
- Build a story, to mesmerize the reader
- Review (proof-read) before submission

Don'ts

- Don't write too long and complicated sentences. Keep it short and sweet.
- Slang words and jargons should be avoided
- Prevent repetition of ideas
- Don't exceed the word limit

Careers360- Do you think there are some time management skills required for a student to write a complete structured WAT?

Sakshi- Time management is the key skill which is tested during the Writing Ability Test, it is essential that one learns how to work under pressure, gather all thoughts and structure them well. Hence, essay writing should be practiced with a time limit to avoid stress on the D-day.

Careers360- Could you share your PI experience with us? How big was the panel and what were your feelings while facing them?

Sakshi- The interview process was to check the overall personality and confidence of a candidate. The questions were concentrated more towards the past work experience, hobbies and aspirations. In my view, personal interviews can be quite a challenge as you don't know what questions will be thrown at you, at the same time, getting through a PI also makes us more confident. Speaking about my experience at Great Lakes, I was grilled by the panel about my past work experience. The panel comprised of two professors and facing them was a tough task as they were counter questioning all my responses. So, I believe that PI is all about maintaining your calm, staying confident and giving credible answers.

Careers360- Among all the interviews you have appeared in, which one was the best and why? Share your best PI experience with us.

Sakshi- The best interview till date has to be my interview for placement. After going through the curriculum at Great Lakes, I have gained more self-confidence. I was not at all nervous during my interview and because of this, I was able to perform outstandingly. As the role was related to Sales, I had to sell so many things during my interview ranging from a paper to an iPhone. But the spontaneity with which I could answer made me realize that I had become a different person who is full of confidence and can convince others quite skilfully.

Careers360- What were the questions which you found most difficult to answer? What were your answers to those questions?

Sakshi- During my selection process at Great Lakes, I was asked why I didn't try to go abroad for higher studies despite having such good academic scores. It was difficult to

answer this question; however, as there was so much uncertainty after the new government came to power in the USA, I chose to base my answer on the same background. I answered by saying, it was my dream to study in The United States but as there is a huge turmoil and unexpected things happening, I decided to study in India. Given, that by studying PGPM at Great Lakes I will be able to complete my MBA within a year, I was confident of my decision.

Careers360- What was the panel reaction to questions you had no answer to?

Sakshi- Fortunately, that was not the case. But if I were to face such a scenario, I think it would be best to say, I don't know about this event or I do not have much interest in this area hence lack knowledge for the same. As it becomes very easy for the interviewer to catch you if you beat around the bush and this may increase the chances of elimination.

Careers360- What were the most interesting questions you were asked? Please share your answers as well.

Sakshi- The question related to hobbies was most interesting. Travelling is one of my hobbies and I was thrilled to answer as I have already travelled to many countries like Italy, UK, Switzerland, Germany, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau and so on. I was happy to share the same. Hence, some questions when asked to help us to pave the path and add value to the discussion. We should have a knack for picking up such moments.

Careers360- How did you prepare yourself for your PI session? What were the PI questions that you searched for during your preparations?

Sakshi- I prepared for my PI by brushing upon all the things that I had done in the past and had mentioned in my resume. It is essential to be well-versed with your CV as it is the first point of contact for the other person to know about you.

Careers360- What factors or qualities, you think the PI panel looks for in a candidate?

Sakshi- Confidence - the ability of a candidate to convince the panel with the answers.

- Communication skills are judged in PI.
- Passion - you should love what you do for success.
- Ideas - candidate should come up with good ideas.
- Body Language – Panel also observes the body language of the person to understand the credibility of a person.