

Education cos knock on IIM doors for CAT deal

Pearson VUE, Eduquity Career Technologies, MeritTrac & Aptech Eyeing \$40-M Contract If Prometric Tie-Up Is Cancelled

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EDUCATION companies who organise online exams for various universities have started knocking on IIMs' doors hoping to land the contract to run the annual CAT exams if the current deal with Prometric is cancelled.

Pearson VUE, Eduquity Career Technologies, MeritTrac and Aptech are among those who have shown interest in bagging this high profile \$40 million contract. Some of the companies have informally approached IIM, while others are waiting to see the outcome of the review that IIMs are conducting of Prometric's performance this year.

The annual CAT exams saw a number of glitches when it was organised on an online basis for the first time this year. US-based Prometric, which was organising the exams in association with Delhi-based NIIT, has been sharply criticised for its poor handling.

"We are having informal discussions with IIMs and presenting them our capabilities," said a person from one of the testing company who did not wish to be quoted. "Even though this exam was conducted on a large scale, we believe we would have done better than Prometric," said a person who participated in the bid last year for the contract. Companies such as Pearson VUE, Eduquity Career Technologies and Aptech were among other bidders chasing the contract when it was awarded to Prometric.

Officials familiar with online CAT said that IIMs may cancel the contract with Prometric and float a new tender, but they are under great pressure to start from the scratch again. "Floating a new tender and selecting a new player is a long process of 8-10 months, IIMs may shorten this period," said a person familiar with the matter.

Sources also said that IIMs may consider other option of continuing the contract with Prometric and switch to a



new player for 2011 CAT. "They may tell Prometric to change its partner NIIT for 2010 CAT, which was given majority chunk of the work," said another person. There are several large-scale exams in the country that have migrated

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from off-line to online successfully. Eduquity Career Technologies said that it successfully conducted test for 1,25,000 candidates during a window period of 20-22 working days. "We have also conducted similar exams for

organisations such as HAL in which around 48,000 candidates appeared," an Eduquity official said.

MeritTrac recently launched 'Pariksha,' an integrated examinations service, capable of administering over 1,50,000 online tests in a single day across the country. The company said that technology platform is supported by a network of 50,000 testing terminal in 185 cities across India.

Around 23,000 candidates successfully appeared for the Gujarat Common Entrance Test (GCET 2009) conducted by testing company MeritTrac and Gujarat Technological University (GTU) over a period of four days said GTU registrar NN Bhuptani. "We simulated the exam and did very rigorous checks in advance dealing with areas such as the load capacity, networking, connectivity to internet and sanitised computers against any virus threat," he said.

Manipal and BITS Pilani have also been conducting online entrance ex-

ams for around one lakh students since 2005. Dr GK Prabhu, registrar of Manipal University said that they did not go for large number of students initially.

Instead, they first experimented these tests on their post graduate students who are relatively low in number and then scaled it up by conducting exams for undergraduate students. The online exam for the under graduate students is completed in a period of 45 days and empty slots are kept in advance, in case the students miss the examination. "I also monitor the online tests, while they are being held by getting real time videos from various centres through a dedicated network," Dr Prabhu said. Manipal claimed that its online entrance exam achieved a zero per cent failure rate for exams spread across in 20 cities over 40 days.

Pearson said there is a silent period one week before any online test, in which mock tests are conducted in various centres.

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