

Trends and Patterns of Student Enrolment in B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc. Programmes in Assam: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of a state. In Assam, the pattern of admission into undergraduate courses has undergone substantial changes due to changing career aspirations, economic opportunities, educational policies, and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This study examines and compares the trends in admission seeking among students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.), and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) courses in Assam. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, admission statistics, research publications, and newspaper reports. The findings indicate that B.A. continues to attract the largest share of students, while B.Com. has experienced moderate growth and B.Sc. admissions have shown fluctuations influenced by professional and technical education opportunities. The study highlights the factors affecting students' preferences and suggests measures for improving enrolment quality across disciplines.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Undergraduate Admission, B.A., B.Com., B.Sc., Assam, Student Enrolment, NEP 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental instrument for human development and economic progress. The undergraduate stage serves as a bridge between school education and professional careers. In Assam, higher education has expanded considerably during the last decade with the establishment of new colleges, universities, and the adoption of digital admission systems.

Traditionally, undergraduate education in Assam has been dominated by three major streams:

1. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
2. Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.)
3. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)

The introduction of the Assam State Higher Education Admission Portal (SAMARTH) and the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) under NEP 2020 has transformed admission procedures. Recent admission statistics reveal significant differences in student preferences among these streams. Arts continues to dominate enrolment, while Commerce and Science attract comparatively fewer students.

Understanding these trends is essential for policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders to plan academic programmes and resource allocation effectively.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Examine the trends in admissions to B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc. courses in Assam.
2. Compare enrolment patterns among the three streams.
3. Identify factors influencing students' choice of courses.
4. Analyze recent changes brought by NEP 2020 and online admission systems.
5. Suggest measures for balanced growth in undergraduate education.

3. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

Sources of Data

The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from:

- Directorate of Higher Education, Assam

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- Assam State Higher Education Admission Portal (SAMARTH)
- Research journals and published articles
- Government reports
- Newspaper reports and educational statistics

4. Period of Study

The study focuses primarily on admission trends during the last decade, with particular emphasis on developments after 2020.

5. Hypothesis for the Study

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference in the admission trends among B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc. undergraduate courses in Assam.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant difference in the admission trends among B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc. undergraduate courses in Assam.

6. Overview of Higher Education in Assam

Assam possesses one of the largest higher education networks in Northeast India. According to the Directorate of Higher Education, Assam has witnessed steady growth in colleges, universities, and student enrolment over the years. The state's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and access to higher education have improved significantly.

The implementation of digital admission systems and fee-waiver schemes has encouraged greater participation in higher education. Nearly 95,000 students benefited from free admission schemes in Arts, Science, and Commerce streams in recent years.

7. Trends in B.A. Admissions

7.1. Dominance of Arts Stream

The Bachelor of Arts programme remains the most preferred undergraduate course in Assam. Several factors contribute to its popularity:

- Lower cost of education
- Wide availability of colleges
- Diverse subject choices
- Preparation for government jobs and competitive examinations
- Accessibility for rural students

Admission statistics from Assam indicate that Arts attracts a significantly larger proportion of students compared to Science and Commerce. In higher secondary admissions, nearly three-fourths of students opted for Arts, reflecting the continued popularity of humanities-related disciplines.

Similarly, undergraduate admissions through the SAMARTH portal show that Arts accounts for the largest share of admissions among all streams. In 2024, approximately 66,600 students secured admission in Arts courses through the state admission portal.

7.2. Reasons for High Demand

The major reasons include:

- Aspirations for civil services and government employment.
- Greater availability of seats in colleges.
- Lower laboratory and infrastructure requirements.
- Flexibility in subject combinations.

Many students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds consider B.A. as a practical and affordable option.

8. Trends in B.Com. Admissions

8.1. Growth of Commerce Education

Commerce education has gained importance due to increasing opportunities in:

- Accounting
- Banking
- Finance
- Taxation
- Business administration
- Entrepreneurship

The growth of the service sector and financial institutions has enhanced the attractiveness of B.Com. programmes.

However, Commerce admissions remain significantly lower than Arts admissions. Data from the Assam admission portal show that only around 7,280 students took admission in Commerce courses during the first phase of admissions in 2024.

The Sentinel

8.2. Factors Affecting Commerce Admissions

Several reasons explain the moderate enrolment:

- Limited availability of Commerce colleges in rural areas.
- Preference for professional courses such as CA, CS, CMA, BBA, and BCA.
- Perception that Commerce requires strong mathematical and accounting skills.

Despite these challenges, Commerce remains a preferred option among urban students seeking careers in finance and business.

8.3. Emerging Trends

Recent years have witnessed growing interest in:

- Computerized Accounting
- Financial Management
- E-Commerce
- Digital Marketing
- FinTech-related subjects

Such developments are expected to increase B.Com. admissions in the future.

9. Trends in B.Sc. Admissions

9.1. Science Education in Assam

Science education is considered essential for technological advancement and innovation. B.Sc. programmes provide pathways to careers in:

- Research
- Biotechnology
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Environmental Science
- Teaching

However, Science enrolment in Assam remains relatively lower than expected.

Reports indicate that less than 18% of students opted for Science at the higher secondary level. This trend eventually affects B.Sc. admissions in colleges.

In 2024, approximately 11,400 students secured admission in Science programmes through the SAMARTH portal.

9.2. Factors Influencing Science Admissions

Some major factors include:

- High academic demands.
- Costly laboratory facilities.
- Migration of talented students to engineering and medical institutions.
- Preference for professional and technical education.

Many Science students choose engineering, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and other professional programmes rather than traditional B.Sc. degrees.

9.3. Emerging Opportunities

- Recent developments in:
 - Biotechnology
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Data Science
 - Environmental Studies
 - Renewable Energy

have increased the relevance of science education.

10. Comparative Analysis of Admission Trends

Table 1: Admission Distribution in Assam (2024)

Stream	Students Admitted
B.A./Arts	66,600
B.Com./Commerce	7,280
B.Sc./Science	11,400

Source: Assam State Higher Education Admission Portal.

Table 2: Relative Share of Admissions

Stream	Percentage (Approx.)
Arts	78%
Science	13%
Commerce	9%

Key Observations

1. Arts dominates undergraduate admissions.
2. Science ranks second.
3. Commerce attracts the lowest enrolment.
4. Urban areas show greater preference for Commerce and Science.
5. Rural areas contribute heavily to Arts admissions.

Table 3: Distribution of Undergraduate Admissions in Assam (2024)

Comparative admission figures for Arts, Commerce and Science streams through the state admission system.

Stream	Numbers of students Admitted
BA (ARTS)	66,600
B COM(COMMERCE)	7280
B SC (SCIENCE)	11,400

Table 4: Comparative Admission Statistics

Stream	Students Admitted	Percentage Share
B.A. (Arts)	66,600	78.2%
B.Sc. (Science)	11,400	13.4%
B.Com. (Commerce)	7,280	8.4%
Total	85,280	100%

Interpretation of the Chart

The chart clearly demonstrates that the Arts stream dominates undergraduate admissions in Assam, accounting for approximately 78 percent of total enrolment. Science occupies the second position with about 13 percent of admissions, while Commerce represents only 8 percent. The findings indicate a significant imbalance in student preferences among the three streams.

Several factors contribute to the popularity of Arts education, including wider availability of institutions, lower educational costs, and greater suitability for students preparing for government service examinations. Science admissions remain moderate due to the higher academic and financial requirements associated with laboratory-based education. Commerce admissions are comparatively lower because many students opt for professional courses such as CA, CS, CMA, BBA, and BCA after completing higher secondary education.

Table 5: Trend of Undergraduate Admissions in Assam (2023–2025)

Year	B.A. (Arts)	B.Sc. (Science)	B.Com. (Commerce)	Total
2023	60,500	10,200	6,800	77,500
2024	66,600	11,400	7,280	85,280
2025	69,500	12,300	7,950	89,750

The SAMARTH portal was introduced for centralized undergraduate admissions in Assam beginning with the 2023–24 academic session, making stream-wise admission tracking more systematic.

Table 6: Three-Year Trend of Admissions (2023–2025)

Comparative trend of admissions in Arts, Science and Commerce streams.

Arts	Science	Commerce
69,500	12,300	7,950

Percentage Share of Admissions (2024)

The 2024 SAMARTH admission data show that Arts accounted for the overwhelming majority of admissions, followed by Science and Commerce. Approximately 66,600 students enrolled in Arts, 11,400 in Science, and 7,280 in Commerce.

Table 7: Stream-wise Share of UG Admissions in Assam (2024)

Percentage distribution of admissions among Arts, Science and Commerce streams.

Arts	Science	Commerce
78.1%	13.4%	8.5%

Table 8: Annual Growth Rate

Stream	Growth (2023–2024)	Growth (2024–2025)
Arts	10.08%	4.35%
Science	11.76%	7.89%
Commerce	7.06%	9.20%

Interpretation

1. Arts remained the most preferred stream throughout the study period.
2. Science exhibited the highest overall growth rate, indicating increasing interest in STEM-related education.
3. Commerce showed steady growth due to expanding opportunities in accounting, finance, banking, and entrepreneurship.
4. The implementation of FYUGP under NEP 2020 and the centralized SAMARTH portal improved accessibility and transparency in admissions.
5. Rural students continue to dominate Arts enrolment, whereas Science and Commerce are comparatively more urban-centric.

11. Factors Influencing Students' Choice

11.1. Employment Opportunities

Students increasingly evaluate courses based on career prospects. Government jobs remain a major attraction for Arts students. Discussions among students frequently highlight concerns regarding employment opportunities and skill development in Assam.

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11.2. Economic Background

Students from low-income families often prefer Arts because of lower educational expenses.

11.3. Availability of Institutions

Arts courses are offered in almost all colleges, whereas Commerce and Science facilities are comparatively limited.

11.4. Parental Influence

Parents often influence students' educational choices, particularly in Science and Commerce streams.

11.5. Professional Course Alternatives

Many students bypass traditional B.Sc. and B.Com. programmes in favour of:

- Engineering
- Medicine
- Nursing
- BBA
- BCA
- Professional accounting courses

12. Impact of NEP 2020 and FYUGP

The implementation of NEP 2020 has significantly altered undergraduate education.

Major reforms include:

- Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP)
- Multidisciplinary learning
- Multiple entry and exit options
- Skill-based education
- Academic flexibility

These reforms are expected to improve the attractiveness of all streams by integrating vocational and employability-oriented components. The introduction of FYUGP has also encouraged students to explore interdisciplinary learning opportunities. □

13. Challenges in Undergraduate Admissions

The study identifies several challenges:

13.1. Imbalance Among Streams

A large concentration of students in Arts creates pressure on resources while Science and Commerce remain underutilized.

13.2. Limited Career Awareness

Many students lack adequate information regarding career opportunities in Commerce and Science.

13.3. Infrastructure Constraints

Science education requires laboratories, equipment, and trained faculty, which are insufficient in some institutions.

13.4. Employability Concerns

Graduates often face difficulties in securing suitable employment due to skill gaps and limited industrial growth within the state.

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14. Suggestions

To ensure balanced growth among undergraduate streams, the following measures are suggested:

1. Strengthen career counselling programmes in schools.
2. Expand Science and Commerce facilities in rural colleges.
3. Introduce industry-oriented curricula.
4. Enhance internship and placement opportunities.
5. Promote entrepreneurship education.
6. Improve laboratory infrastructure.
7. Encourage multidisciplinary learning under NEP 2020.
8. Strengthen collaborations between educational institutions and industries.

15. Conclusion

The study reveals that B.A. remains the most preferred undergraduate course in Assam, followed by B.Sc. and B.Com. Admission statistics demonstrate a substantial imbalance among the three streams, with Arts accounting for the majority of enrolments. While Commerce and Science offer promising career opportunities, factors such as institutional availability, economic considerations, academic difficulty, and employment perceptions significantly influence student choices.

The introduction of FYUGP and NEP 2020 has the potential to reshape undergraduate education by

providing greater flexibility and skill-oriented learning. Policymakers and educational institutions must focus on strengthening Science and Commerce education while maintaining the strengths of the Arts stream. Balanced development of all disciplines is essential for creating a diversified and skilled workforce capable of contributing to Assam's socio-economic progress.

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