

UPSC Civil Services Exam: A Beginner's Complete Guide to Eligibility, Syllabus, and Exam Pattern

Introduction

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), established in 1926, is India's premier central recruiting agency, responsible for appointing candidates to the highest civil service positions. The Civil Services Examination (CSE) is the annual exam conducted by UPSC to select candidates who possess the necessary integrity, aptitude, and leadership qualities to run the country's administration.

Top services you can join through the CSE:

- Indian Administrative Service (IAS)
 - Indian Police Service (IPS)
 - Indian Foreign Service (IFS)
 - Indian Revenue Service (IRS)
 - ...and over 20 other prestigious services.
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Eligibility Criteria

- **Nationality:** Must be a citizen of India (for IAS/IPS/IFS).
 - **Educational Qualification:** A graduate degree in any stream (BA, B.Sc, B.Com, B.Tech, MBBS, etc.) from any recognized university. Final-year students are also eligible to apply.
 - **Age Limit:** Between 21 and 32 years of age (for the General category), with relaxations for reserved categories.
 - **Number of Attempts:**
 - **General / EWS:** 6 attempts
 - **OBC:** 9 attempts
 - **SC / ST:** Unlimited attempts (till the upper age limit).
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The Three-Stage Exam Pattern

The UPSC CSE is a year-long process divided into three sequential stages.

Stage 1: Preliminary Examination (Objective Type)

This is a screening stage to select candidates for the Main Examination.

- **Paper I: General Studies (GS)**
 - **Marks:** 200
 - **Purpose:** Score in this paper determines qualification for the Main exam.
 - **Syllabus:** History, Geography, Polity, Economy, Environment, Science & Tech, and Current Affairs.
- **Paper II: Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT)**
 - **Marks:** 200
 - **Nature:** Qualifying (a minimum of 33% or 66 marks is required).
 - **Purpose:** Tests aptitude, logical reasoning, and comprehension. Its marks are not counted for the Prelims cutoff.

Stage 2: Main Examination (Descriptive/Written Type)

This stage is the core of the selection process and determines the final ranking. It consists of nine papers.

- **Qualifying Papers:**
 - **Paper A (Indian Language):** Qualifying with a minimum of 25%.
 - **Paper B (English):** Qualifying with a minimum of 25%.
 - *(Note: Marks from these two papers are not counted in the final merit list).*
- **Papers Counted for Merit (Total 1750 Marks):**
 - **Paper I: Essay** (250 Marks)
 - **Paper II: General Studies I** - Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society. (250 Marks)
 - **Paper III: General Studies II** - Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice, and International Relations. (250 Marks)
 - **Paper IV: General Studies III** - Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security, and Disaster Management. (250 Marks)
 - **Paper V: General Studies IV** - Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude. (250 Marks)
 - **Papers VI & VII: Optional Subject (Paper 1 & 2)** - One subject chosen by the candidate from a list of options. (250 Marks each)



Stage 3: Interview (Personality Test)

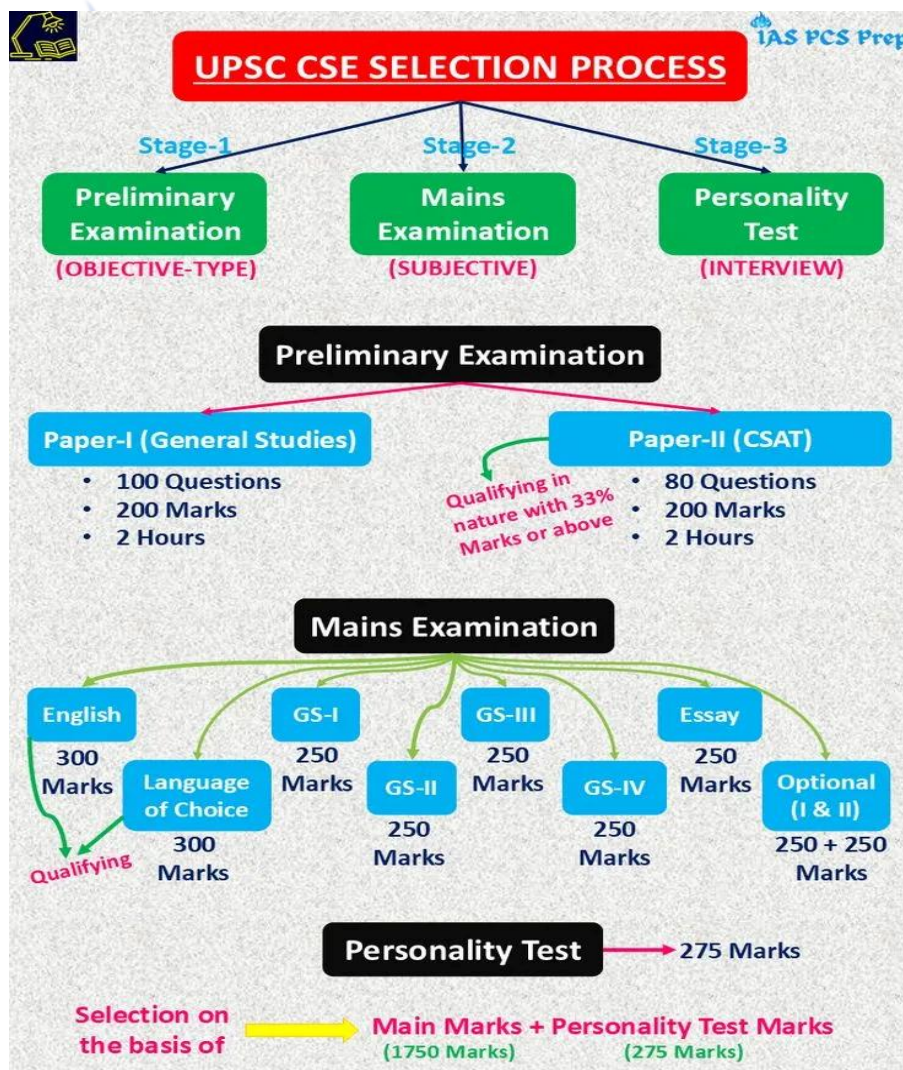
This is the final stage for candidates who clear the Mains cutoff.

- **Nature:** A structured conversation with the UPSC board.
- **Purpose:** To assess a candidate's mental alertness, critical thinking, clarity of thought, social skills, and overall suitability for a career in civil services.
- **Marks:** 275

Final Merit List Calculation

The final rank is determined based on the total score from:

- **Main Examination:** 1750 Marks
- **Interview:** 275 Marks
- **Grand Total:** 2025 Marks



Detailed Syllabus

Preliminary Examination Syllabus

- **Paper I: General Studies (GS)**
 - Current events of national and international importance.
 - History of India and Indian National Movement.
 - Indian and World Geography – Physical, Social, Economic Geography of India and the World.
 - Indian Polity and Governance – Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
 - Economic and Social Development – Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.
 - General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change.
 - General Science.
- **Paper II: Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) (Qualifying)**
 - Comprehension.
 - Interpersonal skills including communication skills.
 - Logical reasoning and analytical ability.
 - Decision making and problem-solving.
 - General mental ability.
 - Basic numeracy (numbers and their relations, orders of magnitude, etc.) (Class X level).
 - Data interpretation (charts, graphs, tables, data sufficiency, etc.) (Class X level).

Main Examination Syllabus

- **Paper I: Essay**
 - Candidates will write two essays on given topics.
- **Paper II: General Studies I**
 - Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society.
- **Paper III: General Studies II**
 - Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice, and International relations.
- **Paper IV: General Studies III**

- Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management.

- **Paper V: General Studies IV**

- Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude.

- **Papers VI & VII: Optional Subject (Paper 1 & Paper 2)**

- Candidates must choose one optional subject from a list of around 48 subjects. This choice is crucial as it covers 500 marks.

