

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q:** What is the level of competition in UPSC Civil Services Examination?
- A:** The number of candidates aspiring for the UPSC Civil Services has gone up to more than 9,00,000 who fill the form and almost 4,00,000 who appear in the 1st stage of the exam, Preliminary Exam.
- The number of candidates who qualify the Preliminary exam to appear in the Main Exam is equal to 12 to 13 times the number of vacancies in the Civil Services Exam that year.
- Out of these, the number of candidates who will qualify to appear in the Interview is 2 times the number of vacancies in the Civil Services advertised that year.
- For instance, if the number of vacancies in given year is 782 then about 10,000 candidates would be called (qualified) by the UPSC to appear in the Main exam & the number of candidates who will qualify the Main examination to appear in the Interview would be about 2,340.
- Q:** What is the number of vacancies in Civil Services for which the examination is conducted every year by UPSC?
- A:** The number of vacancies is reported by Union Public Service Commission in its advertisement/notification for the exam. The number of vacancies varies every year; the number of vacancies per this (2018) year 782
- Q:** When does the UPSC advertise about the Examination?
- A:** UPSC publishes/releases the notification for holding the Civil Services Examination every year in the month of March for the Preliminary Test to be held in the month of June, of the same year.
- Q:** What is the eligibility to appear for this Examination?
- A:** Candidates must be at least 21 years old on the 1st of August of the year in which they aspire to give the Exam and must hold a graduation degree (recognized by University Grants Commission) to appear for this Examination. Indian students holding a foreign degree need to ensure that their degree is accredited or recognized by UGC.
- Q:** Can a candidate who has completed his education from an Open School/ University apply for Civil Services Examination?
- A:** Yes, provided it is a recognized University and he/she possess the educational qualifications prescribed for the exam and is otherwise eligible.

- Q:** Is a candidate who has done his graduation without passing class Xth and class XIIth eligible for Civil Services Examination?
- A:** Yes, provided the graduation has been completed from a recognized University and he/she possess the educational qualifications prescribed for the exam and is otherwise eligible.
- Q:** How many attempts does one get to crack the Civil Services Examination?
- A:** Number of attempts for General Category candidates is 6; OBC is 9 and for a candidate belonging to SC/ST category is unlimited (there is no restriction on number of attempts for SC/ST category).
- Q:** If a candidate has applied for the Civil Services (P) Examination but has not appeared at any paper will it be counted as an attempt?
- A:** No. An attempt is counted only if a candidate has appeared in at least one paper in Civil Services (P) Examination.
- Q:** Is there any relaxation in number of attempts for physically handicapped?
- A:** A physically handicapped will get as many attempts as are available to other non-physically handicapped candidates of his or her community, subject to the condition that a physically handicapped candidate belonging to the General Category shall be eligible for nine attempts. The relaxation will be available to the physically handicapped candidates who are eligible to avail of reservation applicable to such candidates.
- Q:** Whether a candidate belonging to a community included in the OBC list of states but not in the Central list of OBCs is eligible for age relaxation, reservation etc. for Civil Services Examinations?
- A:** No. Only candidates belonging to communities which are included in the Central list of OBC's are eligible for such concessions.
- Q:** Whether the relaxation on number of attempts and reservation applicable to all candidates included in the Central List of OBC's?
- A:** Members of other backward classes, belonging to the Creamy layer ('Creamy layer' is the income limit beyond which OBCs are not eligible for quotas) will not be eligible for reservations in jobs and education. Right now the creamy layer bar stands at earnings of over rupees 6 lakhs annually. More details about Creamy layer criteria are available at http://www.ncbc.nic.in/User_Panel/UserView.aspx?TypeID=1116

- Q:** Can a candidate choose an optional subject, which he has not studied at graduate/PG level?
- A:** Yes. Candidates may choose any optional subject from amongst the UPSC's list of subjects for Civil Services Examination irrespective of their educational background in it.
- Q:** Can a candidate write different papers of Civil Services (Main) Examination in different languages?
- A:** No, candidates have the option to write their answers either in English or in any one of the languages included in the Eighth schedule to the Constitution.
- Q:** Can a candidate write the Civil Services (Main) Examination in English and take the interview in Hindi or in any other Indian language?
- A:** The candidates, who opt for an Indian Language medium to write Civil Services (Main) Exam, may choose either the same Indian Language or English or Hindi as the medium for the interview.
- The candidates, opting to write the Civil Services (Main) Examination in English, may choose as the medium for interview either English or Hindi or any other Indian Language opted by them for the compulsory Indian Language Paper.
- However, the candidates, who are exempted from the compulsory Indian Language Paper, will have to choose either English or Hindi as medium of Interview of Personality Test.
- Q:** After the written examination, on what criterion is the answer books sent for evaluation? Is it on Roll no. basis or based on centre of examination? That is, will a particular examiner/set of examiners get to evaluate answer books only of a particular centre or a particular group of Roll nos.?
- A:** Mixing of the answer books received from different venues is done before sending them for evaluation. Computer-based randomized fictitious code no. is given to each answer-book before evaluation.
- Q:** Are answer books segregated/sorted based on community of the candidate?
- A:** This is not done at any stage of the evaluation process.
- Q:** Is it likely that my evaluated performance suffers because my answer books were evaluated by a 'strict' examiner, while another candidate benefits as his answer books were evaluated by a 'liberal' examiner?
- A:** The Paper Setter, who is an eminent person in his field, normally acts as the Head Examiner, and wherever the number of candidates in a particular subject is very large, the Commission appoints Additional Examiners for valuation of answer books.

To achieve uniformity in valuation, where more than one Examiner is involved, the Commission arranges a meeting of the Head Examiner with the Additional Examiners after the Examination is over. At this stage, they discuss thoroughly the question paper, the appropriate answers and decide the standard of evaluation.

To further bring about uniformity of assessment inter se the Examiners, the following procedure is undertaken: The Head Examiner conducts a sample survey of answer books of each Additional Examiner to verify whether the uniform standards of evaluation evolved in the meeting of Examiners have actually been followed. Depending on the standard adopted by the Additional Examiner, the Head Examiner may confirm the awards without any change if the Examiner has correctly followed the standard decided upon, or may carry out upward / downward moderation as considered necessary to ensure maximum possible degree of uniformity in the evaluation process.

Therefore, the aspect of inter examiner variation in standards of evaluation in a Paper affecting candidates' performance is taken care of adequately.

Q: Can I know the 'question-wise' marks awarded to me for a paper?

A: In a competitive examination, what is relevant is not the absolute performance of a candidate, but his/her relative performance that in fact determines whether the candidate qualifies and, if so, his/her position in the merit list. Accordingly, as already explained above, the evaluation process does not end after initial evaluation by an Examiner. Moderation, wherever applied, is on the total award initially given (the so-called 'raw marks') and not on question-wise basis.

Therefore, once the evaluation process is complete, neither 'raw marks' nor 'question-wise' marks subsist. What subsists is the candidate's total score in a paper awarded at the end of the evaluation process and this award is normally made available to the candidate in due course (a month or two) on the Commission's website.

Q: Are subject-wise/paper wise marks of each candidate made accessible/available to him/her for Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination?

A: No. This is because the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination is simply a short-listing (elimination) exercise to select candidates for the Main Examination and as such the scores obtained in this Examination are not communicated to candidates. However, an individual candidate desirous of knowing his/her marks may seek such information from the Commission pursuant to RTI Act 2005.

- Q:** Are individual marks secured in various papers or total marks across all papers considered for merit?
- A:** Total marks across all the papers in the respective part (Prelim/Main) are considered for merit. However, the Commission has discretion to fix qualifying marks in any or all the subjects of the examination

Preliminary Examination: In CSE (P) 2016, the minimum marks required for qualifying Paper – I was set at 30 and that for Paper – II at 67. UPSC draws a list of candidates to be qualified for Civil Services (Main) Examination based on the marks in GS Paper I. However, GS Paper-II was qualifying with 33% marks (Rule-15 of Civil Services Examination, 2016)

Mains examina*on: Total marks obtained by the candidates for all the ranking papers (from Paper I-VII) will be counted for merit. However, the Commission has discreCon to fix qualifying marks in any or all the subjects of the examination. In CSE (M) , it is subject to 10% marks in each of the seven ranking papers. Candidates, who obtain such minimum qualifying marks in the wriNen part of the Main ExaminaCon as may be fixed by the Commission at their discreCon, shall be summoned by them for interview or a Personality Test.

The Commission informed regarding cut-offs of Civil Services Examination, 2016. The marks obtained by the last candidates declared qualified by the commission in their respective category at different stages of the examination were:

Community/ Category	Marks Obtained		
	CS (P), 2016 (out of 200)	CS (M), 2016 (out of 1750)	CS(Final), 2016 (out of 2025)
General	116	787	988
OBC	110.66	745	951
SC	99.34	739	937
ST	96.00	730	920
PH-1	75.34	713	927
PH-2	72.66	740	951
PH-3	40.00	545	817

- Q:** Can I know the marks of other candidates who took the Examination from the Commission?
- A:** The marks, secured in the Main exam and Interview of those candidates who are recommended for the services by UPSC, are published within 2 months of declaring the final result.

- Q:** If the overall marks of two or more candidates are equal, how is relative merit between such candidates decided?
- A:** Tie-breaking principles are applied to decide inter se merit among candidates having the same overall marks.
- TIE PRINCIPLES** - Wherever the two or more candidates have secured equal aggregate marks, the tie(s) is/are resolved in accordance with the principles approved by the Commission, viz.,
- (i) Candidate securing more marks in the Compulsory Papers and the Personality Test put together is to be ranked higher;
 - (ii) In case where the marks mentioned at (i) above are equal, the candidate senior in age is to be ranked higher; and
 - (iii) In case where the (i) and (ii) above are same, then the candidate getting more marks in the compulsory papers is to be ranked higher.
- Q:** Wherever evaluation standards are set or moderation is applied, are these different for different mediums (languages) in which a particular subject/paper Examination is written?
- A:** No. The evaluation standards/moderation for a Paper are not medium-specific. In other words, if the Rules of the Exam provide that a Paper can be written in any of, say, English/Hindi/a recognized Indian language; then the medium in which a candidate writes the Paper will not be a factor in determining evaluation standards or the moderation to be applied.
- Q:** Is it possible that evaluation/assessment could be affected by the knowledge of a candidate's identity?
- A:** No. Before evaluation, the Roll no. written on every answer book is detached and computer-based randomized fictitious code no. is given. At no stage of the evaluation process (including the moderation stage) is the actual Roll no. /identity of the candidate known to any of the Examiners/Officials associated in the process.
- Q:** One person who is 21 years of age and the other who is 32 years of age, who has better chance to qualify for civil services?
- A:** UPSC does not give any weight-age for age. It is the quality of answer which is evaluated not age. The only difference between 21 and 30 years is that the person entering at 30 years of age shall retire nine years before the person entering at 21 years of age. Otherwise at the entry level there is no difference at all.

- Q:** Should one go for IAS right after graduation without any job or should one first settle down with a job and then go for writing this examination?
- A:** Civil Services preparation in majority of the cases is seen to be a full time exercise and it merits at least one year of thorough preparation after graduation. However, it is the quality of time spent towards this goal which is important and not the presence of a job alongside or the absence thereof.
- Q:** What is the minimum age at which people should start preparing for the civil services examination?
- A:** Preferably the preparation should start in a focused manner around 19-20 years of age. This is the time student is able to focus on the goal properly and is in a position to peak at the right time. Starting too early has a likelihood of tiring at the right time or starting very late will have disadvantage in terms of competitive edge of early start.
- Q:** What are the important areas of newspaper from which notes can be made?
- A:** Reading newspaper is an art which needs to be honed by the candidates. Newspaper has got information for all kinds of readers and for a candidate to use newspaper for its own requirement it must have a proper orientation of the kind of question being asked in General Studies. As the breakup of General Studies includes Indian Economy, Polity, Social Issues etc. accordingly the information from the newspaper be picked up. It is advised that the students should take up information by writing in short form and maintaining separate files for different segments which over a period of time is expected to grow to a substantial size which shall be very handy when the student is close to the examination. Apart from providing content for the above-mentioned themes, newspapers are the best first hand source for the current event updation. The events of National and International which effect human lives at large are important from General Studies point of view.