



UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION (CSE) 2026

**Complete Eligibility Criteria • Application Procedure • Prelims • Mains • Interview •
Detailed Syllabus**

At a Glance	Official CSE 2026 Position
Conducting Body	Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
Preliminary Examination	24 May 2026
Stages	Preliminary Examination → Main Written Examination → Interview/Personality Test
Prelims	2 objective papers, 200 marks each; GS Paper II qualifying at 33%
Mains Written	9 descriptive papers; 2 qualifying + 7 counted for merit
Mains Merit Marks	1750
Interview/Personality Test	275
Final Merit Total	2025 marks

1. Understanding the UPSC Civil Services Examination

The Civil Services Examination is UPSC's competitive examination for recruitment to the IAS, IFS, IPS and several other Group A and Group B services/posts. The selection process operates through a screening Preliminary Examination followed by the Civil Services (Main) Examination, which consists of a written examination and the Interview/Personality Test.

Three-stage journey

Stage	Nature	Purpose	Marks in Final Merit
Stage I – Prelims	Objective (MCQ)	Screening for Mains	No
Stage II – Mains Written	Conventional/Essay type	Tests depth, analysis, expression and optional subject	1750
Stage III – Interview	Personality Test	Assesses suitability for public service	275

Final ranking is based on the marks obtained in the seven merit papers of the Main written examination plus the Interview/Personality Test, for a total of 2025 marks.

2. Eligibility Criteria for UPSC CSE 2026

2.1 Nationality

- For IAS, Indian Foreign Service and IPS, the candidate must be a citizen of India.
- For other services, eligibility may also extend, subject to the prescribed certificate of eligibility where applicable, to subjects of Nepal or Bhutan, specified Tibetan refugees, and specified persons of Indian origin who migrated from listed countries with the intention of permanently settling in India.

2.2 Age Limit (CSE 2026)

A candidate must have attained 21 years and must not have attained 32 years on 1 August 2026. For CSE 2026, this corresponds to a date of birth not earlier than 2 August 1994 and not later than 1 August 2005.

Category / Condition	Upper-age relaxation under the 2026 notice
General / EWS	No general category relaxation; base age limit 21–32
SC / ST	Up to 5 years
OBC eligible for reservation	Up to 3 years
Defence Services Personnel disabled in specified operations	Up to 3 years
Eligible ex-servicemen / specified ECOs / SSCOs	Up to 5 years, subject to conditions
PwBD	Up to 10 years, subject to prescribed conditions

Age relaxations can interact with category rules and service conditions. Candidates should verify their exact case from the current UPSC notice.

2.3 Educational Qualification

A candidate must hold a graduate degree from a university incorporated by an Act of the Central or State Legislature in India, an institution established by an Act of Parliament, a deemed university under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956, or possess an equivalent qualification.

- Candidates awaiting the result of a qualifying examination, or intending to appear in it, may be admitted subject to the conditions in the notice; candidates reaching the Personality Test stage must produce valid proof of passing within the prescribed time.
- Government-recognised professional and technical qualifications equivalent to a degree are eligible.
- Specified medical-degree candidates who have passed the final professional examination but have not completed internship may be provisionally admitted, subject to documentary requirements.

2.4 Number of Attempts

Category	Maximum Attempts
General / EWS	6
OBC	9
SC / ST	Unlimited within the applicable age limit
PwBD – General/EWS/OBC	9
PwBD – SC/ST	Unlimited within the applicable age limit

An attempt is counted if a candidate actually appears in any one paper of the Preliminary Examination. Subsequent disqualification or cancellation does not erase that attempt.

2.5 Physical and Medical Standards

Candidates must satisfy the physical and medical standards prescribed for the service/post eventually allocated. Requirements vary by service, and PwBD suitability is service-specific. Candidates targeting services such as IPS should study the applicable medical/physical standards carefully.

3. Application and Selection Procedure

1. Create/use the UPSC online application account and complete the Universal Registration and Common Application Form modules.
2. Fill the examination-specific CSE module, choose the examination centre and submit required information/documents and fee, where applicable.

3. Download the e-Admit Card and appear in both papers of the Preliminary Examination.
4. If declared qualified in Prelims, complete the post-Prelims online requirements within the window prescribed by UPSC and proceed to the Main Examination.
5. Appear in all required Main written papers. Qualifying language papers must meet the prescribed minimum standard before the merit papers are taken cognizance for ranking.
6. Candidates qualifying the written Main Examination are summoned for the Interview/Personality Test and must update/upload the required educational and other details/documents.
7. Final merit is prepared from Mains merit papers (1750) + Interview (275) = 2025 marks.
8. Service allocation depends on final rank, category, medical/other eligibility and the service preferences submitted by the candidate.

4. UPSC PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Prelims is a screening examination. Its marks are not added to the final merit score, but a candidate must clear the prescribed standards to enter the Main Examination.

Paper	Marks	Duration	Nature	Role
General Studies Paper I	200	2 hours	Objective / MCQ	Determines Prelims merit/cut-off
General Studies Paper II (CSAT)	200	2 hours	Objective / MCQ	Qualifying; minimum 33%

- Both papers are compulsory; absence from either paper disqualifies the candidate from evaluation.
- Question papers are set in Hindi and English.
- Wrong answers attract a penalty of one-third (0.33) of the marks assigned to the question. No penalty is imposed for a question left blank.

4.1 Prelims Paper I – General Studies Syllabus

- Current events of national and international importance.
- History of India and Indian National Movement.
- Indian and World Geography: physical, social and economic geography of India and the world.
- Indian Polity and Governance: Constitution, political system, Panchayati Raj, public policy, rights issues and related areas.
- Economic and Social Development: sustainable development, poverty, inclusion, demographics, social-sector initiatives and related issues.
- General issues on environmental ecology, biodiversity and climate change that do not require subject specialization.
- General Science.

4.2 Prelims Paper II – CSAT Syllabus

- 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).

4.3 What the Prelims Result Means

UPSC fixes the qualifying standard for General Studies Paper I after ensuring that the candidate has secured at least 33% in CSAT. The number admitted to the Main Examination is normally about twelve to thirteen times the approximate number of vacancies, subject to the Commission's rules.

5. UPSC CIVIL SERVICES (MAIN) WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The Main Examination is descriptive/conventional in nature and is intended to assess intellectual traits, depth of understanding, analytical ability and the capacity to present relevant, meaningful and succinct answers.

Paper	Subject	Marks	Status
Paper A	One Indian Language from the Eighth Schedule	300	Qualifying
Paper B	English	300	Qualifying
Paper I	Essay	250	Merit
Paper II	General Studies I	250	Merit
Paper III	General Studies II	250	Merit
Paper IV	General Studies III	250	Merit
Paper V	General Studies IV	250	Merit
Paper VI	Optional Subject – Paper I	250	Merit
Paper VII	Optional Subject – Paper II	250	Merit

Written merit total: 1750 marks. Each Main paper is of three hours duration. The qualifying language papers are of Matriculation/equivalent standard and their marks are not counted for ranking. The 2026 notice requires at least 25% in Indian Language and 25% in English for the merit papers to be taken cognizance.

5.1 Qualifying Indian Language and English Papers

- Comprehension of given passages.
- Precis writing.
- Usage and vocabulary.
- Short essays.
- For the Indian Language paper: translation from English to the Indian language and vice versa.

Paper A is not compulsory for candidates hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. The notice also provides a specified exemption for eligible PwBD candidates in the hearing-impaired sub-category who satisfy the stated conditions.

5.2 Paper I – Essay (250 Marks)

Candidates may be required to write essays on multiple topics. UPSC expects candidates to remain close to the subject, arrange ideas in an orderly manner, write concisely, and demonstrate effective and exact expression.

5.3 General Studies I – Heritage & Culture, History, Geography and Society

- Indian culture: salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times.
- Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century to the present: significant events, personalities and issues.
- Freedom Struggle: stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of India.
- Post-independence consolidation and reorganisation within India.
- World history from the 18th century: Industrial Revolution, world wars, redrawing of boundaries, colonisation/decolonisation and political philosophies such as communism, capitalism and socialism and their social effects.
- Indian society and diversity; women and women's organisations; population, poverty, development and urbanisation issues and remedies.
- Effects of globalisation on Indian society; social empowerment, communalism, regionalism and secularism.
- World physical geography; distribution of key natural resources and factors influencing industrial location.
- Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic activity and cyclones; changes in critical geographical features, flora and fauna and their effects.

5.4 General Studies II – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations

- Indian Constitution: historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.
- Union–State responsibilities, federal issues, devolution of powers/finances to local levels and related challenges.
- Separation of powers, dispute-redressal mechanisms; comparison of India's constitutional scheme with other countries.

- Parliament and State Legislatures: structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers, privileges and issues.
- Executive and Judiciary; Ministries/Departments; pressure groups and associations and their role in polity.
- Representation of the People Act; Constitutional posts and bodies; statutory, regulatory and quasi-judicial bodies.
- Government policies/interventions; development processes and the role of NGOs, SHGs and other stakeholders.
- Welfare schemes and mechanisms for vulnerable sections; health, education and human-resource issues; poverty and hunger.
- Governance, transparency, accountability, e-governance, citizens' charters and role of civil services in democracy.
- India and its neighbourhood; bilateral, regional and global groupings; impact of foreign policies/politics on India; diaspora; international institutions and fora.

5.5 General Studies III – Economy, Technology, Environment, Security & Disaster Management

- Indian economy: planning, resource mobilisation, growth, development, employment, inclusive growth and government budgeting.
- Agriculture: crops and cropping patterns, irrigation, storage, transport, marketing, e-technology, subsidies, MSP, PDS, food security and animal-rearing economics.
- Food processing industries; land reforms; liberalisation and industrial policy; infrastructure and investment models.
- Science and technology developments/applications; Indian achievements; indigenisation and new technologies.
- IT, space, computers, robotics, nanotechnology, biotechnology and intellectual-property issues.
- Conservation, pollution, environmental degradation and environmental impact assessment.
- Disaster and disaster management.
- Development–extremism linkages; external state/non-state actors; communication networks, media/social media, cyber security and money laundering.
- Border-area security, organised crime–terrorism linkages, and security forces/agencies and their mandates.

5.6 General Studies IV – Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

- Ethics and Human Interface; dimensions and consequences of ethics; ethics in private/public relationships; human values.
- Attitude: content, structure, function, influence on thought/behaviour, moral and political attitudes, social influence and persuasion.
- Civil-service aptitude and foundational values: integrity, impartiality, non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication, empathy, tolerance and compassion.
- Emotional intelligence and its application in administration and governance.
- Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and the world.
- Public/civil-service values and ethics in public administration; ethical dilemmas; laws, rules, conscience, accountability, ethical governance and corporate governance.

- Probity in governance: public service, transparency, RTI, codes of ethics/conduct, citizens' charters, work culture, service delivery, public funds and corruption.
- Case studies on the above issues.

5.7 Optional Subject – Papers VI & VII

A candidate chooses one optional subject. Each optional paper carries 250 marks, giving 500 marks in total. The syllabus is broadly honours-degree level; for Engineering, Medical Science and Law it corresponds to bachelor's-degree level.

- Agriculture
- Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Science
- Anthropology
- Botany
- Chemistry
- Civil Engineering
- Commerce & Accountancy
- Economics
- Electrical Engineering
- Geography
- Geology
- History
- Law
- Management
- Mathematics
- Mechanical Engineering
- Medical Science
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science & International Relations
- Psychology
- Public Administration
- Sociology
- Statistics
- Zoology
- Literature of an approved language (including English)

6. INTERVIEW / PERSONALITY TEST

Feature	Details
Marks	275
Minimum qualifying marks	No minimum qualifying marks prescribed for the Personality Test
Who is called	Candidates who meet the Main written qualifying standard fixed by UPSC
Approximate number called	About twice the number of vacancies
Nature	Directed, purposive conversation; not a strict cross-examination

6.1 What UPSC Assesses

- Mental alertness.
- Critical powers of assimilation.
- Clear and logical exposition.
- Balance of judgement.
- Variety and depth of interest.
- Ability for social cohesion and leadership.
- Intellectual and moral integrity.
- Intelligent interest in current affairs, one's academic field, surroundings, national/international events, modern currents of thought and new discoveries.

6.2 What the Interview Is Not

UPSC explicitly describes the Personality Test as not being a strict cross-examination and not merely another test of specialised or general knowledge already tested in the written papers. It is intended to reveal mental qualities and overall suitability for a career in public service.

7. Final Merit, Rank and Service Allocation

Component	Marks counted
Essay + GS I–IV + Optional I–II	1750
Interview / Personality Test	275
Final Total	2025

Prelims marks and the two qualifying language-paper marks do not form part of the final merit total. Final ranking is based on the 2025-mark aggregate. Allocation to services depends on rank, preferences, category, medical/physical suitability and other applicable conditions.

8. CSE 2026 Important Dates and Current Status

Event	CSE 2026
Notification	4 February 2026
Application closing date in revised official notice	24 February 2026, 6:00 PM
Preliminary Examination	24 May 2026
Prelims written result	15 June 2026
Civil Services (Main) Examination 2026	Active examination; UPSC has issued timetable/admit-card related updates

UPSC web pages can show later administrative updates alongside the original notice. For applications and future cycles, rely on the latest examination notice and UPSC online portal.

9. Meer Sir Academy – Recommended Preparation Framework

A serious UPSC plan should integrate Prelims and Mains instead of treating them as unrelated examinations.

Phase	Primary Work
Foundation	NCERT/basic texts, polity, history, geography, economy, environment, science basics
Integrated GS	Prelims MCQs + Mains notes + current-affairs linkage
CSAT	Regular qualifying practice; do not postpone until the end
Optional	Choose early and complete core syllabus with answer-writing practice
Mains Answer Writing	Issue-based notes, structure, evidence/examples, timed writing
Prelims Revision	Multiple revision cycles, MCQs, elimination skills and full mock tests
Post-Prelims	Intensive Mains writing, Essay, Ethics and Optional
Interview	DAF/profile preparation, current affairs, judgement,

10. Common Mistakes Candidates Should Avoid

- Assuming CSAT is unimportant because it is only qualifying.
- Preparing Prelims facts without building Mains-ready conceptual notes.
- Choosing an optional only because it is considered 'scoring'.
- Ignoring revision and relying on continuously adding new sources.
- Writing generic Mains answers without addressing the exact demand of the question.
- Treating the Interview as a quiz rather than a personality and suitability assessment.
- Using old eligibility rules without checking the current UPSC notification.
- Submitting service preferences casually; final allocation depends substantially on rank and preferences.

12. Quick Sheet

Question	Answer
Minimum age	21 years
General upper age for CSE 2026	Below 32 years on 1 August 2026
Minimum qualification	Graduate degree or equivalent
General/EWS attempts	6
OBC attempts	9
SC/ST attempts	Unlimited within age limit
Prelims papers	2 × 200 marks
CSAT qualifying mark	33%
Prelims negative marking	1/3 of marks assigned to a wrong answer
Mains written papers	9 total: 2 qualifying + 7 merit
Mains merit marks	1750
Interview marks	275
Final total	2025