

UPSC CSE MAINS · PAPER I & II

Public Administration

Optional Strategy Kit

What UPSC asks, the order to study it, and how the 26 units link. This sample has real pages from each of the four PDFs in the kit; the full kit is 347 pages.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

4

PDFS IN THE KIT

347

PAGES

1,643

PYQS BY UNIT

518

TOPIC LINKS

13 PAGES

Syllabus, mapped

All 26 units and 182 topics, the exam pattern and how Paper I feeds Paper II

186 PAGES

PYQs 1987–2026

All 1,643 questions by unit with marks, 22 full papers and ten-year pattern charts

23 PAGES

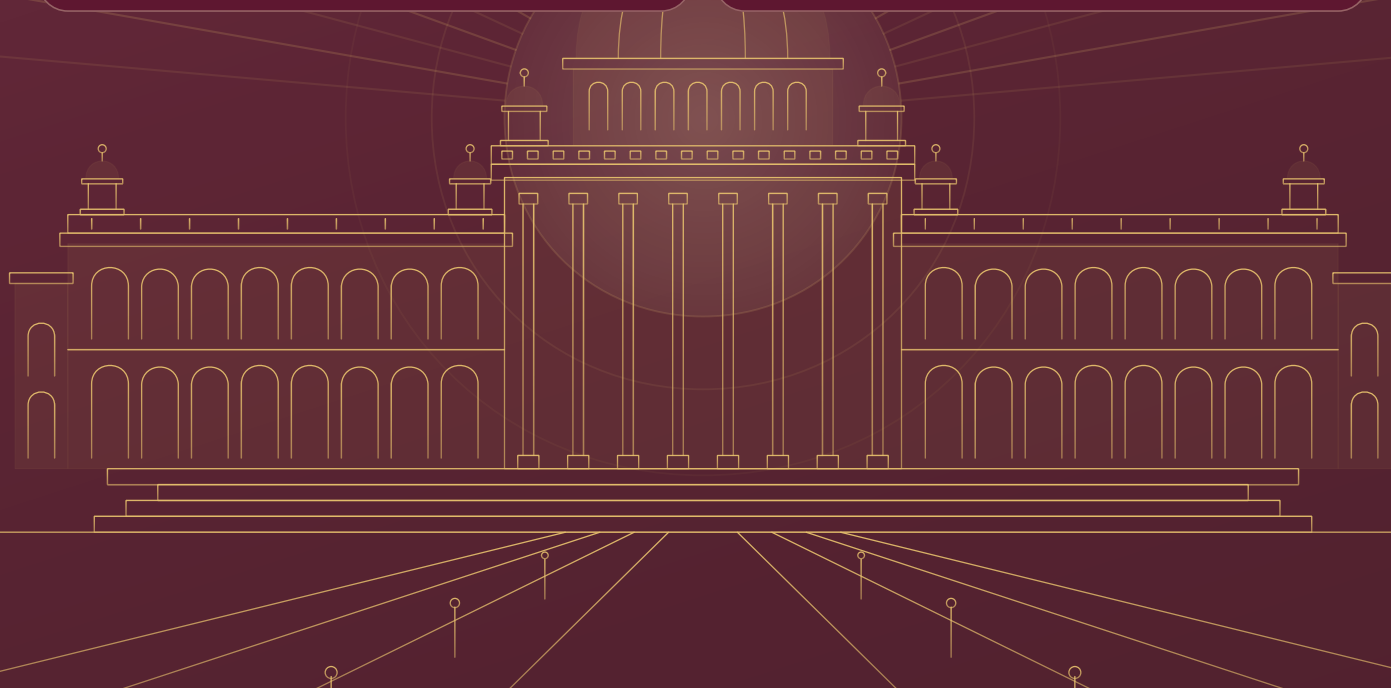
Study Route

The order to study all 26 units in 8 phases, tied to book pages and PYQs

125 PAGES

Interlinking Guide

518 topic links, 10 theme webs, 24 thinkers applied to India



UPSC CSE MAINS · OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Public Administration

Optional Syllabus, Mapped

The complete UPSC syllabus for Public Administration, Paper I and Paper II, unit by unit and topic by topic, with the exam pattern and how the two papers connect, laid out so you can see the whole subject at a glance.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

2

PAPERS · 3 HOURS EACH

500

MARKS (250 + 250)

26

SYLLABUS UNITS

182

SYLLABUS TOPICS

PAPER I

Administrative Theory

12 units · 90 topics · 250 marks

PAPER II

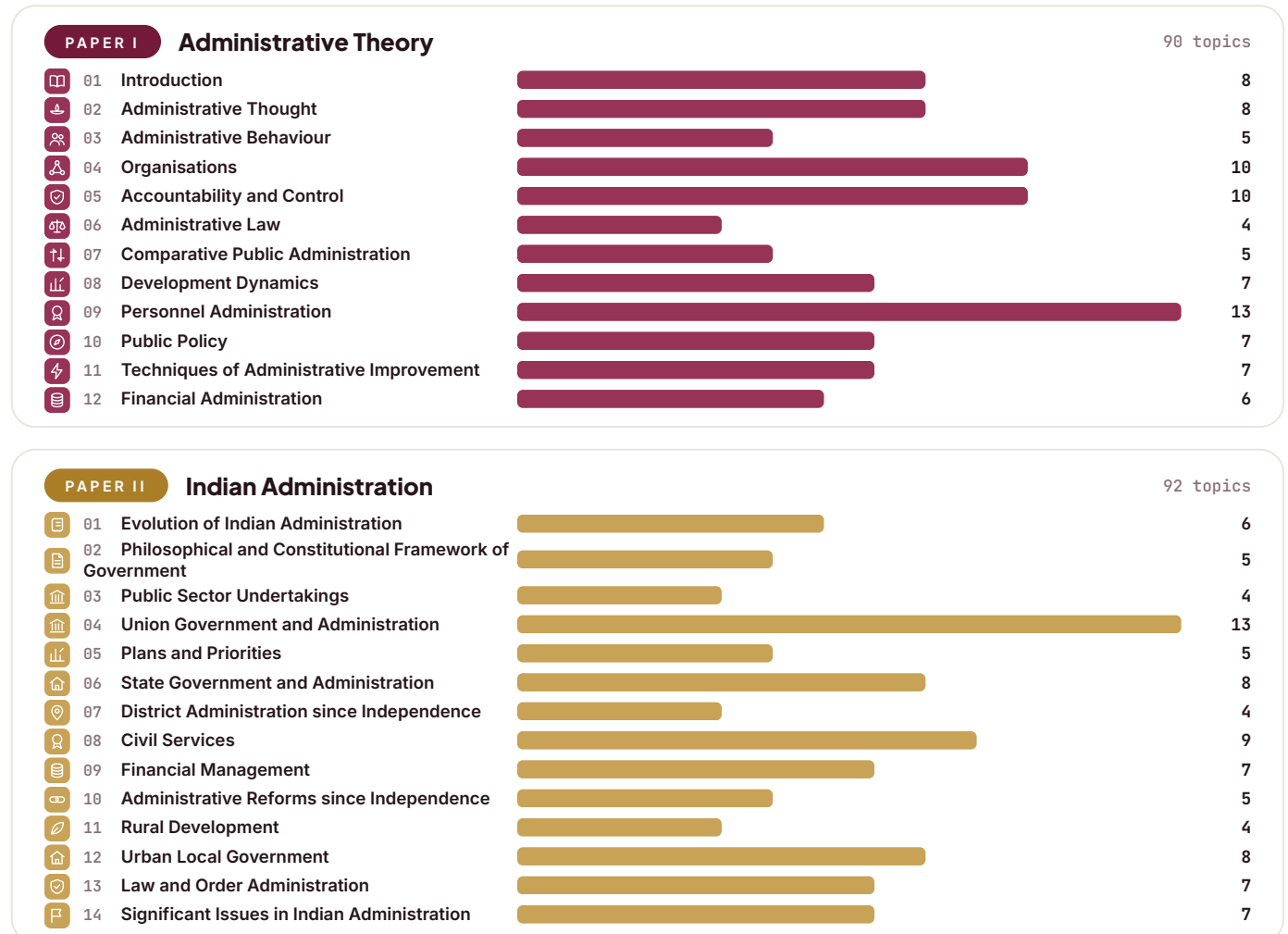
Indian Administration

14 units · 92 topics · 250 marks

FREE SAMPLE · SYLLABUS, MAPPED, PAGE 1 OF 13

The syllabus at a glance

All 26 units on one page. Each bar shows how many separate topics UPSC lists in that unit: the breadth you have to cover, not how often it is asked.



PAPER I

250 MARKS

3 HOURS

Administrative Theory

The theory of administration: its thinkers, organisations, people, policy and money.

12 units 90 topics 809 previous year questions since 1987



PAPER I · UNIT 01

Introduction

8 topics

102 PYQs since 1987

Meaning, scope and significance of Public Administration

Wilson's vision of Public Administration

Evolution of the discipline and its present status

New Public Administration

Public Choice approach

Challenges of liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation

Good Governance: concept and application

New Public Management



PAPER I · UNIT 02

Administrative Thought

8 topics

112 PYQs since 1987

Scientific Management and the Scientific Management movement

Classical Theory

Weber's bureaucratic model: its critique and post-Weberian developments

Dynamic Administration (Mary Parker Follett)

Human Relations School (Elton Mayo and others)

Functions of the Executive (C. I. Barnard)

Simon's decision-making theory

Participative Management (R. Likert, C. Argyris, D. McGregor)



PAPER I · UNIT 03

Administrative Behaviour

5 topics

62 PYQs since 1987

Process and techniques of decision-making

Communication

Morale

Motivation theories: content, process and contemporary

Theories of leadership: traditional and modern



PAPER I · UNIT 04

Organisations

10 topics

56 PYQs since 1987

THEORIES

Systems

Contingency

STRUCTURE AND FORMS

Ministries and Departments

Corporations

Companies

Boards and Commissions

Ad hoc and advisory bodies

Headquarters and field relationships

Regulatory Authorities

Public-Private Partnerships

FREE SAMPLE · SYLLABUS, MAPPED, PAGE 5 OF 13

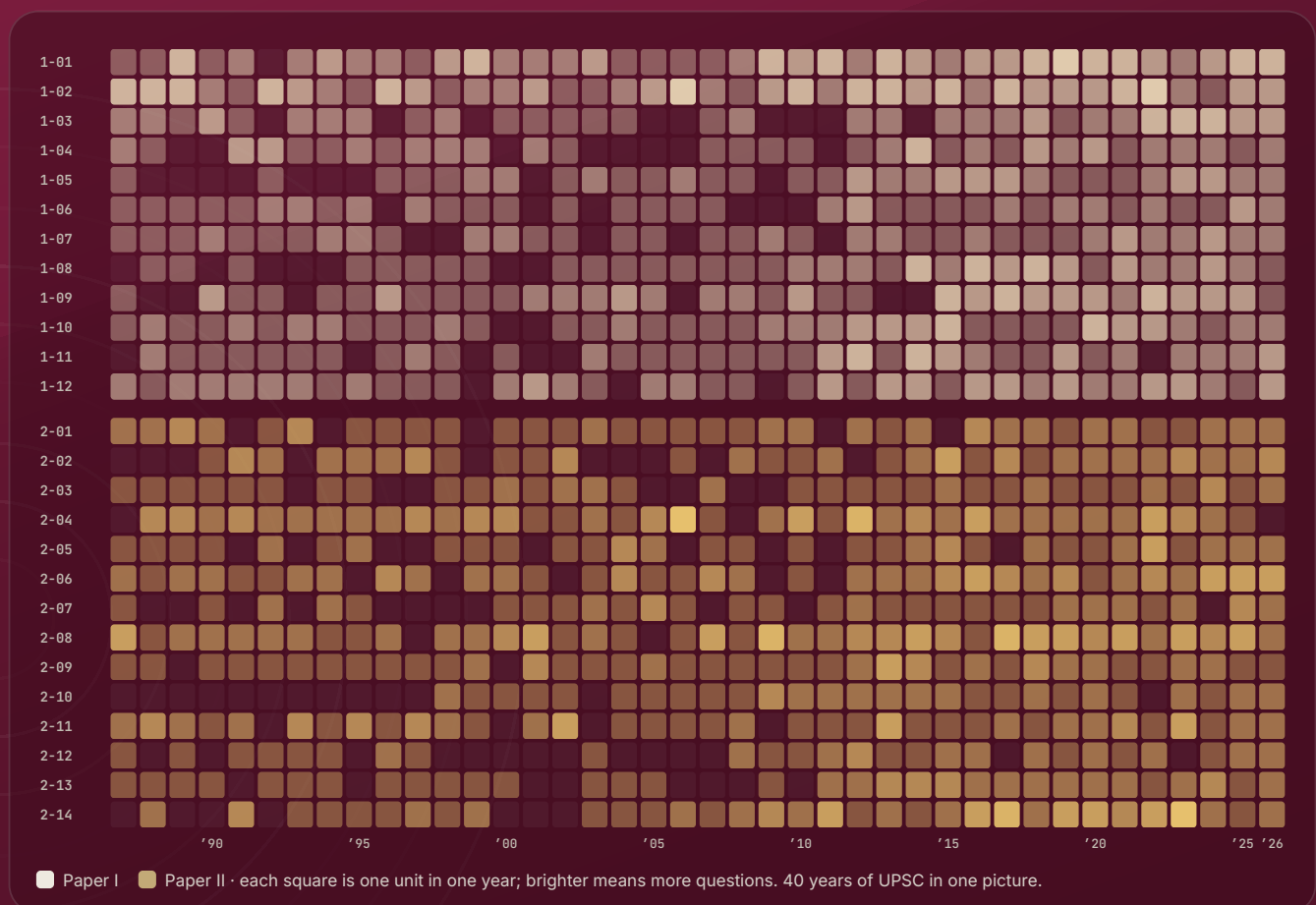
UPSC CSE MAINS · PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL · PAPER I & II

Previous Year Questions

Topic-wise 1987–2026 + Year-wise 2016–2026

All 26 syllabus units of Administrative Theory and Indian Administration, every question since 2016 checked against the official paper with its marks, and a ten-year pattern analysis of what UPSC asks.

COMPILED BY | Arvind KrS



1,643

questions sorted into units

FREE SAMPLE · PYQS 1987–2026, PAGE 1 OF 186

syllabus units, both papers

full papers with marks

10

years of pattern charts

PART A

2017-2026

Ten years of patterns

How many questions UPSC asked from each unit in the last ten papers, and the marks they carried. Each sub-part counts as one question; Q1 and Q5 sub-parts carry 10 marks, the long questions 20, 15 or 10.

560

Questions, 2017-2026 (every sub-part counts as one)

8,000

Printed marks those questions carried

20/26

Units asked in every one of the ten years

36

Questions from the most-asked unit, Introduction

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

- **Most asked:** Introduction (36 questions, 535 marks), Civil Services (35 questions, 475 marks), Significant Issues (33 questions, 465 marks) over ten years.
- **Rising fastest** (2022-26 vs 2017-21): Administrative Behaviour (+8 questions), State Government (+6 questions), Plans and Priorities (+5 questions).
- **Cooling:** Civil Services (-5 questions), Introduction (-4 questions), Development Dynamics (-4 questions). Cooling is not skipping: each of these was still asked in all ten years.
- **Asked least often:** Urban Local Government (8 of 10 years), Administrative Reforms (9 of 10 years), District Administration (9 of 10 years). Even these units drew questions, so no unit is a safe skip.
- **Indian Administration leans on two units:** Civil Services (35 questions), Significant Issues (33 questions) carry the most weight in Paper II, and both reward current examples.



PAPER II · INDIAN ADMINISTRATION · UNIT 08

98 QUESTIONS · 1987-2026

Civil Services

35

questions in the last 10 years

475

marks, 2017-2026

10/10

years asked



SYLLABUS Civil Services: Constitutional position; Structure, recruitment, training and capacity building; Good governance initiatives; Code of conduct and discipline; Staff associations; Political rights; Grievance redressal mechanism; Civil service neutrality; Civil service activism.

2026 2 questions

- 1 Lateral Entry in Government of India has not moved in the intended direction. Explain the reasons. 18
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q5(a)
- 2 Civil services is grappling with severe capacity issues and which is a major bottleneck in implementing ambitious programmes across sectors. Mission Karmayogi can only supplement but not solve the entire capacity constraint. Give your opinion. 20
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q6(a)

2025 4 questions

- 3 Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) does not effectively address local level issues. Give your opinion. 20
Grievance redressal PII Q6(a)
- 4 Do you think 'Aadhaar' initiative has promoted inclusive governance and administrative credibility? Throw light. 20
Good governance initiatives PII Q6(b)
- 5 Assess the role of Government Process Reengineering (GPR) in promoting good governance. 10
Good governance initiatives PII Q7(c)
- 6 Training and capacity building represent different scope and objectives. Explain the key differences. 20
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q8(b)

2024 3 questions

- 7 The constitutional stature provided to the Public Service Commissions accord them the autonomy to work towards fair recruitments. Comment. 10
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q5(a)
- 8 "The neutrality of civil service has become a myth." Comment. 10
Neutrality and activism PII Q5(b)
- 9 What aims and objectives was the Capacity Building Commission established for? Evaluate how far it has come in realising the goals. 10
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q6(c)

2023 4 questions

- 10 "Instead of conflicting, the employer-employee relationship should be one of mutual reliance." Explain. 10
Conduct and discipline PI Q5(e)
- 11 "In career advancement, civil servants are necessitated to political superiors and hence the phenomenon poses the challenges to civil service neutrality." Comment. 15
Neutrality and activism PI Q7(b)
- 12 The district training component of Induction Training of IAS officers requires to be revisited. Examine. 10
Recruitment, training, capacity PII Q5(a)

FREE SAMPLE · PYQS 1987-2026, PAGE 106 OF 186

UPSC CSE MAINS · OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Public Administration

Optional Study Route

The order to study all 26 units of both papers, why each comes where it does, and a week-by-week plan tied to the page numbers of the Complete Notes and to the previous year questions of every unit. Written for a first attempt at the optional.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

27

WEEKS, SIX STUDY DAYS EACH

8

PHASES

3,327

PAGES OF NOTES, MAPPED

1,643

PYQS TO PRACTISE

1

Foundations of the discipline
Weeks 1-4

2

The bridge to India
Weeks 4-6

3

Structures of government
Weeks 6-10

4

People and money
Weeks 11-14

5

Control and reform
Weeks 14-17

6

Development, policy and
local government
Weeks 17-21

7

Security and live issues
Weeks 21-23

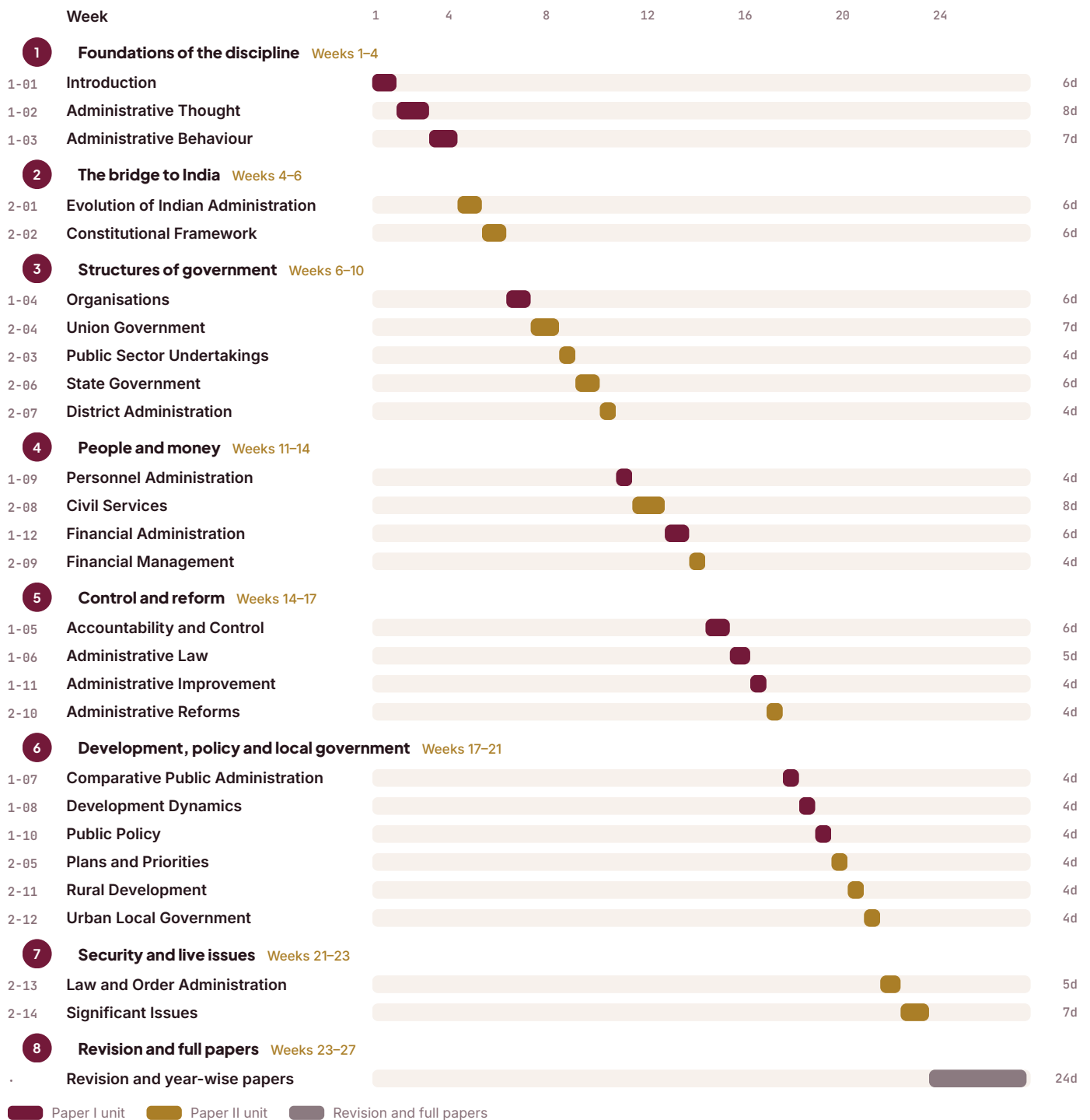
8

Revision and full papers
Weeks 23-27

FREE SAMPLE · STUDY ROUTE, PAGE 1 OF 23

The route at a glance

Every unit in the order you study it, at about 30 pages of notes a day. The days column counts study days: the unit's pages, plus one day for its previous year questions and a quick revision.



How to walk the route

About three hours a day for the optional, six days a week, alongside your GS preparation. The route is built on the Complete Notes: each unit card gives the book and page numbers to read, and the chapters in order.

A STUDY DAY

1

Read the day's pages of notes

2 hours. About 30 pages. Read with a pen: underline the thinker, the concept, the Indian example and the criticism in every section.

2

Write one answer

30 minutes. Pick one previous year question from the chapter you just read and write it, even if the answer is short.

3

Revise

30 minutes. Yesterday's pages, then the pages from seven days ago. Add any new example to your example bank.

HABITS THAT MAKE THE ROUTE WORK

One revision day a week

Use the seventh day to go back over the week's units and to write two full answers against the clock.

Keep two banks

One page of thinkers and one of Indian examples for every unit. They become your revision notes in the last phase.

Unit PYQs on the last day

Read every previous year question of the unit, newest first, and outline three of them before moving on.

Short on time?

Read about 45 pages a day and keep everything else the same: the route then takes roughly 18 weeks plus revision.

READING A UNIT CARD

WEEKS · DAYS	When the unit falls in the route and how many study days it gets.
WHY HERE	Why the unit comes at this point and what it builds on.
READ	The notes book and pages, and the chapters in the order to read them.
PAIR WITH	The unit in the other paper that uses the same ideas.
COLLECT	What to add to your thinker and example banks as you read.
TRY FIRST	The most recent question from the unit, quoted as UPSC set it. Write it on the unit's last day.

WHAT YOU NEED

THE COMPLETE NOTES	The four books whose page numbers are on every unit card. The free unit pages on lotusarise.com have the same notes online.
THE PYQ BOOK	Every question by unit for the last day of each unit, and the full papers for the revision phase.
TWO THIN NOTEBOOKS	A thinker bank and an Indian example bank, one double page per unit. They are your revision notes at the end.
THE SYLLABUS PDF	Keep it open beside the route and tick off each topic as you finish it.

PHASE 4

WEEKS 11–14

PAPER I + PAPER II

4

People and money

Two pairs read back to back: personnel administration with India's civil services, and financial administration with India's financial management. Read together, each pair gives you the theory and the Indian example for the same topic in one sitting.

4 UNITS · 22 STUDY DAYS · 557 PAGES

11

1-09 · PAPER I · UNIT 09

Personnel Administration

Week 11 · 4 days

72 PYQs · 29 in last 10 years

WHY HERE

Recruitment, training, promotion, discipline and ethics: the theory of managing public servants.

READ

Paper I Part B, pages 304–404 (101 pages, 3 chapters), in this order:

- p.305** Recruitment, Training and Promotion: HRD, Lateral Entry, Mission Karmayogi and Pay Commissions
- p.338** Discipline, Appraisal and Employee Relations: Article 311, APAR, Whitleyism and JCM
- p.369** Administrative Ethics: Theories, Dilemmas, Nolan Principles and Indian Frameworks

PAIR WITH

Read immediately before Civil Services, its Indian application. Together they are among the most-asked pair in the optional.

COLLECT

Each personnel process with its Indian practice and a reform proposal (lateral entry, Mission Karmayogi, performance appraisal).

TRY FIRST

"Administrative ethics is an abstract concept, and in practice, is an unresolved dilemma between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. Comment." (2026 · 10 marks)

12

2-08 · PAPER II · UNIT 08

Civil Services

Weeks 11–12 · 8 days

98 PYQs · 35 in last 10 years

WHY HERE

India's civil services: constitutional position, recruitment and training, conduct, neutrality and activism.

READ

Paper II Part B, pages 4–213 (210 pages, 5 chapters), in this order:

- p.5** Civil Services in India: Constitutional Position, All India Services, UPSC and Recruitment
- p.48** Civil Service Training and Capacity Building: LBSNAA, Mid-Career and Mission Karmayogi
- p.90** Good Governance Initiatives and Civil Service Reforms: Performance and Accountability
- p.130** Civil Service Conduct and Discipline: Staff Associations, Political Rights, Grievances
- p.174** Civil Service Neutrality and Activism: Committed Bureaucracy and Whistle-blowing

PAIR WITH

Builds directly on Personnel Administration; neutrality goes back to Weber.

COLLECT

Articles 308–323, committees on the civil services, and current debates: lateral entry, capacity building, political neutrality.

TRY FIRST

"Civil services is grappling with severe capacity issues and which is a major bottleneck in implementing ambitious programmes across sectors. Mission Karmayogi can only supplement but not solve the entire capacity constraint. Give your opinion." (2026 · 20 marks)

UPSC CSE MAINS · PAPER I ↔ PAPER II

Public Administration

The Interlinking Guide

Every syllabus topic connected to the rest of the subject, with the mechanism that joins them, a specific Indian example, real previous year questions and lines you can reproduce in the exam hall.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

182

SYLLABUS TOPICS

518

TOPIC-TO-TOPIC LINKS

436

LINKS ACROSS THE TWO PAPERS

10

THEME WEBS

PAPER I

Administrative Theory

12 units, each linked to the other paper

PAPER II

Indian Administration

14 units, each linked to the other paper

FREE SAMPLE · INTERLINKING GUIDE, PAGE 1 OF 125

PART A

METHOD



The linking system

Six ways to connect any two topics, a four-step method to do it in the exam hall, the tiers of Indian government on one page, and a map of which units link most.

LINK TYPE 1

Theory → Indian practice

Every Paper I concept has an Indian address. State the concept, then show where it works.

E.G. Regulatory authorities (1-04) → TRAI, SEBI and the electricity regulatory commissions as India's regulatory state (2-14).

LINK TYPE 2

Thinker → case

Name the thinker, then test the idea on an Indian case.

E.G. Weber's impersonal official (1-02) → political neutrality under the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968 (2-08).

LINK TYPE 3

Report bridge

A commission or committee that speaks to both topics joins them in one sentence.

E.G. The Second ARC's report on Refurbishing of Personnel Administration links performance appraisal (1-09) to civil service reform (2-08).

LINK TYPE 4

Tier ladder

Follow one function down the tiers of government: Union, State, district, village or city.

E.G. Cabinet Secretariat (2-04) → Chief Secretary (2-06) → District Collector (2-07) → gram panchayat (2-11).

LINK TYPE 5

Paradigm lens

Read one issue through two approaches to show depth.

E.G. Citizen's Charters (1-05) read as NPM (the citizen as customer) and as New Public Service (the citizen as owner) (1-01).

LINK TYPE 6

Law and court bridge

An article, Act or judgment that both topics depend on.

E.G. Article 311 and Union of India v. Tulsiram Patel (1985) join disciplinary procedure (1-09) to the protection of civil servants (2-08).

In this guide: type 1 · 136 links, type 2 · 86 links, type 3 · 71 links, type 4 · 50 links, type 5 · 59 links, type 6 · 116 links.

The 26 × 26 link matrix

How many topic links join each pair of units in this guide. Darker cells are pairs to revise together; the two off-diagonal blocks show Paper I meeting Paper II.

	PAPER I												PAPER II													
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14
1-01 Introduction					3		1						1	3	5	4	2	2	1	8	3	4	5	4	2	4
1-02 Administrative Thought											1		2	2		9		5	3	7	2	1	2	1	3	4
1-03 Administrative Behaviour									2	2						3		1	2	4		3			2	4
1-04 Organisations													1		9	14	2	6	2		2	3	1	4	1	6
1-05 Accountability and Control	3					1							1	7	3	3	2	2	3	6	7	3	5	2	5	6
1-06 Administrative Law					1		1		1					4				1		4		1			1	4
1-07 Comparative Public Administration	1					1							4	2		1	1	2	2	3		4	3	2	3	3
1-08 Development Dynamics													2	3	3	2	6	1	2	2	2	1	7	3	1	1
1-09 Personnel Administration			2			1							2	2	1	3		1	1	22	1	6	1	1	3	6
1-10 Public Policy			2											2	1	1	7	2	3		2	2	4	1		4
1-11 Administrative Improvement		1											1	1		7	2	1		1	5	3	4	2	1	2
1-12 Financial Administration													1		2	1	2	4			14	3	2	3		
2-01 Evolution of Indian Administration	1	2		1	1		4	2	2		1	1		1					2	1			2		1	1
2-02 Constitutional Framework	3	2			7	4	2	3	2	2	1		1			1	1	1		3				1		1
2-03 Public Sector Undertakings	5			9	3			3	1	1		2					1					1				1
2-04 Union Government	4	9	3	14	3		1	2	3	1	7	1		1			8	1	1	1					1	1
2-05 Plans and Priorities	2			2	2		1	6		7	2	2		1	1			2					1	1		
2-06 State Government	2	5	1	6	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	4		1		8	2		2	1	2	1	1	3	1	2
2-07 District Administration	1	3	2	2	3		2	2	1	3			2			1		2			1	2	1	1		
2-08 Civil Services	8	7	4		6	4	3	2	22		1		1	3		1		1			1			1		4
2-09 Financial Management	3	2		2	7			2	1	2	5	14				1		2				2		1		
2-10 Administrative Reforms	4	1	3	3	3	1	4	1	6	2	3	3			1			1	1	1	2			1	1	
2-11 Rural Development	5	2		1	5		3	7	1	4	4	2	2				1	1	2					1		
2-12 Urban Local Government	4	1		4	2		2	3	1	1	2	3		1			1	3	1		1		1			1
2-13 Law and Order Administration	2	3	2	1	5	1	3	1	3		1		1			1		1	1	1		1				3
2-14 Significant Issues	4	4	4	6	6	4	3	1	6	4	2		1	1	1	1		2		4		1		1	3	

THE EIGHT STRONGEST PAIRS

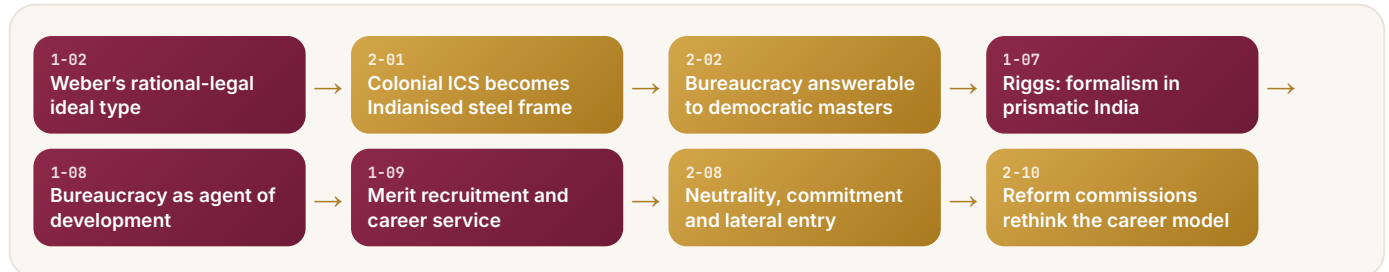
- **1-09** Personnel Administration ↔ **2-08** Civil Services: **22 links**
- **1-12** Financial Administration ↔ **2-09** Financial Management: **14 links**
- **1-04** Organisations ↔ **2-04** Union Government: **14 links**
- **1-04** Organisations ↔ **2-03** Public Sector Undertakings: **9 links**
- **1-02** Administrative Thought ↔ **2-04** Union Government: **9 links**
- **2-04** Union Government ↔ **2-06** State Government: **8 links**
- **1-01** Introduction ↔ **2-08** Civil Services: **8 links**
- **1-11** Administrative Improvement ↔ **2-04** Union Government: **7 links**

02

THEME WEB · 8 UNITS

Bureaucracy from Weber to lateral entry

How Weber's ideal type, carried through a colonial service and Riggsian realities, shapes today's debates on neutrality, commitment, merit and lateral entry.



1-02 Administrative Thought	Weber's ideal type (hierarchy, written rules, merit, career tenure, impersonality) is the template of the Indian civil service. Merton's goal displacement explains red tape, and the Neo-Weberian State tries to keep rule-based administration while serving citizens' needs.
2-01 Evolution of Indian Administration	India's bureaucracy grew from colonial design. The ICS was opened to Indians through competitive examination, the Lee Commission (1924) pressed for faster Indianisation, and its successor, the IAS (1947), is an All India Service under Article 312, carrying the 'steel frame' image forward.
2-02 Constitutional Framework	Democracy asks a Weberian bureaucracy to be accountable without being partisan. Articles 74 and 77 and the Transaction of Business Rules, 1961 make ministers decide and officials advise, the Indian form of the politics-administration relationship.
1-07 Comparative Public Administration	Riggs explained why Weber's model bends in transitional societies. In prismatic India, formalism (the gap between rule and practice) and overlapping of modern offices with caste and kinship ties explain why written procedure and actual behaviour diverge.
1-08 Development Dynamics	Development administration wanted bureaucracy to lead change, not just keep order. The Community Development Programme (1952) made district officers development managers, while Myrdal's 'soft state' (Asian Drama, 1968) warned that weak enforcement would blunt plans.
1-09 Personnel Administration	Personnel administration turns Weber's merit principle into practice: open competition through the UPSC (Articles 315 to 323), foundation training at LBSNAA, and the Kothari Committee's (1976) scheme of a preliminary and a main examination.
2-08 Civil Services	The debate moved from neutrality to commitment to openness: the 'committed bureaucracy' call after the 1969 Congress split, T.S.R. Subramanian v Union of India (2013) on fixed tenure, and lateral entry from 2018, whose August 2024 advertisement was withdrawn.
2-10 Administrative Reforms	Reform bodies kept testing the closed career model. The Hota Committee (2004) and the 2nd ARC's tenth report, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration (2008), pressed for performance management and domain competence at senior levels.

EXAM-HALL LINE

From Weber's ideal type (1-02) to Riggs's formalism (1-07), India's colonial steel frame (2-01) was adapted to democracy (2-02) and development (1-08); merit recruitment (1-09) now meets lateral entry and reform debates (2-08, 2-10).

PYQ

"Examine the lateral entry recruitment in government in the context of Part XIV of the Indian Constitution." (2022 · 2-08 Civil Services)

PAPER II · UNIT 08

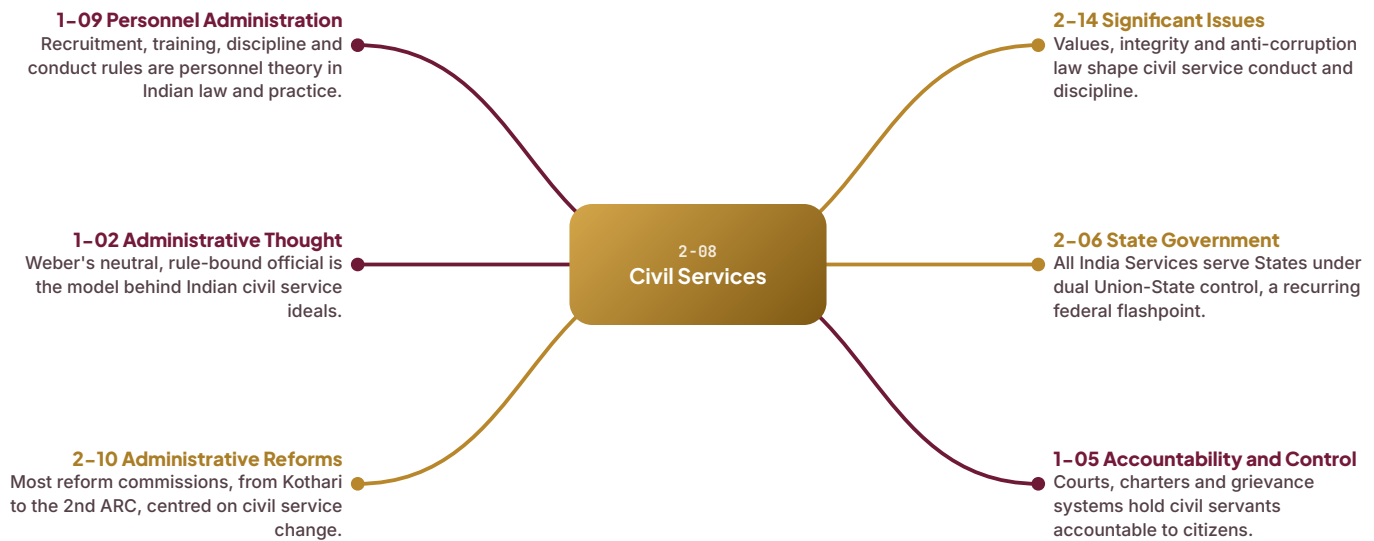
9 TOPICS · 26 LINKS

08

Civil Services

Supplies the people who run every other unit: it applies 1-09 Personnel Administration and 1-02 Weber to Indian services, and feeds 2-06 State Government, 2-07 District Administration and 2-10 Administrative Reforms.

STRONGEST LINKS



TOPIC BY TOPIC

01 Constitutional position

1-09 Personnel Administration

Discipline

LAW AND COURT BRIDGE

HOW

Article 311 builds procedural safeguards into civil service discipline, yet its second proviso lets the government dismiss without inquiry in special cases.

EXAMPLE

Union of India v. Tulsiram Patel (1985) upheld dismissal without inquiry under the second proviso to Article 311(2), leaving only limited judicial review.

1-06 Administrative Law

Administrative Tribunals

LAW AND COURT BRIDGE

HOW

Article 323A moved service disputes from ordinary courts to tribunals, giving civil servants a specialised forum for their constitutional protections.

EXAMPLE

The Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 created the CAT; L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India (1997) held that High Courts can still review its decisions.

2-06 State Government

Union-State administrative, legislative and financial relations

LAW AND COURT BRIDGE

HOW

Article 312 services work for both Union and States, creating dual control that becomes a flashpoint when the two governments are ruled by different parties.

EXAMPLE

The All India Services Act, 1951 and the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 govern deputation of officers; disputes arise when States refuse to release them.

02 Structure, recruitment, training and capacity building

1-09 Personnel Administration

Recruitment

REPORT BRIDGE

HOW

Merit recruitment theory meets Indian practice through the UPSC examination, whose design expert committees have reshaped repeatedly.

EXAMPLE

The Kothari Committee (1976) led to the three-stage Civil Services Examination adopted in 1979; the Satish Chandra, Alagh and Baswan committees later reviewed it.

You have seen 16 of 347 pages

The full kit gives you the whole plan for Public Administration Optional: what UPSC asks from each of the 26 units, the order to study them, and the links between Paper I and Paper II that turn two papers into one subject.

13 pages

Syllabus, mapped: All 26 units and 182 topics, the exam pattern and how Paper I feeds Paper II

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MAINS 2027 EDITION · UPDATED TO UPSC MAINS 2026

Get the full Strategy Kit

Syllabus, PYQs 1987–2026, Study Route and Interlinking Guide: four printable A4 PDFs, one-time payment.

₹236 ~~₹500~~

Download all four PDFs →



SCAN TO OPEN

WANT THE CONTENT TO LINK?



COMPLETE NOTES · PAPER I & II

Public Administration Optional Complete Notes

All 26 units in four A4 books: 81 chapters, 3,339 pages, with the PYQ book.

₹1,180

Get the Notes →