Public Administration as a Mains Optional Subject [Books, Study Plan, Answer Writing Strategy]

**Public Administration as a Mains Optional Subject**

- Public Administration is a very popular optional subject both in UPSC and state public service exams because
- The syllabus is relatively short, requires less mugging (compared to geography or history)
- Syllabus has a lot of overlapping with topics of general studies and Essay (polity, budget, empowerment, good Governance, disaster Management etc)
- Books, material and question papers of public administration are very easy to find in both English and Hindi medium.
- The subject is easy to understand, any graduate from any stream: medical, engineering, science, commerce or arts can get a good grip over it after to 2-3 months of diligent preparation.
- This optional subject is taken in huge number by both English and non-English medium aspirants, so when they get selected for the interview, the “success-rate” looks huge compared to Botany and Medicinal science.

**Challenges of Public Administration**

- Public Administration is an “easy” subject hence any Tom, Dick or Harry can read the books once and (can manage to) attempt the questions. So it takes much effort to shine out from the Mains-crowd in terms of answer quality.
- Lately UPSC has started asking unconventional question, thus making the life a little more difficult. More about it under Back-breaking
Move sub-topic below

- Keep in mind, selecting Public Administration as optional doesn’t automatically make you an IAS- hard work and good luck are essential.

“Before a science can develop principles, it must possess concepts”
– Herbert A. Simon

So let us possess some concepts before developing the Principles of Public Administration Preparation Strategy. (PAPS!)

There are two types of questions in Public Administration (Mains) Exam

**Types of Question: Static vs Dynamic**

**Static Questions**

- They are on the expected lines, directly lifted from the books.
- They don’t require brain application, in the answer sheet you just have to jot down whatever points you’ve prepared (or mugged up.)
- For example: Functions of Cabinet Secretary or Functions of O& M office.
- Problem: even a 7th standard kid can read the book once and understand what it is all about.
- But when you actually answering in 150 words, you have to write down the specific points, you cannot beat around the bush, like you did in the board and university exams by filling up answersheets by garbage and repeated lines.
- And You cannot waste 10-15 minutes in “brainstorming or framing” an answer for this. You just have to mechanically reproduce the information from your mind on the piece of paper.
- The advantage of a static question is, you write down the points and get full marks (unlike Dynamic questions, where the examiner may be expecting for a different angle of answer or opinion altogether)
- Static questions give competitive advantage to rot-learners. For example if total functions of Cabinet Secretary are ten and you write down only 6, while others write 9 or 10, you are a gone case.
That's why always have a crispy “key-words” note ready for static questions. For example
functions of cabinet secretary:

1. Agenda 4 cabinet
2. Advice PM
3. Newspaper case
4. Conscience keep
5. Chief coordinate
6. Select Jt.secy
7. Conference of C/S

—etc.etc. And so on.
^or in the book itself, write down the keywords in the margin of the same page. You can quickly do revision of it. Whenever you pick up the book for the first-time, just finish the notes making simultaneously.
“baad mein kar loonga” (I’ll do it later) approach is dangerous. You’ll have to re-read the entire topic again.

**Type:2 Dynamic Questions**

Dynamic questions are “not directly from the book”. You’ve to pause, brainstorm, think and structure an answer before putting it on paper. Example:

*Kautilya’s Arthashatra bears considerable similarity with features of Weber’s ideal bureaucratic model. -2009 Mains*

Here, First you’ve to brainstorm the ideas, e.g.

- What was Kautilya talking about?
- What was weber talking about?
- How are their ideas related?

And then you structure a good answer out of it.

same way another question

*Explain how McGregor took forward Follet’s ideas in the context of complex organizations -2011*
Again If you’ve done proper revision, you can brainstorm the ideas very quickly else you’ll end up wasting 10-15 minutes in just trying to ‘recall’ what was Weber’s idea? 
IF you start writing the answer immediately without thinking, you’ll end up beating around the bush and then 150 words limit will be over before you can even touch the ‘actual’ question.

**Gemstone Mining from Standard Reference Books**

- Dynamic questions are generally derived from some random sentences given in the standard reference books. (SRB)
- Readymade guidebook and Printed material from coaching class= only copy paste the chief ideas from SRB but cannot do the gem-stone mining.
- So whenever you read a book containing some analytical or philosophical idea about the topic, try to dig gemstones from it, and note it down. Suppose you read 10 books in the span of four months, it is impossible to do another in-depth reading of the same books before 2 weeks of the mains exam. Besides have to prepare general studies and other optional subject. That’s why whenever you are reading any book of public administration, after every paragraph, Try to summarise the idea for any key “gemstone” in one or two sentences, wherever applicable. Consider this example

  *Indicate the milestones in the story of development from Nehruvian model to the Liberalisation Model.*
  *(asked in 2011’s Pub Ad.Mains Paper 1)*

On the first hand it looks like a static question, just list down changing approaches of five-year plans over the years, then LPG etc. But (in my opinion) This question is lifted from Mohit Bhattacharya’s New Horizones of Public Administration ,Chapter 10 :Development Administration. I’m copy-pasting the sentence from his book:

  *In the Fifties, when development set out on its journey, The search was on for goods and things. Roads, buildings, dams, fertilizer, wheat, rice, these are the targets; development meant to direct it planned activities to produce or construct these things.*

  *(journey=>milestones...is it clicking your brain? this is indirectly ‘lifted’ question by UPSC)*
(Milestones hinted by Mohit in the same chapter)

- 1950s: Aeroplane perspective
- 1970s: Helicopter vision
- 1980s: Steamroller approach
- 1990s: Panchayati Raj.

Then you dress it up with Changing approaches in Five years plans etc. and The Impact on examiner, will be totally different. Another example

_Incrementalist paradigm posits a conservative tendency in public policy making._ 15m (2011 Mains Paper 1)

It is Directly lifted sentence from Nicholas Henry’s book: Public Administration and Public Affairs
Chapter 10 : Understanding and improving public Policy.

Note: Some Online question papers have typing mistake: “Instrumentalist” paradigm. Actually UPSC asked about “Incrementalist” paradigm, download the question papers from original site www.UPSC.gov.in only!

### Back-breaking Move of UPSC™

- A trademark move of UPSC to break the backs of coaching factories and senior players.
- UPSC Chairman has an affinity for ‘first timers’, as said in an interview. 😞
- Now what does this mean? If UPSC asks a very routine static question from Taylor, Fayol or Weber, the senior player who has been in this business (with or without coaching) for 2-3 or more years, has lot of competitive advantage over a newcomer / first timer.
- The strategy adopted by coaching factories of Delhi is something like this:
- Heavy emphasis on Static topics of syllabus (Thinkers, Theories, personnel, Financial administration et al) combined with tonnes of mock-test answer writing preparation. Their preparation is very ‘professional’ : Ignore Public Policy and Development
administration, you can take it out in ‘options’ and concentrate heavy on personnel, thinkers etc. Besides their ‘assumption’: examiners don’t give enough marks from public policy / DA questions.

- For a seasoned veteran out of these factories, routine static question paper = walk in the park, easy 150+/300 marks.
- So lately UPSC has stopped giving importance to the static topics or “HOT” current affairs and started heavy on Development administration, Public Policy etc. And even from the core topics they are asking very unusual questions.
- 2009, 2010, 2011 UPSC has increased the intensity of back-breaking move, for both public administration and general studies paper.

**Innocent Bystanders**

- Those small town candidates who themselves don’t goto Delhi for coaching but follow their printed postal material and method of preparation, which they learned from some xyz friend who went to Delhi earlier.
- What happens to Innocent Bystander in Action movies? They get killed during the car chase of hero and villain.
- Whether it is Public Administration, or general studies, prelims or mains, innocent bystanders always suffer the most. Some of you might have first-hand experience of this.

**Notes making**

- As I said earlier any Tom, Dick or Harry around can attempt 300/300 marks in the question paper, even after reading the books for only single time. Truckload of Juntaa from the coaching factories of Delhi, mug up the notes of Vajiram, Mohanti, Bhavani Singh, Sunil Gupta et al and paste everything verbatim from those notes, in the answersheets.
- The examiners check dozens of answersheets in few hours, gives below-average marks to these routine so your answers should be sparkling, unique, must stand out in the crowd, or you will also
There won’t be any MCQs in the mains exam, your marks will depend on the content, quality, width and depth of your descriptive answers.

Your vocabulary, command over language, way of expressing your idea, your handwriting- everything matters.

**Excuses Excuses**

Of course Coaching ‘sirs’ will tell everything that a “Customer” wants to hear:

Oh you attempted only 10 marks worth questions in CSAT Prelims out of 200 questions?
Don’t worry Betaa, cut off will be less than 5 marks! So come join my optional subject coaching!
Your handwriting is bad? No problem! it doesn’t matter.
Command over language doesn’t matter, you don’t need to maintain notes, you don’t need to remember the thinker-quotes, just read from my printed material. etc. etc. etc.

But think for a moment: a rough estimate (not looking for statistical debates here)

12,000 candidates clear preliminary exam, 5000 would have opted for Public Administration, 2000 of them would be Senior players who’re already dead tired giving attempt after attempt, really hungry for success and have learned from their past mistakes.

They don’t make such excuses, they never shy away from hard work. They keep making and updating their notes from every possible current affairs source or reference book possible. They keep revising it, they keep practicing mock-answer-writing at home at regular intervals. They hang charts of quotes, thinkers, factual data in their study table and room. They maintain separate pocket-diaries for revision of “easy to forget points” topics such as NPM, PCA etc.

I’m talking about “THE” professionals. If you don’t work hard, someone else will and he’ll become the topper while you fill the application form for the next year’s preliminary exam.
When you maintain your own handwritten notes, you are improving your handwriting passively and automatically. Besides in Mains you’ve to write for 6 hours each day. (each descriptive paper is of 3 hours, and 2 papers per day). The speed and elegance in handwriting can only come through practice. Of course you don’t need to become a calligrapher, but the totally negative attitude towards improvement that “Although I’ve really pathetic handwriting but I won’t do anything to even slightly improve it, Yeh Muj se Nahi Hogaa!” = know that there is always someone with better handwriting and better knowledge than yours.

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**Bogus Postal Courses**

Don’t waste your money in postal courses. Each and everyone of them is mere rephrasing and copy pasting the sentences from IGNOU’s booklets and some random data from internet articles here and there- of course they too have a family to feed, I understand but they demand 7 to 12 thousand rupees and even more, for such “postal courses” – I’m against that robbing in broad day light. I suggest you Better consult the original source itself.

Some of these ‘readymade’ postal courses and printed class notes, intentionally skip the difficult sounding concepts

for example in Max Weber/ bureaucracy topic, they start directly from The Types of Authority (Traditional, Charismatic, Legal ), 10 characters of bureaucracy in “bulleted” points and fancy looking tables. The noob amateur player thinks

> Yes I got full command over this topic!! Public Administration is so Easy because of ***** Sirs’s notes! I’ve learned EVERYTHING!!

No you haven’t. The Real Max Weber starts way before the types of authority: Development of money economy, emergency of mass-democracy, protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. This is the reason why you’ve to read the standard reference books from well known authors, and not some chopshop coaching class. This is not a board or university exam, You don’t have to get a ‘First class’, You’ve to get in the merit list. Answers require depth.

To finish the syllabus and preparation of Public Administration in a limited time period of 2 or 3 months, you will have to do a very
systematic and parallel Topicwise study. First, get the tools ready, because plan requires Simultaneous parallel study and notesmaking. Move in this way: (similar approach for Paper II)

**Integration Strategy**

- Always keep Question papers and Syllabus in front of you.
- Read M.Laxmikanth > IGNOU->Prasad->Mohit ,Nicholas, Stephen etc, in that order.
- Note down the current affairs related to Administration, Government Policy, (the ‘Yearbook’ stuff)
- in paper one (theory): add the examples of paper 2 (Indian Administration)+ current affairs
- in paper two (Indian Administration): add the principles of paper one (theory) + current affairs.
- For Public Administration Syllabus Click Me
- All questions of last 33 years Click Me
- To download the Public Administration Notes of previous years’ Topper Mr.Om Kasera, Click ME

Let me Elaborate about the Books now

**The Essential Books and Studyplan for Public Administration (Mains)**

Laxmi

Public Administration : For the UPSC by M.Laxmikanth (TataMcGrawhill)

(For Hindi Medium) Lok Prashasan by M.Laxmikanth (TataMcGrawhill)
Yes, it is the same legendary M.Laxmikanth who wrote *that book on Indian Polity*
- In the pre-CSAT era, there was GS+ Optional Subject paper (120 questions worth 300 marks).
- M.Laxmikanth’s book was “THE BASE BOOK”. You read the book and you get overall idea of entire public administration.
- And from that “base”, you build up and expand your knowledge and understanding from IGNOU, Mohit, Nicholas etc.
- It helps to link up the topics: readymade quick-revision of all thinkers, and personnel administration etc static topics can be done from his book.
- Donot sit to finish the entire book at once. as I told you: move from Topic to Topic. For Example
  - Chapter #3 of Laxmi: Theories of Administration
    - Finish and Move to
  - Administration Thinkers by Prasad and Prasad
    - Finish and Move to
  - IGNOU MA Booklet MPA_012 Module
    - Finish and ultimately read “the” Gita: New Horizones of Public Administration.
  - Same way
  - Topic: Introduction, Nature and Scope of Public Administration
    - Laxmi > Nicholas Henry > IGNOU MPA_011 >Mohit.

**IGNOU BA and MA Booklets**
- They can be downloaded in PDF format, from for free after registering a free account using your email id. (Nothing piracy or scamgame, everything is legit)
Note: IGNOU’s Egyankosh.ac.in server is sometimes under maintenance, so I’ve compiled the material and uploaded in a separate article: click me

But Why am I recommending IGNOU?

**IGNOU= Indira Gandhi National Open University**

- UPSC’s syllabus of Public Administration, political science, History etc all lifted fully or partially from IGNOU’s respective BA, MA courses.
- Their Distance Learning program coursebooklets, help tremendously in doing self-study at home because they’ve written it after going through various well known national and international authors by themselves. Thus saving your time from having to manually go through OG Glen Stahl, Nigro n Nigro, M.J.K. Thavaray, Rumki Basu, RK Sapru etc.
- At the end of each topic, demo questions are given and model-answerkey is provided.
- You don’t need to consult separate books for public policy, e-governance or disaster Management because all covered under IGNOU’s MA module.
- Same way Personnel, Development administration, Indian Administration etc in BA Module.
- Besides all these so called famous and expensive ‘postal-courses’ or printed notes of Mohanty, Sunil Gupta etc are mere rephrasing of IGNOU coursebooklets. Better use the original source for free.
- IGNOU itself provides Gemstone mining for example Question in Mains paper-I, 2009

“Taylor’s contribution was not a set of general principles but a set of operating procedures that could be employed in each concrete situation to secure their application.” -2009 Mains Paper -I

Now where is the ‘set of operating procedure in concrete situation?’

IGNOU MPA_012 Unit#4, has the concrete situation specific procedures...
advocated by Taylor:

- A worker suited to handle pig iron as a regular occupation, should be so stupid and phlegmatic that he’s mental make-up resembles that of an ox. [Selection of Workers]
- Influence of group makes a person produce less, the female workers are prone to such personal pressures and they should be separated from each other in such a way that verbal interaction impossible. [Work must be individual activity, not group activity.]

Prasad

Administrative Thinkers by Prasad and Prasad

In Hindi, same book under title Prashasnik Chintak by Prasad and Prasad.
You must read Prasad and Prasad’s book multiple times until you know the thinkers, their ideas and their quotes like the back of your hand. In exams, sometimes they just give you a sentence (Quote) of a thinker and will ask you to discuss it.

In the beginning, you will find memorising the quotes very difficult, but revision is the key. Always remember, if you don’t do it, someone else will, and get more marks compared to you.

You don’t have to do quotes of all random thinkers appearing everywhere but those in the syllabus: especially big-thinkers = Taylor, Fayol, Weber, Wilson, Follet, Mayo, Barnard, Herbert A. Simon.

Prasad’s books provides biography and theory of a thinker. IGNOU’s BA booklets will add some more factual data in it. IGNOU’s MA booklets (MPA_012) will provide advanced philosophical and managerial analysis of a particular theory. And lastly Mohit Bhattacharya’s book will give the crux of the matter like Gita.

For every thinker You should make a personal note out of it, preferably in following order
- name of the thinker
- books written by him
  - Quotes
- main ideas of his theory
- relevance in Current Era
- His critiques
- compare and contrast with other thinkers (e.g Taylor vs Follet)

Do not confine the ideas of these thinkers to paper-I only.
- For example, Henry Fayol advocated for “centralisation”, how is it relevant in context of Panchayati Raj (paper-II)?
- “Material rewards are ineffective beyond the subsistence level”, said Chester Bernard, so try to relate it with Personnel Management (paper-I), Pay-Commissions (Paper-II) and so on.
- Try to think with this mindset and you will be able to frame high-quality answers for the Mains exam.

Make sure to read even the "Notes and References" Given at the end of each chapter in Prasad and Prasad.
- For example: Mary Parker Follet gave three ways to solve conflict = (CID) Compromise, Integration and Domination.
- Wait, there is a fourth method too, “Crowd Manipulation”, given in the Notes at the end of her chapter.
- There are few other books with the same theme, for example S.R.Maheshwari’s book on Administrative thinkers
- But Prasad is famous, standard, old, time-tested and trusted by Toppers and losers alike.
  - So use Prasad instead of doing adventures with other books.

Mohit Bhattacharya

New Horizons of Public Administration by Mohit Bhattacharya

Same book in Hindi, under title Lok Prashasan Ke Naye Aayam by Mohit Bhattacharya
In terms of size, it is the smallest of all Public Administration books but otherwise considered to be the toughest and most important book for public administration. Mohit for Public Administration, is what D.D. Basu is for Indian Constitution. What will be your expression if you started reading Gita without knowing the back-story of Mahabharat?

Gita is a very tough book, It says I cannot be killed by weapon or burned by fire? But How is it possible? This is so tough. It’s not going in my head.

Same is the case with Bhattacharya’s book. To appreciate the finesse and depth of his ideas, one must be totally aware (and well versed) in the routine topics of Public Administration syllabus. That’s why always start with M.Laxmikanth’s book on Public Administration, then read IGNOU BA booklet, then MA booklets and finally in the end read the sacred book of Mohit Bhattacharya. Same way to understand D.D. Basu, one should first go through M.Laxmikanth’s book on Polity.

Mohit’s book must be read multiple times after an interval of few weeks, Because everytime you read it, same lines will give you a totally new viewpoint and gemstone.

In the Pre-CSAT era, it was GS+ Optional Subject paper (120 questions worth 300 marks). And out of those 120 questions, 8-12 used to come out from Mohit’s book. In older mains, UPSC would lift statements directly from his book and ask you to comment on it. It was a sacred book then, it is a sacred book now.

Any JBPS/Noob/Lord Curzon picks up Public Administration as an optional subject after hearing that it is a ‘scoring subject’.

When such juntaa reads Mohit, they find it difficult, Juntaa: Yaar kuch samaj mein nahi aa rahaa. Mohit is boring.

Coaching class “Sir”: koi baat nahi betaa, Forget Mohit. Aa jaao, mera Rs. 5000/ 7000/ 12000 kaa readymade study-material aur Nazar Suraksha Kavach (नजर सुरक्षा कवच) lelo!! Bedaa paar ho jaayega. ^A grave Mistake that will lead you to your grave. Mohit Must not be ignored.
Not available in Hindi Medium but should be read by Hindi aspirants as well.

• Nicholas Henry’s book covers Evolution of Public Administration, Forces of Organisation, Leadership theories, Budget Types, Public Policy etc. in a thorough manner. In Pre-CSAT era, serious players would consult his book specifically for prelim questions about Budget types.

• Since he’s a famous author, Sometimes statements directly lifted from his book example

    Incrementalist paradigm posits a conservative tendency in public policy making. 15m (2011 Mains Paper 1)

• You don’t have to read his entire book but only the chapters related to our syllabus.

• Syllabus is given in official UPSC CSAT-2012 notification. You can download the pdf file link is on the top navigation bar of my site.

- Stephen Robbins is For Administrative Behaviour topics: leadership, communication, motivational theories etc.
- Most of the books even IGNOU booklets stop after Maslow, Herzberge’s motivational theories and don’t talk much about modern motivational theories.
- But Stephen’s book covers them with charts, diagrams and examples.
- In Pre-CSAT era prelims, 3-4 questions used to come from his book.
- His ideas on organisational design, communication, motivation, hierarchy, leadership, performance appraisal etc. can be applied and linked to other questions in Paper-I and II. so that way it indirectly helps you to frame better answers.
- His book is written in very easy language, barely 350 pages, can be read like a storybook and finished within 7-10 days.

Apart from this, 2nd ARC report. Reading of Yojana, Kurukshetra Magazines etc.

List of Core books/Study-material for Public Administration (Mains)

Can purchase these books online safely with Flipkart by clicking links below, no Credit card needed, pay cash on Delivery only. Delivery in 2-3 businessdays.

English Medium

- Administrative Thinkers by Prasad and Prasad
- Essentials Of Organizational Behavior by Stephen Robbins
- Public Administration And Public Affairs by Nicholas Henry
- Public Administration : For the UPSC by M.Laxmikanth (TataMcgrawhill)
- Indian Polity by M.Laxmikanth (TataMcgrawhill)
- IGNOU’s B.A. Booklets in English (Free Download)
- IGNOU’s M.A. Booklets in English (FREE Download)
- Reports of 2nd Administration Reforms Commission in English (Free Download)
- Yojana Magazines in English (free download)
- Newspaper (Indian Express/Hindu) for Current affairs related to Public Administration.

**Hindi Medium**

- Lok Prashasan Ke Naye Aayam (Hindi) by Mohit Bhattacharya
- Prashasnik Chintak (Administrative Thinkers) by Prasad and Prasad
- Buy Lok Prashasan by M.Laxmikanth (TataMcgrawhill)
- IGNOU’s B.A. Booklets in Hindi (free download)
- IGNOU’s M.A. Booklets in Hindi (free download)
- Reports of 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission in Hindi
- Yojana Magazines in Hindi (free download)
- Newspaper (Indian Express/Hindu) for Current affairs related to Public Administration
- Following books not available in in the Hindi medium, but should be read and notes made in Hindi language
- Public Administration And Public Affairs by Nicholas Henry
- Essentials Of Organizational Behavior by Stephen Robbins
Non-English Non-Hindi Medium Aspirants
(Gujarati, Punjabi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu..)
You can download Yojana Magazine in your mother-tounge for free
First You need to build the vocabulary and sentence formation to write formal answers in your language.
For example you can’t write “Public Administration naa principles” in Gujarati fonts in your answersheet. You’ve to be specific in your choice of words, it is “Jaaher Vahivat naa siddhanto” (જાહેર વહીવટ ના સિદ્ધાંતો)

- To get the vocabulary, first get some cheap (bogus) readymade guidebooks/ coaching material for State PSC exams for Public Administration. Read them, understand the language formation and vocabulary. Then read the standard reference books (Prasad, Mohit etc) in Hindi /English language, and note down the gem stones in your notes, in your mother tongue.
- Some Small town candidates studying in isolation- make a mistake. They don’t touch the Standard Reference books (SRB) at all , thinking that they’re only competing with their own Gujarati / Marathi fellows only so they rely only on readymade State PSC guidebooks and printed material of local coaching classes.
- But you must not forget that there are always some ‘senior-players’ in your own medium and state, who have made notes out of SRB and writing better answers than yours.
- Never underestimate the competition.
- Besides your papers will be checked by a university professor who himself would have gone through the SRBs, not some jholaa-chaap study-material and guidebooks that passes around in State PSC exams hence he’d be expecting a certain level and depth in your answers for IAS exam.

The administrative man cannot pursue all possible alternatives, cannot predict all possible consequences, he, instead of attempting to arrive at optimal solutions, makes a choice with with relatively simple rule of thumb that does not make impossible demands upon his capacity for thought.
Since he cannot maximise, he settlers down with ‘Satisficing’ : the choice of a course of action which is satisfactory or good enough.
- Since you’re an Administrative man, you cannot ‘Maximize’, you’ve to settle by ‘satisficing’.
- Besides most of the gemstones given in them are covered in BA, MA booklets of IGNOU already. To be Continued

Source: Mrunal

Source: xaam