

SHIVOM ERA IAS ACADEMY

Excellence in Civil Services Preparation · Agra, Uttar Pradesh

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES MAINS EXAMINATION

GENERAL STUDIES — PAPER IV (Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude)

Time Allowed: 3 Hours

Maximum Marks: 250

Total Questions: 20

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. There are 20 questions. Section A has 12 theory questions; Section B has 4 case studies.
2. All questions are compulsory.
3. Section A: Questions carry 10 marks each; answer in approximately 150 words.
4. Section B: Case Studies carry 25 marks each; answer sub-parts as directed.
5. Content, not length, will be rewarded. Avoid padding or repetition.
6. Answers must demonstrate ethical reasoning, not mere description.
7. Do not write anything outside the answer box.

SECTION A — THEORY QUESTIONS (10 Marks each | ~150 words)

Q1.

Ethics has both absolute and relative dimensions. Explain this statement with reference to the tension between universal moral principles and cultural relativism. How should a civil servant navigate this tension in a diverse society like India?

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q2.

Attitude shapes behaviour, but behaviour can also reshape attitude. Examine the role of emotional intelligence in cultivating a positive, service-oriented attitude in public officials, and discuss how cognitive biases can subvert ethical decision-making.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q3.

Mahatma Gandhi's ethical framework, rooted in Satya and Ahimsa, offers enduring lessons for public service. Critically examine the relevance of Gandhian ethics in contemporary governance with specific examples.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q4.

John Rawls' 'Veil of Ignorance' and Amartya Sen's 'Capability Approach' offer contrasting but complementary frameworks for justice. Compare their core assumptions and examine their practical implications for social policy in India.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q5.

Public service is not merely an occupation but a moral vocation. Examine the foundational values — integrity, impartiality, empathy, and accountability — that distinguish public service from private employment, and discuss how these values are tested in practice.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q6.

Conflict of interest in public office is a structural risk that cannot be eliminated but must be managed. Examine the forms that conflict of interest takes in Indian governance and evaluate the adequacy of existing safeguards.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q7.

Whistleblowing in public institutions involves a direct conflict between loyalty to the organization and the duty to the public interest. Examine the ethical justification for whistleblowing and critically evaluate India's legal protection framework for whistleblowers.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q8.

Corruption is not merely an economic problem but a moral failure with deep social consequences. Examine the philosophical underpinnings of corruption and critically assess India's anti-corruption architecture including Lokpal, CVC, and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q9.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has moved from philanthropy to a mandatory governance obligation in India. Examine the ethical foundations of CSR and critically evaluate whether mandated CSR under the Companies Act 2013 achieves genuine social good or merely compliance.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q10.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as more critical than cognitive intelligence for effective leadership in public administration. Examine the components of EI as defined by Goleman and discuss how each component contributes to ethical governance.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q11.

Probity in governance is not just about avoiding corruption — it encompasses transparency, accountability, and a commitment to the public good. Examine the institutional and individual dimensions of probity and discuss how it can be cultivated as an organizational culture in the civil services.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q12.

The distinction between 'legal' and 'ethical' is fundamental to understanding the moral responsibilities of a civil servant. Examine situations where a legally permissible action may be ethically impermissible, and discuss how an IAS officer should navigate such dilemmas.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

SECTION B — CASE STUDIES (25 Marks each)**Q13. CASE STUDY**

You are a District Collector. A major infrastructure project — a dam that will provide irrigation to drought-prone areas benefiting 2 lakh farmers — requires the displacement of 5,000 tribal families from their ancestral forest land. The project has all statutory clearances. The tribal communities have not given their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) as required under the Forest Rights Act and PESA. Your superior has instructed you to proceed with land acquisition, citing the 'larger public interest.' The tribal leaders have approached you directly, expressing fear of cultural annihilation and citing broken promises from previous projects. The project contractor is reportedly connected to a senior political figure. A local NGO has threatened to file a PIL.

- (a) Identify the ethical issues and competing values in this situation. (8 marks)
- (b) What immediate steps would you take, and why? (9 marks)
- (c) How would you balance developmental imperatives with the rights and dignity of the tribal community? (8 marks)

(25 Marks)

Q14. CASE STUDY

You are a senior IPS officer heading the cybercrime division of a state police force. During an investigation into online financial fraud, your team discovers that a popular social media influencer with 10 million followers has been running a sophisticated investment scam targeting middle-class families. Your investigation also uncovers that a senior bureaucrat in the Finance Ministry has been receiving kickbacks to ignore complaints against this influencer. When you prepare to arrest the influencer, you receive an unofficial phone call from the Minister's office asking you to 'go slow' on the case. Your immediate superior asks you to submit a diluted report. Simultaneously, a journalist contacts you, claiming to have evidence of the cover-up and threatening to publish the story in 24 hours.

- (a) What are the ethical dilemmas you face as an officer of integrity in this situation? (8 marks)
- (b) Evaluate the courses of action available to you, including their ethical and practical consequences. (9 marks)
- (c) How would you uphold your constitutional duty while protecting your career and the integrity of the investigation? (8 marks)

(25 Marks)

Q15. CASE STUDY

You are the Principal of a government medical college. Your institution is severely understaffed — only 60% of sanctioned faculty positions are filled, infrastructure is inadequate, and the hostel facilities for MBBS students are in poor condition. Despite repeated representations, the Health Department has not released funds. A student delegation informs you that a private medical college nearby offers superior facilities, prompting several students to demand transfers. An RTI activist has filed an application seeking details of fund utilization. Meanwhile, a local politician pressures you to admit a student who narrowly missed the merit cutoff, hinting at discretionary financial support to the college if you comply. You discover that a subordinate staff member has been falsifying attendance records.

- (a) Identify all the ethical issues embedded in this scenario. (8 marks)
- (b) How would you prioritize and address each issue, and what governance reforms would you recommend? (9 marks)
- (c) Discuss the role of personal integrity and institutional courage in navigating this complex situation. (8 marks)

(25 Marks)

Q16. CASE STUDY

You are a newly posted IAS officer as the CEO of a district-level Zila Panchayat. You discover that a large proportion of MGNREGS funds over the past three years have been siphoned through fake muster rolls, with collusion between local elected representatives, junior officials, and a private contractor. The beneficiaries — mostly Dalit and tribal labourers — have not received their full wages. When you begin an internal inquiry, you face overt hostility from the local MLA, who has significant political influence. Two junior officials who cooperated with your inquiry are suddenly transferred. You also find that a senior colleague who had earlier posted in this district had filed a complaint about these irregularities but was silenced. Your own transfer orders arrive shortly after you begin the probe.

- (a) What ethical principles are at stake, and what does this situation reveal about systemic corruption? (8 marks)
- (b) What steps would you take before and after receiving the transfer orders to ensure accountability? (9 marks)
- (c) Reflect on the role of courage, perseverance, and systemic reform in fighting entrenched corruption. (8 marks)

(25 Marks)

— END OF QUESTION PAPER —

MODEL ANSWER OUTLINES (Selected Questions)

Q13 — Case Study: Dam Project & Tribal Displacement (25 marks)

- Ethical issues: development vs. rights, FPIC violation, political pressure, rule of law vs. expediency
- Values in conflict: utilitarian calculus (2 lakh farmers) vs. deontological rights of 5,000 tribals
- Immediate steps: halt acquisition, conduct FPIC process, verify clearances, document political pressure
- Legal framework: Forest Rights Act 2006, PESA 1996, LARR Act 2013 — all require consent
- Balance: propose R&R; package co-designed with tribal communities; explore alternative dam sites
- Systemic lesson: 'larger public interest' cannot be defined without including affected communities
- Conclusion: An ethical officer must be a bridge between development and dignity, not a tool of either

Q8 — Corruption: Philosophical & Institutional Dimensions (10 marks)

- Philosophical roots: erosion of virtue ethics, breakdown of public trust, normalization of dishonesty
- Corruption as moral failure: corrupts both the giver and the receiver; undermines public duty
- India's architecture: Lokpal Act 2013, CVC, CBI, CAG, RTI — institutional overview
- Gaps: Lokpal appointment delays, CBI autonomy issues, low conviction rates under PC Act
- Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act 2018: bribe-giver also liable — positive reform
- Conclusion: Institutional reform must be paired with ethical education and a culture of integrity

Q16 — Case Study: MGNREGS Fraud & Transfer Orders (25 marks)

- Ethical principles: integrity, courage, accountability, justice for marginalized beneficiaries
- Systemic issue: collusion across political-administrative-contractor nexus; whistleblower suppression
- Before transfer: secure all evidence, submit detailed inquiry report to higher authorities and CVC
- After transfer: file complaint with Anti-Corruption Bureau, approach CAG if funds misused
- Legal options: IPC, Prevention of Corruption Act, SC/ST Atrocities Act for victim labourers
- Institutional reform: geo-tagged muster rolls, direct benefit transfer for MGNREGS wages
- Reflection: Transfer is not defeat — documented evidence outlives postings; integrity is its own legacy

EXAMINER'S NOTE — What Earns 7+ / 10 in GS IV

ETHICAL VOCABULARY: Use precise terms — deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics, integrity, probity.

THINKER REFERENCES: Cite Gandhi, Rawls, Kant, Aristotle, Kautilya where relevant — but apply, don't just mention.

CASE STUDIES: Structure answer as: Ethical issues identified → Options evaluated → Decision justified → Systemic lesson.

AVOID MORALIZING: Examiners reward practical ethical reasoning, not preachy platitudes.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY: Show the officer as a moral agent — not a passive rule-follower.

CONCLUSION: Every answer must end with a forward-looking ethical insight or institutional recommendation.