

SCHEME FOR CULTIVATING EARLY FOUNDATIONS: THE IMPERATIVE OF PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE UPSC EXAM FROM A YOUNG AGE

In the realm of competitive examinations, the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) exam stands as the epitome of meritocracy and excellence. It serves as the gateway to some of the most prestigious administrative positions in the country, offering individuals the opportunity to contribute significantly to nation-building and societal progress. While the journey to cracking the UPSC exam is arduous and demanding, there exists a compelling need to initiate the preparation of students from a young age. This proactive approach not only enhances their chances of success but also nurtures a holistic development conducive to effective leadership and public service.

First and foremost, early exposure to the intricacies of the UPSC exam instills a sense of aspiration and purpose in young minds. By familiarizing themselves with the exam pattern, syllabus, and expectations from an early age, students can chart a well-defined path towards their career goals. Such clarity of purpose fosters determination, resilience, and a disciplined work ethic, qualities indispensable for navigating the rigorous demands of the UPSC preparation journey.

Moreover, preparing students at a young age for the UPSC exam cultivates a broad and interdisciplinary knowledge base. The UPSC syllabus encompasses diverse subjects ranging from history and geography to economics and current affairs. Initiating preparation during formative years allows students to delve deeper into these subjects, fostering a comprehensive understanding of societal dynamics, governance structures, and national and international affairs. This multifaceted knowledge equips them not only for the UPSC exam but also for a myriad of professional pursuits, enriching their intellectual acumen and analytical prowess along the way.

Furthermore, early preparation for the UPSC exam nurtures essential skills vital for effective leadership and public service. The UPSC examination evaluates not only academic knowledge but also critical thinking, communication abilities, and ethical integrity. By engaging in structured preparation from a young age, students hone these skills progressively, thereby laying a robust foundation for their future roles as administrators, policymakers, and change-makers. Additionally, exposure to the values of empathy, social responsibility, and ethical leadership inherent in the UPSC syllabus instills a sense of civic duty and altruism, shaping students into conscientious citizens committed to the betterment of society.

The imperative of preparing students at a young age for the UPSC exam transcends mere academic pursuits; it embodies a holistic approach towards grooming future leaders and catalysts of positive change. By instilling aspiration, fostering interdisciplinary knowledge, and nurturing essential skills, early preparation empowers students to embark on the UPSC journey with confidence and conviction. More importantly, it imbues in them a steadfast commitment to serving the nation and upholding the values of integrity, equity, and social justice, thus heralding a brighter and more inclusive future for generations to come.

I. SELECTION PROCESS OF ASPIRANTS

1. Target Group : Entry - Exit

- i. The target group shall be at least 10 aspirants who had just passed their HSLC examination and continuing education within Aizawl and till their completion of HSSLC Examination.
- ii. After passing their HSSLC Examinations, the selected aspirants' performance shall be re-evaluated to ensure that the students had not lost their focus. This measure will prevent the government from continuously depleting its resources without purpose.
- iii. The students shall have the option to withdraw and exit the programme at any point of time if s/he had lost interest.
- iv. The scheme shall be put in force till the government decides necessary.

2. Advertisement and Application from selected candidates/young aspirants:

- i. The advertisement shall be issued by Mizoram Board of School Education in the name of the Secretary, MBSE.
- ii. The opportunity shall be advertised widely through various channels including social media, educational websites, newspapers, and community groups.
- iii. Cut off marks for the first stage of the application shall be determined by the Mizoram Board of School Education. The number of students may be fixed to a maximum of 500 so that exam can be conducted in a single examination centre.
- iv. It shall be ensured that the application form collects necessary information such as personal details, educational background, experience (if any), and a statement of purpose.

3. Application Screening& Eligibility Criteria:

- i. The young aspirant should be a student permanently residing in Mizoram and willing to continue higher secondary stage of school education in Aizawl after passing the most recent HSLC Examination.
- ii. All received applications shall be reviewed to ensure they meet the basic eligibility criteria.
- iii. The authenticity of documents submitted such as educational certificates and identity proof shall be verified.

4. Examination Syllabus & Entrance Examination:

- i. The syllabus for the entrance examination should be the same as UPSC prelims Paper II syllabus. The difficulty level of questions shall be moderated by MBSE.

Syllabus : (200 marks)

- 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).

Note 1: The minimum qualifying marks shall be fixed at 33%.

Note 2: The questions will be of multiple choice, objective type.

Note 3: There will be 80 questions.

Note 4: Each question will carry 2.5 marks.

Note 5: Every wrong answer will cost $\frac{1}{3}$ of the marks for that answer (i.e. 0.83).

- ii. An entrance examination shall be conducted to assess candidates' aptitude, knowledge, and skills relevant to the program.
- iii. Questions for the entrance examination shall be prepared by MBSE.
- iv. It shall be ensured that the exam format allows for fair evaluation and provides equal opportunity to all the applicants.

5. Result Declaration and Interview Call:

- i. 50 candidates shall be shortlisted to be called for personal interview.
- ii. Shortlisted candidates shall be notified via email or phone call, providing them with details about the interview process, schedule, and required documents.

6. Interview Process:

- i. A panel of interviewers comprising of officials from the Central Service, subject matter experts, educators, and professionals from relevant fields shall be formed by the MBSE in consultation with the Government.
- ii. The marks scored by the candidates shall not be disclosed to the panel to avoid any possible conflict of interest.

7. Final Selection Criteria:

- i. The interview scores along with the written exam scores shall be compiled to create a final merit list.
- ii. The top-ranking candidates up to the predetermined number of available seats shall be selected for admission into the program.
- iii. Selected candidates shall be required to submit an acceptance letter and a bond shall be signed between the selected candidates and the state government.
- iv. A waitlist of 5 candidates in case any selected candidates decline the offer or fail to meet admission requirements for a period of two months shall be maintained.

8. Orientation and Onboarding:

- i. The selected candidates shall be admitted to coaching centre(s) determined by the State Government.
- ii. An orientation session for selected candidates shall be organized to familiarize them with the program structure, curriculum, faculty, facilities, and expectations.
- iii. Necessary support and guidance shall be provided to facilitate a smooth transition for the selected students into the program.

9. Continuing Support System

- i. The coaching centre(s) shall conduct a performance assessment exam to ascertain the aspirants' progress after HSSLC Examinations.
- ii. The syllabus for this exam shall cover the entire UPSC syllabus.
- iii. The support system shall be continued only for the deserving aspirants so that the government's resources are not needlessly depleted in the future.
- iv. The support system after HSSLC may be dealt with through other appropriate agencies like Mizoram Youth Commission, etc.

II. GROOMING SESSIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Embarking on the journey towards cracking the UPSC exam requires more than just academic preparation; it demands a holistic approach that nurtures leadership qualities, fosters mentorship, and provides exposure to real-world governance dynamics. Recognizing this need, we have designed a comprehensive grooming program aimed at empowering UPSC aspirants with the requisite skills, knowledge, and networks to excel in their endeavors. Central to this program is the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with leading Coaching Centers, coupled with a mentorship initiative encompassing interactions with key stakeholders including Chief Ministers, Ministers, MLAs, and high-ranking officials, especially IAS officers.

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Coaching Centers:

Strategic partnerships with renowned Coaching Centers specializing in UPSC preparation to provide aspirants with expert guidance, resources, and support shall be established.

The selected Coaching Centre(s) is/are to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Mizoram.

The MoU shall outline collaborative initiatives such as exclusive access to study materials, mock tests, and expert faculty, tailored to the specific requirements of our grooming program participants.

The Coaching Centers shall commit to organizing specialized workshops, seminars, and doubt-clearing sessions to augment aspirants' preparation and enhance their competitive edge.

Through this partnership, aspirants shall benefit from a structured curriculum, personalized guidance, and a conducive learning environment conducive to optimal performance in the UPSC exam.

2. Mentorship Programme:

The mentorship program shall pair UPSC aspirants with seasoned bureaucrats, including IAS officers, for personalized guidance, motivation, and career advice.

Mentors shall provide aspirants with invaluable insights into the nuances of civil service preparation, sharing their experiences, strategies, and success stories.

The grooming program shall facilitate guided visits to key stakeholders in governance, including the Chief Minister of Mizoram, Ministers, MLAs, and high-ranking officials, particularly IAS officers so that aspirants gain a deeper appreciation of the practical aspects of governance, governance dynamics, and the role of civil servants in shaping public policy and administration.

These interactions will also offer aspirants a firsthand understanding of governance challenges, policy formulation, development initiatives and decision-making processes, enriching their perspective and augmenting their preparation.

III. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Recognizing the diverse needs of aspirants, ranging from admission fees to study material expenses, the government shall endeavor to provide comprehensive financial support to alleviate financial burdens and facilitate a conducive environment for aspirants to excel in their UPSC journey. Here's a detailed overview of the financial implications and government interventions to cover the diverse needs of UPSC aspirants:

1. Admission Fees:

The government shall allocate funds to cover the admission fees required for enrolling in the coaching institutes.

2. Tuition Fees:

Fees for coaching programs catering to UPSC preparation shall be waived off entirely through government scholarships or financial assistance schemes. Coaching Centres partnering with the government shall be incentivized to offer free tuition fees to ensure affordability for aspirants.

3. Textbooks and Study Material:

Government initiatives may encompass the provision of textbooks, reference materials, and study resources essential for UPSC preparation.

Libraries equipped with UPSC-specific books and study material shall be established or upgraded, enabling aspirants to access relevant resources free of cost.

4. Miscellaneous Expenses:

Special grants or allowances may be provided to aspirants facing financial hardship, ensuring they can focus wholeheartedly on their UPSC preparation without financial worries.

- 5.** All financial expenses shall be borne by the State government. The fund may be given to the implementing agency i.e. Mizoram Board of School Education, to meet the requirement.