



drishti

Ethics Strategy (GS Paper - 4) Maximum marks: 250

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Introduction

- GS Paper-4, titled Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude, was introduced as part of mains syllabus reforms from civil services examination, 2013.
- The official UPSC syllabus offers broad guidelines on what UPSC wants to test through this paper.
- It mentions that “ This paper will include questions to test the candidates’ attitude and approach to issues relating to integrity, probity in public life and his problem-solving approach to various issues and conflicts faced by him in dealing with society. Questions may utilize the case study approach to determine these aspects”.
- This paper is subdivided into two sections Section A and Section B each valuing 125 marks.
 - Section A includes theoretical questions which are generally of the applied kind.
 - Section B consists of case studies.
- Both sections require specific strategies.
- Overall, scoring in ethics paper is a game of keywords, awareness about self, and ability to project oneself as an individual who is pragmatic and productive while being committed to personal and professional ethics.
- The nature of examination is of generalist kind. Hitherto UPSC has been asking questions that require the application of common sense while keeping ethical principles in mind.

Importance of Ethics Paper

Scoring well in ethics paper is the sine qua non for featuring in final list and getting one's desired service. Like the essay paper, this paper offers maximum returns. With very less efforts one can score good marks. Thorough preparation of this paper also helps in adding the moral dimension to answers in GS Paper - 1, 2, 3 papers and also the essay paper. It also helps in coming across as a person who has qualities desired of a civil servant in the personality test.

General Guidelines for Preparation of Ethics Paper

- Know the syllabus - Syllabus of Ethics is your most important book and keywords list in itself. Learn the syllabus so that you can use the keywords mentioned in the syllabus in your answers.
- Read limited books. Read them twice before marking important lines. Mark lines and make short notes.
- Notes help in keeping keywords together in concise form. This is A MUST as Ethics answer writing is wordplay of keywords
- See all previous year papers. Make note of unique keywords asked like 7 sins, Weber, Rawls social justice theory etc. Use these keywords in your answers.
- Reading is not as important as answer writing is for Ethics. Know the best answer writing structure and technique for both section-A and case studies.
- Develop examples from current, social issues, professional life, your areas of interest etc. Examples form the core of answer writing in Ethics paper.
- Draw diagrams in Ethics to be innovative and unique. This will give you an edge over others.

Preparation of Ethics Paper

- ETHICS paper is designed to evaluate the '**ethical competence**', but **not** the '**knowledge about ethics**'.
- Initially one should acquaint oneself with terms mentioned in the syllabus. One should be able to express terms in simplest words and minimal possible words.
To illustrate, **Values** mean preferences; ethics means guide about right or wrong; **Transparency** means the provision of access of government information to the public; **Accountability** means holding a person answerable to his/her acts; **Attitude** means a person's own evaluation of another person, idea, situation etc.
- Relate terms and values mentioned in the syllabus with one's personal experiences. For example - if you are honest, try to recollect events from your life where you demonstrated honesty.

○ Illustrations:

- **Incident 1** – In my 10th Standard Board exams, in English Paper, we were asked to write the opposite of POPULAR. I had written IMPOPULAR. Then, exam invigilator who was walking accidentally saw my answer script and told me, the correct answer is UNPOPULAR. However, I did not change my answer.
- **Incident 2** – One Saturday, I ate idli at Parimala Hotel in Tumakuru Bus stand. I forgot to pay the money and came out of the hotel. Even the hotel people did not ask me. I realized the same in the evening when I found excess money in my pocket. Then I promptly went to the hotel, said sorry and paid the money on Monday morning.

- If there is no real-life example, be ready with anecdotes from lives of social reformers, leaders, civil servants etc. and other venerable public figures to illustrate one's point.

Illustrations

- Sir M. Visvesvrayya, then Dewan of Mysore state, used Government vehicle while he went to tender his resignation. After tendering his resignation, he drove back by his private vehicle. He always maintained two sets of candles – one set bought out of government money and the other set bought from his money. He used the former set of candles for looking into official documents and used the latter set to read books. (The above two anecdotes can be used as examples for not misusing public resources for private gain)
- Kuvempu, Jnanapith awardee, a poet and Karnataka's pride, was once Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University. His son Poornachandra Tejaswi was studying BA in the same university. Once, an English Professor approached Kuvempu and told him that his son had scored marks below minimum pass-mark in English Paper and asked Kuvempu as to what to do. Kuvempu went through the answer script and instructed the professor to award to even lesser marks. (This anecdote can be quoted as an example for avoiding conflict of interest)
- A Rajput Prince was conspired to be killed. Panna who worked in the court learned the conspiracy. In order to save the Prince, she replaced the Prince with her own kid. Her own kid got killed. (This anecdote can be an example of loyalty)

- A workaholic engineer was working on a major scientific project. Abdul Kalam sir was the project head. Children of that engineer once asked their father to take them to an exhibition in the evening. Engineer sought permission from Kalam sir to leave early and mentioned the reason as well. Kalam sir agreed. However, he got so much involved in the work that he completely forgot that he had to leave early. Kalam sir observed the engineer being engrossed in the work. So, he himself took the children to the exhibition. (This anecdote is an example of empathy towards subordinates).
 - Satish Dhawan was the chairman of ISRO during the first launch of SLV - the mission failed. He took the responsibility for failure. In the next attempt, when the launch was successful, he gave full credit to the team that had worked for it. (This anecdote is an example for leadership and teambuilding).
 - Sagayam, an IAS officer from Tamil Nadu has disclosed his and his family's assets on the website. (Example for probity and transparency)
 - K. Jairaj, Karnataka-cadre IAS officer was asked to approve the dismissal of a lady typist on the grounds of unruly behavior by her against her colleagues. Jairaj sir delved a little deeper into the issue and found out that she had been a widow and one co-worker misused her, promising her a new life. And this had pushed her into depression. Adding salt to the wound, her co-workers started abusing her in filthy language. This had made her lose her temper. Later, considering her precarious financial condition and need to educate her son, two increments were cut and she was reinstated to service. Later, her son got a very good job at Infosys. (Example for compassion towards women; empathy towards subordinates; work culture)
- Also, be prepared to use a hypothetical situation if there are no real-life examples or anecdotes. Always start such examples with SUPPOSE..... ASSUME.... and so on.
 - To illustrate, for a question on 'conflict of interest', you can write an example as suppose an IAS officer is a part of an interview panel. While taking interviews, he/she discovers that a candidate is a son of his friend. Then that IAS officer should disclose that fact. He should abstain from taking interview of that candidate.
 - These kinds of scenarios have to be created in the exam hall depending upon the nature of the question. So, that kind of thinking has to be developed beforehand.

- One more important tip – every case study you solve is a hypothetical scenario. So, you can use the case studies you may have practiced as hypothetical scenarios for your answers in the exam.

Answer Writing Strategy for Part A- Theoretical Portion

- Section-A generally includes 12-13 questions of 10-marks each amounting to 120-130 marks. These are to be answered in 150 words and 2 pages are provided to do the same. A 10-marker question should ideally be answered within 7 minutes. Questions may be analytical or at times theoretical.
- Answers in Ethics can be written both in paragraphs or points based on the demand/type of question. Ideally, an answer shall include following:
 1. **Introduction:** here definition for keywords/terms mentioned in the question shall be given in 2-3 lines.
 2. **Answer body:** it can be in points or paragraph. What matters is that various dimensions get covered so that the answer is multi-dimensional. Answer written in points-bullets handles dimensions much more easily, compared to one in paragraphs where the risk of digressing from the question is high.
 3. **Theory:** theories, thinkers, and terms mentioned in the syllabus shall be incorporated in answers. This helps in keeping the answers 'ethical'. Theory should ideally make a maximum 20% of an answer. Overdoing theories/keywords makes answers mechanical.
 4. **Examples:** generally it is mentioned in the question to quote example(s). In such questions write 2 examples. While in questions where example has not been explicitly asked, one should still write at least 1 example.
 5. **Diagrams:** these are important to gain the edge over other candidates. Diagrams provide the X-factor that the examiner is looking for. They also break the monotony and make for better presentation.
 6. **Conclusion:** it is as important as introduction or answer body itself. Do not skip the conclusion in a hurry to jump to the next question(s). Just summarize the answer in 2-3 lines.

Answer Writing Strategy for Part B- Case Studies

There is never a set answer for a case study. The idea should be to learn from the format:

- Actors
- Dilemmas
- Answer Body
- Points
- Keywords
- Theory
- Diagram
- Conclusion

1. Try to provide practical solutions. Ideal solutions, if unworkable, would not fetch you marks.

2. Give out-of-the-box yet practical solutions.

3. Try to provide specific solutions. Avoid generalized solutions.

To illustrate, don't say, "I would take steps to promote transparency. Mention how you would promote transparency.

4. When you are asked to give all the options available to you - give even the most undesirable course of action as one of the options. However, don't choose that option.

To illustrate, in a case that mentions the offer of a bribe to you, mention 'acceptance of bribe' as one of the options. But prefer the options that entail 'rejection of bribe'.

5. Do not touch upon only core issues. Also, touch upon peripheral issues in a case study.

To illustrate, suppose a case study in which "you are the head of the committee investigating the irregularities of colleges. You are in the dilemma whether to recommend for the derecognition of college and spoil the career prospects of students or to recommend their regularization in the light of future of thousands of students. You have been offered a bribe of Rs. 5 crores." In this case study, a core issue is 'whether to regularize colleges'. Most candidates would just address this issue in their answer. However, there is another issue, the 'peripheral issue', that is, the offer of a bribe. Try to address that issue as well. While addressing bribe issue, please don't just say – "I won't accept the bribe". Also, say – "I would lodge a complaint against the person who has offered me the bribe".

6. Let your solutions try to balance conflicting options as much as possible. (Caution – such balancing may not happen always).

Consider the examples mentioned in the previous point. Most candidates would say, either “I shall recommend derecognition of colleges because errant colleges have to be punished” or “I shall recommend for regularisation of colleges because of the future of students”. Rather, try to think of a solution that penalizes the colleges and at the same time rescues the career prospects of thousands of students. One such solution can be – allowing already enrolled students to finish their course and recognizing their degrees while prohibiting any fresh admissions. Or, accommodation of students of such colleges in other recognized colleges.

Recommended books

Books

1. ARC 4th report.
2. Ethics in Public Administration – Patrick Sheeran.
3. Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude: G. Subbarao.
4. NCERT Psychology book Class XI & XII: Selected chapters.
5. Citizen Centric Administration – ARC Report.
6. Yojana Issues- Good Governance (2013), Inclusive Governance (2013), Reforms in Public Administration (2014).
7. Lexicon for ethics, Integrity, and aptitude- Civil services chronicle.
8. Ethics, Integrity, and aptitude – McGraw-Hill education – M.Karthikeyan.

Biographies & other books

1. Experiment with Truth – Mahatma Gandhi.
2. Verghese Kurien autobiography.
3. Swami Vivekananda – Karmayoga and his biography.
4. Selected articles by Immanuel Kant, Aristotle etc. *There is a BBC website also on ethics.*

• Videos

Harvard lectures by Michael Sandel.

• Miscellaneous

1. Learn famous quotations from Goodreads and used them wherever possible.
2. Refer to Fodder for the essay.