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**INTERVIEW  
GUIDANCE  
SERIES 2023**

**#03**

**QUALITIES ASSESSED  
DURING THE  
UPSC INTERVIEW**

**Manoj K. Jha**

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An Institute for Civil Services

# INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAMME 2023

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# QUALITIES ASSESSED DURING THE UPSC INTERVIEW

Manoj K. Jha

In the realm of interview sessions, the IAS interview stands out as a unique departure from the conventional. Unlike its structured counterparts, the IAS interview is an engaging conversation, unfolding in a formal yet undirected setting. Contrary to the perception of a question-answer session, it delves into a spectrum of qualities, seeking a nuanced evaluation of the candidates. Understanding the intricacies of this evaluation is pivotal for candidates, aligning their preparation with the demands of the process.

## **Qualities to be Assessed during the Interview:**

UPSC consistently outlines the broad qualities subjected to assessment during the interview session. Each of these qualities carries significance in evaluating a candidate's suitability for a career in public service.

### **1. Mental Alertness:**

- ▣ Defined by wholehearted presence and engagement.
- ▣ Requires a profound "presence of mind," opposed to absent-mindedness.
- ▣ Lack of mental alertness is evident in repeatedly missing points and failing to grasp context or hints from the board.

- ❑ *Example:* Consider a scenario where the board introduces a sudden twist to a question. A mentally alert candidate adapts promptly, showcasing a “presence of mind” by grasping the nuance without missing a beat.

Mental alertness means being at the time and place, ie, a wholehearted presence and engagement. In other words it is about “presence of mind” which is opposite of “absent mindedness”.

Once or twice you may politely ask the board members” sir please tell me the question again” but repeatedly missing the points and queries signifies lack of mental alertness. Also failing to understand the context and indications as to why a question has been asked and also missing occasional hints related to queries from board members can be taken as lack of mental alertness.

## **2. Critical Power of Assimilation:**

- ❑ Goes beyond a mere recitation of facts.
- ❑ Evaluates the candidate’s ability to reflect, introspect, and draw reasoned conclusions.
- ❑ *Example:* When questioned about a complex policy issue, a candidate with critical assimilation powers not only recites facts but delves deeper. They reflect on the issue, introspect, and draw reasoned conclusions, demonstrating a holistic understanding.

This is not just about “I have read” or “I know”, but also about whether you have reflected and introspected and examined and weighed to understand matter of the fact and drawn reasoned conclusions.

## **3. Clear and Logical Exposition:**

- ❑ Demands understanding of the subject matter.
- ❑ Requires a clear and logically ordered presentation of ideas.
- ❑ Involves avoiding vagueness and presenting statements with convincing clarity.
- ❑ *Example:* Imagine a question about a contentious social is-

sue. A candidate's clear and logical exposition involves presenting their ideas with order and coherence, avoiding vagueness. The response convinces the board, even if they may not entirely agree.

You can be clear in exposition only if you understand a thing. And logical exposition also means that anything that you say should not be devoid of order, i.e, first thing first, followed by next important one be it simple listing of relevant facts, causes, reasons etc. while answering.

It is about avoiding "vagueness" and treating your statement as "axiomatic" as if everybody should accept it without suspecting and be convinced. Clarity and logical exposition convinces the listener or at least you make your point whether they agree or not and you have an explanation for what you say.

#### 4. **Balance of Judgment:**

- ❑ Discourages judgment based on limited understanding, inadequate facts, or bias.
- ❑ Encourages neutrality, honesty, and a comprehensive understanding of ground realities.
- ❑ Involves considering pros and cons, costs and benefits, and moral and ethical implications.
- ❑ *Example:* When discussing a controversial decision, a balanced judgment is evident in a candidate who considers the pros and cons, weighs the moral and ethical implications, and avoids making snap judgments based on limited understanding.

Being judgmental about any event, thing or person on the basis of limited understanding, inadequate facts, prejudice, preference or bias is greatest of all intellectual failures.

Before we judge, we must try to take a neutral and honest position on one hand and a proper sense and understanding of ground realities. Balance of judgement can be achieved by considering pros and cons,

good and bad, cost and benefit and moral and ethical as well as long term implications of a thing, policy, measure or a thing or a position that we take.

### **5. Ability for Social Cohesion and Leadership:**

- ❑ Emphasizes the importance of understanding and promoting social cohesion.
- ❑ Leadership involves knowing, showing, and leading the path.
- ❑ Encourages team spirit, consideration for stakeholders, and finding solutions.
- ❑ Stresses the importance of being cool, calm, patient, and optimistic.
- ❑ *Example:* Leadership qualities shine in a candidate who, when faced with a problem, not only identifies it but also proposes solutions. This leader fosters team spirit, considers stakeholders, and approaches challenges with optimism, embodying the essence of effective leadership.

A prospective Civil Servant should have a mindset and attitude to understand the need and importance of social cohesion while fulfilling his duties and in all her/his public utterances, posturing and interactions.

India is a country which stands for unity in diversity and our constitutional values also signify that. This awareness should be reflected in the thought and actions of a Civil Servant.

Leadership - Leadership is about knowing the path, showing the path and leading the path. It is not just about flagging the problems but also about willingness and ability to find solutions. Leadership is also about team spirit, giving due consideration and credit to all the stakeholders. It is also about being cool, calm, patient and optimistic. It is also about endurance and resilience. It is also about giving and ensuring maximum benefit to maximum people at the same time avoiding being populist or irrational especially with regard to optimisation of resources and their outcomes.

Last but not the least a leader is one who through his sincerity, honesty and integrity and hard work becomes a role model for public. These things must be reflected in our thought processes.

#### 6. Intellectual and Moral Integrity:

- ❑ Trust, credibility, and confidence stem from a public servant's moral and intellectual integrity.
- ❑ Integral for becoming a role model and contributing to more human and worthy governance.
- ❑ *Example:* Consider a hypothetical scenario where a candidate is asked about a situation involving ethical dilemmas. Intellectual and moral integrity come to the forefront when the candidate's response reflects honesty, sincerity, and a commitment to ethical principles.

A public servant elicits trust, credibility and confidence among people if her/her moral and intellectual integrity is above board and beyond doubt. This not only makes the Civil Servants a perfect role model, but also makes governance more human and worthy.

Conclusively, In the crucible of the UPSC interview, candidates are not merely tested on their knowledge but on the profound qualities that define effective public service. The IAS interview transcends the traditional question-answer format, seeking to unearth a candidate's depth of character, ethical standing, and leadership potential. Understanding and embodying these qualities become paramount, as candidates strive to not just articulate their knowledge but to project themselves as individuals ready to embrace the multifaceted challenges of public service.