

QUALITIES TO BE ASSESSED DURING THE UPSC INTERVIEW

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Many interview sessions follow a well-structured pattern, but IAS interview is an exception to this. Far from being conducted under a structured format, it is an exercise in which an engaging conversation takes place between the board and the candidate. Thus, contrary to the popular perception of interview being a question answer session, it is much more than that. In a setting which is formal but undirected one (undirected means a natural course is followed at the interview rather than a pre-determined session), the interview session seeks to evaluate a candidate on the below given qualities.

A proper understanding of what he is going to be tested for will make a candidate's preparation close to its needs.

IAS interview is NOT about:

- ❑ A mere question answer session
- ❑ A test of knowledge or plethora of information
- ❑ A deliberate attempt to pin you down by difficult questions
- ❑ Having extraordinary expectations from you

Qualities to be assessed during the interview:

UPSC, every time in its notification, outlines the broad qualities that will be assessed during the interview session. These qualities are explained below for better understanding.

1. Mental alertness

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

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

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 judgement

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

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

A public servant elicits trust, credibility and confidence among people if her/his 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.

So, IAS interview is about:

- ▣ Judging your authentic self
- ▣ An interactive, friendly session
- ▣ Extracting your opinion and stand on vital issues
- ▣ Exploring the quality of honesty, integrity, commitment, leadership etc.
- ▣ Testing you more on where you know rather than where you do not know
