"Time Management and Subject Selection are Crucial to CSS Exam."

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Steps for CSS Preparation

CSS is one of the most challenging exams in Pakistan. This exam demands a wholesome approach on the part of candidates who are going to appear in this exam. Following are the steps:

First Step

The first step is the selection of a suitable combination as far as the elective subjects are concerned. The selection of subjects is a crucial matter. A candidate must consider his/her own ability to understand and grasp all those subjects which he/she thinks appropriate for selection. The second consideration must be based on choosing those subjects which can fetch good marks.

Second Step

The selection of subjects is followed by collection of the relevant reading material. Now a days, there is a variety of reading material available in the market but the wisdom lies in choosing that material which is directly relevant, precise and unequivocal.

Third Step

The third step hinges upon devising a time table for the initiation of preparation. Most of the candidates spend most of the time in studying elective subjects. The best strategy is to devote enough time to both compulsory and elective subjects.

Fourth Step

The fourth step entails preparation of written material. According to Francis Bacon, "Writing makes an exact man." Therefore, the clarity of ideas is reflected through writing. The written work along with supporting evidences like graphs, flowcharts, maps and diagrams are essential to score high marks in written exam.

Fifth Step

The CSS Exam preparation is juxtaposed with an electric mind. The candidates with fertile imagination need to equip themselves with knowledge and material.

Role of CSS Academies

I think the decision of joining an academy for preparation depends on the candidate. Two things are important during CSS preparation:

(i)   Motivation.

(ii)   Self-Discipline.

If a candidate is motivated by inner impulses and follows a disciplined course of action, it is better to prepare on his own. If a candidate is not deeply motivated and he lacks initiation which I believe is the main driving spirit, then such candidates must join an academy. But at the end of the day, it is candidate, who is the direct stakeholder so that the decision of joining an academy is the candidate's responsibility.

Strategy to Get Higher Marks in Written

The written exam score plays a key role in determining the fate of a candidate in CSS. The key to get a reasonable score in the written exam varies from subject to subject. The important point is the technique / presentation of the stuff. The conceptual frame work of any subject needs to be understood completely. If learning of the basics is not correct, the entire edifice of writing would fall out of joint. The logical progression of ideas need to be presented in such a manner that forces an examiner to mark generously. The accurate division of the time is also important. The written exam

is just like a show. The three hours show would be successful only when a candidate divides the target time judiciously for both objective and subjective papers. The poor time-management leads to frustration and resultantly demoralization. The

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entire preparation goes to drain if time is not managed properly. Each question should be allocated equal time so that a paper can be finished

within stipulated period of time.

Interview Techniques

CSS interview is an art of eloquence, knowledge and presence of mind. The steady temperament along with a steadfast approach is required to take questions asked by the panel. The candidates must rehearse interview repeatedly before the final day. The mode of interview preparation is different from the written exam. A candidate would be better if he is able to articulate his ideas confidently and faces adverse criticism simultaneously. The mock interview is the best way to prepare for interview. The mutual exchange of ideas, and arguments

among those who are preparing for interview enables a candidate to gain confidence, strength and clarity. These are requisites of a good interview.

There is no prescribed technique for scoring better in interview. But the universal attributes like presence of mind, feel of personality and finesse play a key role in getting good marks.

General Problems

1. CSS exam is a lengthy and complex phenomena. This exam is different from other professional exams. The candidates find it difficult to encompass the entire range of subjects starting from compulsory to elective subjects. It is difficult to decipher the complexities in a short time. The availability of diverse reading material also adds up to the problems. The candidate finds himself in a situation when he is confronted with the entire range of subjects and material. His mind boggles and he is unable to think clearly.

2. The lack of planning, poor time management and lack of proper guidance are some of the problems faced by candidates.

English Essay Writing Technique

I think that English essay is a unique paper. It involves a concentrated writing on a topic, selected by a candidate according to his will. Usually, the choice of topic determines the quality of attempted essay. The selection of an unusual topic leaves the candidate in a quandary about what to do. The essay writing is not dilly-dallying. It is a structured piece of writing which is based on solid arguments, facts, figures and quotes. It has a proper beginning

and denounment. The candidates need to practise essay writing in routine. It is better to have a full-fledged practice session followed by checking by an experienced teacher of essay paper. The grammatical errors need to be corrected and a better idiomatic expression has to be adopted to write an essay in CSS examination.

English Essay & English Composition

The English essay and composition is an Achilles' heel to many candidates. They flunk in these subjects despite scoring well in others. One reason for failure could be short time period devoted to these papers. Though both papers need a meticulous effort to prepare well. It is important to allocate time to practice essay and precis writing on regular basis.

The composition paper needs to be solved within stipulated time and checked by an expert, for critical comments. It is preposterous to believe that attempting one essay or précis would be enough to score well. Both papers require a thorough

preparation on regular basis.

Role of Luck

The CSS exam precludes categories like average or exceptional students. It is neither a university exam nor a college one. According to my belief, it is a performance. The successful performance would be a combination of skill, knowledge, stamina, breadth of mind and good fortune. The success in CSS exam is linked with certain tangible and intangible factors. The tangible factors remain in candidate's control but the intangible factors lie beyond the reach of a candidate. The CSS exam is linked with livelihood. The intangible factor includes luck which plays a vital role other than preparation.

"CSS is an examination which needs perpetual struggle. This experience leaves one learned and sagacious. It is CSS which broadens one's horizon. The essence of success is felt after a long arduous journey of patience and persistence."