

Shah Fahad 4th Position, CSS-2010

KARACHI is Crying

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The interviews of position holders of prestigious CSS examination are permanent feature of Jahangir's World Times. The prime objective of the interviews is to show the aspirants of the competitive examinations right direction. The position holder is asked variety of questions thus revealing the factors which have been instrumental in his/her success. It is expected that the interviews would play a strong motivational role in the success of CSS candidates.

Q: Please tell us about yourself, educational background and achievements.

Shah Fahad: I belong to Mohamand Agency of FATA and I completed my early education from Peshawar. Then, for graduation, I went to Islamia College, Peshawar.

If I were to choose the most intelligent decision of my educational career, it would be seeking admission in Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, in the department of International Relations for a Masters degree. Actually, Quaid-i-Azam University provided me the essential platform from which I did all that I wanted to accomplish.

Moreover, I always stood in the first three positions of merit throughout my educational career. Presently, I am also working as International Relations Officer at Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA). I am a diehard lover of English classic novels and plays. I hope, I have been fair enough with my pen to write everything that I am.

However, my life has been based on hard work, responsibility, dedication to my family and cause, education and commitment. That is why I think that these norms can have the greatest effect on one's success.

Q: Being 4th position holder in Pakistan in overall merit of CSS-2010, what type of strategy did you follow for preparation?

SF: Actually, I haven't followed a well-formulated strategy for CSS exam because being on job and having limited time for preparation, it is difficult to make and follow a strategy. However, I believe, the points which must be kept in mind while preparing for the exams are:

- a) An organised plan of study giving every subject proportionate time.
- b) Crystal clear vision of target i.e. achieving certain position or group.
- c) Commitment and dedication towards the achievement of the target.
- d) Continuous labour to improve writing skills through reading and writing because writing skill is an important tool for getting good marks in any exam.

Q: What type of guidance should one seek to achieve such a raving success?

SF: Well! like any other examination, CSS exam also requires guidance especially for those students who are completely novice to this exam. Here, I think professional academies can play an important role in directing and streamlining the students towards their goal. I believe guidance should be sought specifically for subject selection, articulating study plans, interview preparation and finally group selection.

Q: Highlight the role of academies. Did you prepare from any academy or did it on your own? If yes, then how did you manage to get this privileged position?

SF: I have never been to any academy for CSS preparation and all that I have achieved is a result of my hobbies of reading and writing since school times. Fair knowledge about the CSS exam, as many of my cousins are in Civil Services, has helped me a lot. My commitment to every task, time management and creativity has been instrumental in my success.

As I earlier said, academies and professional teaching institutions should be sought for guidance and their role is just to streamline things for the aspirants. However, it should also be kept in mind that nowadays, academies have become money-making chains. So, one should join an academy where success is taken supreme above any other notion.

Q: What did you prefer, books or notes?

SF: I preferred books because I am of the view that books are the primary source of knowledge as authors have taken years of research and labour to write them. Similarly, a book streamlines the theoretical framework of knowledge on any issue and hence instigates the thought process. Thus, preparation from a good book on any subject gives an aspirant the capability of attempting the questions in a strong theoretical background. Secondly, the trend of questions in CSS examination has changed a lot. Almost all the papers with exception of English Essay and Precis and Composition, carry questions which are general in nature. So in my view, books should be taken as the primary source for preparation for CSS examination.

Q: What are the prerequisites for CSS exam in your opinion?

SF: For me, the prerequisites for CSS are preparation of one's mindset for the exam, passion and strong commitment. Talent and ability comes with continuous hard work. Furthermore these qualities,

I think, must be there to gear one's potential towards achieving a good position:

- a) Excellent reading and writing skills.
- b) Skill of organising a good study plan.
- c) Believe in the notion of hard work and devotion.

However, these traits can also be acquired through continuous labour and struggle during the exam preparation.

Q: What are the steps for the preparation of English Essay and Composition papers?

SF: I must say, essay is deemed to be the most difficult paper in CSS examination and thousands of students fail in it each year. Actually, the primary reason for failure is the lack of knowledge about attempting the right topic in an appropriate manner. I think these steps will help the aspirants in getting good marks in Essay and Precis and Composition:

Studying the essentials of essay writing from any good grammar book.

Writing down an essay everyday on any topic and its evaluation by subject specialist.

Reading an authentic newspaper such as Dawn to learn the art of writing on a formal note

Studying of English grammar portion on daily basis and its practice.

For Précis and Comprehension,

one must learn the art of summarising and reading between the lines.

Q: What sort of combination should students opt for the optional subjects?

SF: There is no doubt that subject selection is the first and most important step for a new candidate. Therefore, subjects should be selected keeping in view one's interest and educational background. I think, one should opt for the subjects which one has studied during graduation or Masters because it gives the distinct advantage of saving time for other subjects.

JWT: What are the ways to get higher marks in written and interview and give your written and interview scores?

SF: I believe that the following plan is necessary for getting good score in the written exam:

Excellent writing and reading skills

A well-developed study workout

Attempting the most appropriate questions in a lucid but precise manner

Giving each and every question equal timeframe

Writing the primary facts and omitting unnecessary details

I suggest that at least six to eight months of a daily eight to 10 hours study is an ideal timeframe for a complete workout of CSS exam.

Now in CSS interview, a candidate is judged on his capabilities, his personality traits, communication and presentation skills, his know-how of contemporary national, regional and international issues, etc. So, it is direly needed that the candidate should work hard to improve in these areas.

Moreover, a candidate can form a group of his fellows and have mock interviews. This will help in building his confidence as well as marking his weaker areas which could be improved then by

practicing it further.

My written score in CSS exam is 728 while in interview I got 222 out of 300.

(Essay 40, Precis and Composition 70, Everyday Science 61, Pakistan Affairs 47, Current Affairs 50, Islamiyat 53, Political Science 148, European History 132, Constitutional Law 53, Pashto 73).

Q: How many months and daily hours are required for CSS preparation?

SF: Actually, it depends on the aptitude of the aspirant and his/her study plan. However, I suggest that at least six to eight months of a daily eight to 10 hours study is an ideal timeframe for a complete workout of CSS exam.

Q: What are the general problems of CSS candidates from FATA?

SF: The candidates who have got their preliminary to higher secondary level education inside FATA face a horrendous task of getting a good position in CSS. It is due to lack of good educational institutions in the region. Those who qualify and achieve good positions have gone through a very hard labour.

In addition, I would say, it is of utmost importance that government should establish quality educational infrastructure in FATA so that the candidates hailing from this region can acquire the essential tools which in future may help them in their career planning.

Q: Do you believe in 'Luck Factor' in CSS as numbers of average students get allocation while the talented ones are often unable to qualify this prestigious exam?

SF: Luck, as I believe, may be one of the variables in the CSS examination but it is relative in nature because every candidate has got some potential. Simply, those who utilise it in the most organised manner get the maximum result. While those who fail to do so are bound to face failure.

In fact, no one in this world is average or talented and these qualities can be acquired. The real key to success is hard work, commitment and devotion to the cause. It is my belief and faith that talent, potential, ability, capability and wisdom come through hard toil.

Q: What is so special in District Management Group (DMG) that you opted for this group?

SF: DMG is the most prestigious group in the Civil Service Cadre. Every candidate has the aspiration for this particular group. I opted for this group as I believe I can be an agent of change, a source of zeal for the downtrodden, and forerunner to serve my people at the very grassroots level.

Q: Any message

SF: As a message, I would like to give a quote of Abraham Lincoln which says: "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other".