

EDUCATIONPLUS

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Hemalatha M.
Biju Dharmapalan

A common problem faced by youngsters today is the difficulty of getting a job in their domain of knowledge. The reason for this is not that there are not enough jobs in the market but the difficulty of finding a candidate who fulfils the needs of the job profile. This situation is primarily because of the lack of passion among youngsters. While passion is an important driver for success, it has never been a measured metric in our academic evaluation structures. The syllabus in our universities is mainly prepared by teachers based on convenience and workload. As a result, students are forced to learn what they don't wish to learn, and so do not acquire or focus on skills needed for a job profile in their knowledge domain. This is affecting the academic and industry ecosystem, and necessitates fixing yardsticks to measure and promote passion during academic life.

Passionpreneurship combines "passion" with "entrepreneurship," reflecting a pursuit of careers driven by personal values and interests rather than just market opportunities. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which focuses on profit, passionpreneurship stems from an innate desire to work in fields that excite and fulfill individuals. This mindset can redefine academic suc-



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Fuel their passions

Passionpreneurship is the key to unlocking students' potential and reshaping the future of education

cess, encouraging students to harness their unique talents and align them with societal needs. Incorporating passionpreneurship into academic structures aligns well with the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which promotes self-directed learning and problem-solving skills tailored to diverse career paths. The rise of social media and digital platforms has further facilitated this approach, mak-

ing it easier for students to transform their hobbies into viable careers through digital tools and global connections.

Custom-made syllabi
Fostering passionpreneurship within academia is not about rejecting traditional learning. Instead, it enhances it by allowing students to explore unconventional paths that resonate with their passions. Soft skills such as

creativity, critical thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence are vital in this approach. Educators are now developing personalised learning plans, enabling students to tailor course content to match their entrepreneurial goals. A custom-made syllabus can encourage passionpreneurship in several ways:

Enhanced engagement: When students help shape their syllabus, they

can include topics related to their interests, leading to increased engagement and deeper investment in their passions.

Cross-disciplinary knowledge: Custom syllabus allow students to incorporate diverse subjects, supporting interdisciplinary learning. For example, a student interested in health technology might integrate Biology, Software Development, and Business Studies to create a niche in health tech.

Syllabus customisation: Tailoring the syllabus enables students to focus on the skills they need for their entrepreneurial goals, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.

Problem-solving focus: By designing curricula around real-world problems, students develop a problem-solving mindset. Students interested in sustainability, for instance, could focus on Environmental Studies and green innovation, equipping themselves to launch eco-conscious ventures.

Mentorship and networking: A custom syllabus allows students to connect with mentors and professionals aligned with their passions, providing essential insights and industry connections.

Creative exploration: Custom syllabi encourage students to explore unconventional or emerging topics, fostering creativity and innovation. This helps students generate unique entrepreneurial ideas.

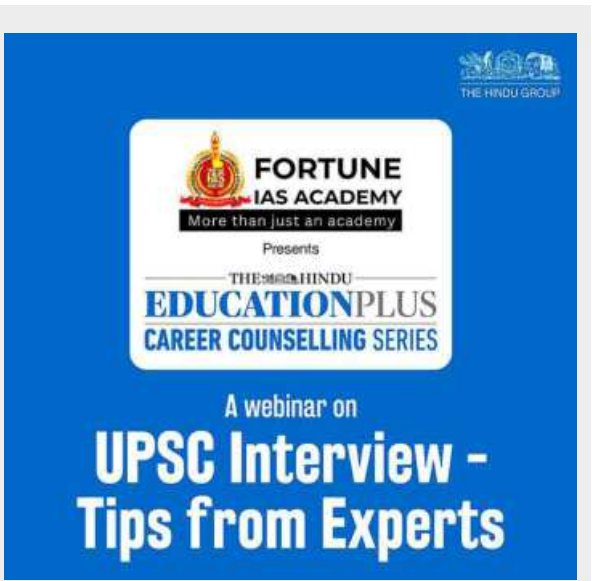
Tailored assessments: Personalised assessments

such as portfolios or business models reflect students' entrepreneurial goals, offering a platform to showcase their skills and build confidence in their ventures.

Thus a custom-made syllabus gives students control over their educational journey and provides a structured way to pursue, experiment with, and refine their passions into viable, fulfilling careers. As passionpreneurship continues to gain traction, the role of academic institutions will evolve. Universities and colleges that succeed in the future will embrace this shift, providing students with the tools and opportunities required to pursue their passions and make a meaningful impact. Academic success will no longer be measured solely by degrees or exam results but by the ability of institutions to cultivate innovative thinkers and socially conscious entrepreneurs.

As more institutions adopt this mindset, we can expect to see a generation of students who are not only well-educated but also deeply engaged with their passions, ready to innovate and make meaningful contributions to society. The fusion of passion and entrepreneurship is the key to unlocking students' potential and reshaping the future of education.

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Aspiring to become a civil servant is a journey of commitment, resilience, and precision. For those who have cleared the UPSC Mains, the interview is the final step. To guide candidates on excelling in this crucial stage, Fortune IAS Academy, in collaboration with The Hindu EducationPlus, presents a webinar on UPSC Interview: Tips from Experts. Moderated by Soma Basu, Senior Deputy Editor, The Hindu, the session has D. P. Agrawal, Former Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC); P.K. Sidharth Ramkumar, AIR 4 in the 2024 UPSC CSE and IAS Officer Trainee; and

Kiran P. B., IPS Officer and National Interview Topper of 2022 offer insights, strategies and practical tips on preparation, confidence building and presenting oneself effectively during the interview. The webinar also includes opportunities for aspirants to interact with the panel and seek clarifications from those who are familiar with the UPSC CSE interview process.

When: December 22, 2024, at 10:30 AM, To register, visit <https://newsth.live/> or scan the QR code.



Build a strong academic profile

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am in my last semester of B.Sc. Geography Honours. I want to get into the Civil Services but I am considering B.Ed. as a backup. Or should I opt for coaching for the UPSC? Rinjula

Dear Rinjula,
The best choice would depend on your interests, strengths and what you want as your eventual career path. Evaluate your core interests and reflect on your long-term career aspirations. If you are passionate about teaching, a B.Ed. will be worth pursuing. If your primary goal is to get into the Civil Services, then join a coaching institute for structured guidance, resources, and a community of like-minded candidates, which can be motivating. Doing a B.Ed. can also be your backup plan as it will provide you with job security and valuable skills.

I am in the second year of B.Sc. Geology and passionate about it. However, I am uncertain about pursuing it as a career, since a Master's qualification is essential for success. Additionally, I want a government job

immediately after graduation. How can I strategise to avoid any time gap while balancing the pursuit of government jobs and postgraduate studies? Priyankarevathy

Dear Priyankarevathy,
Engage in internships or research projects now to enhance your resume and make you a more competitive candidate for government jobs and postgraduate programmes. Explore job opportunities and research positions that require only a Bachelor's in Geology. Look at specific departments such as mining, environmental protection, or geological surveys for openings. Identify competitive exams for government jobs, check the eligibility criteria and prepare accordingly. Create a timeline of your goals for the next few years. Include milestones for job applications, exam preparation, and Master's applications to keep you on track. Consider doing your Master's through distance learning so that you can work while studying to avoid a significant gap in your career. But ensure that the course is valid and the degree is recognised. Finally,

look at opportunities to network so that you can learn about different career paths in your field.

I am in the third year of B.Tech. Computer Science. My CGPA is 7.8. I have started learning front-end development and Data Structures and Algorithms (DSA) during semester breaks. But, given the current situation, I wonder if a career in technology is viable. My parents want me to do PG or MBA but I am concerned that my current CGPA may not be good enough. What should my immediate priority be: improving my CGPA, working on web development projects, or preparing for PG options? Also, should I opt for an MS or an MBA? Gopalakrishnan

Dear Gopalakrishnan,
Take time to identify where you see yourself in the future. An M.S. or MBA depends on your career goals. Why do you feel that a career in technology is not viable? Continue learning and improving your skills in Front-End Development and DSA and build a portfolio. Contribute to open-source projects to gain practical

experience and improve your resume. As far as your CGPA is concerned, identify the academic gaps. Why is it low and what can you do to improve it? A high CGPA can open doors for internships and job opportunities. Talk to your parents when you are clear about what excites you so that they can be more understanding and supportive of your choices. Research the courses that match your career aspirations. If you are passionate about technology, an M.S. will deepen your technical knowledge and lead to advanced roles in tech, research, or development. But if you are inclined towards management, business strategy, or entrepreneurship, an MBA would be better.

I am a Bachelor's student of Food Science and Nutrition. I want to do a Ph.D. abroad. Which are the institutions I should consider? Also what do I need to do to prepare for this? Veda

Dear Veda,
Cornell, University of California-Davis, Texas A&M University in the U.S.; University of Reading, King's

College London and University of Leeds in the U.K.; and University of Queensland and University of Sydney in Australia offer comprehensive programmes in this area. Read and review each for specific courses, prerequisites and admission criteria, explore potential supervisors and look out for potential projects. Right now focus on building a strong academic profile, gaining skills and focusing on a good CGPA. Engage in research projects, seek internships in food science labs, and related fields and build a portfolio. Focus on building relationships with professors and industry professionals who can later provide strong recommendations based on your academic abilities and research potential. Discuss potential research topics with your professors as a well-defined proposal will strengthen your application. Attend conferences, seminars, and workshops related to food science and nutrition. Network with professionals in the field to gain valuable connections and insights.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Find the right balance

While allowing students to work while studying has a host of benefits, it also comes with challenges that need to be addressed

Shrinidhi R.S.

With the evolving job market pushing higher education toward a blend of academic learning and real-world experience, many institutions now allow students to pursue degrees while gaining industry exposure or exploring entrepreneurial ventures. This dual approach has both benefits and challenges.

Benefits
Career Readiness: Employers increasingly seek candidates with both academic credentials and hands-on experience. A 2023 National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) survey found that 81% of employers prefer hiring graduates with practical experience. In India, companies often prioritise candidates with internships, freelance projects, or part-time work on their resumes. Blending academics with work enables students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, enhancing their learning.

Financial Benefits: Working part-time or interning while studying allows students to earn a steady income and reduces their reliance on entry-level salaries after graduation. Distance learning programmes can also cut educational costs, with a 2024 AICTE report stating that online education can be up to 60% cheaper than traditional classroom education. **Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** The start-up culture in India has prompted students to explore entrepreneurial ventures alongside their studies. A 2023 study by the National Skill Development



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Corporation (NSDC) found that 35% of student entrepreneurs attribute their start-up success to the combination of academic learning and practical experience. Some educational programmes offer mentorship, funding, and incubation even as students continue their education.

Challenges
Dilution of academic rigour: A 2024 survey revealed that 42% of students in distance learning programmes were concerned about limited interaction with their professors, which affected their understanding. The lack of a campus environment also means missing out on intellectual discourse and collaboration, which are key aspects of a holistic education.

Self-Discipline: Balancing academics and work requires self-discipline and effective time management. A 2023 study showed that 60% of students who combined full-time study with part-time work reported higher stress levels and burnout. The overloaded schedules can reduce academic performance and job productivity.

Limitations: While online programmes offer flexibility, they can hinder practical learning, especially in fields like Engineering or

Medicine. A 2023 Ministry of Education report found that while online programmes had a 25% enrollment increase, only 45% of students felt adequately prepared for real-world applications, compared to 75% of those in traditional classroom settings.

Thus, striking the right balance between academics and real-world experience requires coordination between institutions, students, and employers. Educational institutions should enhance the quality of distance learning by integrating interactive elements like live sessions, mentorship, and industry partnerships for internships and co-op programmes. Students must assess their capacity to manage both commitments effectively and seek support from academic advisors and mental health professionals. Employers, in turn, should acknowledge the dual pressures faced by student-workers and offer flexible arrangements, such as part-time positions, internships, or remote work options. This approach can reshape higher education and prepare students to thrive in an evolving job market.

The writer is Co-Founder and CEO, ChemLearn

SCHOLARSHIPS

KARM Fellowship

An initiative from KARM Trust
Eligibility: Open to girl students who are in Class 12 and willing to pursue a UG course in a college affiliated to Delhi University. Basic proficiency in English and use of technology is required. Annual family

income must be below ₹500,000.
Rewards: College and exam fees and other benefits
Application: Online
Deadline: December 31
www.b4s.in/edge/KARM2

Ministry of Panchayati Raj Internship Scheme

An opportunity from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
Eligibility: Open to UG, PG and doctoral students or

researchers and post-doctoral students from a recognised institution.
Rewards: ₹7,000 monthly and other benefits
Application: Online
Deadline: March 31, 2026
www.b4s.in/edge/MOPR4

Manchester Humanities International Excellence Scholarship

An initiative from University of Manchester, the U.K.

Eligibility: Open to Indian nationals who have an offer of admission for a full-time PG course at the University of Manchester and fulfil the specified academic criteria.
Rewards: Discount in tuition fee up to £5,000
Application: Online
Deadline: Round the year
www.b4s.in/edge/MIES1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

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Jayaram E.R.

In the intricate tapestry of legal education, beyond the familiar realms of criminal law, corporate law, and family law, lies a universe of specialised fields. These unique specialisations cater to a diverse range of legal needs, offering students the opportunity to delve into niche areas and contribute to the evolution of the legal landscape.

Sports law: These practitioners deal with a wide range of issues, such as player contracts, endorsements, labour disputes, and intellectual property rights. They work for professional sports leagues, teams, athletes, and agencies, advising them on matters such as salary negotiations, contract disputes, agent representation, and legal disputes involving sports organisations.

Maritime law: This is a specialised branch that governs activities on the high seas and navigable waters.

It encompasses a wide range of issues, including ship ownership and registration, maritime contracts, salvage operations, maritime torts, and maritime insurance. Maritime insurance is a specific kind that provides financial protection against losses and covers various risks, such as ship damage, cargo loss, and liability for accidents at sea.

Gaming law: In the digital age, gaming law addresses legal issues related to video games, online gaming platforms, and virtual reality. Gaming law specialists can work for game developers, publishers, and online gaming platforms, advising on matters such as intellectual property rights, privacy laws, and consumer protection.

Space law: This specialised field governs activities in outer space and encompasses various aspects such as the exploration, use, and exploitation of celestial bodies, as well as the regulation of satellite



PIXABAY

Make the right choice

A Levels or IB? CBSE or ISC? Here's breaking down each board of education for students.



CAREER CUES
Richa Dwivedi Saklani

Choice is a wonderful thing but it also makes us wonder.

Should I choose CBSE, IB or A Levels? Which will bring out a student's best? Is one preferred over others by international colleges or even private colleges in India? Which one is best for a student to take competitive exams in India?

Let's discuss the key differences, benefits and challenges of leading Indian and international curricula.

Options

A Levels: British curriculum emphasising subject depth and academic rigour.

CBSE: Indian curriculum known for a structured approach and emphasis on foundational knowledge.

IB: International curriculum focusing on well-rounded development, critical thinking and original research skills.

ISC: Indian curriculum known for its balanced and in-depth focus on languages, arts, and sciences.

Curriculum Structure

A Levels: Offer flexibility. Students usually choose 3-4 subjects and those who want to challenge themselves even choose five to specialise in. A-levels are taken in the 13th year of schooling, which is equivalent to Class 12 in India.

CBSE: Students choose five subjects in class 11 and 12.

IB: Comprehensive programme with six subject groups, core components like Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Activity,

Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay.

ISC: Balanced breadth with a slightly more challenging syllabus than CBSE. It focuses on English proficiency, practical components in Sciences, and offers creative electives like Fine Arts.

Approach

A Levels: Focuses on depth and subject-specific expertise.

CBSE: Emphasis on rote learning and standardised tests, though it is evolving towards conceptual clarity.

IB: Inquiry-based, interdisciplinary learning with a focus on critical thinking and real-world applications.

ISC: Offers flexibility with subject choices and emphasises both conceptual understanding and application-based learning.

Assessment

A Levels: Exams are typically modular, with AS and A2 levels. Focus on written exams. One can even take a subject at AS level and finish it off in Year 11 itself.

CBSE: Annual board exams for Class 10 and 12, with internal assessments gaining importance.

IB: Combination of internal and external assessments, including essays, projects, and exams.

ISC: Exam-heavy with an emphasis on language proficiency.

Skill Development

A Levels: Builds deep academic depth and analytical skills in chosen subjects.

CBSE: Focuses on strong academic basics and competitive exam preparation.

IB: Develops critical thinking, deep knowledge and interdisciplinary connections.

ISC: Enhances analytical thinking, research, communication, and practical skills by its academic

rigor and subject variety.

Global Recognition

A Levels: Widely accepted by universities worldwide, particularly in the U.K. and Commonwealth countries.

CBSE: Primarily recognised in India, though many global universities accept it. Not valued as highly by certain universities, particularly Oxbridge, which expect students to take Advanced Placement (AP) exams alongside the CBSE curriculum. Ideal curriculum if you want to do NEET or JEE in India.

IB: Globally recognised and valued, especially in the U.S. and Europe. Private Indian universities have started accepting the IB as well. American and Canadian universities even offer college credits for certain IB courses taken in high school.

ISC: Strong recognition in India and most international institutions.

Costs and Accessibility

A Levels: Offered in international schools; moderately expensive.

CBSE: Affordable and accessible across India.

IB: Expensive, with limited schools offering the programme at a high-quality level in India.

ICSE: Moderately expensive and less widespread than CBSE.

Challenges

A Levels: Very in depth courses and a very limited breadth because students take only 3-4 subjects.

CBSE: A lot of rote learning required. CBSE focuses on theoretical knowledge with limited emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, or problem-solving.

IB: Immense workload, with six subjects. It also has an extended essay, which requires a lot of research and writing. IB is very time intensive and requires a significant amount of time outside of school. It is also not ideal for Indian Competitive Exams.

ISC: An academically demanding curriculum with a heavy syllabus and an exam-focused assessment system. ISC is offered in a limited number of schools, and its higher English standard can be challenging for Indian students.

So, which curriculum is right for you? That really depends on your own learning style and which environment you thrive in. However, if you plan to take the international curricula, it is better to start early, as transitioning at a later stage can be difficult.

With inputs from Kritika Malhotra

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Seven Law School specialisations that students may not know of

Unveil the uncommon

launches, space debris, and the legal framework for space colonisation. Space law seeks to establish international standards and principles to ensure peaceful and sustainable use of outer space for the benefit of all humanity.

Food law: Another specialised field, this deals with the legal aspects of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. Food law specialists can work for food manufacturers, retailers, and government agencies, advising on matters such as food safety regulations, labelling requirements, and consumer protection laws. They play a vital role in ensuring that food products are safe and meet regulatory standards.

Art law: These specialists can work for art galleries, auction houses, museums, and artists, advising on matters such as copyright, authentication, and art fraud. They help protect the rights of artists and ensure the inte-

grity of the art market. Art law encompasses a wide range of issues, including copyright, trademark, and patent law as applied to artistic works; contract law in the context of art sales and exhibitions; and issues related to the authentication and provenance of artworks.

Technology law: In the age of digital technology, technology law is essential to address the legal challenges posed by the rapid evolution of technology. Technology law specialists can work for technology companies, Internet service providers, and government agencies, advising on matters such as intellectual property rights, privacy laws, and cybersecurity.

These are just a few examples of the many specialised fields within the ever-evolving legal profession. As technology advances and societal needs evolve, new specialisations are likely to emerge.

The writer is Dean, School of Law, GD Goenka University, Gurugram.

The second act

Tips to navigate the Group Discussion and Personal Interview in the CAT



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Rajesh Kumar Singh

Over two lakh candidates take the Common Admission Test (CAT) each year, but only a small percentage move from doing well in the test to effectively navigating the subsequent Group Discussion and Personal Interview (GD-PI). Many candidates struggle here not because they are incompetent, but because they make preventable mistakes like poor preparation in basic concepts, lack of awareness of current affairs and business scenarios, ill-articulated speech, or disorganised mental processes. Here are some tips to handle the Group Discussion and Personal Interview.

Group Discussions

The fear of criticism in group discussions remains a big problem. Many applicants get passed over because of the fear of saying something inappropriate. So what can one do?

Open with clarity: Start with a concise, thoughtful statement framing the topic effectively.

Engage actively: Think about what others must say. This not only bolsters your points but also depicts teamwork.

Practise mock GDs:

Giving constructive feedback throughout simulated debates can improve confidence and articulation.

Personal Interview

On the confidence scale, candidates often lose their edge by veering to extremes. Overconfidence can be perceived as arrogance, while underconfidence might lead to

rigid or hesitant responses. For instance, if a candidate claims to be "immaculate" when asked about their drawbacks, it may come across as bold, but can raise questions about their self-awareness and ability to self-reflect. In the PI round, interview panels value authentic, self-aware candidates who demonstrate maturity in acknowledging both

Be prepared

Tips for aspirants who make it to the UPSC Civil Services Personality Test



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Gopala Krishna V.

With the Main exam of the UPSC Civil Service Exam 2024 having been completed recently, the spotlight moves to the Personality Test, which accounts for 275 marks out of 2025. While it may seem like a mere 13.2%, its weightage actually is around 30%. Therefore, it requires a focused strategy to be prepared.

Before the test

Start with dividing expected questions into five broad themes: personal, academic, optional subject, current affairs and

On D-Day

The Personality Test is conducted by a panel of five or six experts who will quiz the candidate individually. They will rate the candidate on the basis of their

individual assessments, which is then converted to marks. Here are some tips to cope on the day of the test.

Ensure you are dressed formally. Wish the board members appropriately. Sit comfortably when asked to do so. Be attentive and listen to the complete question. Ensure you have understood it before answering.

Do not reply hastily, make small talk or wisecracks. Present your experience/abilities without exaggeration. Allow the board members to finish what they are saying. When answering, don't try to give the answer you think they want to hear or change your opinion just to agree with them. Accept your error if you are shown to be wrong. Keep your answers to the point.

In the last few years, the Personality Test has also undergone a change. In keeping with the recommendations of the Nigvekar Committee (2012), the interview board also assesses a candidate's behavioural, attitudinal and value-based traits apart from focusing on conventional questions.

The writer is the Director of Brain Tree, Hyderabad

ON THE SHELF



■ **Behold the Leviathan: The Unusual Rise of Modern India**

India today has as many Grandmasters in Chess as the U.S. The virtuosity of its scientists have guided India's space modules to the dark side of the moon, a feat no other country has achieved. In this book, the authors explore provide a gripping picture of how 1.5 billion Indians are combining to spectacular effect to create a range of social and economic outcomes which have no precedent in any emerging economy.

Authors: Saurabh Mukherjee and Nandita Rajhansa
Publisher: Penguin
Price: ₹699

■ **Hyperefficient: Simple Methods to Optimise your Brain and**

Transform the Way you Work

A strong cup of coffee helps us get through a dull meeting, and a brisk walk helps us think more clearly. But what if we could optimise our brains to improve our focus, process information with ease, harness our motivation and become 'hyperefficient'? Physician and neuroscience researcher Mithu Storoni explains how to seamlessly switch your brain into the best gear for the task at hand, whether that's complex thinking, creativity, concentration or decision-making. Instead of unthinkingly imposing the rhythm of our daily tasks on our brains, Dr Storoni proposes we flip it and impose the rhythm of our brains on our work and perform at our best.

Author: Mithu Storoni
Publisher: Hachette
Price: ₹599

