

# RAJYA SABHA STUDY GUIDE

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF EXAMS



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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Members of the Rajya Sabha,

We the Executive Board of the Rajya Sabha are pleased to announce the important responsibilities entrusted to you in research. Firstly, your role as a MP will involve conducting in-depth research on legislative issues that directly affect youth policy, education, employment and social care. It is necessary to delve into the existing laws, analyse their effectiveness and propose the necessary changes or new laws to solve the most pressing problems facing the youth of our country. As a member of the Rajya Sabha active participation in committee meetings is essential. Your role will involve collating research findings and insights to facilitate informed decision-making within committees. Effective collaboration with MPs in the preparation of committee reports and policy recommendations based on thorough research is also essential. In addition, you are expected to proactively research the relations and activities of the Parliament with relevant stakeholders such as government officials, NGOs and youth organisations.

The purpose of this Indian Youth Parliament is to gather diverse perspectives on legislative issues and ensure broad input into proposed legislation and government policies. Strict adherence to parliamentary procedure and respect in debates and discussions are essential.

This includes following voting protocols on motions, amendments and legislative matters. Adherence to these standards ensures that Parliament operates efficiently and respectfully. Punctuality and responsibility are your essential responsibilities. Your dedication and expertise will be invaluable in shaping policies that will positively impact our nation's youth. If you have any questions or need further clarification on your obligations, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to your contribution to the advancement of our agenda.

Regards,

Darshil Kochar (Chairperson)

Dhyan Jariwala (Deputy Chairperson)

## WHAT IS THE RAJYA SABHA??

The Rajya Sabha is the upper house of India's bicameral Parliament. It is also known as the Council of States, representing the Federation of States of the Indian Union.

The maximum strength of the Rajya Sabha is 250 members: 238 are represent the states and the Union Territories and 12 members are nominated by the President who have distinguished themselves in the fields of art, literature, science, social service etc.

The Rajya Sabha is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution. One-third of its members retire every two years and are replaced by newly elected members. Each member is elected for a term of six years.

The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. He/She presides over its meetings. The Rajya Sabha also elects a Deputy Chairman from among its members.

The Rajya Sabha is equal to the Lok Sabha in all functions except financial power. No money bill can be introduced and a vote of no confidence cannot be raised in the Rajya Sabha.

# OVERVIEW: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The International Center for Academic Integrity defines Academic Integrity as a commitment to the five fundamental values: trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, honesty and the courage to abide by these values, even in the face of adversity.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has been established as a premier, specialist, autonomous and self-sustained testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in higher educational institutions. The agency selects exam centres based on a pre-approved list of government schools and the All India Council for Technical Education recognized institutes. Each centre must annually consent to hosting exams, ensuring compliance with the National Testing Agency's standards and protocols.

The Academic Integrity Bill: to promote academic integrity in higher educational institutions in the country and to curb plagiarism by establishing the Central Academic Integrity Authority for matters connected in addition to and incidental to it. It shall apply to students, researchers, faculty, and staff of all Higher Educational Institutes in the country.

# MAJOR ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS CONDUCTED IN INDIA

Joint Entrance Examination (JEE):

The Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) is an engineering entrance assessment conducted for admission to various engineering colleges in India. It comprises two different examinations, the JEE-Main and the JEE-Advanced. JEE Main is the entrance exam for admission to the NITs (National Institute of Technology), and other central/state government-funded institutes. It is also the qualifying exam for JEE Advanced. JEE Advanced is for admission to the IITs, IISTs (Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology). The JEE Main exam is held twice a year. The JEE Advanced is held once a year.

Common Law Admission Test (CLAT):

The Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) is a centralised national-level entrance test for admissions to 25 out of 27 National Law Universities (NLU) except NLU Delhi and NLU Meghalaya. CLAT was introduced in 2008 as a centralised entrance examination for admission to the National Law Schools/Universities in India.



National Defense Academy (NDA):

NDA is the National Defense Academy which is a joint service academy of the Indian Armed Forces, where cadets of the three services, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force are trained together before they go on to their respective service academies for further pre-commissioning training.

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC):

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is a constitutional body established under Article 315 of the Indian Constitution. The UPSC's functions, authority, tenure of office for its officials, as well as their rights and responsibilities.

The UPSC Civil Service exam for IAS officers is divided into 3 stages:

- Preliminary or Prelims (entry level, objective type test)
- Mains Examination (1 essay, 4 general tests and 2 optional papers)
- Personality Test (interview round)

# THE NEET CONTROVERSY

What is the NEET Exam?

The NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, Undergraduate) is the only entrance exam held each year for students seeking admission to undergraduate medical courses in all medical institutions throughout the country. NEET-UG is the sole entrance test for admissions to MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) and BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) seats in India.

To replace multiple examinations with a single exam, NEET was introduced in 2013. The first three NEET examinations in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 were conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). However, in 2019, The National Testing Agency (NTA) was established as the agency for control of all India competitive exams and it now conducts NEET (UG).

The results of the NEET exam were announced on June 4, the same day that the results of the Lok Sabha Election 2024 were announced, instead of the scheduled June 14. The public thought of it as a deliberate attempt since they wanted to avoid any discussion on the NEET results which were declared on June 4, when the entire country would be talking about the election results.

Aspirants raised a variety of concerns following the results announcement, including the allocation of grace marks to 1,536 students, an abnormally high number of students receiving flawless grades, and claims of a leaked question paper.

The results showed that 67 students achieved a perfect score of 720/720. It is alleged that six of the toppers had appeared for the exam at the same centre in Haryana. When asked for the NTA's response on this, the agency gave three reasons for the same:

- Increase in the number of candidates naturally led to an increase in high scorers due to a larger pool of candidates.
- The 2024 NEET paper was comparatively easier than the previous years.

- The NTA said that 1563 students were awarded grace marks, which includes 44 of the 67 toppers. The NTA stored the primary question paper set with SBI and a backup set with Canara Bank. Both sets were issued at these centres, confusing. After 25 minutes, the SBI set was withdrawn, leaving these two centres with a tougher Canara Bank set. Another reason for awarding grace marks was one multiple-choice physics question in the paper that showed 2 different answers.

Further, some students were awarded marks of 718 and 719, which critics said are mathematically impossible because in NEET's marking scheme, each question carries four marks and there is a negative marking for wrong answers.

Another problem in the NEET controversy was that the NEET paper was leaked in a few centres.

# BIHAR

Four individuals have been arrested in Bihar in connection with the leaking of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) question paper. Among those arrested are three aspirants - Anurag Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Amit Anand - and Sikandar Yadavendu. The arrests follow a confession wherein the suspects admitted to receiving and memorising the leaked question paper, casting a shadow over the integrity of the NEET-UG 2024 examination process.

Amit Anand admitted to orchestrating the leak and disclosed that candidates were provided with the leaked paper and answers for a price ranging from Rs 30-32 lakh. Amit Anand's confession further revealed that burnt remains of the question paper and answer sheet were discovered at his residence, solidifying the evidence against him.

The students at Hardayal and Vijaya schools were given question papers which were different from the ones handed to students across the country. It is alleged that the biggest centre of irregularities in the NEET-UG exam for admission in government medical colleges across the country is the Hardayal Public School in Jhajjar, Haryana.

More than 500 students appeared for the exam at this centre. Out of them, six candidates got 720 out of 720 – full marks. Apart from this, two candidates got 718 and 719 marks each – a figure which was pointed out to be mathematically impossible until the NTA claimed to have assigned ‘grace marks’ to some students

## HARYANA

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# RAJASTHAN

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested the alleged mastermind, a B.Tech graduate, and two MBBS students who acted as solvers in the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak case. The two MBBS students arrested are from a medical school in Bharatpur, Rajasthan.

At least 10 medical students at Jhalawar Medical College in Rajasthan have been detained for questioning by the Crime Branches of Delhi and Mumbai Police, Dean of Jhalawar Medical College Dr Subhash Chandra Jain said.

# HISTORY OF PAPER LEAKS IN INDIA

Paper leaks have resulted in the cancellation of examinations for more than 3 lakh government posts between Jan 1, 2019 and June 25, 2024. Not just NEET, but at least 64 other major examinations across 19 Indian states have been marred by incidents of question paper leaks since 2019.

Four other pan-India level examinations (aside from (NEET)-UG 2024) were tainted by paper leaks.



# The Indian Army's Common Entrance Examination, 2021

The Indian Army's Common Entrance Exam was scheduled to be held on February 28, 2021, until military intelligence and the crime branch of Pune conducted specific operations at various locations in Maharashtra, recovering a leaked question paper of the common entrance exam for a soldier (general duty).

The two-day operations began on February 27th and ended on February 28th, 2021. The Pune police crime branch sleuths apprehended key operators running the recruitment module by providing question papers in exchange for rupees four to five lakh per candidate from prospective candidates.

# NEET-UG 2021

National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2021, the Undergraduate Medical entrance exam had been a subject of controversy even before the exam took place. Reports claimed the exam paper had been leaked, leading to social media campaigns by student organisations like the All India Students' Federation (AISF), and the National Students Union of India (NSUI).

On September 12, 2021, an exam led to the arrest of a girl, Dineshwari Kumari, and seven others for alleged cheating. Among those arrested were her uncle, exam invigilator Ram Singh, and the exam center's administration head, Mukesh. During the exam, Ram and Mukesh sent photos of the exam paper to two men in Jaipur, who then shared them with others in Sikar.

A student of King George's Medical University (KGMU), Varanasi, and another person were also arrested for their involvement in the NEET scam in 2021.

Their gang used to take contracts to send impersonators to appear in the entrance exam. In case a candidate cleared the exam, the gang charged anything from Rs 30 lakh to Rs 40 lakh from the candidate. Police recovered copies of 15 admit cards, four photos of aspirants, four receipts of couriers, two mobile phones containing chatting of gang members, details of money transactions and other items.

# JEE MAIN 2021

In September 2021, the CBI arrested seven persons for manipulating the JEE Main examination and facilitating aspiring students to get into top National Institutes of Technology (NITs).

The case was registered on September 1, 2021, against a private company and others, including its directors, three employees and private persons (conduits).

Subsequent raids were carried out at 20 locations across India, including Delhi NCR, Patna, Pune and Jamshedpur. The investigating agency had seized over 20 laptops, seven computers, around 30 post-dated cheques, mark sheets of students and several other documents from these locations.

A 25-year-old Russian hacker, Mikhail Shargin, was also accused of allegedly aiding 820 students in cheating in the exams. Each student was allegedly charged Rs 12-15 lakh to be provided with solvers. The CBI stated that it was revealed during the investigation that foreign nationals were also involved in the hacking.

The accused used to collect Class 10 and 12 marksheets, user IDs, passwords and post-dated cheques of the candidates as 'security'. After the successful admission process, they collected the amount from the candidates, the agency added.

# IMPACT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ON STUDENTS AND THEIR LIVES

## Mental Health:

Students preparing for critical exams like NEET invest a lot of time, effort, and financial resources. The uncertainty caused by incidents like paper leaks or irregularities in exam conduct, and therefore the abandoning of academic integrity principles, can lead to severe stress and anxiety. This has a deep impact on their future academic and professional goals. There is a constant mentality among students of a 'rat race' in which they must top and succeed. Instances like these crush the hopes and dreams of millions of students and increase the pressure on them.

## Increased Competition:

There are a total of 2,044 MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) seats in AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) institutes collectively. AIIMS Delhi offers 125 MBBS seats for Indian doctors. Out of the 125 MBBS, only 46 general category seats are available for admission to the graduate medical courses of AIIMS.

AIIMS is a premier medical institute in India and offers MBBS seats across all its campuses, but the competition is very tough for the 46 general seats in AIIMS Delhi. Among the 67 students scoring perfect marks of 720/720 all are competing for the limited AIIMS Delhi seats, therefore making the admission race more fierce. This results in extreme pressure on the student, who not only has to excel but also outperform the competitors, leading to increased stress and anxiety.

### Genuine Learning:

Academic integrity promotes honest and ethical behaviour, thus fostering genuine learning and personal growth. When students use shortcuts such as plagiarism and cheating, they miss out on critical learning experiences that stimulate their growth. They deprive students of the opportunity to develop essential skills, deepen their understanding of a topic, and achieve true academic success. Rather than confronting academic challenges, students opt for shortcuts that offer only a temporary escape, ultimately depriving nobody but themselves of essential learning opportunities.

## Moral and Ethical Development:

Academic integrity fosters a culture of honesty and responsibility, which is extremely important for the overall character development of any individual. When students engage in morally incorrect practices like cheating and plagiarism, they undermine their ability to develop a strong moral foundation. This corruption threatens the development of a strong moral foundation, as students exposed to or aware of such practices may come to view dishonesty as a more feasible route to success, thereby impacting their future ethical conduct and professional integrity.



# TIMELINE

Freeze Date: 21st July, 2024.

The freeze date for our committee is 21st July, 2024.

Any events occurring after which will not be taken into account. This means that, in the context of the parliamentary session, no event or incident after 21st July 2024 has occurred.

2004:

Central Board of Secondary Education Pre-Medical Test (CBSE-PMT) exams were leaked leading to widespread outrage and a demand for systemic reforms.

2006:

Himachal Pradesh Combined Pre-Medical Test (HP CPMT) was allegedly leaked on July 14. Not only was there a probe into the leak of the paper but also how the exam was conducted.

2007:

For the first time in 57 years, question papers of the Common Proficiency Test - the first level of examination for the Chartered Accountancy course - were leaked in Ahmedabad. The paper was flashed on a news channel in Delhi.

2013:

NEET is a national level medical entrance examination in India. It was introduced in 2013 by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), as an attempt to unify all the medical entrance examinations across the country. However, a few private medical colleges and the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu filed writ petitions in the respective High Courts seeking exemption from NEET. These petitions were transferred to the Supreme Court. The court with its judgement quashed the implementation of NEET

**2014:**

A medical exam known as the Combined Pre-Medical Test or CPMT was cancelled after it was found that the box of question papers was tampered with.

Uttar Pradesh Combined Pre-Medical Test (UPCPMT-2014) was cancelled over a suspected question paper leak as the boxes containing the papers were found to have been tampered with in Ghaziabad.

**2015:**

The AIPMT was cancelled as the paper was leaked in 10 states across India. During the investigation, it was found that the question paper and answer key had already been circulated. In 2015, around 300 people were arrested and 750 students expelled in the northern state of Bihar after parents and friends of students were photographed climbing school walls to pass on answers during school exams. The Uttar Pradesh Combined Pre-Medical Test (UP CPMT) was also leaked this year.

2016:

The Review Officer (RO)/ Assistant Review Officer (ARO) exam which is conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) was cancelled as its paper was leaked at a centre in Lucknow.

UPSC's Provincial Civil Service exam (PCS) was also cancelled in 2016. The paper was leaked in the NEET examination in 2016 in Uttar Pradesh. NEET Examination was reintroduced.

2017:

Board examination papers were leaked in various states of India. Himachal Pradesh reported that some question papers were stolen from Government Senior Secondary School, Kinnaur which served as a centre for exams Maharashtra's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exam paper was leaked in March. The Indian army recruitment exam was cancelled across 6 centres in the West after a suspected paper leak.

2020:

The National Law School of India University (NLSIU) took cognisance that some students had circulated questions to the National Law Aptitude Test (2020). The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) in Pune was also leaked this year.

2022:

Rajasthan saw its Forest Guard Recruitment exam leaked on social media. The Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) was scrapped on May 8, 2022, after allegations of a paper leak. The Uttarakhand Subordinate Service Selection Commission (UKSSSC) exam, the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission's (APPSC) Assistant Engineer test, and the D.El.Ed (Diploma in Elementary Education) test in West Bengal.

May 2024:

The National Testing Agency (NTA) conducts the NEET-UG exam for over 24 lakh students across 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 abroad. A petition alleging irregularities in the exam reaches the Supreme Court. The petition raises concerns about a possible question paper leak.

June 2024

June 4, 2024:

The much-awaited NEET-UG results are declared, raising eyebrows amidst an unusually high number of toppers (67 students). Additionally, reports surface about the award of "grace marks" to a specific group of students, further fueling suspicion.

June 14, 2024:

The Education Minister vehemently denies allegations of corruption surrounding the exam, asserting the integrity of the process. However, the government agrees to cooperate with the ongoing investigations.

June 16, 2024:

Amid a nationwide uproar, the EOU released confessions of the arrested accused which allegedly indicated an exchange of money for the question papers.

The statements claimed that medical aspirants paid over Rs 30 lakh each to the 'brokers' for the question papers.

During his interrogation, the 56-year-old junior engineer with the Bihar government, Sikandar Kumar Yadavendu, reportedly confessed his role and said that he was in touch with the families of some NEET aspirants, after which financials were bargained

June 19, 2024:

In a separate development, the University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET), another crucial exam conducted by the NTA, faces cancellation due to concerns over its integrity. This incident further raises questions about the functioning of the NTA.

June 20, 2024:

The Supreme Court directs Bihar and Gujarat police to submit a detailed report on the investigation into the alleged NEET-UG paper leak.

Notably, the court refrains from ordering a nationwide retest for all students, acknowledging the potential hardship it would cause.

July 2024:

The Supreme Court continues its crucial hearing on the NEET-UG controversy. The Chief Justice emphasises that a re-test for nearly 24 lakh students would be a last resort, highlighting the financial burden it would place on families. The court emphasises the need for a thorough investigation and a full disclosure report before reaching a final decision.

# KEY PLAYERS AND THEIR TAKES

## ACCUSED:

The Central Bureau of Investigation arrested several members of the “solver gang” based in Nalanda, Bihar.

They are as follows:

### Sanjeev Mukhiya

A resident of Nalanda, Sanjeev Mukhiya is the leader of the solver gang operating across Bihar, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and various other states, according to the police reports. Investigators believe that Baldev may have gotten a PDF of the solved paper on his mobile phone on the evening of the NEET-UG exam, which was on May 4. Investigators believe that the PDF was sent to a recipient who, with the help of fake documents, acquired a SIM card.

### Baldev Kumar:

Baldev Kumar, a resident of Bihar, is believed to be Sanjeev Mukhiya’s main assistant. Investigators believe that Baldev obtained a PDF of the solved paper on his mobile phone on the evening of May 4, after the NEET-UG exam. Investigators believe that the PDF was sent to a contact who had accomplices who used fake documents to get a SIM card.



**Ehsanul Haque and Imtiaz Alam:**

Ehsanul Haque, the principal of Oasis School in Jharkhand, and his vice-principal, Imtiaz Alam, who is also the National Testing Agency's (NTA) designated Hazaribagh district coordinator for NEET-UG, were taken into custody by the CBI on June 28. Investigators think their school was the source of the leak.

**Purshottam Sharma:**

Purshottam Sharma, the principal of Godhra, Gujarat's Jay Jalaram School, was taken into custody on May 21. Purshottam will oversee the May 5 NEET exam in his capacity as superintendent of the school. He is charged with planning to help some pupils cheat by working with others, one of whom is a teacher. Purshottam and his accomplice filled the blanks on the OMR sheets before sealing them.

Arif Vohra:

Arif Vohra, who used to be a martial arts instructor at the school and knew Tushar, was taken into custody on May 12. Arif, who is from Godhra, was communicating with aspiring students from Gujarat, some of whom are now being interrogated by the CBI, to help them achieve a high rank in the NEET-UG exam.

Rakesh Ranjan:

Rocky, also known as Rakesh Ranjan, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in Bihar's Nalanda for his involvement in the NEET paper leak case and has become the main suspect.

Roshan Kumar, Awadhesh Kumar, Sikander Yadavendu and 8 others (not identified yet)

Eleven people were taken into custody by the Patna Police on May 5, two of whom were intermediaries and Patna's locals Roshan Kumar and Awadhesh Kumar. Four examinees and their parents were among those taken into custody, along with Sikaner Yadavendu, who was suspected of bringing the four examinees to Nitish and Amit. The solved PDF was sent to the four accused examinees late on May 4.

## Congress:

The Congress claimed on Saturday that the BJP had strong connections with the Jay Jalaram International School in Godhra, a centre involved in the NEET scam, stating that a corrupt institution cannot be chosen for a national test without political support. The Gujarat Congress chief and Rajya Sabha member Shaktisinh Gohil underlined that Arif Vohra, the third individual in custody, had held the position of vice-president of the Gujarat BJP Minority Morcha. The Congress alleged that the Modi government is jeopardising the future of the youth by stating that the UGC-NET exam was conducted in various cities of the country, subsequently followed by the exam being cancelled on suspicion of a paper leak. The Congress wants to discuss the NEET scam in parliament, saying it ruined students' careers. However, the ruling BJP insists that the motion of thanks to the President's address should be addressed first.

**Bharatiya Janata Party:**

The NEET exam, as re-proposed by JP Nadda of the BJP, reflects their focus on the centralization and commercialization of education. Despite strong opposition from several states due to its anti-federal nature, NEET was enforced on students. The BJP government had to back down from its previous stance and the former Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan eventually admitted that papers had been leaked, despite initially denying any wrongdoing. This admission also displays the BJP's hypocrisy. Pradhan stated that only a small group of students were impacted by the NEET paper leak, and dismissed the calls for a re-examination. The remedy suggested by the government is to form a committee headed by former ISRO Chairman K Radhakrishnan. This is nothing but an attempt by the Education Ministry and the National Testing Agency (NTA) to hide their failures behind one of the country's most eminent scientists and his illustrious career. This committee has also been asked to submit its report in two months. PM Modi remarked while responding to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Upper House.

## Physics Wallah:

Alakh Pandey, the CEO of Physics Wallah, expressed concerns about irregularities in the NEET-UG exam conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA). He raised concerns about why the NTA awarded grace marks to 1,563 students and full marks to six students from one centre without conducting a thorough inquiry. He emphasised that these actions have led to uncertainty and reduced motivation in students.

On June 10, 2024, Alakh Sir filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the NTA's decision to award grace marks, labelling the compensatory marks as arbitrary. The court conducted the hearing on June 12. Political leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, called for an investigation into the alleged NTA scam, criticising the government for dismissing the possibility of a paper leak.

## National Testing Agency:

The National Testing Agency has failed to adequately respond to the different allegations and issues surrounding the NEET 2024 outcomes. The agency posted a short message on social media, admitting to having received various complaints and lawsuits from candidates who experienced a loss of exam time during the NEET-UG exam held on May 5, 2024. The NTA stated that they applied the normalisation formula, as directed by the Honourable Apex Court, to tackle these issues. Nevertheless, even with this explanation, the NTA has yet to release a thorough statement concerning the overall accusations of cheating and question paper leaks.

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