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## An Overview and Content Analysis of UGC-NET with Reference to LIS Discipline and New Pattern

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# **An Overview and Content Analysis of UGC-NET with Reference to LIS Discipline and New Pattern**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study is an effort to bring out an overview of “UGC’s National Eligibility Test (NET) for Assistant Professorship and awarding of Junior Research Fellowship (JRF)” which is being held twice a year. The attempt has been made to discuss briefly the nature and new pattern of this exam and further, the analysis has been made in terms of the latest trends being focused in LIS subject with reference to qualifying of this NET exam. The study has been restricted to December 2018 to June 2020 since NTA has taken over conducting this exam from Dec 2018 and introduced a fresh and new pattern. It is tried to analyze mainly the content and recent trends being focused on by the paper setting board of UGC elaborately for awarding this qualification for the LIS candidates. The study is oriented to provide the precise overview of the latest pattern and the areas to be concentrated on to qualify this exam considering the style of exam and difficulty levels of the LIS paper rather. In addition to that, efforts have been made to convey the key observations and necessary suggestions.*

**Keywords:** UGC, NET, JRF, Lectureship, LIS, NTA, Assistant Professorship

## **Introduction:**

Looking back the early eighties, a general perception was perceived among the public and the leading educationists that it was an easy access of getting into teaching profession in view of the nonexistence of qualified standards to appoint the competent candidates for the teaching profession. It was presumed that there is a necessity of forming valid measures to appoint the candidates to this profession considering the high teaching aptitude and concerned subject profundity. That is when, the Committee formed by UGC in 1983 on revision of pay scales of teachers in the universities and colleges under the Chairmanship of Prof. R C Mehrotra recommended the following for the post of Lectureship:

- Qualifying at the National test conducted for the purpose by UGC or any other agency approved by UGC.
- Master's degree with at least 55 % marks or its equivalent grade.

In view of the diversity of standards followed among universities, the Mehrotra Committee recommended that passing a national qualifying examination before recruitment to be made an essential pre-condition. Consequently, the Government of India, through its notification dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1988 entrusted the task of conducting the eligibility test for lectureship to UGC. Thereby, UGC conducted the first National Eligibility Test (NET), common to both eligibility for Lectureship and Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) in two parts, that is, in December 1989 and in March, 1990 [1].

On behalf of “University Grants Commission (UGC), the National Eligibility Test (NET)” has conducted the test for determining the eligibility of Indian nationals for the Eligibility for “Assistant Professor only or Junior Research Fellowship & Assistant Professor” both, in Indian Universities and Colleges. Recently, the authority for conducting this test amended and as a process CBSE took over till June 2018, and then Dec 2018 onwards, the “UGC- NET” is being conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

The award of “JRF and or Eligibility for Assistant Professor” depends on the aggregate performance of the candidate in Paper-I and Paper-II of “UGC-NET”. The candidates qualifying only for Assistant Professor are not being considered for the award of “JRF”. Candidates who qualify the test for eligibility for Assistant Professor are governed by the rules and regulations for recruitment of Assistant Professor of the concerned universities/colleges/state governments, as the case may be. “UGC-NET” is being conducted twice a year.

## **Scope & Relevance of the Study:**

Clearing of “UGC NET” have been considered as an essential qualification for applying for the post of lectureship/assistant professorship at university/college level. Considering the level of importance of this exam, it is observed that the design of the examination pattern is being revised periodically to qualify the eligible and competent candidates for the lectureship to improve the pedagogy at academic institutions. The difficulty level of qualifying papers is lively upgrading with the latest developments and trends in the concerned field and domain.

Keeping in view of this test as an additional standard qualification, many employers, learning bodies, educational institutions and “R&D” organisations are considering this test as a major criterion to evaluate the candidate’s competency and calibre in each fields of their interest for various reasons. Post Graduating in “Library and Information Science (LIS)” field also a part of this procedure to get career opportunities in various academic institutions, special libraries and public libraries etc. Library & Information Centres as learning institutions are adopting widely the latest technologies in the field ever before, to serve the user community in a better manner and manage the big data effectively. In this regard, the LIS educational institutions are also inspired to introduce the innovative curriculum to train the LIS graduates to rise up with the latest developments and societal demand. In this regard, an attempt has been made in this study to overview the latest structure of NET examination being conducted by NTA presently and content analysis of paper-II of library and information science subject.

To analyse the latest trend and highly approached areas in the current scenario in respect to LIS discipline, the data collection has been restricted from Dec, 2018 to Jun, 2020 since ‘NTA’ has been taken the responsibility of conducting this test, revised the fresh pattern and qualifying the candidates. The study efforts to bring out the flavour of trending areas being focused to check the competency and aptitude of the aspirants in LIS field to award this test clearance.

### **Concept of National Eligibility Test (NET):**

The “National Eligibility Test (NET)”, also known as “UGC NET or NTA-UGC-NET”, is the examination for determining the eligibility for the post of assistant professor and Junior Research Fellowship award in Indian universities and colleges. The examination is conducted by “*National Testing Agency*” on behalf of “University Grants Commission”. Till July 2018, the “Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)” conducted the “UGC-NET” exam, which the ‘NTA’ has been conducting since December 2018. Currently, the exam is being conducted twice a year in the months of June and December in online mode [2].

The “Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GOI)”, has established “National Testing Agency (NTA)” as an independent, autonomous and self-sustained premier organization under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, registered as a self-reliant and self-sustained premier testing organization. As of now, the “NTA” is conducting “NET” in 81 subjects at 225 selected centres spread across the country. The complete list of “UGC-NET” subjects and centres are available in the “NTA” website (<https://nta.ac.in/Home>).

**Structure of the NET Examination:**

The Test will be consisting of two papers. Both the papers will consist of objective type, multiple choice questions. The scope and coverage of the papers as shown below;

Paper	Marks	Number of Questions	MCQ	Total Duration
<b>I</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	The questions in Paper I intends to assess the teaching/ research aptitude of the candidate. It will primarily be designed to test reasoning ability, reading comprehension, divergent thinking and general awareness of the candidate.	03 hours (180 minutes)  All the questions are compulsory.
<b>II</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>	This is based on the <b>subject selected by the candidate</b> and will assess domain knowledge.  (for example, LIS subject)	

**Age Limit and Relaxation:**

- I. **JRF:** Not more than 30 years and a relaxation of upto 5 years is provided to the candidates belonging to “OBC- Non-Creamy Layer (OBC-NCL)” (as per the Central list of OBC available on website: [www.ncbc.nic.in](http://www.ncbc.nic.in)) /SC/ST/PwD/Transgender categories and to women applicants. Relaxation will also be provided to the candidates with research experience, limited to the period spent on research in the relevant/related subject of post-graduation degree, subject to a maximum of 5 years, on production of a certificate from appropriate authority. Three years relaxation in

age will be permissible to the candidates with “L.L.M.” degree. A relaxation of upto 5 years is provided to the candidates who have served in the armed forces subject to the length of service in the armed forces upto the first day of the month in which the concerned “UGC-NET” is to be held. Total age relaxation on the above ground(s) shall not exceed five years under any circumstances.

II. **Assistant Professor:** There is no upper age limit in applying for “UGC-NET” for Assistant Professor.

**Procedure and Criteria for declaration of result:**

The following steps will be followed:

- ✓ Step I: The number of candidates to be qualified (total slots or Eligibility for “Assistant Professor”) shall be equal to 6% of the candidates appeared in both the papers of “NET”.
- ✓ Step II: The total slots shall be allocated to different categories as per the reservation policy of Government of India.
- ✓ Step III: In order to be considered for “JRF and Eligibility for Assistant Professor” and for “Assistant Professor”, the candidate must have appeared in both the papers and secured at least 40% aggregate marks in both the papers taken together for “General (Unreserved) category” candidates and at least 35% aggregate marks in both the papers taken together for all candidates belonging to the following reserved categories “(viz., SC, ST, OBC (belonging to Non-Creamy Layer, PwD and Transgender)”.
- ✓ Step IV: The number of candidates to be declared qualified in any subject for a particular category is derived as per the methodology illustrated below

<p><b>Example:</b> Number of candidates to be declared qualified for Eligibility for Assistant Professor in the subject ‘Economics’ for the “Scheduled Caste (SC)” category</p>	<p>Number of candidates belonging to “SC” category who secure at least 35% aggregate marks in both the papers taken together for SC category for ‘Economics’ (x) Total slots derived for SC category as per Step II (÷) Total number of candidates belonging to “SC” category over all subjects who secure at least 35% aggregate marks in both the papers taken together.</p>
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The aggregate percentage of these two papers corresponding to the number of slots arrived at, shall be determined the qualifying cut-off for Eligibility for Assistant Professor ‘in ‘Economics’ for the SC category. Similar yardstick shall be employed for deriving the subject-wise qualifying cut-offs for all categories.

- ✓ Step V: All candidates who had applied for “Eligibility for JRF & Eligibility for Assistant Professor both” out of the total number of qualified candidates derived as per Step shall constitute the consideration zone for “JRF”.
- ✓ Step VI: The total number of slots available for awarding “JRF” is allocated among different categories as per the reservation policy of Government of India. The procedure for subject wise cum category-wise allocation of JRF slots is illustrated below:

<p><b>Example:</b> Number of candidates to be declared qualified for JRF &amp; Eligibility for Assistant Professor both in the subject ‘Economics’ for the “Scheduled Tribe (ST) category”</p>	<p>Number of candidates belonging to ‘ST’ category who have opted for JRF and have qualified for Eligibility for ‘Assistant Professor’ in the subject ‘Economics’ (x) Total ‘JRF’ slots available for ‘ST category’ (÷) Total number of candidates belonging to ST category over all subjects who have opted for ‘JRF’ and have qualified for Eligibility for “Assistant Professor”.</p>
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The aggregate percentage of the two paper scores corresponding to the number of JRF slots arrived at, shall be determined the qualifying cut-off for JRF in ‘Economics’ for the ST category. Similar procedure is used for all subjects and categories.

**Benefit of Eligibility:**

**I. Assistant Professorship:**

Clearing of “NET” confers eligibility for Assistant Professorship upon Indian nationals, i.e. the NET qualified candidates are eligible to apply for the post of Assistant Professorship in all Indian universities/institutes/colleges. Candidates who qualify the test for eligibility for Assistant

Professorship will be governed by the rules and regulations for recruitment of Assistant Professorship of the concerned universities / colleges / state governments, as the case may be.

## **II. Junior Research Fellowship (JRF)**

The candidates who qualify for the award of JRF are eligible to pursue research in the subject of their post-graduation or in a related subject and are also eligible for Assistant Professorship. In addition, they are also eligible to receive Fellowships “(UGC)” under various schemes subject to the candidates finding their placement in the universities / IITs / other national organizations. UGC has allocated a number of fellowships to the universities for “JRF” qualified candidates to pursuing higher studies leading to M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. The award of JRF will depend on the performance of the candidate in prescribed two papers of NET. However, the candidates qualifying exclusively for Assistant Professorship will not be considered for the award of JRF.

The validity of the offer will be of two years w.e.f. the date of issue of “JRF award letter”. The validity period of the offer has been raised from one year to two years for “JRF award letters” issued on or after 1st April, 2005. However, in case the candidates have already joined “M.Phil. / Ph.D.”, the date of commencement of fellowship will be from the date of declaration of NET examination result or date of their joining, whichever is later.

### **Exemption:**

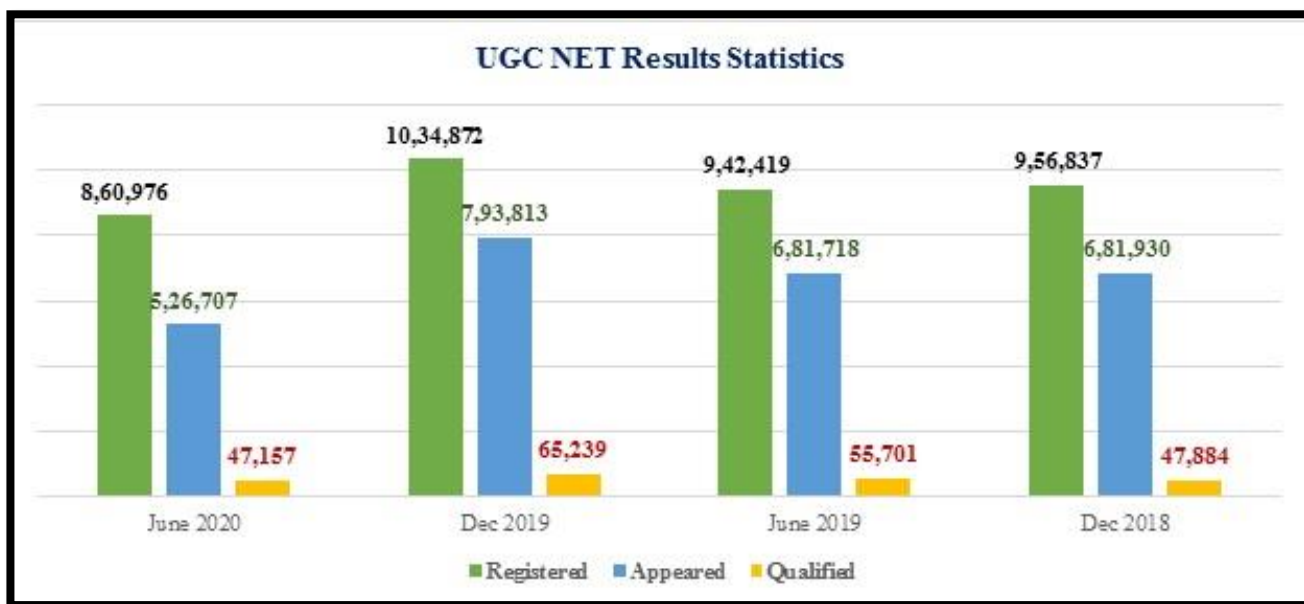
“NET” shall remain the minimum eligibility condition for recruitment and appointment of Assistant Professors in Universities/ Colleges/Institutions. Provided however, that candidates, who are or have been awarded a Ph.D. Degree in accordance with the “University Grants Commission” (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2009, shall be exempted from the requirement of the minimum eligibility condition of “NET/SLET/SET” for recruitment and appointment of Assistant Professor or equivalent positions in Universities/ Colleges/ Institutions. The candidates who have passed the “UGC JRF” examination prior to 1989 are also exempted from appearing in “NET” [3].

### **Statistics of UGC NET Results:**

The public notices of UGC-NET released in the official website have been referred for analysing the data in terms of overall candidates registered, appeared and qualified this exam considering all disciplines. The data analysis of LIS candidates specifically has not been considered due to the



unavailability of explicit data. As shown in the graphical representation, in June 2020, total **8,60,976** candidates registered and paid fees for the UGC NET exam out of which **5,26,707** appeared. Total **47,157** i.e. only 8.95% of the total registered candidates are qualified the exam. Out of this, **40,986** candidates qualified the exam for Assistant Professor only and **6,171** candidates qualified the exam for JRF and Assistant Professor.



UGC NET cut-off 2020 was released by NTA on November 30. Two separate UGC NET cut-offs have been released by the agency - category-wise percentile subjects and percent subjects. The cut-offs have been released for 81 subjects separately for only Assistant Professor and both JRF and Assistant Professor.

Consequently, in Dec 2019 **10,34,872** candidates are registered out of which **7,93,813** candidates are appeared and only 65,239 candidates were able to success in this test i.e. only 8.21% of the total registered candidates. In June 2019 **9,42,419** candidates were registered out of which **6,81,718** candidates appeared the exam and success ratio was 8.17 % where 55,701 candidates cleared the exam. In Dec 2018 when NTA conducted the exam first time 9,56,837 candidates were successfully registered out of which **6,81,930** candidates could attend the exam. The success rate was only 7.02% of total registered candidates. Comparatively, among all these four attempts June 2020 has got the little push in the success rate.

## Methodology

### Analysis of UGC-NET LIS Paper with reference to New Pattern of NTA:

The test has been recognised as one of the toughest exam which is being considered to be essential criteria for academic credentials. Accordingly, the pattern and the level of difficulty being reformed regularly to evaluate the profound candidates over the years according to the updated syllabus. In this section, the authors attempted to bring out the latest trends in the LIS field that is being mainly focused usually in UGC NET papers year by year. The study also focused to make an analysis on the skills and proficiency required in the candidate to qualify this national test in the LIS discipline. In this paper, only Paper-II has been taken as primary data to analyse the trends in the subject and the checklist has been defined as mentioned in the below table considering the curriculum of major LIS schools in India. The question papers from Dec 2018 to June 2020 have been considered, since NTA has taken over to conduct this exam from Dec 2018 and introduced the new pattern. The data has been keenly assessed and interpreted as shown in the table;

Topic	Dec 2018	Jun 2019	Dec 2019	June 2020	Avg. Total
<b>Research &amp; Teaching Aptitude in LIS:</b> Methodology, Metrics and Tools, Pedagogy, Theories & Practices	10 (10%)	02 (2%)	05 (5%)	07 (7%)	24 (6%)
<b>ICT Applications in Libraries:</b> Basics of Computers, Networking, HTTP, HTML, Web Design, Library Automation, Digital Archiving, CMS, OPAC, Metadata, etc.	12 (12%)	23 (23%)	26 (26%)	18 (18%)	79 (19.75%)
<b>Learned Theories &amp; Practices in LIS:</b> Information & Communication Theories, Classification Theories, Knowledge Theories, etc.	11 (11%)	14 (14%)	09 (09%)	17 (17%)	51 (12.75%)
<b>Ethics in Information:</b> Copyright, IPR, Plagiarism & Publication	03 (3%)	02 (2%)	03 (3%)	04 (4%)	12 (3%)
<b>LIS Profession &amp; Development:</b> LIS Education, Legislation, Librarianship, Conferences, Important Events & Associations	11 (11%)	09 (9%)	08 (8%)	06 (6%)	34 (8.5%)
<b>Information Literacy, User Education &amp; Promotion:</b> Skills, Searching Strategies, Users Approach, User Oriented Programs & Information Behaviour	10 (10%)	10 (10%)	09 (9%)	15 (15%)	44 (11%)
<b>Higher Education System, Accreditation Bodies &amp; Best Practices:</b> NAAC, UGC, AICTE, etc.	02 (2%)	03 (3%)	04 (4%)	01 (1%)	10 (2.5%)

<b>Nature and Types of Information Sources:</b> Primary, Secondary & Tertiary based.	05 (5%)	02 (2%)	04 (4%)	06 (6%)	17 (4.25%)
<b>Library Management &amp; Managerial Skills:</b> Budgeting, Building Plan, Collection Development, Decision Making, Human Resource Management, Manpower Planning, Financial Management, Marketing, etc.	08 (8%)	04 (4%)	09 (9%)	06 (6%)	27 (6.75%)
<b>Organization of Information:</b> Classification Schemes, Cataloguing, Indexing, International Standards of Knowledge Management	16 (16%)	11 (11%)	12 (12%)	08 (8%)	47 (11.75%)
<b>National/International Information Systems &amp; Networking &amp; Resource Sharing:</b> INFLIBNET, DELNET, DESIDOC, NISCAIR, NISSAT, NASSDOC, INSDOC, INB, BNB, etc.	02 (2%)	04 (4%)	02 (2%)	02 (2%)	10 (2.5%)
<b>Information Services &amp; Innovative Practices:</b> SDI, CAS, Reference, Referral. Bibliographic, Indexing, Resource Sharing, Lending, e-Learning, Online Services, Social Media, etc.	04 (4%)	06 (6%)	07 (7%)	09 (9%)	26 (6.5%)
<b>General Comprehension &amp; Reasoning Aptitude</b>	06 (6%)	10 (10%)	02 (2%)	01 (1%)	19 (4.75%)

The analysis shows that the testing agency has endeavoured to assess the candidates based on the understanding of theoretical and practical knowledge of the discipline. A well-balanced approach towards checking the skills in all facets of LIS shall be observed in the above table. Nevertheless, ICT and its applications in libraries has got the highest attention i.e.19.75% of total questions are observed mainly to check the skills in adopting the latest technologies in the library services. Followed by 12.75% of questions are asked on the concepts of learned theories and different models of information communication and knowledge. As being said Librarians are Information Managers, 11.75% of questions are raised up to test the organisation skills of candidates majorly on the topics on understanding of different kind of classification, cataloguing, indexing theories and practices with reference to the international standards adopted in LIS. Apart from that, 11% of total questions are noticed in testing of familiarity with information literacy and user education skills.

Apparently, a good volume of questions is extracted from the main streams of LIS i.e. 8.5%, 6.75%, 6.5%, 6% from LIS profession and development, library management skills, information services and innovative practices, research and teaching aptitude respectively. At the same time, the topics like IPR issues, types of information resources, higher education, resource sharing and general aptitude related questions are also quite observed to examine the acuity on all related areas, but it is comparatively less than 6%. As empirical evidence, the questions are most preferably dynamic and diverse since the LIS discipline is itself an interdisciplinary in a manner. Becoming an information professional, or a librarian or an information manager is essentially demanding diverse skills from the aspirant in the modern IT world. Nowadays librarian is no more only custodian of the books rather he is highly skilled professional to serve the community even beyond the walls and playing an important role in virtual realm.

### **Key Observations:**

- ✓ In the national level, the reputation of the exam is increased time by time. This is because of the revised policies of higher educational institutes and government authorities.
- ✓ The study shows that the number of candidates who are being registered for this exam is very high and it is observed of the difference that 2.5-3.5 lakhs of candidates are not appearing for the exam out of total registered candidates.
- ✓ New pattern of NTA has got major revision in terms of time duration of the exam, making all questions mandatory and automation of mechanism in conducting the exam.
- ✓ Overall success rate of this exam with reference to LIS subject after NTA has taken over is between 7% to 9% percentage.
- ✓ The level of difficulty and nature of questions are application oriented in LIS domain year by year and the fundamental concepts also being patterned with good number of questions to sustain the basic attitude of the discipline.
- ✓ Prepared checklist has been succeeded to categorise the questions precisely and the checklist was derived mainly by referring the curriculum of different LIS schools in India.

### **Suggestions:**

Considering the analysis and interpretation of collected data and witnessing the recent trends in the field, the following general suggestions are made.

- As study observes, the authority shall find out the reasons and appropriate resolutions to encourage all registered candidates to appear for the exam.

- The curriculum adopted in LIS schools plays a crucial role in getting success in this exam. Accordingly, the timely updating of curriculum shall fetch fruitful results.
- UGC shall resolutely stand on mandating of qualifying the NET exam to seek an opportunity as teaching faculty at higher education institutions. Offering of relaxation due to various reasons shall be dropped and bring the mindset of clearing the test.
- NET qualification shall be made mandatory for the appointment of Assistant Professorship in colleges and universities as the process of mandating Ph.D. on the same requirement in down the line. This may bring the profound benefit for the development of higher education in India.
- NET exam shall be made an essential criterion for getting admitted for Ph.D. in view of assessing the theoretical knowledge of the candidate and other tests shall be defined to test the candidate practically at university level.
- LIS schools in India shall think of providing practical skills development programs in terms of extending state-of-the-art oriented pedagogy, offering well equipped laboratories, cultivating the research mindset and practical session for cracking such national exams, so that they shall be better skilled and mark a change in the society.
- The government shall encourage all the higher education institutions across the country by funding to build proper infrastructure and skills development for the benefit of large population of academic community to take up such national level tests without hesitation of their affordability.
- The pattern and syllabus of the exam shall be updated and revised in cope up with the application of latest IT tools in the respective field and the methodology of conducting exam shall be revised if necessary from time to time as many of the registered candidates being noticed absent in previous exams.
- Qualified candidates shall be provided with deserved opportunities by timely processing the recruitments across the country in colleges and universities.

**Conclusion:**

UGC has been revising the pattern of the test regularly with clear guidelines for qualifying the candidate in a scientific manner considering it is one of the important test and qualifying criteria in getting an opportunity across the country. As observed, the total number of candidates registered for this exam are not able to attend the exam due to various reasons in terms of not getting the desired centre and availability of limited centres to prefer, transportation facility from remote places, inferiority and lack of confidence in taking of newly introduced computer-based-test, etc. The questions are par with the latest

developments as observed and even though the number of questions shall be increased in the emerging fields of LIS for encouraging the candidates to cope up with the latest technologies. The authority shall review and rectify the issues by increasing the centres to appear the exam and bringing awareness on newly introduced methods of test among the candidates. Moreover, the government shall make this test as a mandate qualification to retain the worthiness and reputation of this national test.

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