

NOTICE

Subject: Guidelines regarding Challenge / Objection Management System

Staff Selection Commission has laid down a Challenge / Objection Management System for finalization of answer keys of various computer-based examinations having objective type multiple choice questions. The candidates are informed about this system through the notice of each examination which contains broad outlines of the system. Under this dispensation, after an examination is held, the Commission publishes the tentative answer keys of all the questions which appeared in the examination and the candidates are invited to raise objections / challenges in respect of the questions or the tentative answer keys. The objections raised by the candidates are examined by the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and based on their recommendation, the final answer keys of the questions are prepared which are subsequently published on the website of the Commission.

2. In the recent past, the Commission has received a number of representations / grievances through various channels, including RTI Applications and the public grievance portal. The candidates have also agitated before various courts of law on the issue of finalization of answer key of various examinations. Based on the feedback received from the candidates and the observations made by the various courts, particularly the observations of Hon'ble High Court of Delhi in Abhi Naitan [WP(C) 8525/2025] and connected matters, the Commission has taken a comprehensive review of the entire challenge management process. It has also been decided to publish the broad guidelines for the information of candidates so that they are aware of the system and can make informed choices while appearing in the examination.

3. After challenges / objections made by the candidates are scrutinized by the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), various scenarios arise. The decision in respect of each of these scenarios would be as under:

- a. **Question is found to be ambiguous or there are errors in the question affecting its clarity or correctness, or there are no correct options available:** In such cases, the question shall be discarded and marks allocated to that question shall be added to the total marks obtained by each candidate irrespective of whether any candidate has attempted the question or not. The candidates may note that once a question has been discarded, it ceases to have any impact on the relative merit position of the candidates; the merit is effectively decided on the basis of the performance of the candidates in the remaining questions.
- b. **A question has more than one correct option:** In such cases full marks will be awarded to all those candidates who have chosen any one of the correct options. In the case of those candidates who have chosen the wrong option, negative marks applicable to the question will be awarded to them. All the candidates who have not attempted such a question will be awarded zero marks.

[Illustration: If the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) opine that a question has three correct options, any candidate who has chosen any of those three options will be awarded full marks. However, a candidate who has chosen the fourth option (the incorrect one), will be awarded negative marks applicable to the question. All those candidates who have left this question unattempted will be awarded zero marks. Similarly, in a rare case of a question having all the four correct options, the candidates who have chosen any one of those options will be awarded full marks, whereas candidates who have left the question unattempted will be awarded zero marks.]

Note: Please refer to para 5 below regarding multiple correct answers.

- c. **Questions deemed to be out of syllabus:** The syllabi of various examinations are broadly defined and as such, the candidates are expected to come prepared keeping in view the broad topics indicated in the syllabus and also the level of examination, which may be of matriculation level, higher secondary level or graduation level. As such, the possibility of a question being out of syllabus is remote. However, in the rare and exceptional cases where the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), after reviewing the challenges, come to a conclusion that a question is out of syllabus, such a question will be discarded and marks would be awarded to all the candidates irrespective of whether a candidate has attempted the question (correctly or incorrectly) or has not attempted the question at all.
- d. **Language specific errors / errors in translation:** While filling up the application form, all the candidates will be required to indicate the medium / language in which they would like to appear for examination. The candidates choosing either English or Hindi medium in their application form will be able to view the questions both in Hindi and English. However, they would be able to mark their answers and submit the same only in the medium / language chosen by them while filling up their application form. To illustrate, a candidate choosing Hindi will be able to view the questions both in English and Hindi but will be able to submit the answer only in Hindi. In a similar manner, in case of examinations which are conducted in multiple languages apart from Hindi and English, the candidates will be required to indicate their medium / language in their application form and they will be able to submit their answers only in the language specified by them in the application form even though they would be able to view the questions in the language chosen by them and also in Hindi and English.

In case there is a translation error or an error in a specific language, the question will be evaluated by the SMEs independently for that language, in accordance with the guidelines set out above irrespective of the position in English / Hindi (or any other language) version of the concerned question. For instance, if a question is correct in the English version but due to an error in the Punjabi version, the question becomes ambiguous, in that case, the question will be discarded only for Punjabi and marks will be awarded to all the candidates who have chosen Punjabi as their medium. Taking the same example, if the Punjabi version is such that it has multiple correct answers, then the dispensation outlined above in the case of multiple correct answers, will be applicable only for the candidates choosing Punjabi as their medium; for all other languages, the question would be evaluated independently taking into account how it appears in each of those languages. Taking the illustration further, in case the question is ambiguous in English version (and consequently discarded) but it is correct in Punjabi version having a unique answer (or even multiple correct answers), the question will be evaluated in the Punjabi version independently in accordance with the guidelines mentioned in preceding paras and the English version will have no impact on such an evaluation.

4. The candidates may note that only substantive objections which impact the clarity or intent of the question will be taken into account; minor errors which do not substantively impact the question and where a person of ordinary prudence having knowledge of the subject as expected of a candidate, is able to understand the true meaning and intent of the question, would be ignored. The candidates are, therefore, advised not to raise objections of a hyper-technical nature for the sole purpose of getting a question rejected, even though the meaning and intent of the question is clear to any person of ordinary prudence having a good knowledge of the subject as expected of an aspirant.

5. Similar principle will be applicable while deciding whether a question has multiple correct answers or no correct answer. The SMEs go with the best, or the most applicable answer, looking at the meaning and intent of the question. More often than not, the best answer is the most obvious one and not the one that can be arrived at by a laboured application of some contrived logic. The candidates are, therefore, advised not to claim multiple correct answers where there is a clear and obvious unique answer as such claims are likely to be rejected by the SMEs. Similarly, where a unique correct answer (which may be the closest option for the question) is clearly available, the claims for discarding the question on technical grounds citing 'no correct answer' may not be accepted by the SMEs. The candidates are, therefore, advised to keep this in mind while attempting the questions.

6. The candidates may also note that the number of challenges / objections raised against a question does not impact the final outcome; rather it is the merit in such objections. Thus, even if a single objection is raised against a question, which has definitive merit, the same is likely to be accepted by the SMEs whereas a large number of objections, without much merit, raised against a question, may not be accepted by SMEs even though all such objections will be duly considered by them. The candidates should, therefore, keep this in mind while raising objections / making challenges.

7. The above are broad guidelines which will be kept in mind by the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) while making their recommendations, based on which the Commission finalizes the answer keys.

8. These guidelines will be applicable to all the examinations conducted by the Commission that involve objective-type multiple-choice questions from the 2026 series onwards and all the forthcoming Departmental Examinations.

Deputy Director
Staff Selection Commission
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