Political Science OR International Relations: Which is Better for CSS & PMS Exam?

Choosing the right optional subjects for the CSS (Central Superior Services) and PMS (Provincial Management Services) exams is a crucial decision that can significantly impact your preparation and performance. Among the various optional subjects, Political Science and International Relations are two popular choices that often spark debate among aspirants. Both subjects offer unique advantages and align with different interests and strengths. This article provides a detailed comparison and analysis to help you decide which subject may be better suited for your CSS and PMS exam preparation.

> Let me clarify that there are myths about which subjects are considered scoring, particularly in International Relations (IR) and Political Science. Both subjects can be scoring if you have an interest in them, command over them, and understand their fundamental terminologies and principles. Therefore, the first thing an aspirant needs to identify is their interest in the subject and grasp its basic essence. If you are already familiar with a subject and have studied it during your graduation, it would be advantageous for you to pursue it further in your competitive exam's journey. Conversely, starting a new subject from ZERO may be more challenging and time consuming.

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Choosing Your CSS & PMS Optional Subjects

When selecting your optional subjects for the CSS and PMS exams, consider the following factors:

- **Your background subject**
- **Your interest**
- **Your potential**
- **Less Syllabus**
- **Common Syllabus**
- **Scoring trends**

Political Science OR International Relations? (In-Depth Analysis)

Recently, a common question in Facebook, WhatsApp groups and CSS forums is whether to choose **Political Science or International Relations**. Many people provide opinions without proper knowledge or experience, which can be confusing. I have Master's Degrees in both and can guide you better than anyone. Making your own decision based on your background, potential, and interest is essential.

As you prepare for the exam, selecting optionals that align with your strengths is crucial. This is a critical step in your CSS journey, and making an informed decision here can significantly impact your success. Follow these guidelines in descending order of importance:

Choosing Your Optional Subjects

When selecting your optional subjects for the CSS and PMS exams, consider the following factors:

1. **Your background:** If you choose a subject that aligns with your educational background, you already have a foundational understanding of the material. For example, suppose you have a degree in Political Science. In that case,

selecting it as an optional subject can make your preparation easier and more efficient, as you'll be familiar with the key concepts and theories. This familiarity can significantly reduce your preparation time, allowing you to focus more on other subjects.

2. **Interest:** Your passion for a subject can make a significant difference in your preparation. If you are genuinely interested in a subject, studying it will feel less like a chore and more like an engaging activity. For instance, if international relations fascinate you, opting for it as a subject will motivate you to delve deeper into the topics, making even complex concepts easier to grasp. Passion fuels persistence, and this persistence is crucial for thorough preparation.

3. **Potential:** Understanding your strengths and weaknesses is crucial when selecting your subjects. Choose subjects that align with your capabilities. For example, if you have strong analytical skills and enjoy critical thinking, subjects like Political Science or International Relations may suit you well. Conversely, if you find these areas challenging, it might be better to opt for subjects that align more closely with your natural strengths and academic potential.

4. **Common subjects:** Look for subjects that overlap with other areas of your study. This strategy can save you a considerable amount of time. For instance, Political Science and International Relations often share common topics with Pakistan Affairs and Current Affairs. By choosing such subjects, you can streamline your study process, as preparing for one subject will simultaneously help you cover part of another, making your preparation more efficient.

5. **Syllabus:** Evaluate the length and complexity of the syllabus for each subject. Opting for a subject with a shorter or more manageable syllabus can help you allocate your time more effectively. For example, if one subject requires extensive reading and understanding of numerous complex theories, while another is more straightforward with fewer topics, the latter might be a more practical choice to ensure you cover everything thoroughly without feeling overwhelmed.

6. **Scoring trends:** While some candidates place significant emphasis on scoring trends, it's essential to focus on your strengths and interests. Scoring trends can vary, and relying solely on them might not be the best strategy. For instance, a subject that is perceived as high-scoring one year might not be the same the next. Instead, choose subjects where you can consistently perform well due to your strong understanding and interest. Remember, consistent performance is more reliable than fluctuating trends.

Advantages of Choosing Political Science in CSS Exam

Political Science can assist you in:

1. English Essay
2. Current Affairs
3. Pakistan Affairs
4. History of Pakistan and India
5. International Relations
6. Philosophy
7. Constitutional Law

Advantages of Choosing International Relations (IR) in CSS Exam

International Relations can assist you in:

1. English Essay
2. Current Affairs
3. Pakistan Affairs
4. International Law

5. US History
6. British History
7. Political Science
8. Economics

Final Recommendations

To make an informed decision, review past papers of both subjects from 2016 onwards. This will help you determine which subject suits you best. As you're going to sit in the exam, therefore, it is high time for you to select optionals according to your background, potential, and interest etc. This is the very initial phase of your CSS exam, you're supposed to learn how to make decisions on your own, if you cannot, stop dreaming of doing CSS. For if you failed in this very step of your exam by following others blindly and not your heart. I don't think so if you are competent to appear in competitive exams. (*Sorry for such words, however, it's essential to decide what suits you the best as you know yourself very well, rather than blindly following anyone's advice. Consider all the aforementioned factors and take this important decision independently. After all, you will be the one sitting in the exam hall*.)
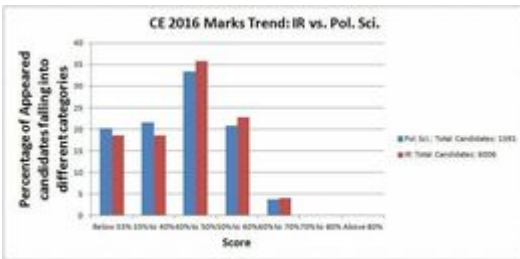
Regards,
FaRan ઠ૪ઙ
(Master in IR, Pol Sci, Physics and Education)
1st attempt in 2016

P.S. Feel free to disagree with my analysis, but please provide strong reasons.

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