

1) Analysis of old question papers for choosing right topics

The first step of smart study method is analysis of old question papers. For this, you require syllabus and old NET question papers of at least last three NET exams. The syllabus and question papers are available on UGC web site www.ugc.ac.in. I suggest you to carry out analysis of paper II and paper III separately. While performing analysis of question papers, you should identify the weightage for each topic by considering number of MCQs asked on it. You are advised to make a separate summary as shown below for Paper II and III.

ANALYSIS OF PAPER II

Unit	No. of questions		
	Dec. 2014	Dec. 2013	June 2013
I	01	01	01
II	03	03	03
III	02	01	02
IV	12	12	12
V	15	15	15
VI	09	08	11
VII	01	02	01
VIII	--	---	---
IX	01	01	01
X	06	07	04
Total	50	50	50

Let's see how such analysis helps you:

A student approached me for NET guidance. He has failed in NET for six times in last three years. He was frustrated because he could not qualify NET in spite of very good study.

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On asking him about method of preparation, he replied saying that he spends most of his time in NET preparation (14 hours a day). His method of study was random and involved reading books one after the other. I knew that this method is not much fruitful as it helps to gain knowledge but cannot assure success in NET. I asked him whether he has done analysis of old question papers prior to the studies. He replied that he has not done any type of such analysis and wondered why it was required to qualify NET. I suggested him to do that. He came back to me after a couple of days with the analysis shown in above table. The analysis which is shown in above table was done by him. I asked him regarding the topics which he was studying for qualifying NET. I was shocked to know that he has chosen Unit I, II, III, VII, and IX for study and left IV, V, VI, and X as option. If you see the above table you will find that there are very few MCQs asked on these topics. When I asked him why he has chosen units I, II, III, VII, and IX for study, he replied these were specialization topics during his post graduation. I was keen to know the reason behind keeping unit IV, V, VI, and X for option. He told me that unit IV and V were not of his interest and unit VI and X were contemporary topics on which literature was not easily available. I immediately realised that the student was sailing in a wrong boat. He was studying such topics on which there was no good weightage. He realised his mistake and started studying other units and qualified in next NET exam.

I have seen many NET aspirants making the same mistake. Most of the students select the topics of their M.Sc./M.Com./M.A. specialization. Many a times, there are very less questions on such topics. Thus, analysis of previous question papers helps you to select proper topics for NET preparation.

Conclusion: In most cases, it is very difficult to study entire syllabus of NET since it is very vast. Under such circumstances, students select few topics for preparation. It is important to know whether there is sufficient weightage on these topics before starting studies. From my

experience, I feel that it is necessary to study at least 60-70% topics from the syllabus. The proper analysis of question papers enables to make a right selection.

2) Qualitative Analysis of questions for understanding direction of study and depth of knowledge:

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The next step of smart study is to follow systematic preparation method. It is important to know the **direction of your study and depth of knowledge** required to qualify NET before you begin studies. I have seen most NET aspirants saying that they don't find questions on whatever literature they read. This is true as most of questions in NET are very strange. I think you will agree with this. This usually happen because of wrong study material followed during the preparation.

I have always suggested students to carry out qualitative analysis of questions asked in previous exams before starting preparation. This will help you to plan your studies with cutting edge accuracy. The so called "qualitative analysis" can be done writing, year wise, all the questions asked on a particular topic one below the other. The sample is shown below:

Topic: Thermodynamics

June 2014: 1)

2)

3)

Dec. 2013: 1)

2)

3)

June. 2013: 1)

2)

3)

Once this is done, analyze questions critically because they are going to be your guide in preparation. They will show you direction of study.

I want to share my experience with a NET aspirant of history subject who was unable to clear NET in spite of six years of hard work. He approached me for NET guidance. After a careful diagnosis, I found that he has never done any type of such analysis. He was reading books, one after the other for last six years. In spite of reading more than hundred reference books, he was not still able to qualify. This is because he gained a lot of knowledge, but could not focus on the aspects on which questions were asked. I suggested him to do qualitative analysis, he realized that he was studying very different stuff that was not relevant with respect to NET. The analysis helped him to concentrate his studies on important things and I am delighted to tell that he qualified next NET with 8th rank.

Conclusion: Most of questions asked in NET are applicative and need different study method to solve. Most of students use orthodox method of study that we employed for post graduation that consists of reading theoretical aspects. This study method is useful when question starts with headings such as Explain, Describe, Elaborate etc. However, questions asked in NET are MCQs which are highly specific. I have observed that this type of analysis even helps to students to predict question that may possibly be asked in next NET (up to 20 % extent). The questions in NET are usually of three types. There are 20 % questions which are predictable because they are repeatedly asked focussing on a single aspect. There are 30 % questions in NET that usually focus on 2-3 different aspects while remaining 50 % questions are unpredictable as they focus on different aspect every time. Thus, qualitative analysis can help us to study half of paper with a good degree of accuracy.

3) Good study material

The third step of smart study is to gather good study material. I have seen many NET aspirants relying on different books available in market especially for UGC-NET. As per my

opinion, these books can guide you but cannot help you to qualify NET. **The best study material for NET preparation is standard reference books.** I have always suggested students to read good reference books if they want to clear NET as early as possible.

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I have always suggested NET aspirants to meet at least five students who have cleared NET in their subject to know about their method of preparation. Their opinion will definitely help you to understand list of good books required for preparation. There are large numbers of seminars, workshops that are being conducted for NET preparation. I have always suggested aspirants to attend these so that you can get proper direction. You can ask your teachers about names of good reference books. Consulting people will definitely help you a lot in your preparation.

I have always suggested students to use three resources for preparation of each topic from syllabus during NET preparation: Resource 1: Get at least one book for NET preparation published by various publishers. Such books help you to get an initial idea regarding preparation. Resource 2: There are many academies that provide correspondence notes for NET/SLET. I have always suggested students to buy these notes. These notes are comprehensive version of book used in resource 1. Resource 3: Use at least two standard reference books. In addition to this, you can take help of many web sites and blogs on e-net which are devoted for NET guidance.

I have always suggested students to invest few thousands in buying these resources. Every business in the world requires some initial investment and I feel clearing NET also require some capital investment. Don't hesitate to spend up to Rs. 10,000/- for study material. Investing few thousands can give returns of crores of rupees throughout life

4) How to study

Once you assimilate good resource material, next task is starting preparation. At this moment, I feel that I should not tell “how to study” as you are mature enough to understand, but I cannot resist myself telling you the most common study method that my students have followed and qualified NET exam. I have seen that many NET aspirants are confused about the time required to qualify NET. Frankly speaking, it is not possible to define time span required for NET preparation as I have seen students failing in these exams in spite of long efforts of several years. On the contrary, I have seen students qualifying NET exam by preparing for even one week. I feel that 3-6 months is sufficient preparation time to qualify NET as the syllabus is quite vast. Though it is standard time required for NET preparation, I have seen many extraordinary students who have qualified NET in one month also. To be very precise, an intellectual student with good rational thinking ability can qualify NET in whatever time he gets for preparation. I am sure that all of you belong to this category and therefore you can qualify NET even if you try now also (Nothing is impossible). Many people have criticized me when I said them that they can qualify NET even if they start preparing from today. Remember that if you start your studies from today, it doesn't mean that it is first day of preparation. Don't forget that you have been studying for NET from last so many years. It happened that you were studying from last so many years for NET but unaware of it. Remember that you have completed your graduation and post graduation in last few years and the syllabus that you have studied for that is the same syllabus which is there for NET.

Make a good plan: I suggest you to make a good plan because it is said that “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail”. I have always suggested students to divide their preparation time in a ratio of 70:30. For example, if one has 100 days for study, then divide them in the

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ratio of 70 +30 days. Use first 70 days for detail study of selected topics from various resources and spend remaining 30 days for solving standard MCQs.

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Preparation strategy in first span (70 days): Suppose you have selected 10 topics for study and have 70 days time for preparation. This means that the time available for preparation of each topic is 7 days ($70/10=7$). This strategy can be employed to identify time for preparation of each topic. I have seen that many NET aspirants study topics without planning and thus are unable to cover the syllabus in available time. Start with topics of your interest and then go to the more difficult ones. Make a time table and paste it in your study room. See the time table daily so that it will remind you to manage the things in time. Strictly adhere yourself to syllabus during your preparation.

Prepare your macro notes: I have always suggested students to write down pin points during their preparation. This helps a lot during revision. I have always told students regarding study method which was used by me when I was preparing for NET. Let me tell you about my study method. Let us assume that I am studying first topic from Chemistry whose name is “structure and bonding”. Initially, I use to make a tentative study plan to finish that topic. While I was studying this topic, I always kept syllabus aside and underlined that point in the syllabus with red pen. Marking with red pen helped me to manage study in time because red lines used to alert me regarding the points to be studied further. In the topic “structure and bonding”, the first point is electronegativity. I use to study the concept of electronegativity simultaneously from all the three resources mentioned in above section (book + correspondence notes from some publisher + two reference books). Reading one point from these resources is enough to understand the concept properly and deeply. Thus, I read information on electronegativity from three resources and prepared macro notes. The macro notes were useful for me during revisions. I used same method for preparation of other

topics. I feel that this is quite good method and you can use if you like it. I have always told students to spend maximum time for preparation (6-10 hrs a day). Thus, this type of method can be used to study the selected topics.

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Once the detailed study is over, it is important to solve MCQs in next span of time (30%). This is most important strategy of your study. I feel that clearing NET requires good reasoning ability which comes from solving large number of good quality MCQs. A large number of MCQs are available in old NET/SLET/SET question papers that are freely available on various websites. I have always suggested students to solve at least 3000 MCQs so as to develop good reasoning ability. I have seen most NET aspirants appearing for NET solving very few MCQs. Solving large number of MCQs will help to develop good reasoning ability which is most important thing to qualify NET.

The MCQs should be solved in a very different manner. Let us see how most NET aspirants solve MCQs. Let us consider 1st MCQ as: Which is the capital of India? A) Delhi B) Chennai C) Mumbai D) Kolkata. This is a very simple question and as we know that answer is A, we verify that by looking at answer key page and proceed to next MCQ. Let us consider 2nd MCQ as: Which is the longest river in Pakistan? A) Ganga B) Yamuna C) Zhelam D) Indus. Since, we don't know the answer of this question; we see the answer key page where we find the answer as D. This is general method that most of students use to solve MCQs. What we do is we read the question and if we know or does not know the answer, we look at answer key page and proceed further.

I suggest a different method for solving MCQs. Treat every MCQ as one sub point of study rather than a question. For example, when a question is asked as which is the capital of India; it means that we should know capitals of all countries in the world Let us consider second question: Which is longest river in Pakistan? This question tells you to study longest rivers in all important countries of the world. Thus, each question gives you one sub point of

study. When you solve 3000 MCQs, you will find that at least 1000 of them will give you sub points for study. When you study these sub points, your study gets a good depth. Secondly, when you solve 3000 MCQs, your reasoning ability increases up to such an extent that you become able to solve even question whose answer is not known to you. In addition, solving MCQs in this way is also a sort of revision.

I hope this method will help you to qualify UGC-NET.

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