GS PAPER II (POLITY, GOVERNANCE & IR): KEY THEMES FOR UPSC MAINS 2026

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INTRODUCTION: WHY GS PAPER II IS A HIGH-SCORING OPPORTUNITY

GS Paper II tests a candidate's **constitutional understanding, administrative maturity, policy awareness, and international perspective**. It is one of the **most predictable yet analytical papers**, where marks are directly proportional to:

- Clarity of concepts
- Use of Constitution, Supreme Court judgments
- Current affairs linkage
- Structured answer writing

Unlike GS I, **GS II is highly current-oriented but constitutionally anchored**.

GS PAPER II SYLLABUS AT A GLANCE

Core Components

1. Indian Constitution & Polity
2. Governance & Public Policy
3. Social Justice
4. International Relations

PART I: INDIAN CONSTITUTION & POLITY (CORE OF GS II)

1. Constitutional Framework

High-Priority Themes

- Features of the Constitution
- Amendments & their impact

- Separation of powers
- Checks and balances

Key Articles to Quote

- Articles 14, 19, 21
- Articles 32 & 226
- Articles 245–263 (Federalism)

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2. Parliament & State Legislatures

Focus Areas

- Parliamentary control over executive
- Role of committees
- Anti-defection law
- Parliamentary privileges

Recent Trend:
Questions increasingly focus on **declining parliamentary accountability**.

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3. Executive & Judiciary

Executive

- Role of PM & Council of Ministers
- Governor vs State Government
- Civil services reforms

Judiciary

- Judicial review
- Judicial activism vs restraint
- Collegium system
- Judicial accountability

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Important Judgments

- Kesavananda Bharati
- S.R. Bommai
- NJAC judgment

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4. Federalism & Centre-State Relations

Key Themes

- Cooperative vs Competitive federalism
- Finance Commission
- GST Council
- Role of Inter-State Council

PART II: GOVERNANCE (MOST DYNAMIC SECTION)

1. Good Governance

Core Principles

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Participation
- Efficiency

Institutions Involved

- CAG
- CIC
- Lokpal

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2. Transparency & Accountability

Focus Areas

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- RTI Act
- Whistle Blowers Protection
- Social audit
- Citizen charters

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3. E-Governance & Technology

Key Areas

- Digital India
- Mission Mode Projects
- Use of AI in governance

Examples

- Aadhaar
- DigiLocker
- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

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4. Role of NGOs, SHGs & Civil Society

- NGOs in service delivery
- Self-Help Groups & women empowerment
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

PART III: SOCIAL JUSTICE (POLICY-ORIENTED)

1. Welfare Schemes

Focus Groups

- Vulnerable sections
- Women
- Children

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- Elderly
- Persons with disabilities

Evaluation Approach

- Objectives
- Implementation challenges
- Outcomes

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2. Health, Education & Human Resources

Health

- Public health infrastructure
- Universal Health Coverage

Education

- NEP 2020
- Digital divide

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3. Issues of Poverty & Hunger

- Multidimensional Poverty Index
- Food security
- Nutrition challenges

PART IV: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (SCORING IF STRUCTURED)

1. India & Neighbourhood

- Pakistan
- China
- Sri Lanka

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- Nepal
- Bangladesh

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2. Major Powers & Groupings

- USA, Russia, EU
- QUAD
- BRICS
- SCO
- G20

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3. International Institutions

- UN reforms
- WTO
- IMF & World Bank

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4. Diaspora & Soft Power

- Role of Indian diaspora
- Cultural diplomacy
- Vaccine diplomacy

ANSWER WRITING STRATEGY FOR GS PAPER II

Ideal Answer Structure

- Constitutional / conceptual introduction
- Body with dimensions
- Current affairs examples
- Way forward conclusion

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Must-Use Value Additions

- Constitutional articles
- Supreme Court judgments
- Committee recommendations
- Government reports

PRESENTATION TIPS

✔ Use headings
✔ Quote Articles & Judgments
✔ Avoid emotional or political bias
✔ Maintain administrative tone

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

 Writing opinionated answers
 Ignoring constitutional provisions
 Lack of current examples
 Poor structuring

3-MONTH GS PAPER II PREPARATION PLAN (BRIEF)

- Month 1: Polity
- Month 2: Governance & Social Justice
- Month 3: IR + Full Tests

TOPPER MANTRA FOR GS PAPER II

Constitution + Current Affairs + Clarity = High Marks

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Q1. Is GS Paper II easy to score?

Yes, with structured preparation, **110+ marks** are achievable.

Q2. How important are Supreme Court judgments?

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Extremely important—judgment-based answers score better.

Q3. Should answers be critical or neutral?

Always **balanced and constitutional**, never opinionated.

Q4. How to prepare IR effectively?

Focus on **India's interest**, not international theory.

Q5. Are NCERTs sufficient for GS II?

NCERTs are basic; **current affairs and constitutional depth** are required.

Q6. How many GS II answers should I practice weekly?

At least **8–10 answers per week**.

FINAL WORD

GS Paper II is the paper where **maturity, balance, and constitutional wisdom** are evaluated. With focused preparation and consistent answer writing, it can become your **highest-scoring GS paper in UPSC Mains 2026**.

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