

Top Optional Subjects Chosen by UPSC Aspirants in Ernakulam

Choosing the right optional subject is one of the most important decisions in the UPSC Civil Services Examination journey. For aspirants preparing in Ernakulam, selecting the correct optional can significantly influence Mains scores, rank, and final selection.

Every year, thousands of students searching for the **best IAS coaching in Kerala** often ask the same question:

“Which optional subject is best for UPSC?”

The answer depends on multiple factors including:

- Academic background
- Interest in the subject
- Availability of guidance
- Overlap with General Studies
- Scoring potential
- Availability of study materials
- Answer writing comfort

In Ernakulam, some optional subjects have become consistently popular among UPSC aspirants because of better faculty support, easier availability of materials, and strong overlap with the UPSC syllabus.

This detailed guide explains the top optional subjects chosen by UPSC aspirants in Ernakulam, their advantages, challenges, scoring trends, and how to choose the best optional for your preparation.

Why the Optional Subject Matters in UPSC

The UPSC Mains Examination includes:

- 9 descriptive papers
- 2 papers dedicated to the optional subject
- Total optional marks: 500

This means the optional subject contributes significantly to your final rank.

Many toppers have achieved high ranks mainly because of strong optional subject scores. Subjects like Sociology, Geography, PSIR, Anthropology, and Public Administration remain among the most preferred optionals.

Most Popular Optional Subjects Among UPSC Aspirants in Ernakulam

1. Public Administration

Why It Is Popular

Public Administration has traditionally been one of the most preferred optional subjects among UPSC aspirants in Kerala.

It is especially popular among students searching for the **best IAS coaching in Kerala** because:

- The syllabus is compact
- Strong overlap with GS Paper II
- Helpful for Essay paper
- Useful for governance-related topics
- Easy to understand for beginners

Advantages

- Short syllabus compared to many subjects
- Administrative relevance
- Strong current affairs linkage
- Good for working professionals

Challenges

- Requires analytical answer writing
- Dynamic nature of governance topics

Best Suitable For

- Beginners
- Commerce students
- Working professionals
- Students interested in governance and administration

2. Geography

Why Geography Is Extremely Popular in Ernakulam

Geography remains one of the most chosen optional subjects among UPSC aspirants in Kerala due to:

- Scientific approach
- Diagram-based answers
- Huge overlap with Prelims and GS
- Availability of resources and coaching

Advantages

- Helps in Prelims preparation
- Strong overlap with GS Paper I and III
- Use of maps and diagrams improves scoring
- Easy integration with current affairs

Challenges

- Vast syllabus
- Requires conceptual clarity
- Physical geography can be technical

Best Suitable For

- Science students
- Engineering graduates
- Visual learners
- Students interested in environment and climate

3. Sociology

Why Sociology Is Growing Rapidly in Popularity

Sociology has become one of the fastest-growing optional subjects among UPSC aspirants in Ernakulam.

Many toppers and coaching experts consider Sociology a high-scoring optional because of:

- Short syllabus
- Easy language
- Current affairs relevance
- Strong overlap with Essay and GS

Advantages

- Easy to understand
- Helpful in Ethics and Essay papers
- Useful for interview discussions
- Less technical compared to other optionals

Challenges

- Requires sociological thinking
- Answer presentation matters heavily

Best Suitable For

- Beginners

- Humanities students
 - Students with strong writing skills
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4. Political Science and International Relations (PSIR)

Why PSIR Is a Favourite Among Serious Aspirants

PSIR has become increasingly popular among UPSC aspirants preparing in Ernakulam because of:

- Strong relevance to current affairs
- Massive overlap with GS Paper II
- Useful for Essay and Interview
- High scoring potential

Advantages

- Excellent overlap with current affairs
- Strong relevance to international relations
- Useful for interview preparation
- Dynamic and interesting syllabus

Challenges

- Requires newspaper reading habit
- Political theories may feel abstract initially

Best Suitable For

- Students interested in politics
 - Current affairs enthusiasts
 - Humanities students
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5. History

Why Many Kerala Aspirants Choose History

History continues to attract a large number of UPSC aspirants in Ernakulam because:

- Strong overlap with Prelims
- Helps in GS Paper I
- Rich availability of materials
- Familiar subject for many students

Advantages

- Helps in Prelims preparation
- Strong narrative-based answers
- Large amount of study materials available

Challenges

- Very vast syllabus
- Requires extensive revision
- Heavy factual content

Best Suitable For

- Humanities students
- Students interested in Indian history
- Strong memory-oriented learners

6. Anthropology

Why Anthropology Is Becoming Popular

Anthropology has seen rapid growth among UPSC aspirants across India and Kerala.

Reasons include:

- Comparatively shorter syllabus
- High scoring trend
- Scientific plus humanities combination
- Easy diagrams and flowcharts

Advantages

- Compact syllabus
- Scoring potential
- Easier revision
- Good for science students

Challenges

- Limited faculty availability in some places
- Requires conceptual clarity

Best Suitable For

- Science students
- Medical background students
- Engineering graduates

7. Malayalam Literature

Why Some Kerala Aspirants Choose Malayalam Literature

Malayalam Literature is chosen by aspirants who:

- Have strong Malayalam language skills
- Enjoy literature and writing
- Want a regional language optional

Advantages

- Familiar language
- Cultural understanding helps
- Less competition

Challenges

- Requires deep literary understanding
- Limited guidance availability

Best Suitable For

- Malayalam medium students
- Literature enthusiasts

Factors to Consider Before Choosing an Optional Subject

1. Interest in the Subject

Never choose an optional solely based on trends.

You will study the subject for:

- 1 to 2 years
- Multiple revisions
- Answer writing practice

Interest is extremely important.

2. Syllabus Size

Some subjects have very vast syllabi while others are compact.

Shorter syllabus subjects may provide more revision time.

3. Availability of Guidance

Students preparing in Ernakulam should check:

- Faculty support
- Test series availability
- Mentorship quality
- Study materials

This is why many students prefer institutes considered among the **best IAS coaching in Kerala**.

4. Overlap with General Studies

Subjects with strong GS overlap reduce overall preparation burden.

Optional Subject	GS Overlap
PSIR	GS II
Sociology	GS I & Essay
Geography	GS I & III
Public Administration	GS II
History	GS I & Prelims

5. Writing Comfort

UPSC Mains is a descriptive exam.

Choose a subject in which you can:

- Write analytical answers
- Explain concepts clearly
- Present structured arguments

Most Scoring Optional Subject - Is There Really One?

There is no universally “best” optional subject.

Every year toppers come from different optionals including:

- PSIR
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Geography
- Public Administration
- History

Experts consistently emphasize that success depends more on:

- Interest
- Preparation quality
- Revision

- Answer writing
- Guidance

rather than the optional itself.

Best IAS Coaching in Kerala for Optional Subject Preparation

When searching for the **best IAS coaching in Kerala**, students should check whether the institute provides:

- Dedicated optional batches
- Experienced faculty
- Answer writing programs
- Test series
- Mentorship support
- Updated notes
- Previous year question discussions

Optional subject guidance can significantly improve performance in UPSC Mains.

Conclusion

Choosing the right optional subject is one of the most crucial decisions in the UPSC preparation journey. In Ernakulam, subjects like Public Administration, Geography, Sociology, PSIR, History, and Anthropology continue to dominate due to their scoring potential, syllabus overlap, and guidance availability.

However, the ideal optional subject differs from student to student.

Aspirants should carefully evaluate:

- Interest
- Aptitude
- Syllabus
- Guidance availability
- Writing ability
- Long-term consistency

before making the final decision.

Remember, no optional guarantees success. Consistent preparation, proper mentorship, revision, and answer writing practice remain the real keys to cracking the UPSC Civil Services Examination.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Which is the best optional subject for UPSC?

There is no single best optional subject. The right optional depends on your interest, background, and preparation strategy.

Which optional subject is most popular in Kerala?

Public Administration, Geography, Sociology, PSIR, and History are among the most popular optional subjects chosen by UPSC aspirants in Kerala.

Is Sociology a good optional for beginners?

Yes. Sociology is considered beginner-friendly because of its short syllabus, easy concepts, and overlap with General Studies and Essay papers.

Which optional has the shortest syllabus?

Subjects like Philosophy and Sociology are generally considered to have relatively shorter syllabi.

Is Geography a scoring optional subject?

Geography is considered a scoring optional by many aspirants because of its diagrams, maps, and GS overlap.

Which optional subject overlaps most with General Studies?

PSIR, Sociology, Geography, Public Administration, and History have strong overlap with General Studies papers.

Can science students choose humanities optional subjects?

Yes. Many engineering and science graduates successfully choose humanities subjects like Sociology, PSIR, and Public Administration.

Is optional coaching necessary for UPSC?

Not compulsory, but proper optional coaching can help with:

- Structured preparation
 - Answer writing
 - Test practice
 - Mentorship
 - Strategy building
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How important is the optional subject in UPSC Mains?

Very important. The optional subject carries 500 marks in UPSC Mains and can

significantly influence final ranking.

Which optional subject has produced many UPSC toppers?

Subjects like PSIR, Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, and Public Administration have consistently produced successful UPSC candidates and toppers.

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