

CSIR NET Syllabus 2026

CSIR / National Testing Agency — Council of Scientific & Industrial Research — National Eligibility Test

Vacancies	Not post-specific — CSIR NET determines eligibility for Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and Assistant Professor/Lectureship roles, not a direct-vacancy recruitment exam
Age Limit	JRF: up to 28 years (relaxation for reserved categories); no upper age limit for Assistant Professor/Lectureship-only eligibility
Qualification	Master's degree (or equivalent) in the relevant science discipline (Chemical Sciences, Earth/Atmospheric/Ocean/Planetary Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, or Physical Sciences) with a minimum aggregate as per CSIR norms; final-year students may apply provisionally
Application Fee	As specified in the current NTA notification (category-dependent, typically in the ₹500–₹1,150 range)
Official Website	csirnet.nta.nic.in
Last Reviewed	9 May 2026

Overview

CSIR NET is the national-level eligibility test administered by NTA on behalf of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, determining eligibility for Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) funding and Assistant Professor/Lectureship roles at Indian universities and research institutions. It's conducted twice a year across five science disciplines — Chemical Sciences, Earth/Atmospheric/Ocean/Planetary Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Physical Sciences — with each discipline having its own single, computer-based paper combining general research aptitude with deep subject-specific content, testing genuine postgraduate-level scientific understanding.

What's New in the 2026 Cycle

- Conducted twice yearly, with candidates choosing one of five science disciplines relevant to their postgraduate specialisation.
- A single JRF-qualifying score also confers Assistant Professor/Lectureship eligibility, but not vice versa — Lectureship-only qualifiers don't receive JRF funding.
- JRF award comes with a fellowship stipend and is typically valid for pursuing a PhD at a recognised institution, subject to admission.
- Paper structure blends a common-format Part A (general aptitude) with discipline-specific Parts B and C at increasing depth and difficulty.

Exam Pattern

CSIR NET (Single Paper, Discipline of Choice)

Mode: Online, computer-based objective MCQ | Duration: 3 hours

Section	Questions	Marks
---------	-----------	-------

Part A — General Aptitude (common to all disciplines)	20	30
Part B — Discipline-specific (moderate difficulty)	—	70
Part C — Discipline-specific (higher-order, application-based)	—	100

Negative marking: As per the current notification (typically applies to Parts B and C; verify against the official notice) | **Nature:** Merit-determining for both JRF and Lectureship eligibility, based on discipline-wise and category-wise cut-offs.

CSIR NET — Detailed Subject-Wise Syllabus

Part A — General Aptitude (common to all disciplines)

A comparatively easier, high-return section relative to preparation time required — don't neglect it.

- General science, quantitative reasoning & analysis
- Research aptitude
- Graphical analysis & numerical ability
- Logical reasoning

Life Sciences (discipline-specific, example)

Extremely broad — prioritise topics with recurring weightage across previous years' papers.

- Molecules & their interaction relevant to biology
- Cellular organisation
- Fundamental processes — DNA replication, transcription, translation
- Cell communication & signalling
- Developmental biology
- System physiology (plant & animal)
- Inheritance biology
- Diversity of life forms
- Ecological principles
- Evolution & behaviour
- Methods in biology & applied biology

Chemical Sciences (discipline-specific, example)

Rewards genuine mechanistic understanding over memorisation, especially in Organic Chemistry.

- Inorganic chemistry — structure, bonding, main group elements
- Physical chemistry — quantum chemistry, thermodynamics, kinetics
- Organic chemistry — reaction mechanisms, stereochemistry, spectroscopy
- Interdisciplinary topics relevant to chemical sciences

Mathematical Sciences (discipline-specific, example)

Demands rigorous, proof-level understanding — this isn't an exam for surface-level formula recall.

- Analysis — real & complex
- Linear algebra
- Abstract algebra
- Topology
- Ordinary & partial differential equations
- Numerical analysis & probability

Physical Sciences (discipline-specific, example)

Mathematical methods and classical mechanics form the foundation most other topics build on — master these first.

- Mathematical methods of physics
- Classical mechanics
- Electromagnetic theory
- Quantum mechanics
- Thermodynamics & statistical physics
- Electronics & experimental methods
- Atomic, molecular, condensed matter, nuclear & particle physics

Selection Process

- 1 Single computer-based paper in the candidate's chosen discipline.

- 2 Merit determined by discipline-wise and category-wise cut-offs, separately calculated for JRF and Lectureship eligibility.
- 3 JRF-qualified candidates seek PhD admission at a recognised institution to avail the fellowship; Lectureship-qualified candidates become eligible to apply for Assistant Professor positions.

Salary & Job Profile

CSIR NET itself carries no direct salary. JRF awardees receive a fellowship stipend (revised periodically by the government, typically in the range of ₹37,000–₹42,000 per month for the initial JRF period, rising for the Senior Research Fellowship phase), while Lectureship-qualified candidates' pay depends on the specific Assistant Professor position and institution they're eventually hired into.

Best Books for Preparation

- Discipline-specific standard postgraduate textbooks (e.g. Molecular Biology of the Cell for Life Sciences; standard inorganic/organic/physical chemistry texts for Chemical Sciences)
- CSIR NET Previous Year Solved Papers — discipline-wise (various publishers)
- CSIR NET Part A — General Aptitude practice guides
- Discipline-specific CSIR NET preparation books — Arihant/MTG/Career Endeavour, as applicable

Previous Cut-off Trends (Approximate)

CSIR NET cut-offs vary significantly by discipline, category and cycle, with JRF cut-offs typically set higher than Lectureship-only cut-offs within the same discipline. Always check the official discipline-wise and category-wise cut-off release for the specific cycle.

Preparation Tips

- Focus the bulk of your preparation on Part C's higher-order, application-based questions, since this section carries the most marks and the greatest difficulty differentiation.
- Revise your core Master's-level coursework systematically rather than relying only on CSIR NET-specific guides, since genuine conceptual depth is rewarded.
- Practise previous years' papers extensively to understand the specific style and difficulty calibration of your discipline's paper.
- Don't neglect Part A's General Aptitude section — it's a comparatively easier, high-return section relative to preparation time required.

Exam Day Guidelines

- Carry the Admit Card and a valid original photo ID to the exam centre.
- No electronic devices are allowed inside the exam hall.
- Arrive well before reporting time for biometric verification.
- Since the exam is computer-based, familiarise yourself with the navigation and marking-for-review tools via any available mock link beforehand.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between JRF and Lectureship eligibility in CSIR NET?

A JRF-qualifying score confers both fellowship-funded PhD eligibility and Lectureship eligibility, while a Lectureship-only qualifying score (a lower cut-off) confers only Assistant Professor eligibility, without fellowship funding.

How many disciplines does CSIR NET cover?

Five — Chemical Sciences, Earth/Atmospheric/Ocean/Planetary Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Physical Sciences — with candidates choosing one based on their postgraduate specialisation.

How many times a year is CSIR NET conducted?

Twice — each cycle has its own notification, application window and exam date.

Does clearing CSIR NET guarantee a PhD seat or teaching job?

No, it confers eligibility only — JRF-qualified candidates must still separately secure PhD admission at a recognised institution, and Lectureship-qualified candidates must separately apply for and be selected in actual Assistant Professor positions.

Compiled and reviewed by Syllabus Hub against the official CSIR / National Testing Agency notification as of 9 May 2026. Exam patterns, vacancies and dates are subject to change — always cross-check with the official notification at csirnet.nta.nic.in before applying. © 2026 Syllabus Hub.