BLOGS

Practice Questions on Administrative Law for CLAT PG 2026

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1. Which of the following scenarios best illustrates the application of the ‘delegation doctrine’ in administrative law?

a) A court directly issues a regulation regarding environmental standards without legislative authorization.

b) The legislature passes a law outlining broad policy goals and empowers an administrative agency to create specific regulations to achieve those goals.

c) The President independently decides to implement a new tax policy without congressional approval.

d) An administrative agency adjudicates a dispute based on common law principles rather than statutory authority.

Correct Answer: b) The legislature passes a law outlining broad policy goals and empowers an administrative agency to create specific regulations to achieve those goals.

Explanation: The delegation doctrine allows the legislative branch to delegate some of its authority to administrative agencies. This occurs when the legislature sets out the general policy and standards, and then authorizes an agency to fill in the details through rulemaking. The key is that the delegation must include an ‘intelligible principle’ to guide the agency’s discretion, preventing the agency from exercising unchecked legislative power.

2. What is the primary legal significance of the ‘Chevron deference’ principle in judicial review of administrative agency interpretations of statutes?

a) It requires courts to always defer to an agency’s interpretation of a statute, regardless of its reasonableness.

b) It mandates that courts conduct a de novo review of all agency statutory interpretations.

c) It instructs courts to defer to an agency's reasonable interpretation of an ambiguous statute, provided the statute is within the agency's jurisdiction.

d) It only applies when the agency's interpretation aligns with the court's pre-existing understanding of the statute.

Correct Answer: c) It instructs courts to defer to an agency's reasonable interpretation of an ambiguous statute, provided the statute is within the agency's jurisdiction.

Explanation: Chevron deference, stemming from the Supreme Court case Chevron U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., sets a two-step framework for judicial review of agency interpretations of statutes. First, the court determines whether the statute is ambiguous. If so, the court then asks whether the agency's interpretation is reasonable. If the statute is ambiguous and the agency's interpretation is reasonable, the court must defer to the agency's interpretation, even if the court would have interpreted the statute differently.

3. In the context of administrative law, what are 'interpretive rules' and how do they differ from 'legislative rules' (also known as 'substantive rules')?

a) Interpretive rules create new legal rights, while legislative rules merely explain existing laws.

b) Interpretive rules are binding on the public, while legislative rules are only for internal agency guidance.

c) Interpretive rules clarify an agency's interpretation of a statute or regulation without creating new rights or duties, whereas legislative rules have the force of law and create new legal obligations.

d) Interpretive and legislative rules are the same; the terms are interchangeable in administrative law.

Correct Answer: c) Interpretive rules clarify an agency's interpretation of a statute or regulation without creating new rights or duties, whereas legislative rules have the force of law and create new legal obligations.

Explanation:

- Interpretive Rules: These rules explain existing laws or regulations. They offer guidance on how an agency interprets its statutes but do not have the force and effect of law. They are often exempt from notice-and-comment rulemaking requirements.

- Legislative Rules (Substantive Rules): These rules have the force of law and create new rights, duties, or obligations. They are generally subject to the notice-and-comment rulemaking process under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).

The key difference lies in their legal effect: legislative rules can be enforced in court, while interpretive rules serve primarily as guidance.

4. What is the primary significance of the doctrine of 'legitimate expectation' in the context of Indian administrative law, particularly concerning government policy changes?

a) It compels the government to never alter its policies, irrespective of changing socio-economic conditions.

b) It grants individuals the right to compensation if a government policy change adversely affects their business interests.

c) It requires the government to act fairly and reasonably when changing a policy, especially if the change frustrates a reasonable expectation that a particular benefit or practice would continue.

d) It forces the government to consult with all affected parties before making any policy changes.

Correct Answer: c) It requires the government to act fairly and reasonably when changing a policy, especially if the change frustrates a reasonable expectation that a particular benefit or practice would continue.

Explanation: The doctrine of 'legitimate expectation' in ensures that public authorities act fairly when changing policies or practices, particularly if these changes affect individuals who had a reasonable expectation that the previous policy would continue. This doctrine does not prevent policy changes but demands that such changes be made rationally, reasonably, and with due regard to those who have come to rely on the previous policy. It serves as a check against arbitrary administrative action.

5. In Indian administrative law, what does the term 'quasi-judicial function' refer to, and what is its importance in determining the procedural requirements for administrative actions?

a) It refers to the legislative functions performed by administrative agencies, such as rulemaking.

b) It refers to the purely executive functions of government, such as implementing policies.

c) It denotes an administrative function that involves elements of judicial procedure, such as conducting hearings, weighing evidence, and making decisions affecting individual rights, thereby requiring adherence to principles of natural justice.

d) It describes the informal advisory role that agencies play in shaping public opinion.

Correct Answer: c) It denotes an administrative function that involves elements of judicial procedure, such as conducting hearings, weighing evidence, and making decisions affecting individual rights, thereby requiring adherence to principles of natural justice.

Explanation: A 'quasi-judicial function' is an administrative action that resembles a judicial proceeding. When an administrative body performs quasi-judicial functions, it must adhere to principles of natural justice, including the right to a fair hearing, the right to present evidence, and the right to a reasoned decision. This ensures fairness and prevents arbitrary decision-making when individual rights are affected.

6. How does the concept of 'proportionality' apply in Indian administrative law when courts review the imposition of penalties or sanctions by administrative authorities?

a) It means the court must always defer to the agency's choice of penalty, regardless of its severity.

b) It requires that the penalty or sanction imposed by the administrative authority should be commensurate with the nature and gravity of the misconduct or violation.

c) It allows the court to increase the penalty if it believes the agency was too lenient.

d) It only applies to cases involving financial penalties, not disciplinary actions.

Correct Answer: b) It requires that the penalty or sanction imposed by the administrative authority should be commensurate with the nature and gravity of the misconduct or violation.

Explanation: The principle of 'proportionality' ensures that any penalty or sanction imposed by an administrative authority is appropriate and proportionate to the offense committed. Courts in India apply this principle to ensure that administrative actions are fair and do not impose excessive or arbitrary punishments. The penalty should fit the crime, and courts have the power to intervene if it does not.

7. What is the significance of the 'doctrine of necessity' and when can it be invoked?

a) It allows the government to bypass environmental regulations in times of national emergency.

b) It permits an authority to act in a decision-making capacity, even if they have a conflict of interest, when no other competent authority is available to make the decision.

c) It requires the government to provide essential services to all citizens, regardless of cost.

d) It allows courts to overturn legislative decisions if they are deemed unjust.

Correct Answer: b) It permits an authority to act in a decision-making capacity, even if they have a conflict of interest, when no other competent authority is available to make the decision.

Explanation: The 'doctrine of necessity' allows an authority to make a decision, even if they have a potential conflict of interest, when there is no other competent authority available to do so. This doctrine is invoked only in exceptional circumstances where the failure to act would lead to significant harm or injustice. It recognizes that sometimes, the need for a decision outweighs the concerns about potential bias.

8. What are the key differences between the 'principle of natural justice' and the concept of 'procedural fairness' in Indian administrative law?

a) The principle of natural justice applies only to judicial bodies, while procedural fairness applies to administrative bodies.

b) The principle of natural justice is a subset of procedural fairness, focusing on fairness in administrative rule-making, while procedural fairness covers adjudicatory functions.

c) There is no real difference; the terms are interchangeable and refer to the same set of principles.

d) The principle of natural justice is a broader concept encompassing procedural fairness, with specific rules like audi alteram partem (the right to be heard) and nemo judex in causa sua (no one should be a judge in their own cause), while procedural fairness is a more general duty to act fairly.

Correct Answer: d) The principle of natural justice is a broader concept encompassing procedural fairness, with specific rules like audi alteram partem (the right to be heard) and nemo judex in causa sua (no one should be a judge in their own cause), while procedural fairness is a more general duty to act fairly.

Explanation: While the terms are often used interchangeably, natural justice is generally considered the broader concept, encompassing specific rules like audi alteram partem (the right to be heard) and nemo judex in causa sua (no one should be a judge in their own cause). Procedural fairness is a more general duty to act fairly in the administrative context, which may include the principles of natural justice but can also extend to other fairness considerations depending on the circumstances.

9. What is the significance of the Supreme Court's ruling in Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978) for the development of administrative law in India, particularly concerning Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty)?

a) It limited the scope of Article 21 to exclude economic rights.

b) It expanded the interpretation of Article 21 to include not only the right to life but also the right to live with human dignity, and required that any procedure depriving a person of their life or personal liberty must be fair, just, and reasonable.

c) It established that Article 21 only applies to citizens, not to foreign nationals.

d) It removed the power of judicial review over administrative actions.

Correct Answer: b) It expanded the interpretation of Article 21 to include not only the right to life but also the right to live with human dignity, and required that any procedure depriving a person of their life or personal liberty must be fair, just, and reasonable.

Explanation: The Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India case was a landmark ruling that significantly broadened the scope of Article 21. The Supreme Court held that any procedure depriving a person of their life or personal liberty must be fair, just, and reasonable, not merely authorized by law. This ruling enhanced the protection against arbitrary administrative action and has had a profound impact on Indian administrative law.

10. In the context of judicial review of administrative action in India, what does the term 'error apparent on the face of the record' signify, and why is it important?

a) It refers to minor typographical errors that do not affect the substance of the decision.

b) It means an error that is obvious and self-evident from the record of the proceedings, without requiring detailed examination or argument, and justifies judicial intervention to correct the error.

c) It allows the court to review the factual findings of the administrative authority de novo.

d) It requires the court to defer to the agency’s interpretation of the law, regardless of its correctness.

Correct Answer: b) It means an error that is obvious and self-evident from the record of the proceedings, without requiring detailed examination or argument, and justifies judicial intervention to correct the error.

Explanation: An ‘error apparent on the face of the record’ refers to a mistake that is clear and obvious from a simple examination of the administrative authority’s decision and the materials upon which it was based. This type of error does not require extensive legal analysis to identify. Courts can correct such errors to ensure that administrative decisions are lawful and do not result in injustice.