ANSWER KEY — 17 MAY 2026

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
B	C	D	B	C	A	D	C	C	B
Q11	**Q12**	**Q13**	**Q14**	**Q15**	**Q16**	**Q17**	**Q18**	**Q19**	**Q20**
C	A	C	B	B	B	A	C	D	C
Q21	**Q22**	**Q23**	**Q24**						
A	B	D	A						

RC PASSAGES

Q1 **B**

The author opens with the Sistine controversy precisely because rival distinguished experts disagreed about WHICH ORIGINAL the restoration should have recovered — the bright underlying pigments or the dark surface glaze (which the critics claim Michelangelo himself applied). The dispute is not about competence; both sides are equally distinguished. The function of the example is to ILLUSTRATE the central interpretive problem of restoration — defining the 'original' — through a case where the difficulty was philosophical, not technical. Option (B) captures this. Option (A) — ban on restoration — is not the author's position. Option (C) — incompetence — misreads the dispute. Option (D) — no cleaning — overstates. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q2 **C**

The passage explicitly says the Venice Charter articulates 'the modern consensus that any restoration intervention should be reversible — that successor generations should retain the option to undo it'. The Charter is grounded in epistemic humility — 'we may discover, in fifty years, that we were wrong'. Option (C) captures this exactly with the reasoning. Option (A) — invisibility — is a different question (the boundary between restoration and reconstruction). Option (B) — unnecessary for stored works — is unrelated. Option (D) — patron's intent — is one of several candidate 'originals' the author discusses but not the Venice Charter's position. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q3 **D**

The author treats the three approaches NEUTRALLY and ANALYTICALLY. The fourth paragraph explicitly says each approach 'implies a different theory of the painting's value — as historical document, as aesthetic experience, as object of contemplation'. The author does not rank them or endorse any particular one; they are presented as legitimate alternative theoretical commitments. Option (D) captures this. Option (A) — endorsing archaeological — is unsupported. Option (B) — dismissing all three — misreads the analytical stance. Option (C) — endorsing invisible-fill — is unsupported. Only the neutral-analytical reading aligns with the passage. Answer: (D) the fourth option.

Q4 **B**

The concluding paragraph says directly: 'No principle dissolves these difficulties. Restoration is irreducibly a practice of judgement under uncertainty, and the best restorers acknowledge as much.' This is the author's overall stance — restoration is irreducibly a matter of professional judgement, no master principle resolves it, and acknowledgment of this is a mark of the best practitioners. Option (B) captures this exactly. Option (A) — awaiting better technology — is the position the author rejects. Option (C) — never restore — is extreme and unsupported. Option (D) — discard the Venice Charter — is unsupported. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q5 **C**

Read the first paragraph carefully. The CRITICS (not the restoration team) argued that the smoky tones WERE in some sense original, because 'Michelangelo had himself applied a final dark glaze over the bright pigments to soften them; the restoration had stripped not only the soot but the artist's deliberate finishing layer'. Option (C) captures this exactly. Option (A) — accumulation of soot — was the RESTORATION TEAM's view, not the critics'. Option (B) — 19th-century restorers — is unsupported. Option (D) — optical illusion — is fanciful. Only option (C) reflects the critics' actual position. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q6 **A**

The author's primary argument, set up in paragraphs 2-3 and made explicit in paragraph 4, is that the Indian workplace systematically excludes neurodivergent talent through PROXIES (interview style, open-plan offices, immediate verbal participation) unrelated to actual job performance; correcting this is 'a matter of accuracy in talent identification, not charitable accommodation'. Option (A) captures this exactly. Option (B) — without screening — overstates. Option (C) — superiority — is what the author explicitly rejects. Option (D) — purely clinical — misreads the passage's workplace focus. Answer: (A) the first option.

Q7 **D**

The author's tone is MEASURED. Paragraph 4 explicitly says the business case is 'real but should not be overstated' — pattern recognition and hyperfocus are valued, but the DEEPER case is structural exclusion through wrong proxies, not the superiority of neurodivergent profiles. Option (D) captures this. Option (A) — effusive — overstates; the author explicitly warns against overstatement. Option (B) — hostile — misreads; the author engages with the business case. Option (C) — indifferent — misreads; the author has a clear analytical view. Answer: (D) the fourth option.

Q8 **C**

Paragraph 3 cites that software firms adjust the work environment — written task descriptions, scheduled communication, sensory-modulated workspaces — and find that candidates who interview poorly under traditional formats perform at the top of the team. Paragraph 2 identifies the interview process (privileging fluent extemporaneous speech under stress) as one of the proxies that systematically filters out talent. Re-designing interview formats so this is not the dominant proxy is squarely consistent with the author's argument. Option (C) captures this. Option (A) — cubicles for all — is not in the passage. Option (B) — abolishing performance reviews — overstates. Option (D) — fixed quota — is exactly the 'charitable accommodation' frame the author REJECTS. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q9 **C**

The customer-care example is introduced honestly to acknowledge that not every adjustment works in every role. A position with high real-time verbal demands does genuinely require a particular profile. The example REFRAMES the question — from 'should we accommodate?' to 'where does the default filter on the wrong proxy, and can we redesign the default?' — narrowing the proposal to roles where the proxy is genuinely misaligned. Option (C) captures this. Option (A) — refutation — misreads; the example is conceded honestly without abandoning the proposal. Option (B) — unrelated aside — is wrong. Option (D) — abolition — is absurd. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q10 **B**

Paragraph 2 says the recruitment system is 'designed around a notional typical employee... whose communication, attention regulation and sensory processing fall within a narrow normative band'. None of the proxies (interview style, open-plan offices, immediate verbal participation) is 'necessarily a poor proxy for productivity' — but each filters out talented individuals whose cognitive profile is misaligned with the proxy rather than with the underlying job. Option (B) captures this exactly. Option (A) — optimally designed — is the opposite of the author's view. Option (C) — random selection — is unsupported. Option (D) — irrelevant — misses the passage's core concern. Answer: (B) the second option.

CR PASSAGES

Q11 **C**

The proposal in paragraph 1 is precisely framed: REPLACE the phased ban with a COMPREHENSIVE BAN on all single-use plastics within a fixed three-year transition window, with statutory carve-outs only for medical and food-safety applications where no alternative meets the safety threshold. The remaining paragraphs defend this narrow conclusion. Option (C) captures the conclusion exactly. Option (A) — retaining phased ban — is the position the author argues against. Option (B) — immediate without exceptions — overstates by omitting both the transition window and the carve-outs. Option (D) — taxing — is a different policy. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q12 **A**

The author's second argument is that comprehensive bans trigger investment in alternative-material supply, and that the phased approach has consistently failed to call forth this investment. Option (A) provides EXACTLY the counter-evidence: a rigorous study from a comparable middle-income country showing that a comprehensive ban FAILED to trigger alternative-material investment, that the parallel illicit plastic chain expanded rather than contracted, and that shortages persisted. This directly engages the substitution-economics claim. Options (B), (C) and (D) are tangential — packaging weight, EU exemptions, country size — and do not engage the substitution argument. Answer: (A) the second option.

Q13 **C**

The author's third argument relies on the claim that the public-health and ecological costs of continued plastic use have become INCOMMENSURABLE with the convenience benefits — i.e., the proportionality balance has shifted decisively. The unstated assumption underwriting this argument is the empirical magnitude of the microplastic burden relative to consumer surplus from single-use items. Option (C) captures this as 'an empirical claim about the magnitude of microplastic harm relative to the consumer surplus from those items'. Option (A) — fully understood — is not the author's claim. Option (B) — exclusively from single-use plastics — is too strong. Option (D) — exclusively Indian — is irrelevant. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q14 **B**

The author's response to the livelihood objection is a textbook CONCESSION-AND-DESIGN move: explicitly accepting the objection as 'real and merits a transition package', then proposing three specific calibrating measures — skill redeployment to alternative-material manufacturing, time-limited income support, and credit for capital conversion. The measures address the underlying concern (worker displacement) while preserving the core policy (comprehensive ban). Option (B) captures this. Option (A) — outright rejection — misreads; the author concedes. Option (C) — political irrelevance — is the opposite of the author's engaged stance. Option (D) — postponement — would defeat the purpose of the response. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q15 **B**

The author's first argument rests on the empirical claim that the phased ban has been a regulatory failure — prohibited items continue to circulate, fines are absorbed as routine costs, and items reappear under modified descriptions. Option (B) provides DOCUMENTED ENFORCEMENT DATA from multiple State Pollution Control Boards confirming exactly these three patterns — circulation at high volumes, fines absorbed as routine costs, and re-description workarounds. This is the strongest possible empirical strengthening of the first argument. Options (A) (popularity), (C) (modelling) and (D) (paper alternatives improving) do not engage the regulatory-failure claim. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q16 **B**

The proposal is precisely framed in paragraph 1: SUPPLEMENT the retirement-age framework with a FIXED NON-RENEWABLE twelve-year tenure for Supreme Court judges (applicable to those elevated after a notified date), combined with a corresponding raise in retirement age, so that the predominantly effective constraint on tenure becomes the fixed term rather than calendar age. Option (B) captures this exactly. Option (A) — abolish retirement age — overstates. Option (C) — life tenure — is not the author's proposal. Option (D) — Executive appointment — is unrelated and undermines the independence the proposal seeks to enhance. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q17 **A**

The author's first argument rests on the principle that JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE requires not only the absence of ACTUAL dependence on the Executive but also the absence of structural arrangements creating a PERCEPTION of dependence — and that the tenure regime should be designed to minimise both. The author's exact phrasing — 'the mere POSSIBILITY of such an offer creates a perception of dependence inconsistent with judicial independence' — relies on this principle. Option (A) captures this. Option (B) — favouring the Executive — is the opposite of independence. Option (C) — always illegitimate — overstates the argument. Option (D) — never raise retirement age — contradicts the proposal which raises it. Answer: (A) the first option.

Q18 **C**

The author's comparative argument relies on the implicit claim that the FIXED-TENURE and life-tenure regimes of Germany, South Africa and the US adequately address the post-tenure incentive distortion that the Indian age-based regime cannot. Option (C) provides exactly the counter-evidence: rigorous documentation that those regimes ALSO produce equal or greater post-tenure incentive distortion — through ideological courtship of governments or actively-pursued post-tenure roles. If true, the comparative argument loses its force: the foreign systems do not solve the problem the Indian proposal targets. Options (A), (B) and (D) are tangential. Answer: (C) the third option.

Q19 **D**

The author's response to the operational objection is a CONCESSION-AND-MITIGATION move: explicitly accepting that the risk of headline-grabbing decisions in final years is 'real but mitigable', then proposing specific design responses — case-management protocols and norms around the composition of Constitution Bench cases — that mitigate the risk without abandoning the core proposal. Option (D) captures this. Option (A) — outright rejection — misreads; the author concedes. Option (B) — emotional appeal — is wrong; the author proposes specific institutional responses. Option (C) — dismissal — is the opposite of engagement. Answer: (D) the fourth option.

Q20 **C**

The final paragraph is a NARROWING move. By specifying what the proposal does NOT claim (it does not allege irrationality in the present age-based retirement regime; it does not allege that the present judiciary has been compromised), the author pre-empts uncharitable misreadings. The proposal is positioned modestly — as a better-designed solution for the specific incentive risk and as alignment with established comparative practice, not as a wholesale critique. Option (C) captures this. Option (A) — unrelated aside — misses the function. Option (B) — repudiation — is the opposite of what the paragraph does. Option (D) — wholesale replacement — is the position the paragraph explicitly disavows. Answer: (C) the third option.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21 **A**

In Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (March 2023), a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held that, until Parliament legislates on the subject, the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the advice of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (or leader of the largest opposition party), and the Chief Justice of India. The Court reasoned that the existing exclusive Executive appointment compromised the institutional independence required by Article 324. Parliament subsequently enacted the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which substituted the CJI with a Cabinet Minister — but the question asks for the Court's holding, not Parliament's subsequent legislation. Option (A) captures the court's holding. Answer: (A) the first option.

Q22 **B**

'Recalcitrant' is an adjective derived from Latin recalcitrare (to kick back), meaning STUBBORNLY RESISTANT to authority, control or instruction — refusing to comply or obey. Option (B) captures this exactly. Option (A) — cooperative — is the antonym. Option (C) — hesitant — captures uncertainty, not resistance; one can be hesitant without being recalcitrant. Option (D) — cheerful — is unrelated. Only 'stubbornly resistant to authority or control' matches the specific defiance-of-authority meaning of recalcitrant. Answer: (B) the second option.

Q23 **D**

The idiom 'to throw down the gauntlet' originates from medieval chivalry: a knight who wished to issue a formal challenge to combat would throw his armoured glove (the gauntlet) at the feet of his opponent. The opposing knight, by picking up the gauntlet, would accept the challenge. By extension, the idiom means to deliver an OPEN CHALLENGE or invitation to contest. Option (D) captures this. Option (A) — unconditional surrender — is the opposite. Option (B) — discarding a garment — literalises and misses the metaphor. Option (C) — declining an invitation — is also the opposite of issuing a challenge. Answer: (D) the fourth option.

Q24 **A**

The Constitution distributes legislative power across the Union List, the State List, and the CONCURRENT LIST. Both Parliament AND the State Legislatures may make laws on matters in the Concurrent List. Where laws made by Parliament and a State are repugnant on a Concurrent-List subject, Article 254 provides that the Parliamentary law shall prevail and the State law shall, to the extent of the repugnancy, be void — SAVE WHERE the State law has been reserved for and received the assent of the President, in which case the State law prevails in that State (subject to Parliament's power to alter or repeal it). Option (A) captures this. Options (B), (C) and (D) misallocate the power. Answer: (A) the first option.