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UGC Asks Higher Education Institutes To Make Accreditation Status Public



Going a step ahead to reform higher education in the country, University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked Universities and affiliated bodies to make their accreditation status online. Irrespective of whether they have an accreditation grade or not, the Commission has asked the educational bodies to make it public on their websites and 'in every material pertaining to the concerned institution for public information.' This also includes those institutes who are eligible but have not applied for the accreditation.

'One of the important dimensions of the reforms is to have stakeholders access to relevant information related to Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) to assist them in taking informed decisions,' said PK Thakur, Secretary, UGC in the letter addressed to Universities.

Under the Human Resource Development Ministry's ambitious 20 world-class institutions project, UGC had received more than 100 applications including seven IITs. "Overwhelming response to the idea of institutions of eminence. This is how world-class universities were built in various countries. The same thing will happen in India," Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar had said, then. The UGC had in September started inviting applications from all institutions that are keen to enter the top 100 of global rankings with the government's assistance. The Centre wants to establish a total of 20 'Institutes of Eminence' -- a distinct category of

deemed-to-be-universities, supporting them to become "World Class" institutions.

Liberating India's best colleges: HRD minister Javadekar announces most far reaching reforms



On the heels of a pragmatic Budget, the human resource development (HRD) minister Prakash Javadekar has now announced the most far-reaching reforms in higher education. One of us (Panagariya) had lamented for long that the reforms in this important area had been cursed, with HRD minister after HRD minister failing to bring about fundamental change. Magically, Javadekar has broken that curse.

By way of background, during past several years, multiple commissions and committees have recommended reforms but failed to bring about any substantive change in the core regulations under the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act. Undeterred, in June 2017, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) appointed a committee at the Niti Aayog to recommend how progress could be made in this important area. One of us chaired that committee while the other joined it as an invited expert member.

It is nothing short of a miracle that Niti committee was successful in forging a consensus around the reforms among its members, which included the top officials of Niti Aayog, HRD ministry, UGC and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE). The committee submitted its report to the PMO at the end of August 2017.

The announcement by the HRD minister has translated the recommendations by Niti committee into action in the areas of autonomy to universities and colleges. The far-reaching changes are contained in two separate Gazette notifications: Graded Autonomy Regulations (GARs) 2018; and Autonomous Colleges Regulations (ACRs) 2018. Recommendations by Niti committee in a third area, accreditation, have received approval by UGC but await a nod from the HRD ministry.

GARs break away from decades long tradition of one-size-fits-all regulations for our universities. Based on National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) scores, they divide universities into three categories: those receiving more than 3.5 in NAAC scores (Category I); those receiving NAAC scores above 3.25 but not exceeding 3.5 (Category II); and those receiving NAAC score of 3.25 or less (Category III). Category I universities also include universities listed among the top 500 in international rankings such as the Times Higher Education and QS. Universities in Categories I and II are granted considerable autonomy while those in Category III remain subject to existing rules.

Under GARs, universities in Categories I and II are entirely free to start new courses, programmes, departments, schools and centres and open constituent colleges within their geographical jurisdiction in self-financing mode. They are also exempt from UGC inspections, can offer courses in open and distance mode, build in an incentive structure to attract talented faculty from their own resources and engage in international collaborations including hiring foreign faculty. Decision making authority has been shifted from UGC to statutory bodies of the university such as the finance committee, academic council and governing board.

ACRs, the rules governing autonomy to colleges, extend autonomy to a larger set of colleges so that they may evolve into high-performing institutions, even independent universities. Historically, process roadblocks at the level of the affiliating university, concerned state government and UGC have discouraged colleges from seeking autonomy. Therefore, ideally, autonomy should be automatically conferred once a college is deemed eligible for it. But the existing technical difficulties forbid this path. Consequently, as a compromise solution, the new regulations make a conscious effort to minimise the roadblocks that the affiliating university, the state government and UGC can place in the path to autonomy once an eligible college applies for it.

Times Higher Education Asia 2018 rankings revealed: India's 6 institutes and 1 university in top 100 list

Times Higher Education (THE) has revealed its rankings for Asian

universities 2018. While India's number improved significantly from last year, several prestigious institutions recorded a decline. Leaving all the universities behind, the National University of Singapore maintained its winning streak third time in the row (since 2016) and came out as a clear winner.

According to THE rankings, on Indian front, two renowned institutes, namely the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay dropped to 29th and 44th places, respectively this year. Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras experiences the biggest drop and from 41 to 103 in 2018 rankings. However, IISc was India's top ranking institute in the prestigious THE list.

India's overall performance

The institutes that made it to the list include Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. Tezpur University was ranked 100th in the prestigious THE list but the rank was shared with University of Haifa (Israel) and Sejong University (South Korea).

Performance of other Asian countries

Talking about other Asian countries, Japan had China did well with 82 and 63 universities, respectively making it to the list. 10 of the Pakistan's universities also found their place in the famous THE list this year.

These university rankings are done on several levels such as teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.

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