

Blueprint for new regime is ready and draft UGC (Grant of Graded Autonomy to Institutions of Higher Education) Regulations 2017 is crucial

Top-ranking Institutions to be Exempt from UGC's Review

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New Delhi: The performance of educational institutions, measured on quality parameters, will henceforth determine the extent of autonomy and the level of regulatory scrutiny they will face. The government has also decided that top-ranking institutions will be exempt from the UGC's review mechanism.

The blueprint for this new regime is ready and the draft University Grants Commission (Grant of Graded Autonomy to Institutions of Higher Education) Regulations 2017 is crucial for this.

The new regulations (to be brought in through Section 26 of the UGC Act, 1956) show the clear stamp of the Prime Minister's Office which has pitched very strongly for institutional autonomy despite some resistance from the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry. They also follow the budgetary announcement this year to restructure the rigid UGC-led regulatory framework for higher education — a recommendation made by almost all higher education committees.

To be applicable to all universities established under a Central Act, a Provincial or State Act as well as Deemed to be University and all autonomous colleges, this regulation will come into effect as soon as it is notified in the Gazette of India.

The framework for 'Graded Autonomy' will hinge on the score of an institution given by the Academic and Administrative Audit (AAA) peer team and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).

ET GETS THE DETAILS:

TIER I: For eligibility to this category,



an institution must conform to two criteria — it needs a score of A+/A++ in the accreditation carried out by AAA (score greater than 3.5 on a 4 point scale) and also be ranked among the top-75 institutions in the NIRF rankings for that year.

Level of Autonomy- Having attained the desired level of institutional excellence, these institutions will be free from UGC review mechanism completely. These top category institutions will be free to start new courses and departments, enter into academic collaborations with foreign educational institutions, undertake curricular reforms and introduce academic innovations in tune with the global best practices. They can also start their own new campuses and centres as per their own Act and regulations governing them and also have the freedom to fix fees for any programme on their own.

TIER II: For eligibility to this category, an institution must have one

of the following criteria — it needs to score A+/A++ in the accreditation carried out by AAA (score of greater than 3.5 on a 4 point scale) OR be ranked among the top-75 institutions in the NIRF rankings for that year.

Level of autonomy- With a high level of institutional excellence having been achieved, these institutions will not have to go to the UGC to start new departments and courses, set up new campuses, fix fees for programmes or undertake curricular reform.

TIER III: Institutions which have either scored Grade A in AAA accreditation (score 3-3.5 on a 4 point scale) or which ranks among the top 150 institutions in the NIRF rankings for the year, will fall in this category.

Level of autonomy- With a moderate level of excellence, these institutions will not need to approach the UGC for starting new courses and undertaking curricular reforms. They will, however, be reviewed by

the UGC's expert committee every 5-7 years.

TIER IV: Any institutions which has neither scored a Grade A in the AAA accreditation nor is among the top 150 in the NIRF ranking.

Level of Autonomy- These institutions will be reviewed and visited by a UGC Expert Committee as per UGC Regulations. These reviews will aim at identifying constraints and lacunae hampering the institution. A peer team will 'mentor' and handhold such institutions and suggest best practices to improve in the required areas.

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If any of the tier-I and tier-II institutions fail to get the required ranking for the second consecutive year, it will automatically slide down to a lower level of autonomy and open itself to greater UGC scrutiny.

The autonomy of institutions granted under various categories will be protected and override all other UGC regulations that may come into conflict with it.

Every institution which gets autonomy must take it upon itself to ensure basic minimum requirements such as infrastructure, faculty and other facilities prescribed by UGC. They will also be expected to strictly follow UGC regulations on specific degrees.

In case of complaint of non-compliance of any UGC regulations by the institutions accorded greater autonomy, the UGC will have the right to inspect them after passing a speaking order. (A speaking order is an order that speaks for itself. That is, the order should contain all the details of the issue, clear findings and a reasoned order).