

Business schools likely to get more autonomy

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NEW DELHI: India's top private business schools such as XLRI, Jamshedpur, SP Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai, and MDI, Gurgaon are likely to get a bigger say in admissions, fees and curriculum with the government planning to grant more freedom to them to do so in a move that is both a recognition of their performance and an enabler to help them do even better.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the regulatory body for technical education in the country, is likely to meet later this month to take a call on the exact nature of the autonomy the institutions, most of which offer a post graduate diploma in management

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(PGDM), should be given. There are about 400 such business schools in the country, and a handful of them are comparable to the older Indian Institutes of Management or IIMs.

AICTE officials said the business schools will be graded A, B and C after assessing them on a set of criteria, including leadership, teaching, learning, graduation outcomes, research, executive education, consulting and

learning programmes, accreditation, and internationalisation and outreach programmes. The degree of autonomy they get will depend on their grades.

"For instance, a PGDM institute that gets A grading might be given the utmost autonomy. As it is, admissions to a number of institutes are through CAT (the common admission test conducted by the IIMs). If an institute gets A grade, it might be allowed to hold its own entrance examination for all seats or for certain percentage of seats. Those graded B might get autonomy in admission to a fewer number of seats," said a senior AICTE official who asked not to be identified.

The degree of autonomy will be decided at the AICTE meeting this month.

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The grading will be done after that and AICTE expects to roll out its grades from the next academic session.

Sunil Varughese, the Chief Brand and Sustainability Officer at XLRI, welcomed the move, saying that the institute is looking forward to it. "It will help the institute in starting new courses and going with new fee structure as per the current requirement. Presently, top business schools in the country including XLRI have to get approval from the AICTE for each and every new decision including the introduction of a new course every year. With more autonomy, the institute will be in better position to start courses."

Varughese added that the top business schools are equal to the IIMs, which have already been given significant autonomy under the IIM Bill.

The autonomy would help the overall cause of quality, an AICTE official explained. According to AICTE officials, the regulator is still working out the scope of autonomy and the nature of incentives. Currently, institutes follow the model curriculum laid down by the AICTE and make their own syllabus using that.

A similar scheme for universities has been drafted by university regulator the University Grants Commission of India, under which the performance of educational institutions evaluated on quality parameters will determine the level of autonomy they have and the extent of regulatory scrutiny they face.

(With inputs from Vishal Kant in Ranchi)