

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA 'RESTRICTIVE'

IIMs Unhappy With Centre's PhD Criteria, Raise Questions on Autonomy

All directors will hold a pan-IIM conference on December 13 to decide next course of action

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New Delhi: Even as the government is claiming credit for granting autonomy to IIMs through an Act of Parliament, fresh concerns have been raised at the prestigious business schools over the real extent of the promised autonomy.

Unhappy with the recent PhD guidelines issued to them by the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry, all IIM directors are set to come together to take a consolidated view on the situation and take up the matter with the government.

Top IIMs are of the view that the government mandated eligibility criteria on PhD programmes at IIMs are 'restrictive', against the nature of the famed Fellow Programme in Management (FPM) and also not in keeping with the new autonomy regime promised to them.

All IIM directors will hold a pan IIM conference on December 13 where they will decide on the course of action to be taken on the issue, ET has learnt.

IIM Ahmedabad, meanwhile, is not waiting until the conference. It has already written to the HRD ministry objecting to the new guidelines, ET has gathered.

IIM OBJECTIONS

The ministry had shot off a communication to all IIM Directors on 23rd October detailing the minimum standards for PhD admissions in IIMs.

Concerns have been raised by the IIMs over three aspects of this eligibility criteria- a 8 CGPA requirement for direct entry candidates (with four year degree or B Tech), a two year Post Graduate Diploma instead of one and the necessity of having a Bachelors degree even with a professional qualification like C.A./C.S./ICWA.

Capping a PhD duration to three years minimum instead of two as proposed by IIMs, is another area of difference of opinion.

Most of the older



IIMs currently offer the doctoral FPM through well established institutional processes involving statement of purpose, one hour long interviews and course work put through rigorous standards of assessment.

With the IIM Act, 2017 having come into effect, IIMs can now offer PhD degrees instead.

The government has issued PhD standards for IIMs in keeping with current UGC regulations and practices followed at IITs. The ministry says that are framed keeping in mind the need to maintain parity between all institutes of national importance.

Many of these eligibility criteria, however, are a significant departure from the IIM FPM mechanisms, sparking unhappiness at the top business schools.

IIM Ahmedabad has written to the ministry pointing out while the government has mandated a 8CGPA for direct entry candidates to pursue a PhD, its

internal data on FPM shows that it has admitted scores of students even with a CGPA of 6.

Half of its FPM pass outs have come with engineering degrees and 60% of the candidates came with a CGPA less than eight. Many of these are even faculty at IIMA currently, the IIM has pointed out. IIM A has also written that it did not think a two year long Post Graduate Diploma in Management was necessary and its one year condensed version should also be considered acceptable.

The third point IIMA has raised, is regarding the minimum duration of three years fixed by the government for the PhD programme. IIM Ahmedabad is of the view that advanced knowledge and original ideaation cannot be constrained by a time barrier and candidates who can complete their doctoral earlier, should be welcome as well.

Most IIMs offering FPM ag-

ree largely with the IIM A position on the issue and feel that a well tested, quality academic programme should not be tinkered with, just to fit it in with a larger scheme.

"We are not happy with these criteria. We have been admitting students through rigorous process for years now and providing a good quality programme. If the government now wants to tinker with it, one wonders what this autonomy is all about. These issues will be discussed at length at the meeting of IIM Directors next month," said an IIM Director.

Another IIM Director conceded that the government may be attempting to fit IIMs into a larger national framework but it may have a quality impact and also affect the current Fellows.

"There are serious concerns with the PhD guidelines which don't take into account the IIM ecosystem- which has proven itself. We are admitting with 60% in our FPM, we already have some Fellows without an undergraduate degree and if we were to go with the two year PG Diploma eligibility criteria, many IIM students will also be ineligible. That leaves us in a quandary and would discriminate against our current crop of Fellows. Therefore, we will meet and decide whether we need to talk to government on the subject and take a consolidated view on this or seek a special dispensation for Fellows who may be impacted", another IIM Director added.

Sources in the HRD ministry said that they are yet to receive any representation from IIMs and will consider it once it is brought to their attention.

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