

New UGC scheme to promote trans-disciplinary research

Amandeep Shukla

amandeep.shukla@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: The University Grants Commission (UGC), the country's higher education regulator, is planning to launch an ambitious scheme to promote trans-disciplinary research, an official aware of the matter said.

Called Stride — Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research through Higher Education Institutes for National Development and Entrepreneurship — the nearly ₹500 crore programme will support the efforts of students and faculty in universities and colleges to discover new areas of knowledge.

Trans-disciplinary research is a team effort by investigators from different disciplines to create new conceptual and theoretical innovations that go beyond the confines of a subject-specific approach, a UGC official said not wishing to be named. "Stride will support trans-disciplinary research and socially inclusive innovations for national development and entrepreneurship. New ideas, concepts and practices for public good and strengthening civil society and nationally relevant research focused on delivering solutions will be encouraged," the official said. A key idea behind the scheme is to develop capacity for advanced research in the country's higher educational institutions.

The scheme envisages exchange between faculty from universities and top colleges and scientists from national bodies like Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Medical Research,



Called Stride, the scheme will support the efforts of students and faculty in universities to discover new areas of knowledge HT PHOTO

Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Indian Space Research Organisation, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology etc for specific periods. This can be mutually beneficial for enhancing the quality and relevance of research.

A unique aspect of Stride is its open nature, the UGC official cited above said. While it would promote research in a range of areas from philosophy, history, archaeology, anthropology, psychology, Indology, liberal arts, languages, culture, law, education, journalism and mass communication, commerce, management, environment and sustainable development, it would not be confined to these.

"Since the idea is to promote trans-disciplinary research, artificial subject boundaries would not be the confine. There is no straitjacket," the official said.

One of Stride's aims is to ensure that the research done is of practical utility. The pro-

gramme will support basic, applied and transformational action research to support government policies. "The highlight of this scheme is its flexibility. Research that is socially relevant to initiatives which address local, national or global needs will be encouraged," UGC official said.

R Subrahmanyam, secretary (higher education) in the Union human resource development ministry, said the UGC had in its meeting on January 29 given its nod to the scheme. Inder Mohan Kapahy, a former UGC member, said, "This is welcome for encouraging cooperative efforts of national-level reputable specialised institutions with universities and colleges. In the recent past, the bulk of efforts had been to encourage only top institutions like IITs, IIMs and other such elite institutions. Indian IHEs can excel in fields like history, archaeology, philosophy, linguistics, etc. So far, the focus had been only on science, technology, management. Expanding the area of focus is good."