

Centre Makes Changes in Higher Education Bill

REVISED PROVISION Commission to have more academics and state representations

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New Delhi: The central government has revised the proposed Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill to ensure it is in keeping with the spirit of 'cooperative federalism' and has more academics and state representations.

In the revised version, HECI will be empowered to bestow degree-granting powers to an institute. Currently, universities have degree-granting powers and specify norms for joint and dual degrees besides regular ones. The HECI will also ensure mechanisms to measure effectiveness of academic programmes and whether they translate into greater employability of graduates.

The draft HECI Bill, 2019, is set to be taken to the Union Cabinet for approval shortly and specifically addresses the concerns red flagged by various political parties.

ET has gathered that the revised version of the Bill, which was discussed with all state education secretaries at a meeting on August 8, has dropped plans to set up an 'Advisory Council' chaired by the Union Human Resource Development (HRD) minister; expanded the commission and withdrawn clauses seen as prescriptive to state governments. Political parties strongly opposed the plans of setting up the 'Advisory Council', which was to be headed by the Union HRD minister to coordinate with state go-



vernments. The HECI was expected to implement the advice rendered by the council and many felt this would amount to Centre's interference.

It has also attempted to bring in more academic representatives to the body, which many claimed was more administration heavy earlier. While the previous draft called for setting up a 14-member Higher Education Commission, which mostly had he-

SCRAPPED CLAUSES



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ads of various regulatory bodies, two vice-chancellors and two serving professors, the new draft envisages a 22-member commission, which will have up to 12 academicians, including two vice-chancellors (one from a central university and another from a state one), six eminent academics who have worked as professors in universities and four academics from state higher education councils. A search-cum-selection committee will identify the chairperson and vice-chairperson through a rigorous process.

The HRD minister has been kept out of the Commission and a secretary to the higher education department is an ex officio member who will be on the panel alongside seven members from professional bodies such as Council of Architecture, National Council for Teacher Education, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Veterinary Council of India and Pharmacy Council among others.