

Multiple agencies may get to accredit educational bodies

Neelam Pandey

neelam.pandey@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Multiple government and semi-government agencies will be allowed to accredit educational institutions in addition to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA), a government-driven attempt to speed up the process, officials said.

The Centre is set to notify the University Grants Commission (UGC) (Recognition and Monitoring of Assessment and Accreditation Agencies) Regulations, 2018 which will allow registration of assessment and accreditation agencies (AAAs) to accredit higher education institutes and programmes.

"Semi government agency" has been defined as an entity formed by a government agency with a majority stake in partnership with a private entity that has at least five years of experience in the accreditation process.

According to a senior Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry official who requested anonymity, these regulations will apply to all assessment and accreditation agencies AAAs that will be formed following the notification of the regulation as well as the NAAC and NBA.

Thus far, the NAAC has accredited close to 1,200 colleges and 59 universities, a small fraction of around 40,000 colleges and 1,200 universities that India has. Accreditation will help improve the academic and administrative standards followed by educational institutes, and lead to better monitoring of the quality of courses they offer students.

Accreditation will help improve the academic and

administrative standards followed by educational institutes, and lead to better monitoring of the quality of courses they offer students. "To begin with three Indian Institutes of Technology -- Delhi, Kharagpur and Madras -- are coming together to form a section 8 company that will allow it to use the network that exists in the IITs to be able to reach out to faculty for carrying out accreditation. The board of IIT-Delhi has approved the proposal and other two IITs are likely to approve it too. The company is likely to be operational by the end of the year," said a second HRD ministry official. Section 8 company is one that is registered for charitable and not-for-profit purposes.

The UGC had approved the rules in a meeting held in January; the rules have now been approved by the HRD ministry and the regulation will be notified by August.

HT had first reported on June 30, 2017 that multiple agencies will be allowed to carry out accreditation of educational institutes. NAAC and NBA are now the only two agencies mandated to accredit the country's universities and colleges. "The move is aimed at ending NAAC's 'monopoly' and ensuring transparency in the accreditation process," said a third HRD ministry official. Under the regulations AAAs will be set up by government or semi-government agencies. These agencies will be empanelled by the UGC on the advice of an Accreditation Advisory Council (AAC) that will be set up. "It is a welcome move but I feel more private players should be allowed....," said Dheeraj Sanghi, professor, department of computer science and engineering at IIT-Kanpur.