

# Revised UGC rules may raise bar for deemed varsity tag

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**NEW DELHI:** The human resource development (HRD) ministry is considering redrawing norms for 'deemed to be universities' which would raise the bar for institutions to get the status and would focus more on quality of education, officials aware of the development said.

There is proposal to make entry norms for such varsities to be made more stringent and bring greater focus on monitoring quality. However, a final decision in this regard may be taken by the University Grants Commission (UGC), a senior official said.

According to the proposal, to get the deemed university status, an existing institution should have completed at least 15 years.

It is also expected that the institution would be accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council with a high score. In case of an institution teaching technical courses, two third of its courses are to be accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA). According to a source, the new proposal also specifies that the institution is either in the top 100 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) or in the top 50 in any specified category at the time of the application and also in the previous two years. Another condition for the granting of the deemed university status for an institute is that it should have multi-disciplinary courses and have a high research output.

According to the proposal, the teacher student ratio also should not be less than 1:20.

"The norms suggested in the fresh proposal are much tighter

than the existing norms and are expected to raise the bar for such institutes," said another senior official.

It holds that the UGC would monitor performance and academic outcomes of all deemed to be universities on an annual basis. Among the performance criteria, it has been suggested that graduate outcomes should be such that at least 50% of them secure access to employment, self-employment or engage in higher education, it is learnt.

Another important condition is that teacher vacancy should not exceed 10% of the sanctioned strength. It is also expected that a substantial number of students passing out of these varsities would appear and clear examinations like GATE, UGC-NET, according to the proposal.

"It is expected that the new norms, if approved, would set up a higher entry bar. However, there are also provisions which would allow more freedom to the selected institutions in terms of pedagogy and curriculum," the official said.

Under the new norms, it has also been decided that only the best among the new deemed varsities would be allowed off-shore centres after due process, a senior official said. Under, the 'de novo' category new institutions offering niche courses may get the status, according to the proposed norms, a source said.

Furqan Qamar, secretary general, Association of Indian Universities, said: "Over a period of time, deemed university regulations have undergone several changes. Any step to improve their quality is welcome. However, it has to be seen that autonomy is encouraged..."