News: A least two private higher education institutes, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha and Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) in Tamil Nadu, which were declared ‘Institutions of Eminence’ (IoEs) on August 2, 2019, are ineligible for the coveted status. It was found that the two institutes do not meet the eligibility criterion on the net worth of the sponsoring organisation members.

What is the eligibility criteria to get IoE status?

- According to the University Grants Commission’s regulations on the IoE scheme, the sponsoring organisation is a “charitable or a not-for-profit Society or a public Trust or a Company incorporated under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013” applying to upgrade an existing private institution or a new one to an IoE.

- The eligibility criterion states the collective net worth of the members of the sponsoring organisation should be Rs 3,000 crore for existing institutions and Rs 5,000 crore for new ones.

Background

- The above eligibility clause was at the source of a lot of heartburn among many private higher education institutions as it had left them out of the application process. This issue was also raised at a workshop organised by the HRD Ministry on October 27, 2017, for “sensitising potential applicants under private sector” for the IoE scheme.

- In a clarification issued by the ministry on November 17, 2017, on the request made by private institutions to reduce the eligibility net worth of Rs 3,000 crore, among other things, the government wrote, “The reduction in eligibility...
About IoE scheme

- The IoE scheme, a pet project of the Prime Minister's Office launched under the NDA-II government, is aimed at creating an enabling architecture for 10 public and 10 private institutions to emerge as world-class institutions.

- The IoEs are proposed to have greater autonomy, including on deciding the fee, and course duration and structure. Their academic collaboration with foreign institutions will also be exempt from approvals. The 10 government institutions, in addition to autonomy, will get Rs 1,000 crore each from the HRD Ministry.

- Implemented under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry.

- Aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.

- The selected institutes will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy. They will receive special funding.

- The selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.

- Eligibility: Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag.

- The private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as greenfield ventures provided the sponsoring organisation submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

- Under the scheme, Public Institutions of Eminence are eligible for a grant of
Rs.1,000 crore from the government and **no funds will be given to Private Institutions of Eminence.**

**Other benefits include the freedom to:**

1. to recruit faculty from outside India (limit of 25% of its faculty strength for public institution).
2. to enter into academic collaborations with other Institutions within the country.
3. to admit additionally foreign students on merit subject to a maximum of 30% of the strength of admitted domestic students.
4. to fix and charge fees from foreign students without restriction.
5. To fix curriculum and syllabus, with no UGC mandated curriculum structure.
6. to offer online courses as part of their programmes with a restriction that not more than 20% of the programme should be in online mode.
7. UGC Inspection shall not apply to Institutions of Eminence

**Controversy with the scheme**

The scheme first ran into controversy in July 2018, with the **selection of Reliance Foundation’s non-existent Jio Institute among India’s first six IoEs** (three public and three private). The announcement of the second and final tranche of IoEs was in August last year, in which seven private and seven public institutions were awarded the status. VIT, KIIT, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Bangalore, Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi, OP Jindal University in Haryana, Shiv Nadar University and Satya Bharti Foundation’s proposed institute were among the seven private IoEs announced last year.