
News: The University Grants Commission (UGC) is set to regulate the fee charged by private deemed universities for professional programmes.

Prelims and Mains focus: About the move by UGC, about UGC and its criticisms.

How will it regulate the fees?

- It is working on a regulation that proposes to set up a high-powered committee to determine the “reasonableness” of the fee charged by private deemed-to-be universities.

- In order to determine the “reasonableness” of the fee charged by private deemed universities, the proposed fee committee (to be set up by UGC) will look into a number of factors, including the cost of educating one student, revenue surplus generated by the institution, salary and allowances to be paid to teaching and non-teaching staff.

- According to the draft, UGC’s fee committee will have five members and it will be headed by a former Vice-Chancellor or former head of a regulatory body like the UGC. The other members will include an eminent educationist who had achieved the rank of a professor, a nominee of a statuary national regulatory authority, an expert from the field of accountancy and an officer of the UGC.

- The said committee will be competent to impose a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh for every violation, apart from the excess fee that the institution will be asked to refund to the students.

Current Scenario:

- As per the UGC (Fees in professional education imparted by private-aided and unaided institutions deemed to be universities) Regulations, 2019, a deemed university can only charge fee approved by the said committee.
Most states have fee fixation committees and even laws for fee charged by state private institutions for professional programmes. However, there's no regulation of fee charged by private deemed universities which come under the union government. Currently, out of the 127 deemed universities, 90 are private institutions.

About UGC:

- The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a statutory body set up by the Indian Union government in accordance to the UGC Act 1956 under Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- Previously, UGC was formed in 1946 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras and, Delhi. In 1947, a Committee was entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with all the then existing Universities.

- After independence, the University Education Commission was set up in 1948 under the Chairmanship of S. Radhakrishnan and it recommended that the UGC be reconstituted on the general model of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom.

The UGC has two primary responsibilities:

- providing funds to educational institutions; and
- coordinating, determining and maintaining standards in institutions of higher education.

Its main functions are:

- promoting and coordinating education in universities,
- determining and maintaining standards for teaching, examination and research in universities,
- framing regulations on minimum standards for education,
- disbursing grants to universities and colleges,
- liaising between the CG, State governments and higher educational institutions, and
- advising the CG and State governments on possible policy measures to improve higher education in India.

Criticism of UGC

- The UGC and its regulatory regime have been criticised several times by a number of committees for its restrictive and suffocating processes.
Several committees including the Professor Yash Pal committee and the National Knowledge Commission of the UPA era and the Hari Gautam committee of Modi regime have recommended a single education regulator to rid higher education of red tape and lethargy.