UGC to suggest academic calendar

Part of: GS-III- Education (PT-MAINS-PERSONALITY TEST)

Panels set up by the University Grants Commission (UGC) have submitted recommendations on the revised academic calendar and suggestions for holding examinations at a time when the country is under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission’s members are likely to discuss the recommendations via video-conferencing and issue advisory guidelines for institutions of higher education by the middle of next week, according to UGC officials.

Meanwhile, Press Trust of India reported that a panel headed by Central University of Haryana Vice-Chancellor R.C. Kuhad had recommended that the new academic year begin in September instead of July. Another recommendation was that universities conduct their year-end examinations online if they had the resources to do so. If not, they should wait until the lockdown is lifted to set a date for the hand-written examinations.

No semester exams yet

Most colleges and universities have not yet held their semester examinations to close out the current academic year.

Another panel headed by Indira Gandhi National Open University Vice Chancellor Nageshwar Rao also submitted its report on improving online education in the midst of the lockdown.

Guidelines on these matters issued by the Commission would “not be binding, but only advisory in nature”.

University Grants Commission – UGC

The UGC was established in 1953 and made into a statutory organisation with the UGC Act in 1956.

- UGC is responsible for coordinating, determining and maintaining standards of higher education.
- The University Grants Commission provides recognition to universities in India and disburses funds to such recognised universities and colleges.
- The UGC has its Head Office in New Delhi and six regional offices:
  - Bengaluru
  - Bhopal
  - Guwahati
  - Hyderabad
  - Kolkata
  - Pune
- In 2018, the Ministry of Human Resource Development announced its plans to repeal the UGC Act.
- The bill also stipulates the formation of a new body, the Higher Education Commission of India.
- The attempts to formalise a national educational system in India started during the British Raj. The University Grants Committee was formed in 1945 to oversee the functioning of the three central universities – Aligarh, Delhi and Banaras. Its responsibility was extended in 1947 to cover all Indian universities.
- The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an organisation that assesses and
education Institutions (HEIs) in India.
- It is an autonomous body funded by the University Grants Commission and headquartered in Bangalore.

UGC Mandate

The UGC has the unique distinction of being the only grant-giving agency in the country which has been vested with two responsibilities: that of providing funds and that of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of higher education. The UGC’s mandate includes:

- Promoting and coordinating university education.
- Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
- Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.
- Monitoring developments in the field of collegiate and university education; disbursing grants to the universities and colleges.
- Serving as a vital link between the Union and State governments and institutions of higher learning.
- Advising the Central and State governments on the measures necessary for the improvement of university education.

Other news related to UGC

STRIDE

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved a new initiative, Scheme for Trans-Disciplinary Research for India’s Developing Economy (STRIDE), to support socially relevant, locally need-based, nationally important and globally significant research projects.

- The UGC has set up an advisory committee under its Vice Chairman Bhushan Patwardhan, to oversee the entire scheme.

Components of the Scheme

- **Component 1:** The Scheme will provide for research capacity building in diverse disciplines by mentoring, nurturing and supporting young talents to innovate pragmatic solutions for local, regional, national and global problems. Grant available is up to Rs. 1 crore.
- **Component 2:** It will mainly focus on enhancing problem solving skills with the help of social innovation and action research to improve wellbeing of people and contribute for India’s developing economy. Grant up to Rs. 50 lakh to 1 crore is available for projects under this component.
- **Component-3** will fund high impact research projects in the identified thrust areas in humanities and human sciences through national network of eminent scientists from leading institutions. Grant available under this component is up to Rs. 1 crore for one Higher Educational Institution and up to Rs. 5 crores for a multi institutional network.

Expected Benefits from the Scheme

- It will help strengthen transdisciplinary research culture in colleges and universities.
  - Trans-disciplinary research is a team effort of investigators from different disciplines to create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological innovations that integrates and transcends beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a
common problem. It goes beyond mere production of knowledge and extends to the practical use of the knowledge outside academic endeavour. It will provide opportunity to build multi sectoral linkages between university-government-community-industry for national development and wellbeing of people. It will give major impetus to high impact research in Humanities and Human Sciences.

2. Life will soon become easier for students migrating from one college to another or from another university. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved a uniform academic calendar for all universities across the country. This would mean that results of all courses will be declared before June and classes for first year students shall commence by the first week of August.