

NEWS UPDATE

Hindustan Times ND (Education) 27.08.2014 P-1

UGC distance learning policy violated, admits HRD minister

Smriti Irani recently responded in Rajya Sabha to MP's query referencing HT Education's story series on degree courses being offered by private and state universities without UGC approval

After HT Education highlighted the plight of thousands of students who spent good money on distance learning programmes not approved by education regulator University Grants Commission, the matter came up for hearing in the upper house of Parliament, when it was in session.

On August 11, 2014, BK Hariprasad, member of parliament representing Karnataka; questioned Smriti Irani, the union minister for human resource development, about the number of state and private universities violating UGC norms by offering distance learning courses through institutes outside their territorial jurisdiction. In her written response, Smriti Irani acknowledged the violations, saying, "The University Grants Commission (UGC) has informed that a university established or incorporated by or under a state act shall operate and function only within the territorial jurisdiction defined under its act and in no case beyond the territory of its location."

"Contrary to this provision, a few state universities and private universities set up under state act have violated this policy of the UGC. The Commission has asked these universities to close down such centres and to comply with the UGC's instructions in the matter," responded Irani.

Despite the HRD minister's statement in Parliament, however, no concrete moves have been evident in curbing this malpractice. For instance, Karnataka State Open University in Karnataka (KSOU) and Mewar University in Rajasthan are still openly offering affiliations in distance learning mode to institutes outside state boundaries. When questioned, the registrar of KSOU, PS Naik, had said, "We can offer courses beyond our territorial jurisdiction as our state act allows us to do so. We don't need to follow UGC." Even an assistant director of Mewar University had admitted to giving affiliation to institutes for training. "Thousands of students who have enrolled in reputed institutes in Delhi for degree courses through distance learning offered by other states' universities do not hold valid degrees. However, nobody is talking about taking action against these institutes and universities," says a senior UGC official.

In addition to this, violation of territorial jurisdiction is not the only worry for students and parents. Replying to another question related to unapproved courses run by some universities, the HRD minister said that the UGC had never approved courses such as MSc in fashion communication, MBA in interior designing, BSc in operation theatre technology and MBA in fire safety etc.

This means that the state and private universities cannot offer these courses through distance learning programmes even in their own states because they don't have UGC approvals.

“The minister says that the UGC will consider approving such courses. Thousands of students have passed out or are at present enrolled in these courses. What happens to their future as such courses are not approved now?” asks Hariprasad, when contacted by HT Education.

“The minister’s response raises many serious issues. If the UGC hasn’t approved some programmes, how are these being offered to the students. All these degrees are fake. The HRD minister also says that the UGC has published advertisements to inform and educate students, but the UGC’s responsibility does not end here. It should take strict action against these universities. I am not satisfied with the minister’s response. We will pursue this issue,” he adds.

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Are you ready for the Management Aptitude Test?

One of the major entrance tests for admission to management programmes across more than 600 B-schools, the next edition of the Management Aptitude Test (MAT) will be conducted on September 7 and September 13, 2014. It was approved as a national-level test by the human resource development ministry in 2003. MAT scores are also accepted by PGDM institutes across the country as per a Supreme Court 2013 ruling.

Conducted four times a year in February, May, September and December, MAT is offered in the offline as well as the online version. The number of participating institutes usually vary in each edition of the test. All participating institutes in MAT are approved by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or the Distance Education Council (DEC) or university affiliated colleges or university departments.

The minimum qualification for the test is graduation in any discipline such as BA, BSc, BCom and BTech from any recognised university. Final-year students are also eligible to take the test provisionally.

Aspirants who go for the online version can choose the date and time slot, which depends on availability. There are 200 questions to be answered in 150 minutes. The question paper is divided into five sections (40 questions each) — language comprehension (LC); data analysis and sufficiency (DI); mathematical skills (QA); intelligence and critical reasoning; and Indian and global environment (GK).

According to John Williams, academic head, CL Educate, Bangalore, “The GK section is not considered in merit scores. A score of 700 or more is considered good for admission to a good B-school. However, those scoring lower than this also stand a chance for admission. The language comprehension and mathematical skills sections are relatively easy. The DI/DS section requires a candidate to devote time. Solving 160 to 170 questions with 90% accuracy should be enough to get a great score.”

Though most management entrance exams are conducted in the online mode, the number of students opting for the computer-based version of MAT is fewer. “There are only about 10% takers for the online version of MAT as the rest go for the paperpen mode. Approximately 2 lakh students take the MAT annually. The number

of test takers for MAT has also gone up this year and this can be linked to the good placements offered by B-schools. So far, 300 institutions have registered for the September edition of MAT,” says **Wing Commander V S Bejoy**, director, Centre for Management Services, All India Management Association, the body that conducts the test.

On the advantages of MAT over other management entrance tests, VS Bejoy says, “MAT is administered four times a year. While scores of exams like the Common Admission Test (CAT) and Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT) are accepted by close to 100 B-schools, MAT scores are accepted by 600 institutions in a year. It is available both in the offline as well as online version. The results are also available within three weeks and students are given proper scorecards.”

With nearly two weeks remaining for the test, experts suggest that students should start planning for the D-day. “Students should attempt the reasoning section first, then move to DI or verbal and quantitative aptitude in the end. Quant is the most scoring section, but it takes time to solve. All 40 reading comprehension questions should be attempted. Those going for the online version must take four to five full length mock tests. Candidates can also go for sectional tests to improve their preparation for particular sections,” says Vijay Jha, senior vice president, CL Educate. Students must also avoid the most common mistakes. “Remember to mark the final answers on the OMR sheet and not on the question paper first. This could disturb the order while you are marking the answers finally on the OMR sheet and also take extra time. Aspirants should also avoid marking the remaining answers randomly in case there is time left as there is negative marking,” adds Williams.

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Hindustan Times ND (Education) 27.08.2014 P-4

More quant questions in CAT

With about 35 quant questions in CAT 2014, candidates will have to work on speed and accuracy

MBA spirants need to devise a new strategy to deal with the quantitative analysis section as they could expect 34-36 questions as compared to 21 questions last year.

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) h ave announced changes in the structure and the test environment of the upcoming Common Admission Test (CAT). There are four significant changes in the test to be conducted in November. First, the number of questions has been increased to 100 from 60. Second, the duration of the test will now be 170 minutes. There will be no sectional time limits. Lastly, candidates will get more time for preparation and fewer slots of testing.

These changes will mean that you have to make appropriate shifts in your preparation to ace this edition of CAT. Needless to say, it would vary across the different sections of the test - quant, data interpretation and logical reasoning and verbal ability. Though structurally the test has only two sections, it may be useful to view it as the three sections each having a character of its own. In this article, we

look at the likely implications of the revised structure on the quant section. Historically, the CAT quant comprised about one third of the paper. It is not going to be any different this year. So, you could expect 34 to 36 questions. Comparing this with the 21 questions of CAT 2013, this is a significant jump. It has many implications. Let us look at them.

Speed: Speed would be of essence here. You have 40% less time to attempt each question now. This would mean that you have to focus on smart ways to solve questions. As a part of your preparation, it becomes imperative that you consciously focus on 'going fast' and 'doing more.' You got to look at every question that you solve and see if there are smarter ways to solve the same.

Choice: When there were just 21 questions, there were fewer questions that you were most comfortable with. That would now increase substantially. So you have got to identify topics that you are comfortable with. You have to master a few topics so that you can afford to focus a little less on the others. Chances are that the average level of difficulty of the section is bound to drop, if not remain the same. Make a list of topics in the descending order of your comfort. This must not be just intuitive, but backed with statistics. This is where intensive practice in topics comes in. This is like going to a test gym and getting a feel of your capability.

Test strategy: Having got used to 'regimented' sectional time limits, it would need a mental shift to move to a 'no sectional time limits' scenario. This needs quick decision making. You can do that only if you have seen sufficient number of questions to be able to quickly decide whether you 'can' or 'cannot' do the question. There are three types of responses that you get when you read a question – 'I know', 'I am not sure', 'I do not know.' This would imply two to three rounds of attempts to maximise your score. And all the while you have got to keep your eyes on the clock.

To get to a state of proficiency, you have got to take at least 20 mock tests that are comprehensive and at least as many sectional tests. You may choose to skip a few topics that look out of your reach. Now that the test dates have shifted by a month, it gives you a great opportunity to make up for any lost time.

Last, but not the least, you should not get into the CAT without having solved the CAT questions of the past. They would give you a sense of familiarity with the CAT that is expected. Remember, they are the best tools for revision.

Economic Times ND 27.08.2014 P-16

UGC don't stifle teaching Innovation

The [University Grants Commission](#) (UGC) is needlessly pushing IITs to scrap their four-year undergraduate programmes (FYUP). Conformity with the UGC's national policy was used as the instrument to end Delhi University's misguided FYUP. Now, the UGC wants to straitjacket that national policy on the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institute of Science and some innovative private universities. This is a grave error. India needs reform in higher education to compete in an increasingly knowledge-intensive economy. Students graduating from our universities should have the ability to think out of the box and to innovate. All this

calls for a change in culture including how courses are designed, and how institutions are run. The UGC should not be a stumbling block in nurturing innovation. Rather, its policy framework should not just leave room for but also encourage [innovation](#) and experimentation.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/editorial/ugc-dont-stifle-teaching-innovation-let-iits-and-private-varsities-experiment/articleshow/40963301.cms>

Economic Times ND 27.08.2014 P-18

Looking for life partner your IIT IIM degree can help

Matrimonial alliances in India have forever been based on criteria like caste, religion, social and economic status, but attempts are being made to move beyond and look for likeminded people on the basis of which college they went to.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/internet/iitiimshaadi-to-help-find-matrimonial-alliances-for-people-passing-from-top-institutes-including-iims-and-iits/articleshow/40958879.cms>

Business Line ND 27.08.2014 P-12

Mid-career executives make a beeline for global degrees

After spending 14 years working in the marketing and communication domain in various organisations, like other senior-level executives, Rajeshree Naik was looking forward to a functional leadership position in her existing company. Having reached a point where it was easy to predict how her career would pan out, Naik decided to go back to the classroom to accelerate the process.

Soon, she was on her way to attend INSEAD Business School's Leadership Programme for Senior Indian Executives (ILPSIE). Now, she was well set to climb up the corporate ladder. At least that's what Naik had planned. Life, however, had other plans in store for her. While she had entered the programme as a mere corporate executive, she came out of it transformed.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/newmanager/midcareer-executives-make-a-beeline-for-global-degrees/article6354053.ece>

Indian Express ND 27.08.2014 P-10

Under Government Control

The ministry of human resource development has constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Hari Gautam for the "review of University Grants Commission for its restructuring and strengthening to address the challenges of higher education". The government's order shows that as many as 14 terms of reference (ToRs) have been identified for the committee. A cursory glance at them indicates that the UGC is unable to fulfil its mandate to promote, coordinate and maintain standards of university education, or to disburse funds to eligible institutions. This is probably due to the internal inefficiency of the UGC.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/under-government-control/>

Business Line ND 27.08.2014 P-12

The new-age CFO and his many avatars

The one key element that has changed the way of doing business is the flow of information. The new-age CFO must now realise that he is no longer expected to linger in the background and surface every time the results are to be announced. As the one person in the organisation who has intimate knowledge of both the past performance and the expected future growth, it becomes his responsibility not only to steer the company towards a better future but also be able to provide a transparent, big picture view of the future, to internal stakeholders, customers and investors.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/newmanager/the-newage-cfo-and-his-many-avatars/article6354054.ece>