# Universities UK International

# INDIA, HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY UPDATE
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**Action:**

For information and awareness of opportunities

**Audience:**

Pro-Vice-Chancellors International, Directors International and International office staff with responsibility for India

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite notable improvements in access to higher education in India, the perceived quality of India's universities is still poor by international standards. Only three Indian institutions appear in the most recent QS top 200 institutions in the world[1]. The response of the Modi Government has been shaped by a push for increased internationalisation, and greater autonomy for its best institutions. Against a backdrop of state reform of regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)[2] – there have been important policy interventions that have demonstrated a desire on the part of the Indian Government for the regulatory bodies to loosen their grip on higher education.

This information note will focus on two of these policies; The Global Research Interactive Network – which focuses on internationalisation efforts and improvements in research outputs – and the 'Institutes of Eminence' – which seeks to provide greater autonomy to ten public and ten private institutions.

The note concludes with a brief analysis of three other Government of India policies; the National Institutional Framework Rankings 2017; the National Academic Depository; and the Higher Education Finance Ministry.

**Note**

1 https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2016

2 http://www.hindustantimes.com/education/ugc-aicte-to-be-history-soon-govt-to-bring-new-higher-education-regulator/story-Z6ydwR5JWVAn649EgTsl1N.html

# THE GLOBAL RESEARCH INTERACTIVE NETWORK (GRIN)

The Global Research Interactive Network (GRIN) has been described[3] by Indian President, Pranab Mukherjee as a follow on to the existing Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) – a programme that has seen significant involvement from the UK higher education sector.

Both GIAN and GRIN represent efforts by the Government of India to increase internationalisation and add the expertise of foreign faculty to their higher education sector. In contrast to GIAN, which focuses upon a global exchange of content by inviting foreign faculty to teach in Indian institutions, GRIN will promote interaction between Indian students and global institutions. The Minister for Human Resource Development, Prakash Javadekar, has described this as turning 'brain drain into brain gain'[4].

GRIN will provide scholarships and opportunities to students from India to work with the best institutions in the world. Students enrolled on five year courses will spend one year overseas before returning to India to complete their courses. Visits will be fully funded by the Indian Government.

The funding for GRIN will be delivered through the new Higher Education Finance Ministry (further information below) which will see an initial commitment of USD $3 billion over the first three years (although this figure would be leveraged from an initial investment of USD $300 million). The money will be invested in upgrading and improving the research infrastructure in Indian universities (most likely the Indian Institutes of Technology) along with providing funding for mobility and scholarships. It is not yet clear exactly how much of this fund will be spent on the GRIN programme.

The development of GRIN reflects the Indian Government's desire for domestic institutions to improve their standing in global university rankings, and an acceptance that for this to be achieved there needs to be considerable improvement in the research outputs of their best institutions. One way that GRIN will seek to achieve this is by encouraging the production of research collaboration between Indian and global faculty.

## Opportunities for the UK HE Sector?

Although it has been agreed in principle by the IIT Council that GIAN will also be taken forward (as presented by Director IIT-Kharagpur[5]), it is unclear if it will be incorporated into GRIN, continued in its current format or take an alternative form – although the Ministry for Human Resource Development (MHRD) is very keen for increased numbers of UK academics to visit India under GIAN. At present, it is difficult to predict future opportunities for UK institutions under GRIN, however, MHRD has explicitly stated that GRIN would place Indian students in the 'most reputed laboratories in the world'[6].

**Note**

3 http://www.india.com/news/india/pranab-mukherjee-says-india-must-emerge-as-a-higher-education-destination-at-visitors-conference-690693/

4 http://indianexpress.com/article/education/want-to-reverse-brain-drain-prakash-javadekar-4452309/

**Note**

5 https://www.iitsystem.ac.in/sites/default/files/councilminutes/minutes/50/ad313e4b3.pdf

6 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/we-want-to-promote-innovation-javadekar/articleshow/57318446.cms

# WORLD CLASS INSTITUTIONS

A policy to create 20 world class institutions has been taking shape over the past couple of years in India and spending commitments are now being discussed increasing the likelihood of a concrete outcome. The 'Institutions of Eminence' will be set up as a separate category of deemed universities. Proposed regulations aim at creating an enabling architecture for ten public and ten private institutions to break into global rankings lists.

## Policy Development

The policy was first mooted by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in 2016 who announced that "an enabling regulatory architecture will be provided to ten public and ten private institutions to emerge as world-class teaching and research institutions"[7]. The statement was reflected in a draft policy on the establishment of world class institutions that followed and was made public in June 2016[8].

The public consultation saw some friction between the MHRD and the Prime Minister's Office with the latter pushing for a much more liberalised regime free from UGC controls. The push for liberalisation and increased autonomy has been reflected in statements from ministers within the Modi government and follows the Modi mantra of 'more governance, less government'. UGC on the other hand operate a top-down one size fits all model of regulation and along with the All India Council on Technical Education (AICTE), they have tended to resist calls for increased institutional autonomy. Although several amendments were made, the draft policy has been sent to Cabinet and it is expected that it will receive approval. Should this happen, an Empowered Experts Committee will be appointed by the UGC to conduct the screening process for the aspiring institutes which will be able to apply within 90 days of notification. There has been some concern over the legality of such a panel, however, with the Solicitor General raising his concerns to MHRD.

## Rationale

Despite an improved showing from Indian institutions in the most recent QS rankings, there are still just four Indian universities in the QS top 250. As a result, there is an increasingly high-level push for greater Indian representation. Indian institutions have generally been held back in rankings due to their relative lack of internationalisation activities and poor research outputs, and in the same manner of GRIN the 'Institutes of Eminence' policy aims to improve in both areas. Amongst the other expectations of a 'World Class Institution' set out in draft guidelines it was stated that it should have "a good proportion of foreign or foreign qualified faculty" and "a reasonably good mix of domestic and foreign students"[9].

Those institutions that do gain the title of 'Institutes of Eminence' will be promised greater autonomy and academic flexibility; they will be free to decide their fee for domestic and foreign students and have a flexible course duration and structure. Salary of foreign faculty will be set by the institution and there will be freedom to choose admission procedure, course structure, and course duration. Their academic collaborations with foreign institutions will be exempt from approvals of government or UGC (except in case of institutions based in MEA and MHA's list of negative countries).

Once identified, the target for the 'Institutions for Eminence' is to break into the top 500 bracket in one internationally reputed ranking framework within a decade and then rise into the top 100 over time.

**Note**

7 http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/budget-2016-full-text-of-finance-minister-arun-jaitleys-speech/articleshow/51194097.cms

8 http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/ugc_guidelines.pdf

**Note**

9 http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/ugc_guidelines.pdf

# OTHER POLICY UPDATES

## National Institutional Rankings Framework (NIRF)[10]

Following on from the launch of the first NIRF in September 2015, the second NIRF was announced in April 2017. The methodology draws on recommendations arrived at by the Core Committee set up by MHRD to identify parameters for ranking universities. The parameters broadly cover; teaching, leaning and resources; research and professional practices; graduation outcomes; outreach and inclusivity; and perception. Despite the growing significance of the rankings, participation in the exercise is not mandatory and the policy has been met with a somewhat cold response from the sector in India with more than 800 fewer institutions taking part this year compared to the first year.

Complaints have centred around the fact that the information provided by the institutions is not verified fully enough with accusations that some of the data provided may have been false[11]. Despite the complaints, NIRF will play an important role in the government's push for greater institutional autonomy with new regulations set to be brought in through Section 26 of the UGC Act 1956. This will see the introduction of 'graded autonomy' where institutions will be defined as Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III institutions with progressively higher levels of autonomy granted. The tier awarded to an institution is based on both the score an institution is given by the Academic and Administrative Audit peer team and the NIRF ranking.

## National Academic Depository[12]

The National Academic Depository (NAD) aims to streamline the process of accessing transcripts and awards certificates for Indian students, and clamp down on the prevalence of fake degrees. The scheme is being promoted as part of the Digital India campaign. The NAD received its first uploads in March 2017 and all Indian universities are being encouraged to upload certificates to the NAD.

The NAD should be particularly useful for Indian students looking to study overseas. Transcripts and certificates will be available online and will also be able to be printed with security markings demonstrating that they are official documents.

## Higher Education Finance Ministry

The highest performing research institutions can expect to see additional funding made through a new Higher Education Finance Ministry. Over the next one and a half years an amount of Rs 20,000 crores (around £2.3 billion) will be raised and spent on academic and research infrastructure in the best universities.

Civil and lab infrastructure projects will be funded through 10 year loans with the principle amount repaid through 'internal accruals' - fee receipts, research earnings etc. Bonuses and penalties will also be introduced in the same manner as is already performed for roads and highways that would reward projects for being completed on time and penalise those that do not. It has been confirmed by MHRD Minister, Prakash Javadekar, that the funding through HEFA would have no effect on existing funds allotted to premier institutions[13].

**Note**

10 https://www.nirfindia.org/Home

11 http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/claims-of-institutions-not-crosschecked/article8434246.ece

12 http://www.nad.ndml.in/

**Note**

13 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/Cabinet-gives-nod-to-Higher-Education-Financing-Agency-HEFA/articleshow/54291736.cms