Legislative Brief

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 15, 2025.
The Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee on December 16, 2025 (Chair: Ms. Daggubati Purandeswari).

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July 6, 2026

Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill replaces three existing regulators: (i) the University Grants Commission (UGC), (ii) the All India Council for Technical Education, and (iii) the National Council for Teacher Education.
- The Bill establishes a single regulatory Commission for higher education – the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (the Commission). Three Councils are established under the Commission — the Regulatory, Standards, and Accreditation Councils.
- Technical education, teachers training, and architecture education will be regulated by the Commission. Medical, legal, and other professional courses are excluded. The central government can also notify professional Councils. Institutions regulated by such Councils will then come under the purview of the Bill.
- Currently, HEIs that can award degrees are defined under the UGC Act, 1956. The Bill allows the Regulatory Council to authorise other HEIs to grant degrees with the prior approval of the central government.
- A penalty of up to Rs 75 lakh will be imposed for repeated contravention of the Act. A penalty of at least two crore rupees can be imposed for establishing a university without prior approval.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill's provisions may not significantly improve the autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs). In some cases, autonomy already granted to HEIs may be rolled back. This includes the autonomy granted to certain accredited universities to set up constituent units.
- Currently, institutes of national importance are governed under their specific laws, with academic and research autonomy. The Bill brings such institutes under the purview of the Commission and its Councils.
- Allocating and granting funds is a key function of the UGC. The Bill does not include this as a function of the Commission or its Councils. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 had recommended setting up a single regulator with four verticals for regulation, accreditation, funding, and standard setting. The Bill sets up three of these, excluding funding.
- The Bill treats professional courses inconsistently. Technical, management, and teachers' education are being subsumed under the Commission. While HEIs teaching architecture will be regulated by the Commission, the Council of Architecture will continue to operate as a professional body. Medical, legal, and other courses are exempted. This is consistent with the NEP (2020), which also excluded these courses. However, other expert Committees have recommended that all professional education be brought under a single regulator.
- Appeals against decisions of the Councils will be made to the central government. This is unlike the procedure for other regulators, such as SEBI and TRAI.

PART A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Context

Education is in the Concurrent List, implying that both the Centre and states are empowered to make laws on education. The central government has the power to co-ordinate and determine standards of higher education institutions (HEIs) (entry 66 of the Union List), while states have the power to incorporate, regulate, and wind up universities (entry 32 of the State List). HEIs teaching general subjects are regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which determines and maintains standards, and disburses grants. Technical education is regulated by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Other professional courses, such as law, medicine, and architecture are regulated by professional bodies. Institutions of national importance (such as IITs) are regulated by their statutes.

Table 1: Higher educational institutions (as of April 2026)

Type of Institutions	Regulator	Number of HEIs
Universities	University Grants Commission	1,290
Technical institutions	All India Council for Technical Education	8,489
Teacher training institutions	National Council for Teacher Education	17,752
Medical Colleges	National Medical Council	823
Architecture colleges	Council of Architecture	362
Law Colleges	Bar Council of India	-

Notes: Medical colleges include only those offering at least undergraduate courses.
Sources: Websites of the UGC, AICTE, NCTE, and Council of Architecture, accessed on April 27, 2026; List of Colleges teaching MBBS, NMC; PRS.

Over the years, several committees have been set up to recommend changes to the higher education regulatory framework.[1,2] In 2020, the National Education Policy (NEP) was released, which recommended an overhaul of the higher education system.[3] It recommended setting up the Higher Education Commission of India as an overarching regulator, with four Councils under it.[3] These would perform functions related to regulation, accreditation, framing expected learning outcomes, and giving grants. The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 proposes a similar structure, with an overarching Commission and three Councils addressing regulation, standard setting and accreditation. The Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (Chair: Ms. Daggubati Purandeswari) on December 16, 2025. We discuss some key features and issues below.

Key Features

- **Regulatory Body:** The Bill establishes the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (the Commission) as an apex regulatory authority for higher education. It replaces the UGC, AICTE, and National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). The Commission will comprise of the Regulatory, Accreditation, and Standards Councils. It will regulate technical education, teacher-training, and architecture education. Other professional courses, such as medicine and law have been excluded from its purview.
- **Composition of the Commission:** The Commission will consist of a Chairperson and up to 12 members. Members include: (i) the Presidents of the three Councils, (ii) the higher education secretary of the central government, (iii) five eminent experts, and (iv) two eminent academicians from state HEIs. The Chairperson will be selected by the central government.
- **Composition of the Councils:** Each Council will consist of 14 members headed by a President. Members will include eminent experts, one nominee of the Union Department of Higher Education, and nominees of the other two Councils. The Presidents and full-time members of the Councils will be selected by a search and selection committee. The Regulatory and Standards Councils will also have one nominee of a state government (with states changing on a rotating basis).
- **Functions of the Councils:** The Regulatory Council will be responsible for: (i) establishing and ensuring compliance with minimum standards for setting up an HEI, (ii) facilitating the autonomy of HEIs in a timely manner, and (iii) addressing grievances received from stakeholders against HEIs. The Standards Council will be responsible for framing learning outcomes for higher education programmes, and minimum academic standards for HEIs. The Accreditation Council will be responsible for developing an accreditation framework and system for HEIs. It will also perform accreditation and empanel accrediting institutions.
- **Removal of members:** The Chairperson, Presidents, or any full-time members of the Commission or the Councils may be removed on grounds of: (i) insolvency, (ii) conviction of offence involving moral turpitude, (iii) physical or mental incapacity, or (iv) abuse of powers. Part-time members may be removed on the recommendation of the central government, in a prescribed manner.
- **Right to confer degrees:** Degrees may be granted only by: (i) a university (established by a central or state Act or deemed under the UGC Act, 1956), or (ii) an institution specially empowered by a central Act, or (iii) other HEIs authorised by the Regulatory Council with the prior approval of the central government.
- **Penalties:** The Regulatory Council may impose penalties on HEIs for contravention of the Act. These will be imposed in a graded manner based on the number of contraventions. If an HEI is established without

government approval, a penalty of at least two crore rupees may be imposed and the institution may be closed. Appeals against orders of the Commission or the Councils will be made to the central government.

PART B: KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Regulating higher education

Higher education is regulated to implement certain standards across the country, ensure coordination between HEIs, and address issues such as access, cost, and equity in education.[4] A key question has been how to regulate HEIs and maintain their standards while ensuring their autonomy. Other considerations relate to quality of education, access to higher education, and funding of HEIs. Some of these are discussed below.

Autonomy of HEIs: Autonomy provides HEIs the freedom to conduct research and innovation, and to be diverse in design and organisation.[2] Autonomy has various facets. Academic autonomy includes the power to independently start schools/programmes/courses, admit students, and conduct examinations. On the administrative front, autonomy involves appointments and other personnel matters, and day-to-day operations. The power to utilise funds independently, charge fees, and mobilise resources from other sources are forms of financial autonomy.

Expert committees have noted that both HEIs and teachers within HEIs lack autonomy.[1,2,3] For example, UGC sets norms on matters including: (i) governance structures of HEIs, (ii) physical infrastructure, (iii) the number of faculty and their qualifications, (iv) admission to professional courses, and (v) minimum standards of instruction.[5] AICTE and NCTE regulate matters like starting programmes, intake size, etc.[6,7] UGC guidelines to HEIs have extended to ensuring student safety on and off campus.[8] For example, at least two teachers (including a female teacher) must be present during excursions and academic trips. HEIs must also mandatorily obtain consent letters from parents/guardians. These guidelines seem to ignore the fact that most students would be above 18 years of age, and thus considered to be adults under Indian law. They would not have guardians.

Several expert committees have proposed that HEIs be granted more autonomy.[1,3] However, the structures proposed by them often control activities of HEIs by regulating degree granting powers, curricula, faculty hiring, and funding. Some practitioners have argued for more autonomy for HEIs, coupled with a robust accreditation system.[9,10,11,12] They have noted that this would increase competition, and hence the quality of education offered.

Quality: The quality of HEIs can be benchmarked in different ways. These include requirements to set up HEIs, minimum standards/benchmarks for education, and accreditation. Several expert committees have noted that the system to enter higher education as a provider is cumbersome, and acts as a barrier.[1,4] Entry requirements are also largely input-centric, focusing on land, buildings, capital, etc.[4] Setting up a university requires a law.[13] Setting up HEIs requires permission from the state government, the affiliating university, UGC, and professional bodies (if applicable).[14]

Accreditation, which is a voluntary process, provides information about HEIs to stakeholders. The Yashpal Committee (2010) noted that sharing such information would protect stakeholders from poor quality education providers, instead of setting minimum standards of quality.[2] The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body established by UGC, is responsible for accrediting institutions. Parameters used for accreditation include: (i) curriculum, (ii) teaching-learning evaluation, (iii) infrastructure, (iv) leadership and management, (v) innovations and best practices, and (vi) student performance.[15] Similarly, the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) accredits technical courses.[16] However, several issues have been noted in the accreditation system. Capacity issues in NAAC and NBA, and low willingness of HEIs to participate in accreditation processes have been noted.[17] As of 2022, only 20% of colleges and 38% of universities in India are accredited.[18] The Standing Committee on Education (2025) noted instances of bribery in NAAC.[19] HEIs were also found to falsely claim higher accreditation ranks.[16]

Access: The NEP (2020) aims to achieve a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 50% in higher education by 2035.[3] GER in higher education is the ratio of students enrolled in higher education to the number of people in the 18-23 age group. As of 2021-22, the GER in India is 28%.[20] It stands at 26% for Scheduled Castes and 21% for Scheduled Tribes.[20] As of 2021-22, density of HEIs is higher in the southern and western states.[20] Increasing enrolment will need an expansion in the current infrastructure without compromising on quality.[1] As noted above, experts have observed that the current system of setting up new HEIs acts as an entry barrier for prospective education providers.[1,10]

Funding: HEIs may obtain funding from public and private sources. Experts have also recommended that public spending on higher education must be increased to 1.5% of GDP.[1] As of 2022-23, public spending on higher education is 0.5% of GDP.[21] Private HEIs may raise funding through fees, however, courts have held that fees cannot be exploitative.[22] While HEIs have autonomy in fixing their fees and may raise some surplus for development, states may establish committees to regulate such fees.[22] A key issue in funding is that UGC acts as a regulator as well as the grant making body. Experts have recommended that grant making powers should be given to an independent body, which should also not have any influence on regulation.[1] The NEP (2020) recommended that funding to HEIs must be provided on the basis of their institutional development plan and progress made on their implementation.[3]

Table 2: International systems of higher education regulation

Aspect of regulation	International Examples
Regulatory structure	In the USA, there is no centralised regulator for higher education.[23] In England and Germany, there are regulators at the sub-national level.[24] The government acts as a regulator in China and Singapore.[25,26]
Administrative and academic autonomy	In England and Australia, the governing bodies of registered HEIs are required, by law, to promote academic freedom.[27,28] Universities in England can also decide their governance structure, elect/appoint heads of governing bodies, and hire other staff.[24] In China and Singapore, while the government plays a role in appointing senior functionaries, HEIs have independence in hiring all other faculty/staff.[29,30] HEIs in Australia, England, Singapore, and the USA can independently determine admission requirements for students.[23,26,27,28] Teachers are also given the autonomy to develop curricula. The Higher Education Law in China grants HEIs the autonomy to conduct research, develop technology, and cooperate with foreign institutions.[29]
Accreditation	Accreditation may be performed for institutions (for example, universities or colleges), or for programmes/courses. In the USA, it is voluntary. It may also be used as a requirement to start programmes (for example, in England and Germany), or to access public funds (England and USA).[23,24,31]

Sources: See endnotes 23 to 31; PRS.

Autonomy of HEIs

Bill: Clauses 11(2)(k), 12(1)

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill notes that the Bill is expected to create reforms which promote autonomy for well-performing HEIs. One of the proposed functions of the Regulatory Council is also to facilitate the autonomy of HEIs in a graded and time-bound manner. However, most functions of the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE have been retained and subsumed under the Commission and its Councils. It is unclear how the Bill will increase the autonomy granted to HEIs. It also raises the question whether the autonomy of HEIs should be specified in the Bill, or whether it may be left to delegated legislation by the regulator.

On the other hand, the Bill may be undoing some autonomy already granted to HEIs. In 2018, UGC issued regulations providing autonomy in some matters to universities achieving minimum accreditation scores.[32] This includes the power to open constituent units/off-campus centres without UGC permission.[32] It applies to courses/programmes/centres that are not funded by the government. Since 2018, more than 60 universities have received some autonomy under these regulations.[33] However, the Bill provides that any existing or newly accredited university can establish constituent colleges, off-campuses, and multiple campuses only with the prior approval of the Regulatory Council.

Institutions of National Importance may lose autonomy

Bill: Clauses 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 49

HEIs set up by Parliament as institutions of national importance (such as IITs and IIMs) are governed by their specific laws, and have autonomy in academic and research work.[34] This includes autonomy in determining admission procedures, course development, and conducting examinations.[34] The Bill brings all such institutions under the purview of the Commission. The Bill allows for regulations to be issued to protect the autonomy of such institutions. This may be done with the prior approval of the central government.

Role of central government in regulation of HEIs

The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (2012) had noted that regulatory bodies envisaged to promote autonomy in HEIs should be autonomous themselves.[35] The Bill creates instances where the regulators require the permission of the central government to carry out certain functions.

Approval from central government required to authorise certain HEIs to grant degrees

UGC Act: Section 22(1)
Bill: Clause 11(4), 17(1)

Under the UGC Act, 1956, only the following institutions may award degrees: (i) a university established under a Central or State Act, (ii) an institution specially empowered by an Act of Parliament to award degrees, and (iii) deemed-to-be universities.[36] After scrutiny and recommendation by UGC, the central government grants eligible institutions the status of deemed-to-be university.[37] These institutions can then award degrees in their own name. Colleges award degrees in the name of the university to which they are affiliated.

The Bill grants degree-granting powers to the first two categories above. The Regulatory Council may grant this power to other institutions, with prior central government approval. This raises a question on the independence of the Regulatory Council. In other sectors such as banking, which also have systemic implications, the regulator has the power to allow entry of new providers. The Reserve Bank of India issues licenses for a private company to start banking operations, based on criteria laid out in law.[38] The central government does not play any role in issuing licenses. It may only hear appeals against the RBI's decision to cancel a license.[38]

Approval of central government required for Councils to take external assistance

UGC Act: Section 9
AICTE Act: Section 7
NCTE Act: Section 9
Bill: Clause 43(1)

According to the Bill, the Commission and Councils may associate with anyone whose assistance will be helpful in carrying out their functions. This requires the permission of the central government. Currently, the UGC and the AICTE can associate themselves with persons for similar purposes without approval from the central government. The NCTE Act, 1993 also has a similar provision. Requiring approval from the central government on such matters may dilute the independent functioning of the Commission and Councils.

Funding of HEIs

UGC Act: Sections 12(b), 12(c), 12(cc)

A key function of UGC is to allocate and disburse funds to universities and other HEIs.[36] The Financial Memorandum of the Bill states that funding of centrally funded HEIs will be outside the purview of the Commission, and grants to HEIs will be disbursed through the Union Ministry of Education. The NEP (2020) proposed a different structure. It envisaged an umbrella regulator with four independent verticals for regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting.[3] The Bill sets up three of these, excluding funding. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC; 2009) also suggested a funding mechanism which had functional autonomy from the central government.[1] It recommended limiting UGC's role to fund disbursal (with other functions assigned to an independent regulator).

Inconsistencies in regulation of professional education

AICTE Act Sections 10(i)
NCTE Act Sections 12(e), 12(f)
Bill: Clause 2

Currently, professional education in India is regulated by 16 professional Councils (see Table 1).[39] These bodies lay down standards for professional practice, and conduct examinations to enter the profession. They may also provide norms for physical infrastructure, curriculum, staff qualification, and academic standards for HEIs.[6,7]

The Bill does not apply to all professional courses consistently. Technical education (currently regulated under the AICTE Act, 1987) and teachers' education (under the NCTE Act, 1993) are being subsumed under the Commission, and the regulators are being dissolved. Institutions offering architecture education will be regulated by the Commission. However, the Council of Architecture will continue to operate as a professional body, and will be represented in the Councils of the Commission. The Bill also allows the central government to notify professional Councils; institutions regulated by these Councils will come under the purview of the Bill. However, it explicitly exempts some professional programs, including legal, medical, and veterinary programs.

The NEP (2020) had recommended that professional Councils should act as standard setting bodies, without playing any regulatory role.[3] They would provide curriculum frameworks and coordinate between teaching and research in their discipline.[3] However, the NEP (2020) had also explicitly excluded medical and legal education from the jurisdiction of the Regulatory Council.[3] The NKC (2009) had recommended that all professional education including engineering, medicine, and law be brought under a single regulator.[1] The professional Councils would only play the role of professional associations, by conducting examinations and providing licenses to practise the profession.[1]

Appeals against directions of Councils lie with the central government

Bill: Clause 37

The Bill states that an appeal against any direction of the Councils will lie with the central government, and the decision of the central government shall be binding. This varies from the appeal mechanism followed by some other regulators. In other sectors, judicial tribunals hear appeals against decisions of the regulator. For example, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Act, 1992 establishes the Securities Appellate Tribunal to address appeals against SEBI orders.[40] The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal hears appeals against directions of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.[40] In 2010, a Bill to set up Educational Tribunals at the national and state level was passed by Lok Sabha, but lapsed in 2014 before being voted in Rajya Sabha.[41] These Tribunals would adjudicate disputes involving teachers and other employees of HEIs, and other stakeholders such as students, universities, and regulatory authorities.

Grounds for removal of part-time members not provided

Bill: Clauses 24(1), 24(4)

The Bill specifies the grounds for removing full-time members of the Councils, who include Member-Secretaries and academicians not below the rank of Professor. However, it does not specify the grounds for removing part-time members (eight of the 14 members of each Council). These members include experts, representatives of the Council of Architecture, and academicians from state HEIs and institutions of national importance. These grounds will be prescribed in rules framed by the central government. This may amount to excessive delegation.

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