

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Review of Autonomous Institutions under Higher Education

- The Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports (Chair: Mr. Digvijaya Singh) presented its report on 'Review of autonomous bodies and institutions- NTA, NAAC, Draft UGC Regulations, ICHR, ICPR, ICSSR, IAS (Shimla), and Auroville Foundation under the Department of Higher Education' on December 8, 2025. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
  - **Issues in administration of competitive exams:** The Committee observed that at least five out of 14 competitive examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) in 2024 faced major issues. These included exam postponement, paper leaks, delayed results, and withdrawal of questions due to errors in the answer key. It also noted that several firms involved in paper setting, administration, and correction have been blacklisted, but continue to secure contracts from other states/organisations. The Committee recommended: (i) focusing on pen-and-paper exams, (ii) hosting computer-based tests only in government or government-controlled centres, (iii) creating a nationwide blacklist of firms that should not be engaged for exam administration, and (iv) setting up a high-level committee to address the proliferation of coaching centres.
  - **Vacancies:** The Committee observed high-level vacancies in several institutions. It also observed that several positions were assigned as additional charges. For example, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has functioned under an acting Chairperson since April 2025. The position of Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla (IIAS) was vacant from August 2021 to August 2025. The Committee also noted that the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) was not constituted between 2022 and 2024, and there was no Chairperson. Fewer than 50% of faculty positions were filled in institutions under the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR). The Committee recommended that such vacancies should be filled immediately. It also recommended that practice of assigning additional charge offices for long periods must be avoided.
  - The Committee noted that Economically Weaker Section (EWS) positions at the Associate Professor and Professor levels are difficult to fill. As per UGC pay scales, individuals at these levels earn more than eight lakh rupees annually, and cannot qualify as EWS. The Committee recommended to re-evaluate the implementation of EWS reservation at Associate Professor and Professor levels.
  - **Accreditation model:** The Committee noted that the existing accreditation and re-accreditation process for higher educational institutions is long and bureaucratic. The Committee recommended the implementation of a binary accreditation model. The binary model recognises institutions as accredited or not-accredited.
  - **Fellowship stipend:** The Committee observed that UGC provides junior research fellowship stipends of Rs 37,000 per month. While the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR), ICPR, and ICSSR provide Rs 17,000 to Rs 20,000 per month. The Committee recommended that the stipend amount, as well as the number of fellowships be increased.
  - **Changes to draft UGC regulations:** The Committee recommended the following changes to the draft UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2025: (i) including harassment of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the definition of caste-based harassment, (ii) including disability as an axis of discrimination, (iii) drawing more than 50% of the Equity Committee from the disadvantaged communities, (iv) including a list of discriminatory practices, (v) providing for annual public disclosure of caste-based discrimination. The Committee also recommended that the UGC's draft guidelines for the appointment and promotion of teachers to be discussed with the Central Advisory Board of Education.
  - **Implementation of NEP 2020:** The Committee noted that universities require support to implement the National Education Policy, 2020. This includes support in infrastructure, recruitment, and curriculum drafting. It also observed that universities without A+ accreditation are not allowed to offer online courses. The Committee recommended that this decision be re-evaluated, as the grading process conducted by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council does not check an institution's ability to provide online or distance education.

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