

Higher Education Commission of India

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In News: The ministry of education is preparing to take to cabinet a Bill to set up the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)- which will come with a clause to allow foreign varsities into India.

About HECI

Functions of the HECI

- The HECI will recommend ways to promote autonomy of higher educational institutions and ensure maintenance of academic standards in higher education. **It will specify norms for:**

- (i) learning outcomes for courses,
- (ii) standards of teaching and research,
- (iii) evaluation procedure to measure yearly academic performance of institutions,
- (iv) accreditation of institutions, and
- (v) ordering closure of institutions.

Further, the HECI may specify norms for:

- (i) granting authorisation to institutions to commence academic operations,
- (ii) award of degree or diploma,
- (iii) affiliation of institutions with universities,
- (iv) grant of autonomy,

(v) graded autonomy,

(vi) eligibility criteria for appointment of Vice Chancellors,

(vii) setting & winding up of institutions, and

(viii) fee regulation.

Composition of the HECI

- The HECI will consist of 14 members.
- A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and members of the HECI.
- The Search Committee will consist of five members including the Cabinet Secretary (Chairperson), Higher Education Secretary, and three eminent academicians.
- For the appointment of the Vice Chairperson and the members of the HECI, the Search Committee will include the Chairperson of the HECI as well.
- For the post of the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson, the Search Committee will recommend names of persons who are citizens of India and those who have been:
 - professors for at least ten years, or eminent administrators with proven capacity for institution building.

Members of the HECI include:

(i) the Chairperson,

(ii) the Vice Chairperson,

(iii) three Secretaries of the central government,

(iv) two chairpersons of All India Council of Technical Education and National Council of Teacher Education,

(v) two chairpersons of accreditation bodies,

(vi) two Vice Chancellors of universities of academic excellence,

(vii) two serving professors of universities, and

(viii) an experienced person from the industry.

Authorisation to higher educational institutions to grant degrees or diplomas

- Every higher educational institution empowered to award degrees or diplomas will have to apply to the HECI to commence its first academic operations.
- To grant permission, the HECI has to ensure that the application complies with the specified norms of academic quality.
- The HECI will notify the institution within a specified time period whether it can proceed with its operations.
- All higher educational institutions currently in existence, will have authorisation to grant degrees for a period of three years.
- The HECI also has the power to revoke permission in cases where the higher educational institution:
 - has continuously or wilfully defaulted in complying with rules and regulations,
 - has failed to efficiently discharge its duties and obligations,
 - has ceased to exist.