

Sansad TV Perspective: Rules for Foreign Universities

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: **Rules for Foreign Universities**.

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Participants:

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Context: The University Grants Commission (UGC) released the draft UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations 2023.

Introduction:

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has announced draft norms for facilitating foreign universities and educational institutions to set up campuses in India.
 - This allows foreign universities and educational institutions autonomy in determining fees, as well as a 90-day approval process.
- The final norms will be notified by the end of January 2023 after feedback from all stakeholders.
- The National Education Policy, 2020, envisages a legislative framework to allow top global universities to operate in India.
- Internationalisation of higher education in India has a pre-history.
 - Many top foreign universities collaborate with Indian higher education institutions such as IITs and central universities for research and knowledge transfer.
 - The collaboration has been strengthened by government's schemes such as Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) and [SPARC](#). These existing research and academic collaborations between foreign and Indian institutions would facilitate the entry of IBCs in India.

Highlights of the Draft:

- A foreign university with a rank among the top 500 global rankings or a foreign educational institution of repute in home jurisdiction can apply to the UGC to set up a campus in India.
- The application will be considered by a standing committee appointed by the UGC which will submit its recommendations within 45 days after examining the institution's credibility, programmes offered, their potential to strengthen educational opportunities in India, and proposed academic infrastructure.
- Subsequently, within 45 days, the UGC may grant in-principle approval to the foreign institution to set up campuses in India within two years. The initial approval will be for 10 years, which can be extended.
- Such a campus can evolve its own admission process and criteria to admit domestic and foreign students.
 - It will also have autonomy to decide its fee structure, and will face no caps that are imposed on Indian institutions.
 - It will also have autonomy to recruit faculty and staff from India and abroad.
- The courses to be offered cannot be in online and open and distance learning mode.
- The qualifications awarded to the students in the Indian campus should have equivalence with those awarded by the institutions in their country of origin.
- Foreign higher education institutions will also be allowed cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of Foreign Currency Accounts, mode of payments, remittance, repatriation, and sale of proceeds, as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999 and its Rules and an audit report will have to be submitted to the UGC.

Internationalisation of Higher Education:

- Despite being among the world's youngest countries, India will not reap its demographic dividend if its higher education remains the mess it currently is. No Indian university is currently ranked among the world's top 200.
 - India is the only BRICS nation without representation in the top 100 global universities.
- Allowing Ivy League schools like Yale and Harvard or universities like Oxford and Cambridge to set up campuses in India gives more viable options to Indian students who head overseas each year in search of quality education.
- Educational equivalent of free economic zones – where foreign and Indian universities provide cutting-edge education within set parameters and without the heavy limiting hand of the state would make India a premier Asian educational hub.
- This will also reduce forex reserve depletion.
 - In 2022 over 5 lakhs (four point five) of Indian students went abroad to study, leading to an outflow of an estimated \$28-30 billion.

- India's higher education collaboration with other countries will increase India's soft power and it will also bring new ideas and institutions from abroad to the shores of India.
- They would encourage competition mainly between existing public and private universities in India and foreign branch institutions.

Challenges:

- There are many regulatory hurdles in India with respect to international academic partnerships, which includes the operation of international branch campuses.
- The biggest challenge would be the inclination of top universities to establish a campus in India. Not many such universities have such policies in place.
- Top foreign universities are willing to respond positively provided there is sufficient clarity in areas essential for operationalisation of branch campuses in India.
- A closer look at the international branch campuses (IBCs) suggests that these campuses are driven by the desire to accumulate profit in the manner of business enterprises. This implies that India will have to allow IBCs to repatriate income.
 - As of now, there does not seem to be a viable model to balance the ploughing back of the resources earned in India and cash remittances to the parent university.
- A key issue in the internationalisation of higher education is the preference for subjects and the areas of research considered rewarding.
 - Humanities and social sciences are not considered as lucrative endeavours compared to the science and business-oriented courses.
- The favourably inclined foreign universities also expect to be treated on par with Indian institutions in matters of government funding and scholarships.