

<https://indianexpress.com/article/education/grant-autonomy-similar-to-that-of-foreign-varsities-in-india-v-cs-8482909/>

## Grant autonomy similar to that of foreign varsities in India: VCs of Indian varsities

On the autonomy aspect, Pankaj Mittal, secretary general of the association of Indian Universities, pointed out that foreign universities will not be governed by UGC guidelines. (Express Photo)

Written by **Ritu Sharma**

New Delhi | Updated: March 7, 2023 08:25 IST



(Express photo by Praveen Khanna/Representative Image)

WITH Australia's Deakin University set to be the first foreign university to set up an international branch campus (IBC) in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar, and more institutions set to follow, universities in the country have expressed their concern to the UGC over autonomy granted to these foreign universities, and have sought similar terms.

The Association of Indian Universities held a meeting of all “stakeholders” — vice-chancellors — from members-universities after the government announced the regulations for foreign universities, and most V-Cs “welcomed” the move, as it will “generate competition”, Pankaj Mittal, secretary general of the association, said.

But, she said, “at the same time, they are afraid there will be poaching of faculty (members) and students”. “We did a stakeholder meeting of all V-Cs to find out what they feel about it. Based on that (feedback received), we have submitted our response to the UGC,” Mittal said.

The one aspect these V-Cs were concerned about regarding the regulations is that “a lot of autonomy has been given to the foreign universities — so they can have their own fee structure, admissions, and a lot more”, Mittal told [The Indian Express](#) on the sidelines of the ‘Women in Leadership Conclave’, organised by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad, on Monday.

The V-Cs were, however, “happy that foreign universities are coming to India after a very long time”, she noted.

On the autonomy aspect, Mittal pointed out that foreign universities will not be governed by UGC guidelines. She said, “What they (V-Cs who took part in the meeting) feel is that since they have been given a lot of autonomy we should also be provided with (similar) autonomy. If you feel autonomy brings quality, we can also bring quality — at least the good universities.”

Mittal, however, pointed out that autonomy is a “double-edged sword”, and can be “misused” by universities that are “not very good”. This, she explained, can then become a “hindrance” for institutions who are eager to perform but are unable to in the absence of the required autonomy.

Mittal pointed out that even the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, mentions that institutions should be given more autonomy “so that they can spread their wings the way they want to”.

The Association of Indian Universities includes conventional universities, open universities, deemed universities, state universities, Central universities, private universities, and institutes of national importance. Besides Indian universities, 13 varsities/institutes from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Thailand, the UAE, and the United Kingdom are its associate members.

Raising the issue of rankings, Mittal said that while the NEP advocates taking Indian universities to the global top-100 bracket, the new regulations allow foreign universities in the world top-500 ranks to set up their campuses here.

She said the figure 500 is not the issue here, but now that “we are doing top-500 in subject-wise rankings”, the problem is that of a university which is, for instance, “very good in Physics and is in top-500, but its overall ranking is 1,500”. Should such a university be “allowed or not” to set up a campus in India, she asked.