

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 31
ANSWERED ON 22.07.2026**

Reforms and skill integration in higher education

31 # Shri Mayankkumar Nayak:

Will the Minister of *Education* be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken to strengthen Higher Education Institutions through accreditation, promotion of research, and the establishment of multi-disciplinary universities;
- (b) the progress made in the inclusion of skill development and vocational courses in the higher education curriculum in accordance with the National Education Policy, 2020; and
- (c) the initiatives undertaken to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio, ensure equitable access to education for disadvantaged sections and promote the internationalisation of Indian higher education?

**ANSWER
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
(SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN)**

(a) to (c): A statement is laid on the table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (C) OF RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 31 FOR REPLY ON 22.07.2026 ASKED BY SHRI
MAYANKKUMAR NAYAK, HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT REGARDING
REFORMS AND SKILL INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

(a): The Government has undertaken several measures to strengthen Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in line with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, with inter-alia emphasis on quality assurance, research and innovation, and multidisciplinary education.

To strengthen the quality of higher education, institutions are encouraged to obtain accreditation from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and reforms are being undertaken to expand accreditation coverage and strengthen the accreditation ecosystem. NAAC evaluates institutions on various parameters including teaching-learning, research, infrastructure, governance and institutional best practices, and awards accreditation grades based on their performance. The accreditation process promotes quality assurance, accountability, research and innovation, and serves as an important benchmark for institutional excellence and continuous improvement in higher education.

To boost research and innovation, the Government has established the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), which seeks to harness the research potential of universities and colleges, support academic research, and facilitate translational research in emerging technologies and national priority areas. The ANRF aims to mobilize ₹50,000 crore during 2023–28, including ₹14,000 crore from the Central Government, with the remaining sourced from public sector enterprises, the private sector, philanthropies, and international bodies, through various funds such as the ANRF Fund, Innovation Fund, and Science and Engineering Research Fund.

The Government has launched the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme on 3rd November 2025, a Rs. 1-lakh-crore initiative representing a significant move to strengthen India's research and development landscape. The scheme is aimed at catalysing private sector investment in research, development and innovation through long-term, low or nil-interest financing, thereby complementing the efforts of ANRF and other Ministry of Education schemes in building a robust national research ecosystem.

Other initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF), Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme, Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), IMPRINT, Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) and Institutions of Eminence (IoE) continue to enhance research capacity, innovation and collaboration between academia, industry and international institutions.

Focus of NEP on research and innovation has propelled India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) from 48 in 2020 and currently being ranked at 38th place in 2025.

The Government has taken several measures to promote multidisciplinary and flexible higher education in line with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified the Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions, facilitating flexible learning pathways and academic mobility through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). The Government is also implementing the Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) Scheme to strengthen research infrastructure and promote innovation and interdisciplinary research in Higher Educational Institutions.

In alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Government has launched the third phase of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in June 2023 in the form of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26 with an outlay of Rs. 12,926.10 crore, including the committed liabilities of the earlier phases of RUSA, to cater to the needs of educationally unserved/underserved areas. Under the Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU) component of PM-USHA, 35 Universities have been approved for a total amount of Rs. 100 crore each.

(b): The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 envisages integration of skill development and vocational education with mainstream higher education to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. UGC has notified the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), aligned with the National Credit Framework (NCrF), which facilitate outcome-based, multidisciplinary and industry relevant learning while enabling integration of general, vocational and experiential learning. The National Credit Framework facilitates credit accumulation and transfer across academic, vocational and skill education, while the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) supports seamless academic mobility. UGC has also issued Guidelines for Internship/Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes (IEDP), enabling undergraduate students to acquire industry-relevant skills through structured internships and apprenticeships integrated with their degree programmes.

AICTE is actively strengthening skill development by embedding it into technical education. It partners with industries and institutions to offer online skill courses aligned with the regular curriculum, along with skill-focused programmes, compulsory internships, and vocational degrees. These initiatives are designed to build students' practical abilities and improve employability. Additionally, AICTE has signed MoUs with leading industries and organisations to support internships, skill-building, and faculty upskilling, including hands-on exposure to Industry 4.0 technologies.

Employability Skill module has been included as a part of Job Roles/SWAYAM courses in the curriculum which includes Communication Skills, Self-Management Skills, Information and Communication Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, and Green Skills.

To support skill development, the SWAYAM Plus portal has also been launched, focusing on upskilling and reskilling the workforce. More than 500 courses have been developed curated from 89 industry partners across 17 sectors and offered on emerging areas such as AI, Data Analyst etc. So far, more than 6,00,000 students registered on the platform.

The National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) bridges the gap between academic learning and industry requirements by providing structured on-the-job training to graduates and diploma holders. The Scheme promotes industry-integrated education through Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes (AEDP), supports apprenticeships in emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), and facilitates academic credit integration through the NATS Assessment and Creditisation Framework.

(c): The Government has taken various measures to increase the GER in Higher Education, which inter-alia includes, Setting up of more Higher Education Institutions; Implementing various Scholarship and Fellowship schemes for providing financial assistance to students, including for SC/ST/OBC and Minority students and underserved regions; Allowing well performing HEIs (based on NAAC and NIRF ranking) by University Grants Commission (UGC) to offer full Open Distance Learning/Online Programmes based on quality parameters; Providing much-needed

flexibility and appropriate Exit as well as entry options in the Higher Education system, to facilitate students to choose their learning trajectory; Allow pursuing two Academic Programmes simultaneously; Permitting HEIs for two admission cycles in an academic year; Providing anytime, anywhere learning opportunities for all learners through Study Webs for Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) platform, which provides high quality structured online courses in multiple disciplines; Permitting up to 40% credits in regular courses using SWAYAM platform; and Conducting JEE, NEET (UG) and Common University Entrance Test (CUET) Exams in 13 languages, and making available Text Books in Indian Languages to facilitate students, particularly from vernacular/rural background.

In order to provide equity in access for disadvantaged groups, the Central Government implements various scholarship and financial assistance schemes to support students belonging to marginalised sections. Department of Higher Education (DHE) implements the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Yojana under which students pursuing higher education in India, including SC, ST, OBC and minority students get scholarships as per Scheme guidelines. In addition, the Government of India has launched the PM-Vidyalaxmi, a new central sector scheme in November 2024 to facilitate access to collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans for meritorious students pursuing higher education.

As a result of these initiatives, India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education increased from 23.7 in 2014–15 to 30 in 2023–24. Female GER rose from 22.9 to 31.2 during the same period. SC GER increased from 18.9 to 27.8, while ST GER increased from 13.5 to 22.8 between 2014–15 and 2023–24. The rise in GER has been accompanied by significant growth in student enrolment, with total higher education enrolment increasing from 3.42 crore in 2014–15 to 4.50 crore in 2023–24, adding more than 1.08 crore students to the higher education system.

For promotion of internationalisation of education, the Government has enabled the setting up of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) in India. 16 Letters of Intent have been issued to FHEIs from Australia, Italy, United Kingdom and USA to set up their campuses at various places in India. Among these, University of Southampton, UK commenced its courses in August, 2025 at its campus in Gurugram, Haryana. Under International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) Regulations 2022, approvals have been accorded to 5 universities from UK, Australia and Northern Ireland for operating offshore branch campuses in GIFT City SEZ, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Among these 5 universities, Deakin University, Australia commenced its courses in July, 2024, and University of Wollongong, Australia commenced its courses in November, 2024. In addition, Indian institutions are also establishing a global presence, with IIT Delhi's campus in Abu Dhabi, IIM Ahmedabad campus in Dubai and IIT Madras in Tanzania. These steps support the goal of making India a global hub for education.

To create a favourable environment for attracting international students to Indian higher education system, 'Guidelines for Admission and Supernumerary seats of International Students in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Program in HEIs in India' was issued by University Grants Commission (UGC) in September 2022. UGC has also issued "UGC (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Educational Institutions to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes) Regulations, 2021", which allows students to do parts of their programmes from both Indian and foreign universities leading to academic and research excellence, as well as mobility of students and faculty.
