



REPORT NO.
371

**PARLIAMENT OF INDIA
RAJYA SABHA**

**DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION, WOMEN, CHILDREN, YOUTH AND SPORTS**

**THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE REPORT
ON**

Review of Autonomous Bodies and Institutions- NTA, NAAC, Draft UGC Regulations, ICHR, ICPR, ICSSR, IIAS(Shimla) and Auroville Foundation under the Department of Higher Education.

*(Presented to the Rajya Sabha on 8th December, 2025)
(Laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on 8th December, 2025)*



**Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi
December, 2025/ Agrahayana, 1947 (Saka)**

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**DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, WOMEN, CHILDREN, YOUTH & SPORTS
(Constituted w.e.f. 26th September, 2025)**

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RAJYA SABHA

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LOK SABHA

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SECRETARIAT

Dr. K.S. Somashekhar, Additional Secretary

Shri Vimal Kumar, Joint Secretary

Shri J. K. Mallick, Director

Shri Devashish Sen, Deputy Secretary

INTRODUCTION

1. I, the Chairman of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports having been authorized by the Committee to present the report on the subject “Review of Autonomous Bodies and Institutions - NTA, NAAC, Draft UGC Regulations, ICHR, ICPR, ICSSR, IIAS (Shimla) and Auroville Foundation under the Department of Higher Education.”

2. The Committee at its meetings held on 20th May, 2025 & 25th July, 2025 heard the Secretary along with the officials of the Department of Higher Education and the representatives of UGC, NTA, NAAC, ICSSR, ICHR & ICPR. The Committee also undertook study visits to IIAS (Shimla) on 18th May, 2025 and Auroville Foundation on 23rd August, 2025.

3. While drafting the Report, the Committee relied on the Detailed background note on the subject and the deposition made by the Secretary along with the officials of the Department of Higher Education and the representatives of UGC, NTA, NAAC, ICSSR, ICHR & ICPR on 20th May, 2025 & 25th July, 2025. The Committee also relied on the deposition before the Committee during its study visits to Bhubaneswar, Varanasi, Shimla, Laddakh and Chennai during the last few months.

4. For the facility of reference and convenience, the recommendations of the Committee have been presented in bold letters in the body of the Report.

5. The Committee considered the draft Report and adopted the same in its meeting held on the 13th October, 2025.

NEW DELHI
13th October, 2025
Ashwin 21, 1947(Saka)

Shri Digvijaya Singh
Chairman, Department-related
Parliamentary Standing Committee on
Education, Women, Children, Youth
and Sports

ACRONYMS

AC	Appeals Committee
AICTE	All India Council for Technical Education
BAF	Basic Accreditation Framework
BoGs	Boards of Governance
CBP	Capacity Building Programme
CBT	Computer Based Test
CEP	Cultural Exchange Programme
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CUET	Common University Entrance Test
DVV	Data Validation and Verification
GF	Gurukul Fellowship
GoI	Government of India
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HLCE	High-Level Committee of Experts
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICHR	Indian Council for Historical Research
ICPR	Indian Council of Philosophical Research
ICSSR	Indian Council for Social Science Research
IIQA	Institutional Information for Quality Assurance
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
IKS	Indian Knowledge System
IMS	Institute Of Management Studies
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
JEE	Joint Entrance Examination
JJM	Jal Jeevan Mission
JRF	Junior Research Fellowship
MBGL	Maturity Based Graded Level
M. Phil	Master of Philosophy
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NASSDOC	National Social Science Documentation Centre
NEET	National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test
NEP	National Educational Policy
NET	National Eligibility Test
NF	National Fellowship
NIT	National Institute of Technology
NTA	National Testing Agency
PDF	Post Doctoral Fellowship
Ph.D	Doctor of Philosophy
PG	Postgraduate

PT	Peer Team
PPT	Pen and Paper Test
PTR	Peer Team Review
PTV	Peer Team Visit
PVTGs	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
QIF	Quality Indicator Framework
Q _n M	Quantitative Metrics
RAF	Revised Accreditation Framework
RMC	Research Methodology Course
RP	Research Projects Grant
RPC	Research Projects Committee
SAF	Senior Academic Fellowship
SC	Standing Committee
SDG	Sustainability Development Goal
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRC	Southern Regional Centre
SSR	Self-Study Report
SSS	Student Satisfaction survey
SWAYAM	Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds
UG	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Commission
UK	United Kingdom
WPC	Writ Petition (Civil)

REPORT

Autonomous bodies are organizations established by the government of India to carry out specific functions with a degree of independence and flexibility. They are often set up either through a specific Act of Parliament or as societies under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and play a vital role in diverse sectors such as education, research, culture, health, science and technology, and governance. While they receive full or partial funding from the government, they operate with their own governing councils and are entrusted with diverse activities, including policy formulation, research, and cultural preservation. Examples include the University Grants Commission (UGC), the National Testing Agency (NTA), the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS), Shimla and the Auroville Foundation. The purpose of these bodies is to allow for specialized work with greater autonomy while still being subject to government oversight. By combining administrative flexibility with accountability, these bodies help the government achieve its developmental goals more efficiently and effectively.

National Testing Agency(NTA)

2. The National Testing Agency (NTA) was established as a Society on 15th May 2018 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. It is a as a self-sustained Autonomous Body of Government of India having the following objectives:

- i. To conduct efficient, transparent and international standard tests in order to assess the competency of candidates for admission.*
- ii. To undertake research on educational, professional and testing systems to identify gaps in knowledge systems and take steps for bridging them.*
- iii. To identify experts and institutions in setting examination questions.*
- iv. To produce and disseminate information and research on education and professional development standards.*

3. Some of the major examinations conducted by NTA include JEE (Main) which besides being an eligibility test for JEE (Advanced), is used for admission to undergraduate engineering programs in the NITs and other prestigious engineering institutions, the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET-UG) for undergraduate medical college admissions, the

University Grants Commission's National Eligibility Test (UGC NET), a qualifying test for university-level teaching and research, and the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) UG & PG for admissions to undergraduate and post graduate programs in Central Universities. NTA conducts examination in both Pen and Paper Mode and Computer Based Test (CBT) mode.

4. In order to suggest effective measures for transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by NTA, the Ministry of Education constituted a High-Level Committee of Experts (HLCE) on 22.06.2024 under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, Former Chairman, ISRO and Chairman BoG, IIT Kanpur for making recommendations on Reforms in mechanism of examination process, improvement in data security protocols and structure and functioning of National Testing Agency.

5. The Supreme Court in *WPC 335/2024 and connected matters*, vide Judgement dated 2nd August, 2024 expanded the remit of the aforesaid Committee and assigned additional tasks in the fields of Examination Security and Administration, Data Security and Technological Enhancements, Policy and Stakeholder engagement and Support and Training. The Committee after wide consultation with the stakeholders, submitted its Report to Ministry of Education on 21st October, 2024.

6. The HLCE has recommended reformation of National Common Entrance Testing including strengthening of NTA, institutional linkage with States, involvement of Test Indenting Agencies as Knowledge and Examinations partner etc. It has also laid out measures and recommended Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent breaches in both Pen and Paper Test (PPT) and Computer Based Test (CBT) examinations. Guidelines for Question Paper Setting and Vetting as per defined protocols have also been recommended. Government has also constituted a High-Powered Steering Committee on 14th November, 2024 to monitor the implementation of recommendations of HLCE

7. As per the recommendations of the Committee to strengthen the NTA structure, 16 new posts have been created in NTA. Further a district level Coordination Committee under the District-Collector has been established to conduct the NEET Examination and a also decision was taken that all examination centres shall be State Government or Government-owned buildings. The Ministry has been able to achieve this to the extent of 94 per cent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. **The Committee reiterates that the NTA's performance in the last year has not inspired much confidence. It has been brought to the notice of the Committee that in the**

year 2024 alone, of the 14 competitive examinations conducted by the NTA, at least five faced major issues and as result, three examinations viz. UGC-NET, CSIR-NET and NEET-PG had to be postponed, one examination viz. NEET-UG saw instances of paper leaks, and one examination i.e CUET (UG/PG) saw its results postponed. In JEE Main 2025 held in January 2025, at least 12 questions had to be withdrawn due to errors noted in the final answer key of the engineering entrance exam. The Committee observed that such instances doesnot inspire confidance of the examinees in the system. The Committee therefore recommends that NTA need to quickly get their act together so that such instances, which otherwise are fully avoidable, do not occur in future.

9. The Committee notes that several firms involved in paper setting, administration, and correction have been blacklisted by one organisation/state government but that this however, is not impeding their securing of contracts from other states or organisations. The Committee is of the view that such blacklisted firms must not be engaged for any entrance test by the NTA or the State Governments. The Committee therefore recommends that the Department should compile a nationwide list of blacklisted firms along with the persons or entities that constitute such firms so as to prevent such firms/persons/ entities from securing future contracts and bring further clarity in this regard.

10. The Committee notes that the NTA collected an estimated ₹3,512.98 Crores while it has spent ₹3,064.77 Crores on the conduct of examinations thereby creating a surplus of Rs. 448 Crores in the last six years. The Committee recommends that this corpus should be used to build the agency's capabilities to conduct tests itself, or to strengthen regulatory and monitoring capabilities for its vendors.

11. The Committee has recommended in its 364th Report that the NTA should produce not just an audited statement but also an Annual Report clearly outlining its activities in detail and submit the same to the Parliament annually. The Committee reiterates the same recommendation.

12. The Committee notes that in the last few years the results of CUET exams were not declared in time by the NTA. Such a delay is a cause of major concern as it not only delays the admission process but also delays the start of the academic session by the on boarded Universities which ultimately puts unnecessary pressure on the students. The Committee emphasises that NTA should not only conduct the examinations within time but also declare the results in a time bound manner.

13. The Committee expresses concern at the rapid expansion of private-sector coaching centers for competitive examinations in the country. The Committee recommends the Department to work with the NTA to ensure that the papers are set to more closely reinforce the curriculum of school examinations, so as to avoid the introduction of a parallel curriculum and the accompanying coaching center industry. The Committee recommends that the Department should set up a high-level committee to address the proliferation of coaching centers and suggest methods to regulate the same.

14. The Committee was informed that with regards to securing the examination process, the tradeoffs are as follows. Pen and paper exams offer more opportunities for paper leaks, while computer-based tests (CBT) can be hacked in a manner that is difficult to detect. Between the two, the Committee supported a greater focus on pen-and-paper examinations given that there are several models of such examinations which have been leak-proof for several years – including the CBSE exams and the UPSC exams. The Committee recommends that the NTA closely study these models and implement the same. Further in the case of computer based tests (CBT), the Committee recommends that these exams be hosted only in government or government-controlled centers and never in private centers.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)

15. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 as an autonomous Institution of the UGC with the vision of making quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Educational Institutions. Its Headquarters is in Bangalore. NAAC conducts the assessment and accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) such as colleges, universities or other recognised institutions to derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution. NAAC evaluates the institutions for its conformance to the standards of quality in terms of its performance related to the educational processes and outcomes, curriculum coverage, teaching-learning processes, faculty, research, infrastructure, learning resources, organisation, governance, financial well being and student services. Its guiding philosophy is "*Right Grade for Right Institution*"

16. Following are the Objectives of Assessment & Accreditation:

- a) Encourage innovations, self-evaluation and accountability in higher education.*
- b) Grade Institutions of higher education and their programmes;*
- c) Stimulate the academic environment and quality of teaching and research in these Institutions;*
- d) Help Institutions realize their academic objectives;*
- e) Promote necessary changes, innovations and reforms in all aspects of the institutions working for the above purpose;*

17. The Mission of NAAC is as under:-

- To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects;*
- To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions;*
- To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education;*
- To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and*
- To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.*

18. NAAC also aims to promote some core values among the HEIs which are as under:-

- Contributing to National Development*
- Fostering Global Competencies among Students*
- Inculcating a Value System among Students*
- Promoting the Use of Technology*
- Quest for Excellence*

19. The process of assessment and accreditation of the HEIs is governed by the following Committees of NAAC :-

- **General Council** for Vision setting and high-level alignment of national priorities of education with accreditation
- **Executive Committee** for policy making and implantation, and setting goals and monitoring, responsible for design and implementation of accreditation framework, etc.
- **Academic Committee** for providing inputs for design, development and implementation of accreditation framework, improving the accreditation system, etc.
- **Standing Committee** of the Executive Committee reviews the outcomes of the assessment and accreditation of the HEIs; ensure the defined process are followed; suggest required corrective actions in the process.
- **Appeals Committee** for accepting and reviewing the application for re-evaluation by the HEIs and offer its recommendations. This committee reports to the Executive Committee.

These committees meet periodically and ensure that the NAAC processes are aligned with the national priorities, fair and transparent with no scope for discretion.

20. The Ministry has informed that before the introduction of Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF) in 2017, the accreditation was completely driven by peer team visits, more based on qualitative analysis. RAF as a quantitative assessment was introduced as a measure of improvement in the accreditation process, to bring objectivity, to distinguish the score in a way that helps institutions for specific areas of improvement and benchmark at national level. NAAC has accredited 8853 HEIs as detailed below since 2018 under the Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF):

Sl. No.	Financial Year	Universities	Colleges	Total Number of Institutions accredited
1	2018-19	45	779	824
2	2019-20	29	705	734
3	2020-21	19	300	319
4	2021-22	78	623	701
5	2022-23	105	1683	1788
6	2023-24	119	1873	1992
7	2024-25	101	2394	2495
	Total	496	8357	8853

21. NAAC Accreditation Process:-The entire process of assessment is carried out through an IT-based portal. The Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF) has the following steps:

- Registration in NAAC portal by providing basic details and they are provided with log-in credentials.
- Institution volunteers to NAAC accreditation from Institutional Information for Quality Assurance (IIQA) thereby provide all documents to support the legality of institutions as an entity of Higher Education with compliance to all statutory norms. Upon the scrutiny of the documents provided, the IIQA is accepted.
- After the acceptance of IIQA, the institution submits a Self-Study Report (SSR). SSR is a document prepared by the institution briefing the institutional assessment during their assessment period (5 years). This report consists of profile of the institution, with the achievements and activities of the institution in all pursuits of Higher Education within the accreditation period.
- SSR submitted by the HEIs are placed in the NAAC website and as per the requirements HEIs are required to place the copy in the institute website for public disclosure.
- The evaluation of the same is captured in Quality Indicator Framework (QIF) in the RAF system. The QIF consist of Qualitative and Quantitative Metric. Quantitative Metrics (Q_nM) add up to about 70% and the remaining about 30% are Qualitative Metrics (Q_lM). The Student Satisfaction survey (SSS) is also conducted through an automated system based on the list of students provided to NAAC.
- The philosophy behind this is that 70% of the quality of institution is through tangible sources that explicitly reflect the quality in performance of the institution. But not all measures of quality are numerically expressive. Hence those intangible measures of quality are expressed through a brief document by the institution that is evaluated by Professors, Principals, Vice-Chancellors as peers who are part of the Peer Team.
- Data Validation and Verification (DVV) partners are empaneled as third-party agencies to check, verify and validate the claim of institutions in Quantitative Metrics. The Third-party agencies were chosen through a tendering process. In order to close the gaps in the validation of data, one time clarification window is provisioned, where the DVV raise issues related to gaps found in substantiating the claim of HEIs. NAAC reviews and approve the validation of data carried out by the DVV partners. The Student Satisfaction survey (SSS) score is part of the quantitative assessment.
- The institution is considered pre-qualified if it scores at least 25% in the Quantitative Metrics. The HEIs that are pre-qualified after DVV process go through the Peer Team Review (PTR). Once this report is accepted by NAAC, the institution is asked for dates for the visit of Peer Team and nearest airport and railway station. The travel and accommodation arrangements are outsourced to Blamer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. (Government of India Company).
- The evaluation of Qualitative Metric happens to Peer Team Visit. For this Peers from academic fraternity are empaneled in NAAC portal. Peer Team based qualitative assessment is in alignment with international practices of Quality Assurance. The PT carry out the onsite visit activities as per the protocol and SoPs provide to them.
- NAAC uses a large pool of members and the PTs are formed through a random selection process enabled through an automated system. The Chairman and members are selected based on set rules, such as not from the home State, no two members from the same State, women members for women's institutions and not more than 6 visits in a year.

- No conflict of interest is submitted by the institution and the Peer Team members. In addition, both HEI and PT the submit Core of Conduct including declaration that no gifts or privileges are provided by the HEI and not accepted by the Peer Team.
- The assessments are done against benchmarks for various types of institutions, and based on the DVV, SSS and PTV. The combined score from DVV, Peer Team Visit and SSS is used to arrive at the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and grades are assigned as per the following scheme:

Range of Institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)	Letter Grade	Status
3.51-4.00	A++	Accredited
3.26-3.50	A+	Accredited
3.01-3.25	A	Accredited
2.76-3.00	B++	Accredited
2.51-2.75	B+	Accredited
2.01-2.50	B	Accredited
1.51-2.00	C	Accredited
≤ 1.50	D	Not Accredited

- The results are placed in the Standing Committee (SC) of NAAC before for a detailed review before it is released to the HEI and the same is disclosed through the NAAC website.
- In case of HEIs not satisfied with the outcome, they may represent to the Appeals Committee (AC) for a review. Based on the recommendations AC, the HEI may undergo Re-DVV or Re-visit or both. Based on the re-evaluation, the Grades are declared.
- NAAC portal has Issue Management System (IMS) through which the HEIs, Peer Team members, DVV partners may raise if any and the same is closed on a timely manner.
- In addition, NAAC has placed an issue escalation system for making representations on any of the issues faced by them. Such issues are handled with utmost care to ensure that the process is fair and not based on any other considerations.
- Assessment and Accreditation is purely based on well-defined and transparent processes. The entities and individuals are expected to work as per the SoPs and established ethical practices. Therefore, there is no scope for any discretion in the system.

22. As part of reforms through NEP-2020, the GOI constituted high power overarching committee on “Transformative Reforms for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in

India”, under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, Former Secretary Department of Space, former Chairman of ISRO, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Kanpur, and Chairperson, Standing Committee of IIT Council as Chairman. This high-power committee considered the recommendation of three other committees constituted by UGC earlier in this regard.

23. In pursuance of the recommendations of Dr. K. Radhakrishnan Committee, NAAC is in the process of carrying over the following reforms:

24. NAAC is in all preparation and ready to launch Basic Accreditation Framework (BAF) which is proposed to do away with grades and the HEI will be accredited in Binary (Accredited or Not Accredited) mode as per NEP-2020.

25. The assessment under Basic Accreditation is purely based on quantitative evaluation carried through an IT-based issuing advanced technologies, with no scope for any manipulation of data.

26. In Basic Accreditation, the data submitted the HEIs will be evaluated through Peer Data Validation (replacing third parties), meaning academics will be involved to verify and validate the institutional data.

27. NAAC is also preparing Maturity Based Graded Levels (MBGL) Accreditation where the institutions are provided with ladder of growth in quality as a pathway to achieve National and Global Excellence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

28. The Committee notes that the current process of accreditation/re-accreditation is long and bureaucratic, with five yearly re-accreditation and yearly reports that demand considerable time from University administrators. The process also involves site visits by the accreditation team, which is cumbersome. The Committee therefore reiterates its earlier recommendation from 364th Report that the NAAC’s accreditation process for HEIs needs to be streamlined so that the whole process is quick and without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

29. The Committee notes that there is an investigation ongoing into a recent case of bribery in the NAAC. The Committee is of the view that a thorough internal investigation should be initiated in the matter and findings of the investigation may be shared with the committee.

30. The Committee appreciates that the NAAC has taken some steps in the last few months to enhance transparency – such as the revision in the grading of about 200 institutions and the removal of about 900 peer assessors. The Committee is of the view that the restoration of the NAAC's credibility is of the utmost urgency. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the NAAC to issue full details that clearly outline the results of the investigations so far, the measures undertaken as a response, and the reasons why these measures were necessary.

31. The Committee notes that the Department of Higher Education has evolved the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to rank institutions as per a variety of metrics. In this context, the NAAC's grading of institutions is extraneous. The Committee also observed that the scope for discretion in the accreditation process is largely in the grading rather than the accreditation itself. A binary accreditation model, as recommended by the Radhakrishnan Committee, would be simpler to implement, ease the bureaucratic process, and limit the scope for discretion in the NAAC's grading. The Committee notes that the binary accreditation model was scheduled to be implemented in July 2024 but has been delayed. The Committee urges the early implementation of the same.

32. The Committee recommends that NAAC should allow flexibility for institutes in tribal and rural areas which cannot be considered on the same scale as institutes in metropolitan cities, etc.

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION(UGC)

Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025

33. The University Grants Commission is a statutory organization under the Ministry of Education, Government of India. It has been established by an Act of Parliament in 1956 for the promotion and co-ordination of University education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in Universities, and for the purpose of performing its functions under this Act. In addition to providing grants to eligible universities and colleges, the Commission also advises the Central and State Governments on the measures which are necessary for the development of Higher Education. The UGC has the unique distinction of being the only grant-giving agency in the country which has been vested with two responsibilities: that of providing funds and that of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of higher education. The mandate of UGC includes:

- *Promoting and coordinating university education.*
- *Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.*
- *Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.*
- *Monitoring developments in the field of collegiate and university education; disbursing grants to the universities and colleges.*
- *Serving as a vital link between the Union and state governments and institutions of higher learning.*
- *Advising the Central and State governments on the measures necessary for improvement of university education.*

34. The UGC Act 1956 mandates the Commission to define the qualifications that should ordinarily be required of any person to be appointed to the teaching staff of the University, having regard to the branch of education in which he is expected to give instruction. In adherence to the provisions of UGC Act, the UGC has been notifying regulations specifying the minimum qualifications for the appointment and promotion of teachers in universities and colleges, from time to time. The current regulations which are in operation were notified on 18th July 2018. In the year 2020, the Government of India announced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The reforms promoted in the NEP 2020, which merit a review of UGC Regulations notified in 2018, are as below:

- Multidisciplinary education,

- Changes in the duration of degree programmes,
- Promotion of Indian languages and the Indian Knowledge System,
- Promotion of Research and Innovation,
- A simple and uncomplicated regulation in line with the “light but tight” regulations promoted in the NEP 2020
- Qualities of leadership, etc.

35. Keeping the reforms of the NEP 2020 into consideration, the UGC developed the draft UGC Regulations 2025. The draft regulations 2025 were uploaded on public domain on 6th January 2025 for public feedback. All stakeholders were given time till 28th February 2025 to submit feedback/suggestion on the draft regulations. The key reforms proposed to be introduced in the draft UGC regulations are as under:

- *The regulations allow candidates to be appointed in disciplines different from their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, provided they have a Ph.D. in the relevant subject. This flexibility encourages interdisciplinary scholars and faculty who can contribute across multiple domains.*
- *It modernizes faculty recruitment to promote interdisciplinary teaching, research, and holistic education, ensuring that Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) are equipped to deliver broad-based, flexible, and integrated learning.*
- *Faculty promotion criteria include contributions to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. Faculty with expertise in multiple fields, including Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), are encouraged.*
- *Faculty recruitment includes criteria for student internship supervision, startup mentoring, and consultancy projects, fostering real-world, problem-solving education.*
- *Universities and colleges have the flexibility to hire faculty who can teach across multiple disciplines, aligning with their unique academic vision and programs. The regulations ensure that multidisciplinary education is not restricted to elite institutions, but rather available across all HEIs, in line with NEP 2020.*
- *Aligning academic standards with international best practices to improve India's global ranking.*
- *The Draft UGC Regulations 2025 aim to ensure quality, inclusivity, innovation, and global competitiveness and propel the country towards Viksit Bharat 2047.*

36. The Department has informed that UGC received a total of 15066 feedback on the draft regulations 2025 which includes 10 State Governments, 92 Association/Federation/Society, 52 Universities/Colleges, National Commission for Minorities, AICTE and ICAR which are being analysed, and all relevant suggestions will be considered by UGC before finalising the regulations.

37. They have further informed that though the feedback received from the general public was largely positive, the provision of the draft regulations 2025 concerning the selection committee and selection process for selecting Vice Chancellors was reportedly seen as a factor weakening the federal structure by some states. They have however stated that the UGC Draft Regulations 2025, strongly uphold and reinforce India's federal structure by balancing national standards and state autonomy in higher education. These regulations are also designed to ensure academic excellence while respecting the diverse educational frameworks of different states.

38. The Department has argued that the draft UGC regulations 2025 provide more autonomy to the States and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Accordingly, the direct recruitment to the post of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor in colleges coming under their purview, State governments/Union Territories, shall be either as per the UGC regulations or as per the rules of the State Government by following the minimum qualifications as given in the UGC draft regulations. It has further argued that the regulations set minimum standards but allow state universities to frame their own additional criteria over and above the minimum standards for faculty appointments and promotions, preserving the autonomy of state universities. Provisions in the draft regulations for promoting regional languages, Indian Knowledge Systems, and community engagement structures ensure that state-specific priorities are protected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

39. **The Committee notes that the position of the Chairperson, UGC, has been vacant since April 2025. The Committee notes that the NEP 2020 states that “[L]eadership positions shall not remain vacant, but rather an overlapping time period during transitions in leadership shall be the norm to ensure the smooth running of institutions.” The Committee in view thereof recommends that a new Chairperson should be appointed for the UGC as soon as possible.**

40. **The Committee notes that the Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, are currently still in review stage and have not been finalized. The Committee was informed that at least 10 state governments have written to the UGC raising concerns and giving suggestions about the draft regulations. In this context, the Committee reiterates its recommendation from Report 364 that the UGC should discuss the draft regulations with**

the CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) to ensure all stakeholders are involved in the consultation process.

41. The Committee at its meeting held on 5th May, 2025 has examined the recently issued draft UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations 2025 which replace regulations from 2012. The Committee notes that there has been a considerable delay in finalising these draft regulations. It was only lately that these draft regulations have been issued after the intervention of the Supreme Court. The Committee in this regard recommends the following –

- i. The draft Regulations must explicitly include the harassment of students and other stakeholders from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in its definition of caste-based harassment, keeping with the Constitutional recognition of OBCs as Socially and Educational Backward Classes (SEBCs) under Articles 15(4) and 15(5) of the Indian Constitution;
- ii. The draft regulations must explicitly include disability as an axis of discrimination;
- iii. The Equity Committee envisioned by the draft Regulations has provisions for only one mandatory woman member and one mandatory member each from the SC and ST communities out of a strength of 10. This should be raised to correspond with the provision of 50% reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs in faculty and student positions. Accordingly, the Equity Committee must also draw more than half of its composition from the SC, ST, and OBC communities to ensure fair representation and effective decision-making;
- iv. The draft Regulations, unlike the 2012 Regulations, must positively identify instances of discrimination. Without such detail, it will be left to the discretion of the institute to decide whether a complaint is genuine or false. Accordingly, the Regulations must explicitly include a comprehensive list of discriminatory practices
- v. The draft Regulations must require an annual public disclosure of caste-based discrimination cases, mandatory sensitization programs for faculty and administrative staff, and adequate mental health support and legal aid in all HEIs.

42. The Committee recommends that annual admissions reports outlining gender, caste, social, ethnic, rural-urban, national, and class background of students be submitted by all centrally funded institutions to the respective University's Academic and Executive Council.

43. The Committee notes the ambitious goals of the NEP, both with regards to expansion of higher education to reach 50% GER by 2030, and the intensification of higher education with the move from a three-year-undergraduate program to a four-year-undergraduate program. The Committee notes that considerable infrastructure enhancement and faculty recruitment is required to meet these targets. In this context, the UGC and the Department's recent measures to restrict funding for capital projects in HEIs

poses a challenge to achieving the goals of the NEP. The Committee is also concerned about the ability of the degree colleges to meet the requirements of the NEP and it feels that there exists mismatch between the current status of these colleges and the vision of the NEP which needs a comprehensive evaluation and a concrete response.

44. The Committee notes that Universities need greater support in implementing Multiple Entry Multiple Exit because its implementation at a wide scale will be very difficult. The Committee also notes that Universities need greater support in drafting their curriculum to ensure that the one-year certificates and two-year diplomas issued under Multiple Entry Multiple Exit provide students with marketable skills within these timeframes.

45. The Committee notes that the NEP encourages distance learning and online learning which is currently regulated by the UGC's Distance Education Bureau. However it notes that Universities not having A+ NAAC accreditation are not allowed to offer new online courses or science courses. The Committee recommends that the UGC re-evaluate this decision in consultation with the Universities and NAAC, since NAAC ratings dont exclusively check for the ability of an institute to offer distance and online education.

46. During its study visit to Ladakh, the Committee was impressed with the academic, research, and entrepreneurship ecosystem at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Laddakh (HIAL), especially its success in implementing experiential education and learning rooted in local socio-cultural and ecological contexts. The Committee was concerned to learn that the UGC has not yet granted recognition to the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives (HIAL) and that the matter has been pending for many years now. The Committee observed that HIAL has achieved tremendous impact on the local community and received international fame through its ice stupas and other community engagement activities. Further, HIAL is rather exemplary in its implementation of the NEP 2020 which calls for such experiential and project-based learning, community engagement, and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The Committee recommends that the UGC should consider granting recognition to HIAL. Moreover, the Committee encourages the UGC and the Department to closely study the HIAL model and consider how it can be replicated elsewhere through Centres of Innovation in Education or other interventions.

47. The Committee notes that there are several institutions of education situated within other Ministries – the Ministry of Culture, External Affairs, Railways, Textiles, Law, etc.

The Committee notes that the effective implementation of the NEP 2020 requires close coordination with these Ministries and their institutes. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the UGC designate an official for close coordination with these institutions to support their take-up of the NEP 2020.

48. The Committee notes that the UGC's Inter-University Center for Teacher Education in Varanasi has a building that has not yet been handed over to the institution by CPWD. The Committee recommends that the Department and UGC take steps to ensure smooth and early transition of the building. The Committee also recommends that the Inter-University Center work with BHU and other local educational institutions to offer degrees to its students.

49. During its study visit to Varanasi, the Committee learnt that the filling of EWS positions in faculty is nearly-impossible for Associate Professor and Professor levels. The criteria for becoming a Professor is typically to be serving as Associate Professor and the criteria for an Associate Professor typically includes tenure as an Assistant Professor. In both cases, UGC pay-scales mean that the candidates serving as Assistant or Associate Professors will be earning more than Rs 8 lakhs, and therefore cannot qualify as EWS. Universities spend a lot of time and resources seeking applicants for such positions despite knowing that candidates will be impossible to find. In such a situation, the Committee recommends that the Ministry re-evaluate the implementation of EWS at the level of Associate Professor and Professor.

50. The Committee notes that unlike the IIT and NIT faculty, the newly recruited faculty at Central Universities and other UGC-funded institutions do not receive seed grants at the beginning of their tenure for establishment and research expenditures. The Committee notes that such a facility is critical to enabling top performance for new faculty members since they would otherwise be reliant on project and research grants for the same which may take long periods of time to reach.

51. The Committee notes that faculty and non-teaching positions at Central universities and other UGC-funded institutions are not eligible to receive benefits under the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS). The Committee would recommend for their inclusion under the UPS scheme.

The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

52. The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) is an autonomous organization under Ministry of Education, Government of India, registered 1972 under Societies Registration Act (Act.xxi of 1860) .Following are the aims and objectives of ICHR:-

- *to promote and give direction to historical research and to encourage and foster objective and scientific writing of history.*
- *to bring historians together and provide a forum for exchange of views between them;*
- *to give a national direction to an objective and scientific writing of history and to have rational presentation and interpretation of history;*
- *to promote, accelerate and coordinate research in history with special emphasis on areas which have not received adequate attention so far;*
- *to promote, accelerate and coordinate research in history with special emphasis on areas which have not received adequate attention so far;*
- *The ICHR is mandated to encourage and foster objective and scientific writing of the history.*
- *to promote a coordinated and balanced distribution of research efforts over different areas;*
- *to elicit support and recognition for historical research from all concerned and ensure the necessary dissemination and use of results.*
- *Responsibilities, functions and conduct or business of such Committees or Advisory Panels as may be constituted from time to time;*
- *Terms and conditions governing scholarships, fellowships and deputations, grant-in-aid, research schemes and projects, and establishment of data library and documentation centre.*
- *Appointments of all categories of officers and staff for conducting the affairs of the Council and define their duties;*
- *Such other matters as may be necessary for the furtherance of the objectives and proper administration of the affairs of the Council.*

With a view to reaching out to far-flung areas of the country, the Council runs three regional centres – Southern Regional Centre (SRC), Bengaluru; North-Eastern Regional Centre, Guwahati & Western Regional Centre, Pune.

53. **Function of ICHR(Schemes & Grant-in-Aids):-**

(A) **Fellowships:-** The following categories of Fellowships are awarded in each financial year for undertaking research in History within India:

- (i) *Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) 80*
- (ii) *Post Doctoral Fellowship (PDF) 10*

- (iii) *Senior Academic Fellowship (SAF) 10*
- (iv) *National Fellowship (NF) 03*
- (v) *Gurukul Fellowship (GF) 02 Guru & 02 Disciple*

(B) The tabular details of the above mentioned fellowships/grants are as under:-

Sl.No.	Grant/Scheme	Number of Fellowships/ Grants in FY	Duration
1	Junior Research Fellowship (JRF)	80	Two Years
2	Post Doctoral Fellowship (PDF)	10	Two Years
3	Senior Academic Fellowship (SAF)	10	Two Years
4	National Fellowship (NF)	3	Two Years
5	Gurukul Fellowship	02	Two Years
6	Research Projects Grant (RP)	-	Two Years

At any point of time, the number of total Fellowships should not be more than double of the upper number ceiling of Fellowship indicated above. No new category of Fellowships other than those mentioned above can be introduced without the prior approval of the Government of India.

54. Junior Research Fellowship: Candidates who are registered in recognized Universities in Ph.D. programme in History or its allied subjects are eligible to apply for the Fellowship. The Fellowship carries an amount of Rupees Seventeen Thousand Six Hundred only (Rs.17,600/-) per month with a contingency grant of Rupees Sixteen Thousand Five Hundred only (Rs.16,500/-) per annum for a period of two years extendable up to one more year without any financial commitment under special circumstances.

55. Post Doctoral Fellowship: Post Doctoral Fellowships are awarded to scholars who have shown significant competence in research work, having been awarded their Ph.D. or have done equivalent research work of merit in History or its allied subjects, and desire to work on approved research themes at institutions of excellence under the guidance of a senior scholar. The applicants for the Fellowship should be affiliated with a University or a research institute of repute. The Fellowship carries an amount of Rupees Thirty Thousand Eight Hundred only (Rs.30,800/-) per month with a contingency grant of Rupees Twenty Two Thousand only (Rs.22,000/-) per annum for a period of two years extendable up to a maximum of one more year without any financial commitment under special circumstances.

56. Senior Academic Fellowship: Senior Fellowships are awarded to the senior scholars who have done quality work and have publications in the form of books and papers in professional journals to their credit. The Fellowship carries an amount of Rupees Forty Four Thousand only (Rs. 44,000/-) per month with a contingency grant of Rupees Forty Four Thousand only (Rs. 44,000/-) per annum for a period of two years extendable up to a maximum of one more year without any financial commitment under special circumstances.

57. National Fellowship: National Fellowships are offered by the Chairman, ICHR in consultation with Research Project Committee members to eminent scholars in history who have made outstanding contribution to research in their respective fields, to enable them to continue their academic work and research. The Fellowship is awarded by the Council to eminent scholars on the recommendations of the Research Projects Committee for a period of two years. Direct applications from scholars are not entertained. The Fellowship shall carry an amount of Rupees Sixty Thousand Five Hundred only (Rs.60,500/-) per month with a contingency grant of Rupees Sixty Six Thousand only (Rs.66,000/-) per annum.

58. Gurukul Fellowship: In view of the Indian traditional education system i.e. *Gurukul Shiksha Paddhati*, the ICHR introduced a new fellowship namely ‘Gurukul Fellowship’ for veteran Historians and their disciples. This fellowship is given in two components- *Guru* (Teacher) and his/her *Shisya*(Disciple) The *Guru* is given Rs. 55000/- Per Month Honorarium, Plus Rs. 60000/- per annum as Contingency Grant. The *Shisya* gets Rs. 28,000/- Per Month and Rs. 20000/- per annum as Contingency grant.

59. Research Projects: The Research Projects Committee (RPC) awards a grant for a project of research in History or on a theme substantively including an aspect or aspects of History, undertaken within India, to a scholar as Project Director, who has shown significant competence in research work, having been awarded his/her Ph.D. or equivalent research work, upon an application made by or on behalf of the said scholar. The objective of such grants is to enable institutions to improve the state of research collections. *Bona fide* Institutions with a well established and respected record of historical research can apply for funding its projects. Such applications shall be treated in the same manner as standard applications for Project funding. The RPC may on its own or at the recommendations of a ‘Committee of Experts’ assign or award a project to a scholar and fix his honorarium.

60. Contingency (Study-Cum-Travel) Grant: The ICHR awards Contingency (Study-cum-Travel) grant to an Indian citizen, or to a non-Indian, to assist him in pursuing research on History within India. The following are eligible for award of grant:

(a) Scholars who are engaged in M.Phil., Ph.D. or Post Doctoral work or carrying on independent research in History and are not currently receiving any travel or contingency grant for the proposed work from any other source.

(b) University and college teachers and members of staff of research institutions and others who are engaged in research work in History.

61. Foreign Travel Grant: Under this Grant, cost of travel and of maintenance abroad may be provided to a citizen of India wishing to study at archives, museums, libraries or private collections abroad for collection of source material, or to take part in a workshop, seminar or conference abroad for presenting a paper related to History, or to receive training in a specialized branch of History.

62. Publication Grants : The Research Projects Committee of ICHR awards grants for publication of the following categories of works relating to History:

- (a) doctoral thesis*
- (b) monograph and other research work*
- (c) proceedings of seminar/symposium/conference*
- (d) critically edited/ translated source material*
- (e) bibliographical and documentation work*
- (f) periodical publication*
- (g) any other research-oriented work*
- (h) translation into any Indian language or into English of an important work on History.*

63. Seminars/Workshops/Conferences: The Research Projects Committee awards grants for seminars, workshops or academic conferences concerned with specific themes of History to individual scholars as coordinators. The amount of grant in each case not to exceed Rupees Three lakh fifty thousand (Rs.3,50,000/-) and to be paid through the host institution deemed to be the institution of affiliation. Besides, that the RPC may award grant not exceeding Rs. 5,00,000/- preferably to registered academic and professional organization of historians.

64. Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) :- The ICHR is one of the implementing agencies of the Cultural Exchange Agreements, signed by the Government of India, with other countries. It maintains international links and strives with different countries for widening the

horizons of historical research in India through its Cultural Exchange Programme. The ICHR sponsors Indian historians to visit foreign countries and also receives foreign scholars under the Programme. The purpose of such visits is to enable historians to undertake collaborative research projects, to organise joint seminars/ workshops, to collect research material, deliver lectures, participate in seminars, consult libraries and interact with scholars. Presently, the ICHR has active exchange programmes with Germany, Japan, UK, and others.

65. Journals : The ICHR publishes the following journals

(i) *Indian Historical Review* :- Since its inception in 1972, the ICHR regularly brings out its Bi-annual journal namely the *Indian Historical Review*. The journal has now become subvention free and also now listed under Arts & Humanities Citation Index coverage of Thomson Reuters.

(ii) *Itihas (Shodh-Patrika)* :- At its meeting held on 13 May 2015, the Editorial Board of *Itihas (Shodh-Patrika)* resolved to revive *Itihas*, which was originally started in 1992. The scholars have been requested to send their original articles written in Hindi only. Thereafter, the Council is regularly bringing out Bi-annual issues of *Itihas(Shodh-Patrika)*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

66. The Committee reiterates its observation from Report 364 regarding the inadequacy of the current budget for the ICHR. The Committee re-emphasises the need to increase the budget for the Council given the critical functions it conducts.

67. The Committee notes that the Junior Research Fellowship issued by the ICHR is limited to 80 students across the country. Further, the stipend is only Rs 17,600 – a figure which has not been revised in many years and which is inadequate given that the UGC's JRF is Rs 37,000 per month. Therefore, the Committee recommends an increase in the fellowship amount as well as to the number of students who receive the fellowship.

68. The Committee notes that the ICHR is the only Research Council without a permanent campus of its own. Further, the current building where the ICHR is operating is tied up in ownership issues. The Committee recommends a speedy resolution of the matter and the establishment of a permanent campus for the ICHR.

69. The Committee was informed of the proposal for additional regional centers of ICHR in Jammu and Kashmir, Varanasi, and the Northeast. The Committee notes that dedicated staff members and a physical office can help bring additional focus to the ICHR's efforts in these regions. At the same time, the Committee has previously observed that the current regional centers need to be better leveraged, with dedicated building,

library, multi-media, and conference hall facilities. The Committee recommends that the Council and the Department consider the proposal for these new regional centers and in close consultation with local historians, students, and faculty members.

70. The Committee was informed that the current Member Secretary of the ICHR is holding additional charge of Director (Research& Adminstration) in ICHR. The Committee is of the view that the practice of assigning additional charges needs to be avoided, especially for long periods of time. The Committee notes the need for the ICHR to support research which takes a subcontinent-wide view of history, given our interconnected history.

Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)

71. Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) came into existence in July, 1977 as an autonomous organization under Ministry of Education, Government of India with an objective to provide impetus to Philosophical discourse by promoting Philosophical research in the country. This organization functions from its head office in New Delhi and Regional Centre and Library in Lucknow. The functional thrust areas of ICPR are many such as Indian as well as World Philosophy, Theories of Truth and Knowledge, Normative Inquiries, Comparative and Critical Study, Logic and philosophy of Logic, Philosophy of Mathematics, Language, Science and Technology, Philosophy of Man and Environment, Social and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Law, Metaphysics Philosophy of Education, Social Sciences and Feminism etc.

72. ICPR is mandated to realize its objectives through the following activities:

- *Reviewing the progress of research in Philosophy from time to time*
- *Giving financial support to institutions and organisations engaged in the conduct of research in Philosophy*
- *Providing technical assistance or guidance for the formulation of research projects and programmes in philosophy, by individuals or institutions, and / or organize and support institutional or other arrangements for training in research methodology*
- *Indicating periodically, areas in and topics on which research in Philosophy should be promoted and to adopt special measures for the development of research in neglected or developing areas in Philosophy.*
- *Coordinating research activities in Philosophy and to encourage programme of interdisciplinary research*
- *Organising sponsoring and assisting seminars, special courses, study circles, working groups/ parties, and conferences for promoting research in Philosophy, and to establish institutes for the same purpose*
- *Providing grants for publication of digests, journals, periodicals and scholarly works devoted to research in Philosophy and also to undertake their publication*
- *Instituting and administering fellowships, scholarships and awards for research in Philosophy by students, teachers and others*
- *Developing and supporting documentation services, including maintenance and supply of data, preparing of an inventory of current research in Philosophy and compilation of a national register of Philosophers*
- *Promoting collaboration in research between Indian Philosophers and philosophical institutions and those from other countries*
- *Taking special steps to develop a group of talented young Philosophers and to encourage research by young Philosophers working in universities and other institutions*

- *Advising the Government of India on all such matters pertaining to teaching and research in Philosophy as may be referred to it by the Government of India from time to time*
- *Entering into collaboration on mutually agreed terms, with other institutions, organisations and agencies for the promotion of research in Philosophy*
- *Promoting teaching and research in Philosophy*

73. The Ministry has informed that until 2014, a substantial number of fellowships and research projects were awarded for research on Western Philosophy and a large number of seminars, conferences, workshops and lecture programmes, etc. organized or supported by ICPR were on the topics related to Western Philosophy. However, post-2014, emphasis has been shifted to study of Indian Philosophy that too in Indian languages and on adopting Indian Research Methodology in the field of Philosophical Research. In the last five year period, of the webinars, seminars, workshops and conferences organized or supported by ICPR, almost all were on topics related to Indian Philosophy and very few were on Western Philosophy. Under recently initiated Five Year Action Plan, ICPR is planning to undertake the initiative of developing and offering SWAYAM courses on Philosophy of Research for all the students of higher education with interest in research. It aims at a systematic promotion of research in decolonizing the philosophical narrative on ‘nation and nationalism’. The Ministry has further informed that for the purpose of cultivating and propagating India’s Wisdom and Indian Way of Thinking as reflected in Indian Philosophy ICPR has organized seminars and awarded research projects on the teachings of Shankaracharya, Shri Bhima Bhoi, Shri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Rishi Bankim Chandra, and many other such thinkers and philosophers. The objective is to cultivate and propagate India’s wisdom and Indian way of thinking as reflected in Indian Philosophy.

74. The Ministry has further informed that since 2015 focus has shifted from research on topics which were neglected earlier. Till 2015, Philosophical research was confined to topics which were popularized by Western scholars or Indian scholars having Western perspective. As a result, certain topics were repeatedly considered for research neglecting others as mundane or irrelevant. That drawback has been overcome and now research topics are selected judiciously and hitherto unexplored fields are given due priority. The Ministry has also informed that Indian Philosophy was always problem-centric and it served the society by providing answers to the questions and challenges faced by individual and society. Keeping this age-old principle of Indian Philosophy in perspective, certain research projects are being supported by ICPR which are related to challenges faced by modern world. For example, in 2021 – 22, ICPR awarded

General Fellowships for the research on the topics like, ‘Essentials of E-commerce Model and its limitations in business ethics’, ‘Moral permissibility of capital punishment: a philosophical scrutiny’, ‘The good of trees: an ethical defence of environment’, ‘Religious Faith and Challenges of Medical Ethics’, ‘A Study on Relationship of Quantum Mechanics with Indian Spiritual Writings (With Special Reference to Shrimad Bhagavadgeeta)’ etc.

75. The Committee has been informed that for Popularising Philosophy among Youngsters, ICPR is exploring prospects of introducing Indian Philosophy in school/ college level. Under the Five Year Action Plan, ICPR is in the process of creating content on logic and ethics for school children in audio, video and printed forms. Besides this, monthly Study Circle programs are organized in colleges to popularize Philosophy among the students. During the programme, renowned scholars and teachers are invited to interact with students, share ideas and deliver lectures.

76. As a measure of emphasis on north-east region, during the last five years, ICPR has organized a number of seminars on the topics related to North-East. National Seminar on ‘Bhakti Tradition in North-East India: Social and Philosophical Implications’ was organized in 2022.

77. In the same period, another seminar on ‘Philosophical Debate on Nationalism in Contemporary India’ was organised in Shillong. Two other seminars on North-East India are in pipeline. Seminar on ‘Social Impact of the Vaishnava Philosophy Spread by Santa Das Gosai and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in North East’ is going to be held in Imphal and ‘Philosophy of Religion and Nature Worship with special reference to North East Bharat’ is to be held in Guwahati. ICPR awarded a number of research projects on the topics directly related to North-East. Research projects, such as ‘Philosophical Thoughts of Deori Community and their Customs and Rituals: A Case Study in Dhemaji District of Assam’, ’Religious Beliefs and Practices of Missing Community of Assam: An Analytical Study’ were among them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

78. **The Committee notes that the stipend under the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) issued by the ICPR is only Rs 17,500 – a figure which has not been revised in many years and which is inadequate given that the UGC’s JRF is Rs 37,000 per month. Therefore, the Committee recommends an increase in the fellowship amount as well as the number of fellowship.**

79. The Committee was informed that a high-powered committee was set up in 2016-18 to examine the current functioning of the ICPR and suggest ways in which it can be improved. The Committee recommends that the Department should review the report of the Committee and evaluate the status of the report's implementation.

80. The Committee notes that the Lucknow campus of the ICPR holds one of the largest libraries of philosophy in Asia but that it is currently severely under-utilised. The Committee recommends that the Council and the Department work together to enhance the library's utilization, including possibly creating residential fellowships to facilitate scholars seeking dedicated access to the library.

81. The Committee recommends that the Council take up more projects which investigate traditions of philosophy in vernacular language, which has largely remained untapped.

82. The Committee notes that there was no Council constituted between 2022 and 2024, and no accompanying Chairperson for the Committee. The Committee emphasises that such a situation should be avoided in the future.

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

83. After Independence, our country sought to regain its indigenous model of social and human sciences research that required decolonization of the education and research. As the country's development process threw up numerous and diverse challenges that required extensive research and analysis, the Government of India established a Committee for Social Science Research under the Chairmanship of Professor V.K.R.V. Rao in 1965 to review the social science research scenario in the country and make recommendations to accelerate its progress. This led to the establishment of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1969 to encourage, promote and fund social science research in the country.

84. ICSSR is mandated to provide policy advice to the Government on vital socio-economic issues as and when required and also to review progress of Social Science Research in the country. It supports early, mid-career and senior researchers in fulfilling their research endeavours through Research Projects and Research Fellowships in various priority areas. For dissemination of ideas, knowledge and research findings, ICSSR sponsors National, International and Collaborative Seminars, supports publication of journals and books and provides library, documentation, data and online services through National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC). ICSSR also promotes national and international collaboration in social science research through its various schemes and initiatives. The data collection and research findings emerging out of the research outcomes of projects and programmes sponsored by the ICSSR has contributed in drafting of government policies in the past decades. The 24 Research Institutes all over the country and covered under the Grant-in-Aid scheme of the ICSSR serve as critical hubs of knowledge creation and its dissemination.

85. As per the information given to the Committee, ICSSR has so far granted **9243** Major, Minor, Collaborative and Special Call Projects and **543** Research Programmes. It has so far awarded **8470** full-term Doctoral Fellowships, **3,547** Post-Doctoral Fellowships, **921** Senior Fellowships and **174** National Fellowships. ICSSR has sponsored **5,659** National and **1,557** International seminars/conferences and funded **2,707** scholars for attending seminars and **499** scholars for data collection abroad. The ICSSR has sponsored **1367** Research Methodology Courses and Capacity Building Programmes for young faculties and researchers, provided financial assistance to **1897** scholars for publication of their Doctoral Theses/ Projects/ Fellowship Reports/ Conference Proceedings, and financially supported **1212** social science journals, including **442** Research Associations involved in social science research activities. It has also conducted Six Rounds of Surveys on the current status of research in crucial social

science disciplines, namely, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Geography and Psychology, in the country. Apart from this, the ICSSR provides research services such as library, documentation, data and e-resources to several thousand social science scholars and faculties across the country through its National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC). ICSSR is promoting and supporting research culture across the country, which is testified by addition of 693 new institutions since January 2023.

86. The Department has informed that some of the key initiatives and research activities undertaken by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) during the Financial Years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 with a focus on fostering socially impactful, interdisciplinary, collaborative and policy-relevant research in social and human sciences are summarized as under:

- a. **Research Projects and Programmes:** ICSSR has awarded a total of 2339 Research Projects and Programmes in the Financial Years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. In addition to regular calls for Major and Minor Research Projects in social and human sciences, ICSSR promotes interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and collaborative research at the national level with special focus on thrust areas of national importance, including attainment of Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). The following initiatives have been taken in the last three years in this direction:
 - i. *Research Programme on History and Sociology of Art, Craft, Culture, and Folk Traditions of India*
 - ii. *Research Programme on Culture, History and Geography of the Scheduled Tribes of India*
 - iii. *Evidence based Short-term Empirical Research on Impact Assessment of 31 Government schemes*
 - iv. *Research Project on Vision Viksit Bharat @ 2047*
 - v. *Research Projects on Longitudinal Studies*
 - vi. *Projects on Impact Assessment of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)*
 - vii. *Projects on Solar Energy and Sustainability*
 - viii. *Research Projects on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)*
- b. **Research Fellowships:** Under its Research Fellowship Scheme, the ICSSR provides various categories of fellowships in order to provide research opportunities to young, senior and established social scientists and to engage them in full-time research on important themes. A total of 2284 researchers have benefitted under the different fellowship schemes of ICSSR in the last three years. These researchers are promoted

to pursue cutting edge research in thrust areas of national importance identified by the ICSSR. The number of fellowships granted in each year is as under:

Scheme	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Doctoral Fellowship	492	483	483
Post-Doctoral Fellowship	185	272	273
Senior Fellowship	29	34	33
Total	706	789	789

- c. **International Collaboration:** ICSSR provides financial assistance to scholars for presenting papers at International Conferences and collecting data in connection with their ongoing research work. In the last three years i.e. 2022-23, 2023-24 & 2024-25, ICSSR has provided grants to 582 scholars to participate in International Conferences and Data Collection abroad. A total of 104 scholars have benefitted under the Scholar's Exchange Programme of ICSSR. Under these schemes, preference is given to the younger scholars, scholars attending conference for the first time & scholars from remote and backward areas besides persons with benchmark disabilities. Under the international collaboration programme, the ICSSR has signed bilateral collaborative agreements with 14 countries and 3 international organizations.
- d. **National and International Seminars:** ICSSR supports National and International Seminars to enable researchers, academicians, policy-makers, industry partners and other stakeholders with an opportunity for the dissemination of research findings and ideas. During the financial year 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25, ICSSR received 3621 proposals for organising International and National Seminars/Conferences from all across India, out of which 1696 proposals were selected for funding by ICSSR.
- e. **Training and Capacity Building:** ICSSR supports capacity building courses aimed at improving research quality, fostering innovation and addressing complex social issues. During the financial years 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25, a total of 513 proposals for both Research Methodology Course and Capacity Building Programme (RMC-144 and CBP-91) were received and 268 grants were approved by ICSSR, which included 155 under the Research Methodology Course and 113 under Capacity Building Programme.

f. Research Publications: During the financial years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-2025, ICSSR has taken significant steps in promoting, disseminating, and supporting social science research across India which reflect a wide-ranging engagement with diverse domains addressing both foundational inquiries and contemporary challenges. The major publications in the period under consideration are: *Understanding India and Its Problems* (Vol I and II), *Cultural Heritage: Implications for Development*, *Distributed Renewable Energy Systems*, *Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries in India*, *Tantrayuktis*, *Indian Thinkers* (Vol I & II), *Lord Shiva in India & Abroad*, *Narratives of COVID-19*, *Public Service Delivery*, *Consumer Behaviour in Digital Markets*, *Integral Humanism a Distinct Paradigm of Development*, *Landscape and the Bengali Diaspora*, *Deccan in Transition: 1600 to 1800*, *Nature and Dynamics of Social Influence*.

g. Research Internship Programme: ICSSR launched its Research Internship Programme for postgraduate degree holders in 2024 to encourage emerging scholars and provide them with valuable research experience. A total of 40 young scholars benefitted under this scheme in 2024-25. ICSSR is in the process of expanding the scope of this scheme in the current Financial Year by including Undergraduate students as well.

Recommendations

87. The Committee reiterates its observation made in its 364th Report that the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission have still not been implemented in ICSSR research institutes and regional centers. The Committee notes that the dimished pay scale makes recruitment of faculty members at the research institutes very challenging. The Committee therefore recommends the immediate implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission in the ICSSR research institutes and regional centers, and the implementation of the Eight Pay Commission at the appropriate time as well.

88. The Committee notes that several State Governments – including but not limited to the Governments of Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Bihar – are implementing the Seventh Pay Commission for their share of funding for ICSSR Research Institutes. At a time when State Governments are rising to support these institutions, the Committee feels it becomes all the more pressing for the Union Ministry of Education to do the same.

89. The Committee expresses its concern over the staffing of the ICSSR Research Institutes. At the Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID)

Chandigarh, only 7 of the 14 faculty positions are currently filled. At the Giri Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) in Lucknow, only 9 of the 18 faculty positions have currently been filled and of the 11 sanctioned research staff, only 1 position has been filled. No recruitments have reportedly taken place in the Giri institute since 2016. At Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (NCCDS) in Bhubaneshwar, there are only two serving faculty of 14 sanctioned positions. At the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (SPIESR) in Ahmedabad, there are only 5 faculty appointed against a sanctioned strength of 14 positions. Similarly, there are reports of promotions in ICSSR research institutions not happening on time.

90. The Committee notes that the ICSSR's research institutes are typically funded by both ICSSR and the State Governments. The coordination between these two bodies needs to be strengthened. For instance, the Giri Institute of Development Studies in Lucknow is reportedly facing a 1.5-year time lag in the funds received from the State Government.

91. The Committee expresses its concern over the non-appointment to leadership positions in ICSSR Research Institutes. For instance, NCCDS in Bhubaneshwar has not had a full-time Director in 5 years. CRRID in Chandigarh too has only had an Acting Director since 2018, in addition to having an Acting Secretary and an Acting Financial Advisor. SPIESR in Ahmedabad has reportedly had only an Acting Director for 15 years now. The Committee recommends that the ICSSR take all possible measures to encourage the appointment of full-time, fully empowered leaders to all research institutes.

92. The Committee notes that in the recent past, grants for salary payments have been halted by the ICSSR for multiple research institutes. While funding has now resumed for all institutes, the Committee strongly emphasises that such non-payment of grants must be discouraged and if necessary, must come only after a thorough investigation and the issue of a notice to the institute.

93. The Committee notes that ICSSR's research institutes have the potential to support high-quality teaching and research in universities and colleges. While some research institutes are offering PhDs in partnership with local universities, the ICSSR must encourage all institutes to do the same. Furthermore, the research institute's faculty can also be encouraged to teach courses in local Central and State Universities.

94. The Committee notes that since December 2019, the position of the Chairperson for ICSSR has largely been vacant – with only one Chairperson appointed briefly between April 2022 and August 2023. The Committee strongly recommends that the Ministry look

into the appointment of a full-time, fully empowered Chairman at the earliest and avoid such delays in appointments to the Chairperson role in the future.

95. The Committee notes that the ICSSR has been entrusted with a very broad mandate to support social sciences research across the country. At a time when the NEP has set the ambitious target of 50% GER in higher educational institutions by 2030, it is critical that ICSSR expand in consonance with the same. Accordingly, the Ministry should seek to expand funding for the Council.

96. The Committee notes that the ICSSR Doctoral Fellows get only Rs 20,000 per month, which is rather inadequate given that the UGC Junior Research Fellowship itself pays Rs 37,000 per month. The Committee therefore recommends an increase in the amount paid as stipend under the Doctoral Fellowships.

97. The Committee notes that given its focus on social sciences research, the ICSSR has the capacity to work more closely with the NITI Aayog and other Government policymaking institutions. The Committee recommends that the Council look into setting up collaborations with such organisations to leverage the research undertaken by its scholars and research institutes into policy decisions.

98. The Committee notes that the decision to conduct a caste census nationally, alongside the caste surveys in Bihar, Telangana, and other states, creates an opportunity to study unique and new data relating to the country's demographics and socio-economic conditions. The Committee notes that the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) Hyderabad, an ICSSR research institute, has worked with the Government of Telangana on the Socio-economic, Education, Employment, Political Caste Survey 2024 (SEEEPC). The ICSSR must seek more such opportunities for collaboration with the Government to assist with the analysis of such census and survey-related data.

99. The Committee notes that in 2022, the Ministry had set up a committee to look into the implementation of Pay Commission for the ICSSR's research institutions and regional centers. The Committee has been informed that as of June 2025 no report in this matter has been issued. The Committee expresses its concern for this inordinate delay. The Committee recommends that the report should be submitted as soon as possible given that this matter has been pending for several years.

100. The Committee notes that the Directors of the ICSSR Research Institutes used to be convened to meet regularly in the past. The Committee recommends that the practice

be revived to enable greater collaboration and dissemination of best practices, etc among the institutes.

Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS), Shimla

101. The Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) is a research institute located in Shimla, India. It was set up by the Ministry of Education, Government of India in 1964 and started functioning from 20 October 1965. The building that houses the institute was originally called the Viceregal Lodge as it housed the viceroys and governors-general of India. After India gained independence, the building was renamed as Rashtrapati Niwas and was used as a summer retreat for the president of India. Subsequently, Dr. S Radhakrishnan, former President decided to turn it into a centre of higher learning in the year 1965. The institute is administered by a Society and a Governing Body, the members of which come from varied backgrounds. A statutory Finance Committee advises the Governing Body in financial matters.

102. **During its study visit to Shimla in May 2025, the Committee found that the position of the Director, IIAS Shimla had been vacant since August 2021 – an issue that the Committee had raised in its 364th Report on the Demand for Grants (2025-2026) of the Department of Higher Education as well. The position has just been filled in August 2025. The committee underscores the need to fill up such vacancies expeditiously in future.**

103. **In the same study visit, the Committee also found that the three-year tenure of the IIAS Society and the IIAS Governing Body had lapsed in December 2024. The Committee emphasises that the IIAS Society and the Governing Body must be reconstituted as soon as possible.**

104. **The Committee noted that the IIAS currently has only 2 of the 5 National Fellows sanctioned. The Committee notes that to fulfill the vision of the institute's founding inspiration Shri Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Institute needs to consistently attract and retain top faculty. The Institute's inability to fill the sanctioned number of National Fellows - the most prestigious position at the Institute - compromises the ability of the institute to meet its potential.**

105. **The Committee was informed that the Institute had been granted the Tagore Center as part of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary. However, only one of the four Tagore Fellows sanctioned was in office as of May 2025. Between 2020 and May 2025, only two Tagore Fellows had been designated whereas there should have been at least four Tagore Fellows every year. The annual international seminars envisioned as part of the IIAS's Tagore Center had not been held even once. The Committee noted that IIAS's inaugural Director Nihar Ranjan Ray himself was a biographer of Rabindranath Tagore.**

The Institute's inability to fully realise the vision and mission of the Tagore Center is therefore disappointing.

Auroville Foundation

106. Auroville was founded by the ‘Mother’ on the 28th day of February, 1968 as an international cultural township. In view of the serious difficulties which had arisen with regard to the management of Auroville, the management thereof was initially vested in the Central Government for a limited period by the Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1980. Subsequently, the Auroville Emergency Provisions Act 1980, was promulgated to take over the affairs and management of Auroville and all its undertakings pursuant to the order of the Supreme Court of India. The office of the Auroville Foundation at Auroville, Tamil Nadu. It has been functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Education as a statutory (autonomous) body under Government of India.

107. Under the provisions of the Act, all undertakings of the Sri Aurobindo Society relating to Auroville were vested in the Foundation, which was declared a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, having power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, to enter into contracts, and to sue and be sued in its own name.

108. The Act provides for the establishment of three authorities of the Foundation, namely:

- i. A Governing Board, appointed by the Central Government, entrusted with the overall review of activities, approval of programmes, ensuring adherence to the Auroville Charter, and coordination with Government;
- ii. A Resident’s Assembly, comprising all adult residents of Auroville, empowered to deliberate on matters of Auroville’s cultural and community life and to make proposals and recommendations; and
- iii. An International Advisory Council, consisting of eminent persons in the fields of education, culture, environment, and spirituality, to advise the Governing Board and the Foundation.

109. It has been explained that the Act empowers the Foundation to establish and maintain educational, cultural, scientific and research institutions, to coordinate the activities of its constituent units and services, to foster international cooperation and understanding in pursuit of human unity, and to manage and develop Auroville in conformity with the Charter of the Mother.

110. The Central Government exercises oversight under the Act, including approval of all rules and regulations made by the Governing Board, audit of accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, power to issue binding directions, and power to dissolve or reconstitute authorities in case of non-performance.

111. The Act provides for the establishment of a Fund of the Foundation to which grants, donations, and contributions are credited, including those from international sources. The Foundation's accounts and annual reports are required to be laid before Parliament. The Act also provides exemptions from certain taxes, duties, and fees in recognition of the Foundation's objectives.

112. The Foundation functions as a centre for educational innovation, ecological stewardship, and community-led transformation, operating through a network of over 700 units and services. Nearly one thousand learners from India and abroad participate annually in its informal education programmes.

113. The Ministry has stated that Auroville provides opportunities for youth empowerment, including leadership training and alternative educational pathways which have enabled students to pursue higher education globally even without following the conventional 12th-standard equivalence. It has been submitted that the Foundation has pioneered ecological restoration and sustainability practices through the Auroville Botanical Gardens, RAMCo projects, and waste-management initiatives such as Wasteless, EcoService, and Garbology 101. In addition, Auroville units are engaged in consulting, design, and advanced technical work, including semiconductor innovation.

114. The Committee was informed that Auroville's pedagogical approach is based on principles of freedom, respect, and beauty, encouraging self-paced learning, reflective assessment, and holistic development of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual faculties. The model is aligned with the provisions of the National Education Policy 2020 and the Integral Education Policy 2025.

115. It has been explained that the Foundation offers teacher-training, volunteer, internship, and apprenticeship programmes, as well as lifelong learning opportunities. Research and curriculum development are anchored in the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER).

116. The Ministry has further submitted that the Auroville Foundation aspires to promote Asian resurgence through research and collaboration, enhance the representation of the Global South, draw upon Indic knowledge traditions in addressing contemporary challenges, and embed Sri Aurobindo's vision in the national education discourse.

117. The Committee has been informed of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Auroville Foundation and IIT Madras for the establishment of a Sustainability Campus on 100 acres of land allocated by Auroville. The campus will serve as a model of regenerative design, zero-carbon infrastructure, and climate-resilient urban development, functioning as a hub for interdisciplinary research in clean energy, circular economy, water conservation, sustainable urbanisation, and community well-being.

118. The Committee was informed that in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 32 of the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988, and with the previous approval of the Central Government, the Auroville Foundation notified the Admission and Termination Regulations, 2023. These regulations govern the criteria and process of admission in all educational institutions administered by the Foundation, as well as the grounds and procedures for termination of admission.

119. The Ministry has informed that termination of admission may take place in cases of misconduct, persistent academic non-performance, or violation of institutional rules, but only after observance of due process, including notice and an opportunity to be heard. Institutions are required to maintain proper records of all admissions and terminations.

120. Auroville Foundation (Constitution of Town Development Council) Regulations, 2024 The Ministry has stated that the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, with the approval of the Central Government, notified the Auroville Foundation (Constitution of Town Development Council) Regulations, 2024, in pursuance of Section 16 of the Act and Appendix V of the Master Plan.

121. It has been explained that under these regulations, the Governing Board constituted the Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) as the Prescribed Authority for the implementation and enforcement of the Auroville Universal Township Master Plan and related regulations.

122. The Ministry has informed that the ATDC shall consist of not more than ten members appointed by the Governing Board, including a Chairperson, a Member-Secretary, and a Member-Finance & Accounts. Members are required to possess skills in administration, coordination, and management, with some having technical expertise in planning, architecture, engineering, horticulture, or survey.

123. It has been stated that the Council structure is based on Appendix V of the Master Plan and requires the establishment of departments with adequate staffing under designated Department Heads. In addition, a Green Belt Development & Enforcement Department has been created under the Planning Group for the specific task of implementing the Green Belt regulations.

124. The Ministry has explained that this department is responsible for preparing an Integrated Green Belt Zone Layout Map in consultation with concerned authorities, processing Green Belt Development Schemes from private landowners, issuing permissions, and enforcing compliance including demolition of unauthorised constructions. The department is to be staffed by planners, architects, engineers, and surveyors, and is supported by a multi-disciplinary enforcement team comprising Legal, Revenue, Horticulture, Survey, and Police officers.

125. It has further been informed that the term of office of a Council member is four years. Members may be re-appointed once consecutively, after which a break of one term is required before further nomination. Provisions have been made for induction and transition of new members six months before the expiry of a term.

126. The Ministry has clarified that a member ceases to hold office if absent for more than three months, if resigning with Governing Board acceptance, if reported as non-performing by the Council, or if removed by the Governing Board for sufficient cause. Casual vacancies may be filled by the Secretary with the approval of the Governing Board.

127. It has been stated that the ATDC functions include:

- i. Acting as Prescribed Authority for implementation of the Master Plan;
- ii. Ensuring that the township is developed according to the Master Plan;
- iii. Issuing building permissions and completion certificates;
- iv. Preparing five-year and annual plans, budgets, and schedules for Governing Board approval;
- v. Raising funds for township development and land consolidation with Governing Board approval;
- vi. Securing services of planners, architects, engineers, consultants, and contractors;
- vii. Constituting technical and project teams;
- viii. Coordinating with central, state, and local authorities; and
- ix. Enforcing compliance with the Green Belt regulations including demolitions.

128. The ATDC is accountable to the Governing Board and is required to submit accounts, income and expenditure statements, and progress reports periodically.

129. It has been explained that the ATDC must also prepare a manual of processes and procedures with Governing Board approval, and may utilise an Advisory Group of up to five

members appointed for four years, to provide expert support for planning and development review.

130. Any ambiguity in interpretation of these Regulations shall be settled by the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation.

131. The Committee was informed that in exercise of powers under Section 32 of the Act, the Auroville Foundation, with the approval of the Central Government, notified the Development Control in Green Belt Zone of Auroville Universal Township Regulations, 2025. It has been explained that these regulations apply to all lands, constructions, and development activities in the Green Belt Zone of the Auroville Universal Township, and override any inconsistent plans or schemes of other authorities.

132. The Ministry has informed that no land transaction in the Master Plan area can be registered without a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Auroville Foundation.

133. The regulations require all development in the Green Belt Zone to conform to an Integrated Green Belt Zone Plan to be prepared and notified by the Foundation. Development may only be undertaken with prior approval of a Green Belt Development Scheme submitted to the Prescribed Authority. It has been stated that the regulations lay down norms mandating renewable energy systems, decentralized wastewater treatment and reuse, on-site solid waste processing, rainwater harvesting, stormwater management, and protection of ecological zones.

134. The Ministry has further explained that landowners must provide land for Master Plan roads and infrastructure, bear costs of trunk infrastructure, and remove non-conforming structures. State revenue and police departments are to support enforcement.

135. The regulations provide that the Auroville Town Development Council, as the Prescribed Authority, shall enforce the provisions, prepare the Integrated Green Belt Zone Plan, process proposals, and undertake demolition of unauthorised structures. A multidisciplinary enforcement team comprising legal, survey, revenue, police, and horticulture officials is to be constituted.

Recommendations

136. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the contributions made by past Chairmen of the Foundation's Governing Board, Dr Karan Singh and Dr Kireet Joshi, whose stewardship and steadfast commitment has led to the preservation and nurturing of the character and vision of Auroville.

137. The Committee notes with satisfaction the many achievements of Auroville since its inceptions and since the passage of the Auroville Act, 1988. The Committee notes that the UNESCO has passed at least six resolutions since 1966 to celebrate Auroville's ideals. The very first resolution, passed at the UNESCO's General Conference held in Paris in October-November 1966, notes that "*the project will contribute to international understanding and promotion of peace*" and "*commends it [the project] to those interested in UNESCO's ideals.*" The sixth resolution, adopted at the 18th plenary meeting on 13th November 2017, recognizes that "*Auroville is a successful and unique model project, proving the capacity of an international community, after almost 50 years of existence, to continue to live up to its initial founding ideas of peace and international harmony.*" It also notes that "*Auroville has developed into a centre of expertise in a wide range of fields, benefiting India*" and notes "*its success in sharing its experience and helping the development of its neighbouring rural population.*"

138. The Committee notes that the Auroville Act (1988) is unique in that it governs a community, not just an institution. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the sixth UNESCO resolution explicitly appreciates the Government of India for passing the Auroville Foundation Act (1988) for the "*purpose of protecting and encouraging the development of Auroville.*"

139. The Committee notes that the Act sets up three bodies for the governance and smooth functioning of Auroville – the Governing Board, the Residents' Assembly, and the International Advisory Council. While the Committee acknowledges the recent Court verdict that the Governing Board is supreme, the Committee emphasises that the three institutions must work together in close coordination and harmony. The Governing Board should continue the practice of consultation and collaboration with the international Advisory Council and the Residents' Assembly before making any key decisions. The Committee observes that the objectives of the Auroville Foundation and the ideals of human unity enshrined in the Charter of Auroville can only be pursued with such an environment of constructive engagement.

140. The Committee emphasises the distinctive nature of Auroville as a community and the critical importance of the Governing Board as the administrative body that oversees the community. The Committee notes that the mandate of the incumbent Governing Board has expired as of 5th October 2025. The Committee emphasises the importance of reconstituting the Governing Board with immediacy upon the expiration of the Governing

Board. It further notes that the Auroville Act specifically stipulates that members of the Board must have distinguished themselves by rendering “valuable service to Auroville” and “contributed significantly in activities that are being pursued or are envisaged to be promoted in Auroville, including activities relating to environment, afforestation, arts and crafts, industry, agriculture, humanities, sciences and integral yoga.”

141. The Committee notes that Auroville is meant to have an autonomous character and that an empowered Residents’ Assembly is critical to the same since it is the only statutory body capable of representing the residents of Auroville. The Residents’ Assembly therefore must hold elections to the Working Committee regularly. To settle disputes and act as a check on the Residents’ Assembly and ensure its continued representativeness, the Foundation may consider setting up a standing panel composed of former members of the Working Committee. This panel can decide on complaints against the Working Committee and make recommendations to the Governing Body about the action that is necessary.

142. The Committee notes that the Ministry has not designated an official as full-time Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, and that for over a year, the position is being held as an additional charge. The Committee’s general stance has been that the practice of assigning additional charges needs to be avoided, especially for long periods of time.

143. The Committee welcomes the Auroville Foundation’s MoU with IIT Madras which paves the way for setting up a sustainability campus. However, the Committee notes that the land for the campus is supposed to come at the expense of the Annapurna Farms currently existing at the location. Food sustainability is an integral part of the vision of Auroville and the loss of farmland will certainly impact the long-term ability of Auroville to sustain itself. Further, Annapurna Farms is currently engaging in organic farming, which was central to The Mother’s vision for the community. The Committee recommends that Annapurna farms should not be disturbed and that alternative sites nearby should be found to situate the sustainability campus.

144. In the same vein, the Committee is of the view that all land transfers in service of the Master Plan should be implemented in full transparency and consultation with all stakeholders, including the Resident’s Assembly and the International Advisory Council.

145. The Committee notes that the Auroville Master Plan 2025 was approved in 2001 by the Ministry of Human Resources Development and notified in the Gazette in 2010. In view of the time that has passed in the interim, the Committee recommends that the Master Plan

be implemented in close consultation with the Resident's Assembly and other stakeholders in Auroville, with changes as may be required. The Committee also notes that as per current regulations, all urban development master plans in the state of Tamil Nadu are to be submitted to the State Urban Planning Department. The Committee recommends that the Foundation do so as well in compliance with these regulations.

146. The Committee recommends that any amendments to the Auroville Act or the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997 should be developed through a consensual process, with the unanimous support of all three statutory bodies – the Governing Board, the International Advisory Council, and the Resident's Assembly.

147. The Committee notes that the Auroville community has achieved many successes in its goals of achieving self-sufficiency. The Matrimandir at the center of Auroville is a testament to the ability of the community to self-finance and self-direct very ambitious projects. The Committee recommends that the Foundation continue this spirit of self-sustenance and minimize the involvement of the Central Public Works Department and other bodies in the conduct of its works.

148. The Committee recommends that the Government may consider amending the *Auroville Foundation Act, 1988* to provide for recognition of Auroville as an Institution of National Importance, keeping in view that UNESCO has already adopted multiple resolutions since 1966 endorsing the project and acknowledging its contribution towards international understanding and the promotion of peace.

149. The Committee recommends that the term of office of the Secretary to the Auroville Foundation should be made co-terminous with that of the Governing Board (i.e. four years). This will ensure better institutional continuity and coordination between the Governing Board and the administrative machinery of the Foundation.

150. The Committee notes that Auroville Foundation receives partial funding from the Central Government in the form of annual grants, as stipulated by the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988. These grants are provided by the Ministry of Education to support the establishment, maintenance, and development of Auroville, the international cultural township. The Foundation also generates its own income, but government grants still remain a significant source of funding for its operations and projects. The Committee feels that instead of an annual grant, the foundation should be granted sufficient amount to sustain itself in future.

151. The Committee notes that the international character of Auroville is not just a matter of pride but the very intent of Auroville, as evident in the founding Charter's declaration that "Auroville belongs to nobody in particular." The Committee notes that the Ministry of External Affairs has set up a special procedure for visa disbursal to Auroville residents, which is a necessary safeguard to preserve the international character of the community. The Committee emphasizes that the Auroville Foundation's role in the visa process must be speedy and independent of any considerations, and that the Foundation should continue to keep the five-year visa as the norm for all residents. As the Honourable Prime Minister has noted in his visit to Auroville, "[A]nyone who is willingly in service of the Divine Consciousness is entitled to live in Auroville."

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE AT A GLANCE

1. The Committee reiterates that the NTA's performance in the last year has not inspired much confidence. It has been brought to the notice of the Committee that in the year 2024 alone, of the 14 competitive examinations conducted by the NTA, at least five faced major issues and as result, three examinations viz. UGC-NET, CSIR-NET and NEET-PG had to be postponed, one examination viz. NEET-UG saw instances of paper leaks, and one examination i.e CUET (UG/PG) saw its results postponed. In JEE Main 2025 held in January 2025, at least 12 questions had to be withdrawn due to errors noted in the final answer key of the engineering entrance exam. The Committee observed that such instances doesnot inspire confidance of the examinees in the system. The Committee therefore recommends that NTA need to quickly get their act together so that such instances, which otherwise are fully avoidable, do not occur in future.

(Para 8)

2. The Committee notes that several firms involved in paper setting, administration, and correction have been blacklisted by one organisation/state government but that this however, is not impeding their securing of contracts from other states or organisations. The Committee is of the view that such blacklisted firms must not be engaged for any entrance test by the NTA or the State Governments. The Committee therefore recommends that the Department should compile a nationwide list of blacklisted firms along with the persons or entities that constitute such firms so as to prevent such firms/persons/ entities from securing future contracts and bring further clarity in this regard.

(Para 9)

3. The Committee notes that the NTA collected an estimated ₹3,512.98 Crores while it has spent ₹3,064.77 Crores on the conduct of examinations thereby creating a surplus of Rs. 448 Crores in the last six years. The Committee recommends that this corpus should be used to build the agency's capabilities to conduct tests itself, or to strengthen regulatory and monitoring capabilities for its vendors.

(Para 10)

4. The Committee has recommended in its 364th Report that the NTA should produce not just an audited statement but also an Annual Report clearly outlining its activities in detail and submit the same to the Parliament annually. The Committee reiterates the same recommendation.

(Para 11)

5. The Committee notes that in the last few years the results of CUET exams were not declared in time by the NTA. Such a delay is a cause of major concern as it not only delays the admission process but also delays the start of the academic session by the on boarded Universities which ultimately puts unnecessary pressure on the students. The Committee emphasises that NTA should not only conduct the examinations within time but also declare the results in a time bound manner.

(Para 12)

6. The Committee expresses concern at the rapid expansion of private-sector coaching centers for competitive examinations in the country. The Committee recommends the Department to work with the NTA to ensure that the papers are set to more closely reinforce the curriculum of school examinations, so as to avoid the introduction of a parallel curriculum and the accompanying coaching center industry. The Committee recommends that the Department should set up a high-level committee to address the proliferation of coaching centers and suggest methods to regulate the same.

(Para 13)

7. The Committee was informed that with regards to securing the examination process, the tradeoffs are as follows. Pen and paper exams offer more opportunities for paper leaks, while computer-based tests (CBT) can be hacked in a manner that is difficult to detect. Between the two, the Committee supported a greater focus on pen-and-paper examinations given that there are several models of such examinations which have been leak-proof for several years – including the CBSE exams and the UPSC exams. The Committee recommends that the NTA closely study these models and implement the same. Further in the case of computer based tests (CBT), the Committee recommends that these exams be hosted only in government or government-controlled centers and never in private centers.

(Para 14)

8. The Committee notes that the current process of accreditation/re-accreditation is long and bureaucratic, with five yearly re-accreditation and yearly reports that demand considerable time from University administrators. The process also involves site visits by the accreditation team, which is cumbersome. The Committee therefore reiterates its earlier recommendation from 364th Report that the NAAC's accreditation process for HEIs needs to be streamlined so that the whole process is quick and without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

(Para 28)

9. The Committee notes that there is an investigation ongoing into a recent case of bribery in the NAAC. The Committee is of the view that a thorough internal investigation should be initiated in the matter and findings of the investigation may be shared with the committee.

(Para 29)

10. The Committee appreciates that the NAAC has taken some steps in the last few months to enhance transparency – such as the revision in the grading of about 200 institutions and the removal of about 900 peer assessors. The Committee is of the view that the restoration of the NAAC's credibility is of the utmost urgency. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the NAAC to issue full details that clearly outline the results of the investigations so far, the measures undertaken as a response, and the reasons why these measures were necessary.

(Para 30)

11. The Committee notes that the Department of Higher Education has evolved the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to rank institutions as per a variety of metrics. In this context, the NAAC's grading of institutions is extraneous. The Committee also observed that the scope for discretion in the accreditation process is largely in the grading rather than the accreditation itself. A binary accreditation model, as recommended

by the Radhakrishnan Committee, would be simpler to implement, ease the bureaucratic process, and limit the scope for discretion in the NAAC's grading. The Committee notes that the binary accreditation model was scheduled to be implemented in July 2024 but has been delayed. The Committee urges the early implementation of the same.

(Para 31)

12. The Committee recommends that NAAC should allow flexibility for institutes in tribal and rural areas which cannot be considered on the same scale as institutes in metropolitan cities, etc.

(Para 32)

13. The Committee notes that the position of the Chairperson, UGC, has been vacant since April 2025. The Committee notes that the NEP 2020 states that “[L]eadership positions shall not remain vacant, but rather an overlapping time period during transitions in leadership shall be the norm to ensure the smooth running of institutions.” The Committee in view thereof recommends that a new Chairperson should be appointed for the UGC as soon as possible.

(Para 39)

14. The Committee notes that the Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, are currently still in review stage and have not been finalized. The Committee was informed that at least 10 state governments have written to the UGC raising concerns and giving suggestions about the draft regulations. In this context, the Committee reiterates its recommendation from Report 364 that the UGC should discuss the draft regulations with the CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) to ensure all stakeholders are involved in the consultation process.

(Para 40)

15. The Committee at its meeting held on 5th May, 2025 has examined the recently issued draft UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations 2025 which replace regulations from 2012. The Committee notes that there has been a considerable delay in finalising these draft regulations. It was only lately that these draft regulations have been issued after the intervention of the Supreme Court. The Committee in this regard recommends the following –

- i. The draft Regulations must explicitly include the harassment of students and other stakeholders from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in its definition of caste-based harassment, keeping with the Constitutional recognition of OBCs as Socially and Educational Backward Classes (SEBCs) under Articles 15(4) and 15(5) of the Indian Constitution;
- ii. The draft regulations must explicitly include disability as an axis of discrimination;
- iii. The Equity Committee envisioned by the draft Regulations has provisions for only one mandatory woman member and one mandatory member each from the SC and ST communities out of a strength of 10. This should be raised to correspond with the provision of 50% reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs in faculty and student positions. Accordingly, the Equity Committee must also draw more than half of its composition from the SC, ST, and OBC communities to ensure fair representation and effective decision-making;

- iv. The draft Regulations, unlike the 2012 Regulations, must positively identify instances of discrimination. Without such detail, it will be left to the discretion of the institute to decide whether a complaint is genuine or false. Accordingly, the Regulations must explicitly include a comprehensive list of discriminatory practices
- v. The draft Regulations must require an annual public disclosure of caste-based discrimination cases, mandatory sensitization programs for faculty and administrative staff, and adequate mental health support and legal aid in all HEIs.

(Para 41)

16. The Committee recommends that annual admissions reports outlining gender, caste, social, ethnic, rural-urban, national, and class background of students be submitted by all centrally funded institutions to the respective University's Academic and Executive Council.

(Para 42)

17. The Committee notes the ambitious goals of the NEP, both with regards to expansion of higher education to reach 50% GER by 2030, and the intensification of higher education with the move from a three-year-undergraduate program to a four-year-undergraduate program. The Committee notes that considerable infrastructure enhancement and faculty recruitment is required to meet these targets. In this context, the UGC and the Department's recent measures to restrict funding for capital projects in HEIs poses a challenge to achieving the goals of the NEP. The Committee is also concerned about the ability of the degree colleges to meet the requirements of the NEP and it feels that there exists mismatch between the current status of these colleges and the vision of the NEP which needs a comprehensive evaluation and a concrete response.

(Para 43)

18. The Committee notes that Universities need greater support in implementing Multiple Entry Multiple Exit because its implementation at a wide scale will be very difficult. The Committee also notes that Universities need greater support in drafting their curriculum to ensure that the one-year certificates and two-year diplomas issued under Multiple Entry Multiple Exit provide students with marketable skills within these timeframes.

(Para 44)

19. The Committee notes that the NEP encourages distance learning and online learning which is currently regulated by the UGC's Distance Education Bureau. However it notes that Universities not having A+ NAAC accreditation are not allowed to offer new online courses or science courses. The Committee recommends that the UGC re-evaluate this decision in consultation with the Universities and NAAC, since NAAC ratings dont exclusively check for the ability of an institute to offer distance and online education.

(Para 45)

20. During its study visit to Ladakh, the Committee was impressed with the academic, research, and entrepreneurship ecosystem at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Laddakh (HIAL), especially its success in implementing experiential education and learning rooted in local socio-cultural and ecological contexts. The Committee was concerned to learn that the UGC has not yet granted recognition to the Himalayan Institute

of Alternatives (HIAL) and that the matter has been pending for many years now. The Committee observed that HIAL has achieved tremendous impact on the local community and received international fame through its ice stupas and other community engagement activities. Further, HIAL is rather exemplary in its implementation of the NEP 2020 which calls for such experiential and project-based learning, community engagement, and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The Committee recommends that the UGC should consider granting recognition to HIAL. Moreover, the Committee encourages the UGC and the Department to closely study the HIAL model and consider how it can be replicated elsewhere through Centres of Innovation in Education or other interventions.

(Para 46)

21. The Committee notes that there are several institutions of education situated within other Ministries – the Ministry of Culture, External Affairs, Railways, Textiles, Law, etc. The Committee notes that the effective implementation of the NEP 2020 requires close coordination with these Ministries and their institutes. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the UGC designate an official for close coordination with these institutions to support their take-up of the NEP 2020.

(Para 47)

22. The Committee notes that the UGC's Inter-University Center for Teacher Education in Varanasi has a building that has not yet been handed over to the institution by CPWD. The Committee recommends that the Department and UGC take steps to ensure smooth and early transition of the building. The Committee also recommends that the Inter-University Center work with BHU and other local educational institutions to offer degrees to its students.

(Para 48)

23. During its study visit to Varanasi, the Committee learnt that the filling of EWS positions in faculty is nearly-impossible for Associate Professor and Professor levels. The criteria for becoming a Professor is typically to be serving as Associate Professor and the criteria for an Associate Professor typically includes tenure as an Assistant Professor. In both cases, UGC pay-scales mean that the candidates serving as Assistant or Associate Professors will be earning more than Rs 8 lakhs, and therefore cannot qualify as EWS. Universities spend a lot of time and resources seeking applicants for such positions despite knowing that candidates will be impossible to find. In such a situation, the Committee recommends that the Ministry re-evaluate the implementation of EWS at the level of Associate Professor and Professor.

(Para 49)

24. The Committee notes that unlike the IIT and NIT faculty, the newly recruited faculty at Central Universities and other UGC-funded institutions do not receive seed grants at the beginning of their tenure for establishment and research expenditures. The Committee notes that such a facility is critical to enabling top performance for new faculty members since they would otherwise be reliant on project and research grants for the same which may take long periods of time to reach.

(Para 50)

25. The Committee notes that faculty and non-teaching positions at Central universities and other UGC-funded institutions are not eligible to receive benefits under the Unified

Pension Scheme (UPS). The Committee would recommend for their inclusion under the UPS scheme.

(Para 51)

26. The Committee reiterates its observation from Report 364 regarding the inadequacy of the current budget for the ICHR. The Committee re-emphasises the need to increase the budget for the Council given the critical functions it conducts.

(Para 66)

27. The Committee notes that the Junior Research Fellowship issued by the ICHR is limited to 80 students across the country. Further, the stipend is only Rs 17,600 – a figure which has not been revised in many years and which is inadequate given that the UGC's JRF is Rs 37,000 per month. Therefore, the Committee recommends an increase in the fellowship amount as well as to the number of students who receive the fellowship.

(Para 67)

28. The Committee notes that the ICHR is the only Research Council without a permanent campus of its own. Further, the current building where the ICHR is operating is tied up in ownership issues. The Committee recommends a speedy resolution of the matter and the establishment of a permanent campus for the ICHR.

(Para 68)

29. The Committee was informed of the proposal for additional regional centers of ICHR in Jammu and Kashmir, Varanasi, and the Northeast. The Committee notes that dedicated staff members and a physical office can help bring additional focus to the ICHR's efforts in these regions. At the same time, the Committee has previously observed that the current regional centers need to be better leveraged, with dedicated building, library, multi-media, and conference hall facilities. The Committee recommends that the Council and the Department consider the proposal for these new regional centers and in close consultation with local historians, students, and faculty members.

(Para 69)

30. The Committee was informed that the current Member Secretary of the ICHR is holding additional charge of Director(Research& Adminstration) in ICHR. The Committee is of the view that the practice of assigning additional charges needs to be avoided, especially for long periods of time. The Committee notes the need for the ICHR to support research which takes a subcontinent-wide view of history, given our inter-connected history.

(Para 70)

31. The Committee notes that the stipend under the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) issued by the ICPR is only Rs 17,500 – a figure which has not been revised in many years and which is inadequate given that the UGC's JRF is Rs 37,000 per month. Therefore, the Committee recommends an increase in the fellowship amount as well as the number of fellowship.

(Para 78)

32. The Committee was informed that a high-powered committee was set up in 2016-18 to examine the current functinoing of the ICPR and suggest ways in which it can be

improved. The Committee recommends that the Department should review the report of the Committee and evaluate the status of the report's implementation.

(Para 79)

33. The Committee notes that the Lucknow campus of the ICPR holds one of the largest libraries of philosophy in Asia but that it is currently severely under-utilised. The Committee recommends that the Council and the Department work together to enhance the library's utilization, including possibly creating residential fellowships to facilitate scholars seeking dedicated access to the library.

(Para 80)

34. The Committee recommends that the Council take up more projects which investigate traditions of philosophy in vernacular language, which has largely remained untapped.

(Para 81)

35. The Committee notes that there was no Council constituted between 2022 and 2024, and no accompanying Chairperson for the Committee. The Committee emphasises that such a situation should be avoided in the future.

(Para 82)

36. The Committee reiterates its observation made in its 364th Report that the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission have still not been implemented in ICSSR research institutes and regional centers. The Committee notes that the dimished pay scale makes recruitment of faculty members at the research institutes very challenging. The Committee therefore recommends the immediate implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission in the ICSSR research institutes and regional centers, and the implementation of the Eight Pay Commission at the appropriate time as well.

(Para 87)

37. The Committee notes that several State Governments – including but not limited to the Governments of Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Bihar – are implementing the Seventh Pay Commission for their share of funding for ICSSR Research Institutes. At a time when State Governments are rising to support these institutions, the Committee feels it becomes all the more pressing for the Union Ministry of Education to do the same.

(Para 88)

38. The Committee expresses its concern over the staffing of the ICSSR Research Institutes. At the Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) Chandigarh, only 7 of the 14 faculty positions are currently filled. At the Giri Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) in Lucknow, only 9 of the 18 faculty positions have currently been filled and of the 11 sanctioned research staff, only 1 position has been filled. No recruitments have reportedly taken place in the Giri institute since 2016. At Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (NCCDS) in Bhubaneshwar, there are only two serving faculty of 14 sanctioned positions. At the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (SPIESR) in Ahmedabad, there are only 5 faculty appointed against a sanctioned strength of 14 positions. Similarly, there are reports of promotions in ICSSR research institutions not happening on time.

(Para 89)

39. The Committee notes that the ICSSR's research institutes are typically funded by both ICSSR and the State Governments. The coordination between these two bodies needs to be strengthened. For instance, the Giri Institute of Development Studies in Lucknow is reportedly facing a 1.5-year time lag in the funds received from the State Government.

(Para 90)

40. The Committee expresses its concern over the non-appointment to leadership positions in ICSSR Research Institutes. For instance, NCCDS in Bhubaneshwar has not had a full-time Director in 5 years. CRRID in Chandigarh too has only had an Acting Director since 2018, in addition to having an Acting Secretary and an Acting Financial Advisor. SPIESR in Ahmedabad has reportedly had only an Acting Director for 15 years now. The Committee recommends that the ICSSR take all possible measures to encourage the appointment of full-time, fully empowered leaders to all research institutes.

(Para 91)

41. The Committee notes that in the recent past, grants for salary payments have been halted by the ICSSR for multiple research institutes. While funding has now resumed for all institutes, the Committee strongly emphasises that such non-payment of grants must be discouraged and if necessary, must come only after a thorough investigation and the issue of a notice to the institute.

(Para 92)

42. The Committee notes that ICSSR's research institutes have the potential to support high-quality teaching and research in universities and colleges. While some research institutes are offering PhDs in partnership with local universities, the ICSSR must encourage all institutes to do the same. Furthermore, the research institute's faculty can also be encouraged to teach courses in local Central and State Universities.

(Para 93)

43. The Committee notes that since December 2019, the position of the Chairperson for ICSSR has largely been vacant – with only one Chairperson appointed briefly between April 2022 and August 2023. The Committee strongly recommends that the Ministry look into the appointment of a full-time, fully empowered Chairman at the earliest and avoid such delays in appointments to the Chairperson role in the future.

(Para 94)

44. The Committee notes that the ICSSR has been entrusted with a very broad mandate to support social sciences research across the country. At a time when the NEP has set the ambitious target of 50% GER in higher educational institutions by 2030, it is critical that ICSSR expand in consonance with the same. Accordingly, the Ministry should seek to expand funding for the Council.

(Para 95)

45. The Committee notes that the ICSSR Doctoral Fellows get only Rs 20,000 per month, which is rather inadequate given that the UGC Junior Research Fellowship itself pays Rs 37,000 per month. The Committee therefore recommends an increase in the amount paid as stipend under the Doctoral Fellowships.

(Para 96)

46. The Committee notes that given its focus on social sciences research, the ICSSR has the capacity to work more closely with the NITI Aayog and other Government policymaking institutions. The Committee recommends that the Council look into setting up collaborations with such organisations to leverage the research undertaken by its scholars and research institutes into policy decisions.

(Para 97)

47. The Committee notes that the decision to conduct a caste census nationally, alongside the caste surveys in Bihar, Telangana, and other states, creates an opportunity to study unique and new data relating to the country's demographics and socio-economic conditions. The Committee notes that the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) Hyderabad, an ICSSR research institute, has worked with the Government of Telangana on the Socio-economic, Education, Employment, Political Caste Survey 2024 (SEEP). The ICSSR must seek more such opportunities for collaboration with the Government to assist with the analysis of such census and survey-related data.

(Para 98)

48. The Committee notes that in 2022, the Ministry had set up a committee to look into the implementation of Pay Commission for the ICSSR's research institutions and regional centers. The Committee has been informed that as of June 2025 no report in this matter has been issued. The Committee expresses its concern for this inordinate delay. The Committee recommends that the report should be submitted as soon as possible given that this matter has been pending for several years.

(Para 99)

49. The Committee notes that the Directors of the ICSSR Research Institutes used to be convened to meet regularly in the past. The Committee recommends that the practice be revived to enable greater collaboration and dissemination of best practices, etc among the institutes.

(Para 100)

50. During its study visit to Shimla in May 2025, the Committee found that the position of the Director, IIAS Shimla had been vacant since August 2021 – an issue that the Committee had raised in its 364th Report on the Demand for Grants (2025-2026) of the Department of Higher Education as well. The position has just been filled in August 2025. The committee underscores the need to fill up such vacancies expeditiously in future.

(Para 102)

51. In the same study visit, the Committee also found that the three-year tenure of the IIAS Society and the IIAS Governing Body had lapsed in December 2024. The Committee emphasises that the IIAS Society and the Governing Body must be reconstituted as soon as possible.

(Para 103)

52. The Committee noted that the IIAS currently has only 2 of the 5 National Fellows sanctioned. The Committee notes that to fulfill the vision of the institute's founding inspiration Shri Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Institute needs to consistently attract and retain top faculty. The Institute's inability to fill the sanctioned number of National Fellows - the most prestigious position at the Institute - compromises the ability of the institute to meet its potential.

(Para 104)

53. The Committee was informed that the Institute had been granted the Tagore Center as part of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary. However, only one of the four Tagore Fellows sanctioned was in office as of May 2025. Between 2020 and May 2025, only two Tagore Fellows had been designated whereas there should have been at least four Tagore Fellows every year. The annual international seminars envisioned as part of the IIAS's Tagore Center had not been held even once. The Committee noted that IIAS's inaugural Director Nihar Ranjan Ray himself was a biographer of Rabindranath Tagore. The Institute's inability to fully realise the vision and mission of the Tagore Center is therefore disappointing.

(Para 105)

54. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the contributions made by past Chairmen of the Foundation's Governing Board, Dr Karan Singh and Dr Kireet Joshi, whose stewardship and steadfast commitment has led to the preservation and nurturing of the character and vision of Auroville.

(Para 136)

55. The Committee notes with satisfaction the many achievements of Auroville since its inception and since the passage of the Auroville Act, 1988. The Committee notes that the UNESCO has passed at least six resolutions since 1966 to celebrate Auroville's ideals. The very first resolution, passed at the UNESCO's General Conference held in Paris in October-November 1966, notes that "*the project will contribute to international understanding and promotion of peace*" and "*commends it [the project] to those interested in UNESCO's ideals.*" The sixth resolution, adopted at the 18th plenary meeting on 13th November 2017, recognizes that "*Auroville is a successful and unique model project, proving the capacity of an international community, after almost 50 years of existence, to continue to live up to its initial founding ideas of peace and international harmony.*" It also notes that "*Auroville has developed into a centre of expertise in a wide range of fields, benefiting India*" and notes "*its success in sharing its experience and helping the development of its neighbouring rural population.*"

(Para 137)

56. The Committee notes that the Auroville Act (1988) is unique in that it governs a community, not just an institution. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the sixth UNESCO resolution explicitly appreciates the Government of India for passing the Auroville Foundation Act (1988) for the "*purpose of protecting and encouraging the development of Auroville.*"

(Para 138)

57. The Committee notes that the Act sets up three bodies for the governance and smooth functioning of Auroville – the Governing Board, the Residents' Assembly, and the International Advisory Council. While the Committee acknowledges the recent Court verdict that the Governing Board is supreme, the Committee emphasizes that the three institutions must work together in close coordination and harmony. The Governing Board should continue the practice of consultation and collaboration with the International Advisory Council and the Residents' Assembly before making any key decisions. The Committee observes that the objectives of the Auroville Foundation and the ideals of human unity enshrined in the Charter of Auroville can only be pursued with such an environment of constructive engagement.

(Para 139)

58. The Committee emphasises the distinctive nature of Auroville as a community and the critical importance of the Governing Board as the administrative body that oversees the community. The Committee notes that the mandate of the incumbent Governing Board has expired as of 5th October, 2025. The Committee emphasises the importance of reconstituting the Governing Board with immediacy upon the expiration of the Governing Board. It further notes that the Auroville Act specifically stipulates that members of the Board must have distinguished themselves by rendering “valuable service to Auroville” and “contributed significantly in activities that are being pursued or are envisaged to be promoted in Auroville, including activities relating to environment, afforestation, arts and crafts, industry, agriculture, humanities, sciences and integral yoga.”

(Para 140)

59. The Committee notes that Auroville is meant to have an autonomous character and that an empowered Residents’ Assembly is critical to the same since it is the only statutory body capable of representing the residents of Auroville. The Residents’ Assembly therefore must hold elections to the Working Committee regularly. To settle disputes and act as a check on the Residents’ Assembly and ensure its continued representativeness, the Foundation may consider setting up a standing panel composed of former members of the Working Committee. This panel can decide on complaints against the Working Committee and make recommendations to the Governing Body about the action that is necessary.

(Para 141)

60. The Committee notes that the Ministry has not designated an official as full-time Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, and that for over a year, the position is being held as an additional charge. The Committee’s general stance has been that the practice of assigning additional charges needs to be avoided, especially for long periods of time.

(Para 142)

61. The Committee welcomes the Auroville Foundation’s MoU with IIT Madras which paves the way for setting up a sustainability campus. However, the Committee notes that the land for the campus is supposed to come at the expense of the Annapurna Farms currently existing at the location. Food sustainability is an integral part of the vision of Auroville and the loss of farmland will certainly impact the long-term ability of Auroville to sustain itself. Further, Annapurna Farms is currently engaging in organic farming, which was central to The Mother’s vision for the community. The Committee recommends that Annapurna farms should not be disturbed and that alternative sites nearby should be found to situate the sustainability campus.

(Para 143)

62. In the same vein, the Committee is of the view that all land transfers in service of the Master Plan should be implemented in full transparency and consultation with all stakeholders, including the Resident’s Assembly and the International Advisory Council.

(Para 144)

63. The Committee notes that the Auroville Master Plan 2025 was approved in 2001 by the Ministry of Human Resources Development and notified in the Gazette in 2010. In view of the time that has passed in the interim, the Committee recommends that the Master Plan be implemented in close consultation with the Resident’s Assembly and other stakeholders

in Auroville, with changes as may be required. The Committee also notes that as per current regulations, all urban development master plans in the state of Tamil Nadu are to be submitted to the State Urban Planning Department. The Committee recommends that the Foundation do so as well in compliance with these regulations.

(Para 145)

64. The Committee recommends that any amendments to the Auroville Act or the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997 should be developed through a consensual process, with the unanimous support of all three statutory bodies – the Governing Board, the International Advisory Council, and the Resident's Assembly.

(Para 146)

65. The Committee notes that the Auroville community has achieved many successes in its goals of achieving self-sufficiency. The Matrimandir at the center of Auroville is a testament to the ability of the community to self-finance and self-direct very ambitious projects. The Committee recommends that the Foundation continue this spirit of self-sustenance and minimize the involvement of the Central Public Works Department and other bodies in the conduct of its works.

(Para 147)

66. The Committee recommends that the Government may consider amending the *Auroville Foundation Act, 1988* to provide for recognition of Auroville as an Institution of National Importance, keeping in view that UNESCO has already adopted multiple resolutions since 1966 endorsing the project and acknowledging its contribution towards international understanding and the promotion of peace.

(Para 148)

67. The Committee recommends that the term of office of the Secretary to the Auroville Foundation should be made co-terminous with that of the Governing Board (i.e. four years). This will ensure better institutional continuity and coordination between the Governing Board and the administrative machinery of the Foundation.

(Para 149)

68. The Committee notes that Auroville Foundation receives partial funding from the Central Government in the form of annual grants, as stipulated by the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988. These grants are provided by the Ministry of Education to support the establishment, maintenance, and development of Auroville, the international cultural township. The Foundation also generates its own income, but government grants still remain a significant source of funding for its operations and projects. The Committee feels that instead of an annual grant, the foundation should be granted sufficient amount to sustain itself in future.

(Para 150)

69. The Committee notes that the international character of Auroville is not just a matter of pride but the very intent of Auroville, as evident in the founding Charter's declaration that "Auroville belongs to nobody in particular." The Committee notes that the Ministry of External Affairs has set up a special procedure for visa disbursal to Auroville residents, which is a necessary safeguard to preserve the international character of the community. The Committee emphasizes that the Auroville Foundation's role in the visa process must be speedy and independent of any considerations, and that the Foundation should continue to keep the five-year visa as the norm for all residents. As the Honourable

Prime Minister has noted in his visit to Auroville, “[A]nyone who is willingly in service of the Divine Consciousness is entitled to live in Auroville.

(Para 151)
