

Institutions of Eminence (IoE) Scheme, Objective, Features

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India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world, yet only a limited number of Indian universities have achieved global academic recognition. To transform select institutions into world-class centres of teaching and research, the Government of India launched the Institutions of Eminence Scheme.

About Institutions of Eminence Scheme

The Institutions of Eminence Scheme is a higher education reform initiative **launched by the University Grants Commission** in **2017** to develop world-class educational institutions in India.

- The scheme was first **announced in the Union Budget 2016**.
- The Institutions of Eminence (IoE) recognition status was formally set up in 2017 by the **University Grants Commission** (UGC).
- It **aims to establish 20 globally competitive institutions in the country, including 10 public and 10 private institutions**.

- Under the scheme, selected institutions are granted the status of “Institution of Eminence”. These institutes are **granted greater academic, administrative, and financial autonomy to improve their global ranking and research capabilities.**
- **Funding:** Public institutions receive a grant of up to ₹1,000 crore; no funding is awarded to private institutions.
- **Regulatory framework:** UGC (Declaration of Government Institutions as Institutions of Eminence) Guidelines, 2017 for public institutions; UGC (IoE Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017 for private institutions.
- The scheme required institutions selected under the initiative to obtain accreditation within five years of notification.
- The scheme includes a **greenfield category** for new institutions that are yet to become operational. Greenfield institutions are given three years to establish themselves before final consideration for Institution of Eminence status. After this period, the Empowered Expert Committee evaluates their performance before granting Institution of Eminence status.

Institutions of Eminence Scheme Objectives

The Institutions of Eminence scheme seeks to transform Indian higher education through excellence, innovation, and international competitiveness.

- **Promoting Excellence in Higher Education:** The scheme aims to develop institutions that provide world-class teaching, research, and innovation.
- **Encouraging Advanced Research:** Institutions are expected to strengthen interdisciplinary research and contribute to knowledge creation.
- **Achieving Global Recognition:** The long-term objective is to place Indian institutions among the top 100 universities globally.
- **Enhancing Innovation Capacity:** The scheme promotes innovation ecosystems, incubation centres, and industry-academia partnerships.
- **Improving Academic Quality:** The initiative seeks to enhance the quality of teaching, faculty development, and research standards.
- **Strengthening India’s Knowledge Economy:** World-class universities are essential for technological advancement, economic growth, and human capital development.

Institutions of Eminence Scheme Features

The Institutions of Eminence Scheme provides extensive autonomy and flexibility to selected institutions to improve their global competitiveness.

- **Greater Academic Autonomy:** Institutions are given freedom to design courses, introduce new programmes, and revise curriculum structures.
- **Administrative and Financial Flexibility:** Selected institutions enjoy greater flexibility in governance, administration, and financial management.

- **Freedom to Determine Fee Structure:** Institutions with Institution of Eminence status can decide their own fee structures with minimal regulatory restrictions.
- **Enhanced Global Collaborations:** Institutions can collaborate more freely with international universities and research organisations.
- **Permission to Recruit Foreign Faculty:** Selected institutions can recruit international faculty members and researchers to improve academic standards.
- **Opportunity to Admit International Students:** Institutions are encouraged to increase enrolment of foreign students and strengthen internationalisation.
- **Support for Research and Innovation:** The scheme promotes advanced research, patents, innovation ecosystems, and interdisciplinary studies.
- **Freedom to Open Offshore Campuses:** Institutions can establish campuses outside India subject to regulatory approvals.

Eligibility Criteria for Institution of Eminence Status

Institutions seeking Institution of Eminence status are selected on the basis of their academic reputation, research performance, and global competitiveness. Only institutions that have secured positions in recognised national or international rankings are considered for the scheme.

- **Eligible institutions should generally be:**
 - Among the top 50 institutions in their respective category under the National Institutional Ranking Framework
 - Among the top 500 institutions in internationally recognised rankings such as QS World University Rankings or Times Higher Education Rankings
- If vacancies remain after evaluating existing institutions, newly proposed institutions under the **greenfield category** may also be considered.

Institutions of Eminence in India

The original plan was to develop 20 world-class institutions consisting of 10 public and 10 private institutions.

However, as of 2026, only 12 institutions have been officially notified under the scheme.

Public Institutions Notified:

- Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru
- Indian Institute of Technology Bombay
- Indian Institute of Technology Delhi
- Indian Institute of Technology Madras
- Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur
- Banaras Hindu University
- University of Delhi
- University of Hyderabad

Private Institutions Notified:

- BITS Pilani
- Manipal Academy of Higher Education
- O.P. Jindal Global University
- Shiv Nadar University

Greenfield Category: Jio Institute received a Letter of Intent under the greenfield category but has not yet been formally notified as an Institution of Eminence.

Significance of the Institutions of Eminence Scheme

The scheme is an important step toward strengthening India's higher education and research ecosystem.

- **Improving Global Academic Reputation:** The scheme aims to improve India's presence in global university rankings.
- **Strengthening Research and Innovation:** Enhanced autonomy and funding can improve research productivity and innovation capacity.
- **Attracting International Talent:** Institutions can attract foreign faculty members, researchers, and students.
- **Reducing Brain Drain:** Improved educational quality can encourage Indian students to pursue higher education within the country.
- **Supporting Knowledge-Based Economy:** World-class universities contribute significantly to scientific advancement and economic development.
- **Promoting Industry-Academia Collaboration:** The scheme encourages partnerships between universities and industries for innovation and skill development.
- **Enhancing Internationalisation of Education:** Greater global collaboration can improve academic standards and international exposure.

Institutions of Eminence Scheme Challenges

Despite its ambitious goals, the Institutions of Eminence Scheme faces several structural and implementation challenges.

- **Slow Progress in Achieving Targets:** Only 12 institutions have been formally notified despite the original target of 20 institutions.
- **Limited Improvement in Global Rankings:** Only a few Institutions of Eminence have significantly improved their global ranking positions.
- **Funding Constraints:** Public institutions may face delays in receiving adequate financial support.
- **Faculty Shortages:** Many institutions continue to face shortages of highly qualified faculty and researchers.
- **Inequality in Higher Education:** The scheme may widen the gap between elite institutions and ordinary universities.
- **Concerns Regarding Selection Process:** Some institutions faced criticism regarding transparency and evaluation criteria during selection.

- **Research Infrastructure Deficits:** Several universities still lack advanced laboratories, research facilities, and innovation ecosystems.
- **Exclusion of Important Institutions:** The exclusion of reputed institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University has generated debate regarding selection priorities.

Way Forward

- **Increase Investment in Higher Education:** India should increase public expenditure on research, innovation, and university infrastructure.
- **Strengthen Research Ecosystems:** Advanced laboratories, research grants, and innovation centres should be expanded.
- **Improve Faculty Recruitment and Development:** Institutions should attract high-quality faculty through better incentives and global exposure.
- **Promote Interdisciplinary Research:** Universities should encourage collaboration across disciplines to solve complex national and global challenges.
- **Expand International Collaborations:** Partnerships with globally reputed universities should be strengthened.
- **Balance Excellence with Inclusivity:** Higher education reforms should promote both academic excellence and equitable access.

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