

Accreditation to varsities could soon be given by private players

Neelam Pandey

neelam.pandey@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Private sector players may soon get powers to grant accreditation to universities, colleges and other institutions of higher learning in the country. At present, this function is vested solely with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous institution under the UGC's jurisdiction.

Official sources said this step could be taken to end the NAAC's "monopoly" and ensure transparency in the process.

Government think-tank NITI

THE MOVE WAS INITIATED AFTER COMPLAINTS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN THE ACCREDITATION EMERGED FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS

Aayog had recently asked the human resource development (HRD) ministry to allow accreditation by reputed private players. Sources said the government was likely to accept its recommendation.

"Just like NAAC, which is a government body, there will be other private agencies that carry out the work in keeping with strict protocols prescribed by the UGC. Universities and institutions will be free to choose which agency they want to approach," a senior HRD official said.

"This will bring in greater transparency and reduce the time taken for accreditation," the official added.

If the recommendation comes through, the task of identifying potential private accreditation agencies will begin soon, he added.

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NAAC had suspended its application process in March to carry out an overhaul of its grading system. The move was initiated after complaints of subjectivity in the accreditation process – besides alleged corruption and misconduct by peer teams during field visits – emerged from various quarters.

"At present, we rope in teachers and professors from different institutions to carry out inspections for accreditation work. This, naturally, affects their normal routine. As there is an urgent need for independent assessors who specialise in conducting accreditation work, private players should be given an opportunity. However, this must be done under a strict regulatory framework to ensure that quality is maintained," said former cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian, who has prepared the draft report on the new education policy.

A++ is the highest grade currently being provided by NAAC, which accredits universities, autonomous colleges, affiliated/constituent colleges and scientific institutions, among others. Following complaints of corruption, weightage of 80% has been proposed for self-reported data