



## UGC on University Exams

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### Why in News

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The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** objected to Maharashtra and Delhi governments employing the **Disaster Management Act, 2005** to cancel the examinations of students amid the **Covid-19** pandemic.

### Key Points

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- **Background:**

- The UGC had directed that final year examinations of Universities must be conducted by September-end in online or offline mode.
  - The UGC **Guidelines on Examinations and Academic Calendar for Universities in view of Covid-19 Pandemic** were recently revised.
  - The new guidelines allow students to opt for **offline or online or the “blended”** manner in which students can alternate between online and physical modes of attending the exams.
- However, many States/UTs like Delhi, Maharashtra and Punjab announced cancellation of these examinations
  - While **Delhi** has cited ‘the reality of digital divide as a reason for scrapping university final year examination’, states like **Maharashtra** have used Disaster Management Act for the same.
- The UGC is calling ‘**cancellation of examination**’ a populist move which may undermine the future of higher education in India.

- **Arguments For Conducting Examination:**

- The UGC argued that the conduct of examinations was entirely within the domain of the UGC which is a **statutory body**, as per the **UGC Act**.
  - The **University Grants Commission Act, 1956** makes provision for the co-ordination and determination of standards in Universities and for that purpose, provides for establishment of UGC.
  - Under this Act, the **determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in Universities** fall under the ambit of power and functions of UGC.
- Higher education is on the **concurrent list**.
  - The **42<sup>nd</sup> amendment Act, 1976** shifted Education from State list to Concurrent List, empowering both the central and state government to make rules on Education.
  - Therefore, **UGC and AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education)** directives have to be implemented in this case.

AICTE is the statutory body and the national-level council for technical education in the country.
- As the UGC said, **the courts of law have a limited role** in framing policy on academic issues.

- **Limitations of Conducting Examinations:**

- As **the teaching-learning process has been hampered** by the Covid-19 pandemic, the basis of assessment of learning by the students has been negated in the first hand.
- Many universities are not technically prepared for taking examinations in the online mode.
- The **reliance on written, subjective-type exams** for the evaluation of students is an archaic model of education which has been done away by many prestigious colleges around the globe, like the Oxford, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) or National Law Universities.
- At a time when the country is struggling with a global health and economic crisis, the pressure of exams may **negatively impact the physical and mental well-being** of the student.
- **Inequality of internet access** among the student fraternity, a lack of adequate **online study material**, and grievances of **students with disabilities** are also some of the shortcomings of taking examinations at this juncture.

## Way Forward

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- The **central and the state governments** should **act in partnership** to devise rules and regulations in order to impart quality education and create human resources with superior mental ability and adaptability.

- The education system must move **beyond numerically-defined academic success** and should take into account development of critical thinking, comparative and analytical modalities of instruction and meaningful, engaging classroom discussion and participation.
- It is clear in the light of this pandemic that **bridging the digital divide** in India is crucial for education to reach the last mile. Campaigns like **Digital India** can go a long way to end this inequality of access to the internet.

**Source: TH**