



## Promoting Foreign Universities in India

**For Prelims:** [University Grants Commission](#), [India's higher education sector](#), [National Education Policy 2020](#), [Gross Enrolment Ratio \(GER\)](#), [Study in India program](#)

**For Mains:** Opportunities & Challenges with the Advent of Foreign Universities in India, Key Reforms Taken in the Indian Higher Education System, Key Issues Associated with India's Higher Education System.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

The entry of foreign universities into India marks a significant shift in the country's **higher education landscape**. Encouraged by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and the **UGC (FHEI) Regulations, 2023**, this presents **both opportunities and challenges** for India's education ecosystem.

- While it offers opportunities for **global integration and academic excellence**, it also raises concerns about **equity, access, affordability, inclusivity, and alignment with national priorities**.

### Note

- **India is also expanding its global presence**, with **IIT Madras** opening a campus in **Zanzibar** and **IIT Delhi** establishing one in **Abu Dhabi**.

### University Grants Commission (UGC)

- UGC is a **statutory body** in India established in 1953 to **coordinate, determine, and maintain standards of higher education**.
- It was created by the Indian government through the **UGC Act of 1956**. The UGC's main functions include **providing recognition to universities, disbursing funds, and advising the government on matters related to higher education**.
- The **UGC headquarters** is located in **New Delhi**.

## What is Driving the Entry of Foreign Universities into India's Higher Education Sector?

- **India's Demographic & Economic Potential:** With over **50% of the population under the age of 30** and a **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education just under 30%**, India

offers a vast **untapped higher education market**.

- **Rising incomes, a growing middle class, English proficiency, and increasing aspirations for international education** make India an attractive destination for foreign universities.
- **Global Push for Diversification:** Universities in the **UK, Australia, and Canada**, where international students comprise **approximately one third** of total enrolments are facing **stagnating domestic enrolments and declining public funding**.
  - Recent **visa restrictions and enrolment caps** in these countries have pushed institutions to **explore new, high-potential markets like India to sustain growth**.
- **Revenue Diversification & Global Footprint:** Setting up campuses in India (e.g., **GIFT City, Navi Mumbai**) allows foreign universities to **diversify revenue, reduce dependency on outbound mobility, and offer affordable international degrees while expanding global visibility**.
- **Collaboration with Indian Institutions:** India already hosts **globally ranked institutions** (e.g., **IIT Bombay, IISc Bangalore, Delhi University**).
  - Foreign universities can **partner with these colleges** to open **joint campuses**, using **existing infrastructure** instead of building from scratch. This model ensures **faster entry, lower investment**, and strengthens **academic collaboration**.
  - **Eg: Deakin University** (Australia) has partnered with **IIM Bangalore** prior to launching its campus in **GIFT City**.

## What are the Benefits for India from Foreign Universities Entering its Higher Education Sector?

- **Global Education Access:** Foreign universities offer **internationally benchmarked curricula, globally recognised degrees, and experienced faculty** within India.
  - This allows students to access **high-quality education** without the burden of **high overseas costs, visa hurdles, and living expenses**, thereby promoting **affordability and educational inclusion**.
- **Brain Drain and Forex Retention:** India saw a **rise in outbound students from 5.8 lakh in 2019 to 9 lakh in 2023**, with over **75% intending to settle abroad**.
  - Domestic foreign campuses can provide similar academic value at home, thereby **retaining talent** and saving significant **foreign exchange outflow**.
- **Research and Academic Reforms:** Collaboration with foreign universities can promote **joint research centres, faculty exchanges, and governance reforms**, enhancing **academic standards**, boosting **research output**, and strengthening **innovation and excellence** in Indian HEIs.
- **Industry Skills and Employability:** Foreign universities offer **industry-aligned programs** with emphasis on **practical learning, internships, and entrepreneurship**, helping bridge the **skill gap** and enhancing the **employability** of Indian graduates in both **domestic and global markets**.
- **Mutual Facilitation & Strategic Diplomacy:** India can negotiate **reciprocal facilitation**, offering **land, regulatory support, and infrastructure assistance**, in return for helping Indian institutions **establish campuses abroad**, particularly in **Gulf nations and Europe**.
  - This would **enhance educational diplomacy**, promote **internationalisation of Indian higher education**, and strengthen **soft power**.
- **Positioning India as a Global Education Hub:** With **52% of the population under 30**, a **tech-savvy, English-speaking youth**, and strategic location, India is well-positioned to become an **international education hub**.
  - Hosting foreign campuses promotes **cross-border education**, attracts students from **South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East**, enhances **India's global academic presence**, and fosters **healthy competition** for top HEIs like **AIIMS, IIMs, and IITs**, paving the way for **India's own Ivy League**.

## What are the Key Challenges Related to Foreign Universities Campuses in India?

- **Affordability and Equity:** Foreign branch campuses may charge **high tuition fees**, making them accessible mainly to the **wealthy elite**.
  - This risks **widening socio-economic inequality** in higher education, potentially **excluding talented students** from **economically weaker sections**, and undermines the **NEP 2020 goal of inclusive access to quality education**.
- **Limited Short-Term Systemic Impact:** Though foreign universities are a major reform step, only a few campuses with limited students will open in the near term.
  - So, their effect on improving **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** and overall education system will be **small and gradual**.
- **Commercialisation & Sustainability Challenges:** Foreign institutions may **prioritise profit over academic integrity**, leading to **marketisation of education** and potential **quality dilution** without strong regulation.
  - Experiences from **China, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf** show that **low enrolments, high costs, and local misalignment** often led to **campus closures**.
- **Regulatory and Infrastructure Barriers:** Despite enabling frameworks like the **UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023**, foreign universities may still face challenges related to **land acquisition, taxation, labour laws, and infrastructure readiness** in general areas.
  - However, in **designated zones** like **GIFT City**, which offer **regulatory exemptions** and a more conducive business environment, these barriers are **significantly reduced**.
- **Cultural and Academic Disconnect:** Foreign universities may face challenges in adapting to India's **social, linguistic, and cultural context**.
  - Without effective **local integration**, through **relevant curricula, Indian faculty, and collaboration with local institutions**, they risk becoming **elitist, isolated campuses**, disconnected from **India's educational ecosystem and societal needs**.

### What are the Key Issues Associated with India's Higher Education System?

Click Here to Read: [Key Issues in India's Higher Education System](#)

### What Measures can be Adopted to Revitalise India's Higher Education System?

Click Here to Read: [Revitalise India's Higher Education System](#)

## What Should be the Strategy for Sustainable Collaboration with Foreign Universities in India?

- **Ensuring Inclusive Access:** To align with [NEP 2020](#), regulations must mandate **scholarships** and **affirmative inclusion measures** for students from **socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds**.
  - **Financial aid**, from either the **government** or institutions, is essential to promote **wider access** and uphold **social justice** in foreign campuses.
- **Flexible but Accountable Governance:** A **tiered and differentiated regulatory model** should offer **operational ease** to top-ranked global institutions while ensuring **strict oversight** on **academic quality, financial transparency, and ethical conduct**.
  - Foreign universities must remain accountable to **Indian laws, student rights, and anti-exploitation norms**.
- **Collaborative Research & Capacity Building:** Foreign universities should engage in **shared campuses, MoUs, joint research centres, and faculty development programs** with Indian institutions. The **UGC must promote such partnerships** to enhance **innovation, capacity building, and mutual learning**.
  - The government should encourage **foreign-Indian college collaborations** where Indian institutions provide **infrastructure support** and benefit from **global visibility**, while ensuring better **Indianisation** of foreign curricula.
  - In the long term, India must build its own **Ivy League-like institutions** with a **global**

**presence**, as seen in **IIT campuses in the Gulf and Africa**.

- **Local Relevance and Cultural Integration:** Foreign universities should align with **Indian educational values, linguistic diversity**, and **student needs** by **adapting curricula**, avoiding replication of home models, and offering **context-specific programs** that support **skill development** and the **knowledge economy**.

## Conclusion

The entry of foreign universities holds transformative potential for India's higher education sector. However, their success will depend on **adaptation to local contexts, affordable quality delivery**, and **collaboration with domestic institutions**. With the right **regulatory safeguards** and **visionary policies**, this initiative can strengthen India's position as a **global knowledge hub**.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Examine the opportunities and challenges associated with foreign universities establishing campuses in India.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims**

**Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)**

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Ans- (d)**

### **Mains**

**Q1.** How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. (2020)

**Q2.** Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. (2021)

