India

Overview of Higher Education System
The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world. There are 723 universities and 33,023 colleges in India (including 3982 colleges for women and distance teaching universities)\(^1\). In total, approximately 16.98 million students are enrolled in a university or college, and 3.75 million in a distance teaching institution. In 2010/2011 the number of female students enrolled at all levels was 71 for every 100 male students enrolled. The Government has set a target of increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 25.2% by the end of 2017 and to 30% by 2020\(^2\).

While higher education is a shared responsibility of the Central Government and the States, the coordination and determination of standards is the constitutional obligation of the Central Government. A large number of statutory bodies exist in the higher education sector (for example, the University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)). To improve coordination among this large number of bodies, the Department of Higher Education is advocating for the creation of a National Commission of Higher Education and Research.

A number of Foreign Educational Institutions operate in India, however, there is no comprehensive and effective policy for regulating foreign education providers which makes assessment and prevention of malpractices difficult. The Government of India, through the AICTE, has brought out regulations for entry and operation of foreign universities/institutions imparting technical education in India. The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill was introduced in 2010 and is pending approval.

According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2012) the number of foreign students studying in India is approx. 40,000. A majority of these students comes from neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Nepal, and Bhutan. In 2012, 200,261 students from India were studying abroad.

Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications
The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) is the nodal agency for granting academic equivalence to degrees awarded by accredited foreign universities/institutions. AIU has brought out a number of publications, including the ‘Universities Handbook’; a comprehensive publication that contains information on all universities and programmes in India. It is available at India Missions abroad for public reference and information as well as for purchasing online.

The publication ‘Equivalence of Foreign Degrees’ lists foreign qualifications recognised by AIU. Equivalence is established on a case-by-case basis. Foreign qualifications that are not included in the publication are assessed on a case-by-case basis. If eligibility requirements, course duration and curriculum are equal to that of Indian universities, AIU grants equivalence. The AIU does not grant equivalence to degrees obtained from foreign universities operating in

\(^1\) MHRD Annual Report (2011-12) [www.mhrd.gov.in](http://www.mhrd.gov.in) UGC Annual Report 2010-11 [www.ugc.ac.in](http://www.ugc.ac.in)

India. Only degrees gained through programmes pursued full time on the Campus of the University of its origin are assessed for equivalence.

2-year fast-track Bachelor Degrees are typically not accorded equivalence, nor are Master Degree programs that are less than 2 years in duration. Diploma Level programmes and qualifications obtained through online and distance learning are not awarded equivalence by the AIU. AIU does not grant equivalence for degrees in fields such as medicine, nursing, dentistry, homoeopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, law, and veterinary and animal husbandry. The AIU accords equivalence to Secondary education qualifications obtained in most parts of the world, enabling most foreign students to enrol at the Bachelor level in India.

Issues and Challenges Concerning Foreign Qualifications Recognition
In the process of screening, national institutions express reservations in regards to three major issues: Inconsistency in the levels and structure of the different national systems of higher education; lack of appropriate mechanisms that assure the quality of educational provisions in some countries; and absence of a reliable mechanism or nodal agencies that can be referred to on mutual recognition issues.

The creation of National Higher Education Qualifications Frameworks (NHEQFs) with modular courses which allow credit transfers both nationally and among regional networks is essential. This is a challenge as India is still developing a NHEQF. However, after its development, an Indian NHEQF can be aligned to suit NQFs in other regions - thereby facilitating global academic mobility.

Progress towards ratification of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention
India has recognised the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted at the Conference of States in Bangkok in 1983. The ratification of the 2011 Convention is yet to take place.

Commitment to Information Sharing Mechanisms
UGC and AICTE maintain an updated database on higher and technical education in India. Official notification of NIC or any similar organisation to function as the designated body is yet to be officially undertaken. India is yet to upload information on UNESCO managed web-portals. However, India has consistently provided data in prescribed formats to databases maintained by UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Further, the websites such as the MHRD, UGC, AICTE and AIU contain updated information on relevant information, such as the names of competent authorities and list of approved/unapproved institutions, etc.


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Criteria and Procedures for Assessment

Association of Indian Universities (AIU)
The nodal agency for granting academic equivalence to degrees awarded by the accredited foreign universities/institutions.

Equivalence Certificate
Students with foreign qualifications are required to obtain an Equivalence Certificate from the AIU. The application form for the equivalence certificate is available for download on the AIU webpage.

The form also lists all documents required by the AIU for processing.

Important Publications

Equivalence of Foreign Degrees
Contains details of equivalence accorded to foreign qualification by the AIU as well as a mechanism for granting equivalence to foreign qualifications.

Universities Handbook
Contains information on all universities and programmes in India.

Both publications are available through the AIU website.