



## National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

**For Prelims:** National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), University Grants Commission (UGC), Paramarsh, All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020-2021.

**For Mains:** Current Accreditation Criteria in India, Challenges Related to India's Higher Education System.

### Why in News?

Recently, the [National Assessment and Accreditation Council \(NAAC\)](#) has been facing allegations of **irregularities in its functioning**.

### What is NAAC?

- **About:**
  - Established in 1994, it is an autonomous body under the [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#) responsible for assessing the quality of **higher educational institutions in India**.
- **Functions of NAAC:**
  - Through a multi-layered assessment process, it **awards grades ranging from A++ to C** based on parameters such as **curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research and financial well-being**.
- **Allegations:**
  - The former chairperson of NAAC's executive committee resigned after alleging that **malpractices were leading to questionable grades** being awarded to some institutions.
  - An inquiry commissioned found **irregularities in the IT system and allocation of assessors**.
    - The inquiry also highlighted that nearly **70% of experts from the pool of around 4,000 assessors** have not **received any opportunity to make site visits**.
  - As of **January 2023**, out of the 1,113 universities and 43,796 colleges in the [All India Survey on Higher Education \(AISHE\), 2020-2021](#), only 418 universities and 9,062 colleges were NAAC-accredited.

### What are the Current Accreditation Criteria in India?

- **Criteria:**
  - Currently, only institutes that are at least **6 years old or from where at least two batches of students have graduated** can apply for **accreditation**, which is valid for 5 years.
- **Accreditation Mandate:**
  - Accreditation by NAAC is **voluntary**, though many circulars have been issued by the UGC urging institutions to undergo assessment.
- **Efforts to Expedite Accreditation:**
  - The **UGC** launched a scheme named '[Paramarsh](#)' in **2019** to mentor institutes aspiring to get accredited.

- NAAC explored the possibility of issuing **Provisional Accreditation for Colleges (PAC) to one-year-old institutes.**
- The [National Education Policy \(2020\)](#) has set an ambitious target of getting all higher educational institutes to obtain the **highest level of accreditation** over the next 15 years.

## What are the Other Challenges in India's Higher Education System?

- **Limited Access:** Despite efforts to **increase access to higher education**, many students from **marginalised communities** still face barriers to entry, including financial constraints and **lack of educational opportunities.**
  - Especially, the number of students in the **Persons with Disabilities** category **dropped in 2020-21 to 79,035 from 92,831 in 2019-20.**
- **Gender Inequality:** Women continue to face **significant barriers to accessing higher education in India**, including social and cultural biases and a lack of support systems.
  - According to **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020-2021**, the female enrolment in higher education programmes was **49% of total enrolments in 2020-21.**
- **Employability Issues:** Despite having a large number of graduates, **many students in India struggle to find employment** due to a lack of practical skills and industry-relevant education.
  - Also, **India lags behind many other countries in terms of research output**, and there is a **lack of a research culture** in many higher education institutions.

## Way Forward

- **Promote Digital Learning:** The use of [digital technology](#) can help make education more **accessible, cost-effective, and efficient.**
  - Institutions should invest in digital infrastructure and provide training to students and faculty to adapt to new technologies.
- **Increase Accreditation:** The accreditation process should be made more transparent and accessible to encourage more institutions to seek accreditation.
  - The government should also **ensure that the accreditation process is fair and free from corruption.**
- **Promote International Collaborations:** International collaborations can help **improve the quality of education and research in India.**
  - Institutions should partner with foreign institutions to **exchange knowledge, expertise, and resources.**

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

### Prelims

**Q. What is the aim of the programme 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan'? (2017)**

**(a)** Achieving 100% literacy by promoting collaboration between voluntary organisations and the government's education system and local communities.

**(b)** Connecting institutions of higher education with local communities to address development challenges through appropriate technologies.

**(c)** Strengthening India's scientific research institutions in order to make India a scientific and technological power.

**(d)** Developing human capital by allocating special funds for health care and education of rural and urban poor, and organising skill development programmes and vocational training for them.

**Ans: (b)**

**Source: IE**

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