UGC-NET Paper I Unit X: Higher Education System – Notes

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1. Institutions of Higher Learning in Ancient India

Education in ancient India was imparted through the **Gurukula** system (residential, teacher-centred, oral tradition) and later through large monastic universities, mainly Buddhist.

Institution	Location (present day)	Key facts
Takshashila (Taxila)	Near Rawalpindi, Pakistan	Among the oldest centres; famous for medicine, law, military science; associated with Chanakya, Panini and Jivaka; no central administration — teachers taught independently
Nalanda	Bihar	Founded by Kumaragupta I (Gupta dynasty, 5th century CE); residential; huge library 'Dharmaganja'; entrance test by gatekeeper-scholars (dwarapanditas); visited by Xuanzang and Yijing; destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khalji (c. 1193)
Vikramashila	Bhagalpur, Bihar	Founded by the Pala king Dharmapala (late 8th century); centre of Tantric Buddhism; Atisha Dipankara taught here
Vallabhi	Gujarat	Maitraka dynasty; centre of Hinayana Buddhism and secular subjects
Odantapuri	Bihar	Founded by Pala king Gopala
Somapura Mahavihara	Bangladesh	Founded by Dharmapala; UNESCO World Heritage Site
Jagaddala	Bangladesh	Pala period
Kanchi, Nadia, Mithila	Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Bihar	Later centres of Sanskrit and Nyaya learning

Nalanda University was re-established by an Act of Parliament in 2010 near the ancient site in Rajgir, Bihar.

2. Evolution of Higher Education before Independence

Year	Event
1835	Macaulay's Minute — English as the medium of instruction
1854	**Wood's Despatch** — called the 'Magna Carta of English education in India'; recommended universities on the London model
1857	Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras established
1882	Hunter Commission (Indian Education Commission)
1904	Indian Universities Act under Lord Curzon (based on Raleigh Commission, 1902)
1917–19	Sadler Commission (Calcutta University Commission)
1929	Hartog Committee
1944	Sargent Plan (post-war educational development)

3. Higher Learning and Research after Independence

Year	Commission / policy	Key points
1948–49	University Education Commission (Dr S. Radhakrishnan)	Recommended a University Grants Commission; rural universities; 180 working days
1953 / 1956	UGC inaugurated on 28 December 1953; made statutory by the UGC Act, 1956	Coordination, determination and maintenance of standards; grants to universities
1964–66	Education Commission (Dr D.S. Kothari)	10+2+3 structure; spend 6% of GDP on education; 'destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms'
1968	First National Policy on Education	Based on Kothari Commission
1986	Second National Policy on Education	Revised in 1992 with a Programme of Action; set up NAAC and open universities
1990	Acharya Ramamurti Committee	Review of NPE 1986
2005–09	National Knowledge Commission (Sam Pitroda)	Expansion, excellence and inclusion
2009	Yash Pal Committee	Renovation and rejuvenation of higher education; recommended a single regulator
2013	Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)	Funding for state higher education institutions
2020	**National Education Policy 2020** (Dr K. Kasturirangan committee)	See below

Key features of NEP 2020 for higher education

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target of 50% by 2035.
- Multidisciplinary universities and colleges; Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs).
- Undergraduate degree of 3 or 4 years with multiple entry and exit (certificate after 1 year, diploma after 2, degree after 3, honours/research after 4).
- Academic Bank of Credits (ABC).
- A single overarching regulator, the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, with four verticals: NHERC (regulation), NAC (accreditation), HEGC (funding) and GEC (standard setting).
- National Research Foundation (NRF) — established as the Anusandhan National Research Foundation by an Act of 2023.
- Promotion of Indian languages, internationalisation, online and digital education, and phasing out of the affiliation system.

Research bodies: CSIR (1942), ICSSR (1969), ICHR (1972), ICPR (1977), DST (1971), DBT (1986), ICMR, ICAR.

4. Oriental, Conventional and Non-conventional Learning Programmes

Type	Meaning	Examples
Oriental	Traditional Indian knowledge systems and classical languages	Sanskrit universities, Vedic studies, Pali and Prakrit, Persian and Arabic (madrasas), Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani
Conventional	Regular, campus-based, face-to-face programmes	Universities and affiliated colleges offering BA, BSc, MA, PhD
Non-conventional	Flexible, learner-centred delivery outside the regular classroom	Open and distance learning (ODL), correspondence courses, online degrees, MOOCs

Open and distance learning milestones

- Correspondence courses began at the University of Delhi (1962).
- First open university in India: Andhra Pradesh Open University, Hyderabad (1982), now Dr B.R. Ambedkar Open University.
- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in 1985 and is the largest open university.
- The Distance Education Bureau of UGC now regulates ODL and online programmes.
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5. Professional, Technical and Skill-based Education

Area	Institutions and regulators
Engineering and technology	IITs (first: Kharagpur, 1951; IIT Act 1961), NITs, IIITs; AICTE (set up 1945, statutory 1987)
Management	IIMs (first: Calcutta, 1961)
Medicine	AIIMS (1956); National Medical Commission (2020) replaced the Medical Council of India
Teacher education	National Council for Teacher Education (statutory from 1995)
Law	Bar Council of India; National Law Schools (NLSIU Bengaluru, 1987)
Agriculture	ICAR and agricultural universities
Architecture, pharmacy	Council of Architecture, Pharmacy Council of India

Skill development

- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), 2008.
- National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), 2013 — 10 levels.
- Skill India Mission and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), 2015.
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2014.
- B.Voc degrees and community colleges under UGC; NEP 2020 aims to integrate vocational education into mainstream education.

6. Value Education and Environmental Education

Value education develops moral, ethical, social and spiritual values such as truth, non-violence, compassion, integrity and respect for diversity. Gandhian values, constitutional values and professional ethics are emphasised. UGC has issued guidelines such as *Mulya Pravah* (2019) on human values and professional ethics in higher education institutions.

Environmental education: In *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India* (1991), the Supreme Court directed that environmental education be made compulsory at all levels. Following this, UGC introduced a compulsory undergraduate course on environmental studies (from 2003-04). Its aims are awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation for sustainable development.

7. Policies, Governance and Administration

Constitutional provisions

- Education was moved from the State List to the **Concurrent List** by the 42nd Amendment (1976).
- Union List Entry 66: coordination and determination of standards in higher education and research.
- Article 21A (86th Amendment, 2002): free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14.
- Articles 29 and 30: cultural and educational rights of minorities.

Types of universities and institutions

Type	Established by
Central university	Act of Parliament
State university	Act of State Legislature
Private university	State Act
Deemed-to-be university	Declared by the Central Government under Section 3 of the UGC Act
Institution of National Importance	Act of Parliament (IITs, IIMs, AIIMS, NITs)
Institution of Eminence	Scheme (2017) to develop world-class institutions with greater autonomy

University governance

- **Visitor:** the President of India for central universities.
- **Chancellor:** usually the Governor for state universities.
- **Vice-Chancellor:** the principal academic and executive officer.
- **Court / Senate:** the supreme governing body.
- **Executive Council / Syndicate:** the main executive body.
- **Academic Council:** the highest academic body (courses, syllabi, examinations).
- Others: Finance Committee, Boards of Studies, Faculties, Registrar, Controller of Examinations.

Quality assurance and ranking

- **NAAC** (National Assessment and Accreditation Council), Bengaluru, 1994 — accredits institutions.
- **NBA** (National Board of Accreditation) — accredits technical programmes.
- **NIRF** (National Institutional Ranking Framework) — launched in 2015; first rankings in 2016.
- **AISHE** (All India Survey on Higher Education) — annual data on institutions, enrolment and GER. GER (18–23 age group) was 28.4% in AISHE 2021-22.
- **IQAC** (Internal Quality Assurance Cell) in every accredited institution.