



Research Paper

# Critical Analysis of Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025: Teachers' Perspective

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper critically examines the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, which outline the qualifications and promotion criteria for academic staff in higher education institutions in India. The analysis focuses on key concerns from a teachers' perspective, highlighting issues related to academic autonomy, appointment criteria, promotion policies, and contractual employment. The paper argues that several provisions in the draft regulations undermine the academic ethos of universities, restrict fair career progression, and potentially commercialize higher education. It calls for a more inclusive and transparent consultative process involving all stakeholders before the implementation of these regulations.

**KEYWORDS:** UGC Regulations 2025, Higher Education, Academic Autonomy, Faculty Appointment, Promotion Criteria, Contractual Employment, NEP 2020.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a fundamental role in shaping a nation's intellectual and socio-economic development. As the primary regulatory body overseeing university education in India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) is tasked with maintaining academic standards while ensuring the autonomy of institutions. The Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, propose significant revisions in faculty recruitment, promotion, and governance. While these regulations seek to create a standardized framework, they have raised serious concerns among academic stakeholders regarding their potential impact on faculty independence, fair career progression, and overall university governance.

The primary objective of these regulations is to enhance the quality of teaching and research by setting stringent criteria for faculty appointments and promotions. However, the regulations have sparked debates on several fronts. Many educators argue that the increasing bureaucratization of faculty recruitment and promotion may stifle academic creativity and deter scholars from entering the teaching profession. The mandatory Ph.D. requirement for faculty promotion, restrictions on university autonomy in selecting Vice-Chancellors, and the centralization of hiring processes are among the key contentious issues. Moreover, the push toward contractual employment and private sector involvement in university administration raises concerns about the commercialization of higher education, potentially limiting access for marginalized communities. This paper critically examines the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, with a particular focus on their implications for academic staff. The study evaluates the concerns of educators, analyzes the potential benefits and drawbacks of these regulations, and proposes recommendations for a more balanced policy that upholds academic integrity while fostering an inclusive and fair environment for faculty members.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education policy and governance have been the subject of extensive research, particularly in relation to faculty recruitment, promotion, and institutional autonomy. Several studies highlight the importance of maintaining a balance between regulatory oversight and academic freedom to foster innovation and knowledge production.

A. **Faculty Recruitment and Promotion Policies:** A growing body of literature emphasizes the role of recruitment and promotion policies in shaping academic careers. Sharma and Gupta (2020) argue that stringent and inflexible criteria can discourage faculty from engaging in interdisciplinary research and innovative teaching methodologies. Similarly, Mukherjee (2021) highlights that overly rigid promotion requirements may lead to inequities, as access to research funding and publication opportunities varies across institutions. The impact of mandatory Ph.D. qualifications has been widely debated. Studies suggest that while a Ph.D. can enhance subject expertise, an exclusive emphasis on doctoral degrees may overlook experienced educators with substantial industry knowledge. This perspective aligns with global trends where alternative qualification pathways, such as professional experience and teaching excellence, are recognized alongside research credentials.

B. **Academic Autonomy and Governance:** Institutional autonomy is a cornerstone of higher education governance. Research by Altbach (2019) underscores the necessity of academic freedom in decision-making processes, including faculty appointments and curriculum design. The centralization of hiring decisions, as proposed in the Draft UGC Regulations, has been criticized for undermining the ability of universities to select faculty members best suited to their academic vision. Furthermore, the role of Vice-Chancellors in university governance has been explored in several studies. AIPSN (2025) argues that allowing non-academics to serve as Vice-Chancellors may compromise academic leadership, shifting the focus toward administrative and commercial priorities. This concern is reinforced by research indicating that political interference in university governance can erode institutional credibility and hinder academic progress.

C. **Contractual Employment and Job Security:** The increasing reliance on contractual faculty appointments is another area of concern. Research by SPCSS-TN (2025) points out that contractual employment models reduce job security, limit academic freedom, and create a precarious work environment. Faculty members on short-term contracts often face challenges in conducting long-term research projects, thereby affecting knowledge production and institutional stability. The literature also discusses the broader implications of privatization in higher education. Critics argue that excessive industry involvement in university administration may prioritize commercial interests over academic rigor. The trend toward privatization, as reflected in the Draft UGC Regulations, aligns with global neoliberal policies, which have been associated with widening inequalities in access to higher education.

D. **The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its Implications:** The Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, are closely linked to the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. While NEP 2020 aims to overhaul the Indian education system by integrating vocational training, interdisciplinary learning, and global best practices, it has also been criticized for promoting centralization and increased government control over universities. A study by Mishra (2021) suggests that while policy reforms are necessary, their success depends on inclusive decision-making that incorporates feedback from faculty, students, and institutional leaders.

E. **Summary of Key Findings:** The literature highlights several critical issues regarding faculty recruitment, academic autonomy, and governance structures. The key takeaways include:

- The need for a balanced approach to faculty recruitment that values both research credentials and teaching experience.
- The importance of safeguarding university autonomy to maintain academic excellence and independence.
- Concerns regarding contractual employment and its impact on academic freedom.
- The potential risks associated with excessive privatization and government control over universities.

By drawing on these insights, this paper evaluates the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, in the context of ongoing debates surrounding higher education governance and faculty welfare. The subsequent sections delve into specific provisions of the regulations, analyzing their implications and proposing policy recommendations to ensure a fair and sustainable academic environment.

### III. KEY CONCERNS AND DISCUSSION

a. **Impact on Academic Autonomy and Federal Structure:** The Draft UGC Regulation 2025 introduces structural changes that significantly impact the autonomy of higher education institutions and the federal character of education governance in India. One of the most concerning aspects of the new regulations is the shift toward increased centralization, which undermines the academic independence of universities and restricts the role of state governments in shaping higher education policies. Education in India has historically been governed under a federal structure, with both central and state governments playing key roles. However, the new regulations signal an increasing centralization of power, reducing the autonomy of state universities and compelling them to follow uniform policies dictated by the central authority. The Draft Higher Education Commission of India Bill, this centralization of decision-making not only threatens the diversity of India's higher education system but also creates a bureaucratic mechanism that prioritizes administrative control over academic excellence. One of the core issues is that the draft regulation grants excessive control to the central government in determining policies, funding, and governance models for universities. This move is problematic for several reasons. First, universities function best when they have the freedom to design their academic programs based on regional and disciplinary needs. A one-size-fits-all regulatory framework, imposed from above, stifles innovation and prevents institutions from responding to local academic and research demands. Second, the financial dependence of universities on central grants further limits their ability to function independently. Institutions that rely on government funds may find themselves pressured to align their policies with governmental priorities rather than academic considerations, leading to a distortion of research agendas and teaching practices. Moreover, by sidelining state governments, the new regulations weaken the role of democratically elected state authorities in shaping educational policies. This shift toward central oversight means that state universities, which cater to the majority of students, may face difficulties in maintaining their distinct academic identities. The dilution of institutional autonomy is also evident in the growing influence of external regulatory bodies in university affairs, reducing the ability of faculty and academic councils to make independent decisions. This erosion of autonomy is not just an administrative issue; it has profound implications for academic freedom. Universities have historically been spaces for critical thought and intellectual inquiry. However, the new regulations threaten to turn them into institutions that primarily serve bureaucratic and political interests, thereby weakening their role as centers of independent scholarship and debate.

b. **Appointment of Non-Academicians as Vice-Chancellors (Clause 10.1.i):** One of the most contentious aspects of the Draft UGC Regulation 2025 is its impact on the appointment process of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) and other senior academic administrators. Traditionally, university governance structures have allowed academic bodies and faculty to play a significant role in selecting leadership based on merit and academic achievements. However, the new regulations introduce changes that make the appointment process more susceptible to political and bureaucratic control. There is growing concern that recent changes in the governance of higher education institutions align with broader political agendas, particularly those of the ruling government. The new UGC regulations reinforce this trend by creating appointment mechanisms that prioritize administrative efficiency over academic leadership. This shift is particularly evident in the selection of VCs, where the government now has greater influence in determining eligible candidates. The implications of these changes are far-reaching. First, they threaten to undermine the quality of academic leadership in universities. When appointments are influenced by political considerations rather than academic credentials, there is a risk that universities will be led by individuals who lack the vision and expertise necessary for academic excellence. Second, the lack of transparency in the appointment process discourages talented academicians from aspiring to leadership roles, leading to a decline in the overall quality of governance in higher education institutions. Furthermore, the emphasis on centralized control in appointments restricts the ability of universities to select leaders who align with their unique academic cultures and research priorities. This is particularly concerning for institutions that have historically functioned with a high degree of academic autonomy. By centralizing the appointment process, the regulations limit the ability of universities to maintain their distinct identities, leading to a homogenization of higher education institutions.

c. **Political Interference in Selection Committees (Clause 10.1.iv.a):** The decision to grant the Chancellor's nominee the position of Chairperson in Vice-Chancellor (VC) selection committees raises serious concerns about political interference in higher education governance. Universities function best when they operate independently, free from external pressures that could compromise their academic integrity. However, the new clause increases the likelihood of politically motivated appointments, leading to the erosion of academic freedom and institutional credibility. A politically influenced selection process risks prioritizing loyalty to the ruling establishment over academic excellence. If the Chancellor's nominee is directly aligned with the government in power, there is a higher probability that Vice-Chancellors will be appointed based on

ideological affiliations rather than merit. Such a system could lead to the promotion of individuals who prioritize administrative and political compliance over scholarly and institutional growth. This concern is not hypothetical—recent trends in university appointments have shown a pattern of government-aligned nominees taking precedence over independent scholars, weakening the culture of critical thinking and academic debate. Another significant issue is that political interference in university appointments can foster nepotism and favoritism, resulting in the appointment of individuals with questionable academic credentials. When positions of leadership are filled by those who owe their appointments to political connections rather than scholarly merit, the decision-making process within universities becomes compromised. This can manifest in substandard academic policies, restrictions on free expression, and the exclusion of faculty members or students who may hold dissenting views. Furthermore, a politically driven selection process discourages meritorious candidates from applying for leadership roles in universities. Academics who prioritize research excellence and institutional development may be dissuaded from pursuing administrative positions if they perceive the selection process as biased. This results in a leadership vacuum, where competent individuals avoid engagement in university governance, leaving institutions vulnerable to mismanagement. To maintain the credibility and excellence of higher education institutions, it is essential that the selection of Vice-Chancellors remains free from political interference. Instead of allowing the Chancellor's nominee to chair the selection committee, a more balanced approach would be to ensure that leadership appointments are determined by independent academic bodies composed of distinguished scholars with no direct political affiliations.

d. **Centralization of Appointments (Clause 10.1.iv.b):** The inclusion of a UGC-nominated member in selection committees represents a shift toward centralization, reducing the autonomy of universities and state governments in appointing academic leaders. India's higher education system operates within a concurrent framework, meaning both the central and state governments have distinct yet complementary roles in educational administration. However, by increasing UGC's control over faculty and leadership appointments, the draft regulation risks disrupting this balance, effectively sidelining state governments and local academic bodies. One of the primary issues with centralizing faculty appointments is that it imposes a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to consider the diversity of India's higher education landscape. Universities across different states cater to unique socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural contexts. A regulatory framework that prioritizes centralized decision-making may fail to accommodate the specific academic and administrative needs of various institutions. For instance, faculty requirements in universities specializing in regional languages, agriculture, or indigenous knowledge systems may not align with standardized UGC guidelines that primarily reflect national priorities rather than regional concerns. Moreover, centralization limits the ability of universities to design and implement recruitment policies suited to their academic objectives. Universities need the flexibility to attract and retain faculty members who align with their specific research and teaching priorities. If hiring decisions are dictated by a centrally appointed body, institutions may struggle to recruit faculty members who complement their academic vision, leading to stagnation in research and curriculum development. Another critical consequence of excessive UGC control over appointments is the politicization of faculty hiring. With central oversight over recruitment, universities may be forced to hire faculty based on criteria that align with broader political or ideological agendas rather than academic merit. This not only dilutes the quality of education but also discourages scholars from engaging in independent, critical research. Furthermore, centralization undermines the decentralized spirit of the Indian Constitution, which recognizes the need for shared governance in higher education. Historically, universities have been granted significant autonomy to ensure that academic governance remains free from excessive bureaucratic interference. By increasing UGC's role in faculty selection, the draft regulation contradicts the long-standing tradition of university self-governance. A more effective approach would involve strengthening institutional autonomy while ensuring transparent and merit-based recruitment processes at the university level.

e. **Contradictions with State University Statutes (Clause 10.1.v):** The UGC's attempt to prescribe uniform service conditions for Vice-Chancellors and faculty members directly contradicts the autonomy granted to state universities under their respective statutes. State universities function under specific legal frameworks designed to accommodate local academic priorities, socio-economic conditions, and cultural specificities. Imposing a standardized national framework overlooks these variations and undermines the role of state governments in higher education governance. One of the core contradictions lies in the mismatch between central regulations and state statutes. Most state universities have their own laws and governing councils that dictate faculty recruitment, service conditions, and administrative policies. By enforcing uniform rules, the UGC risks creating conflicts between national guidelines and state-level governance structures. This could lead to legal disputes and administrative confusion, further complicating the governance of higher education institutions. Another significant concern is that state universities primarily serve local populations, and their governance should reflect regional needs. The imposition of central regulations does not account for the fact

that universities in different states cater to diverse student demographics with varying economic and linguistic backgrounds. For example, service conditions that may be suitable for central universities with higher financial resources may not be feasible for state universities that rely on limited funding from state governments. A rigid regulatory framework could place additional financial burdens on state institutions, making it harder for them to recruit and retain qualified faculty.

f. **Differentiated Recruitment Procedures (Clause 3.3):** The Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, introduce separate recruitment procedures for university and college faculty despite similar qualification requirements. This differentiation creates unnecessary hierarchies within the academic ecosystem, leading to disparities in career progression and service conditions. Faculty members in colleges may find themselves at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in universities, even if their qualifications and experience are similar. This artificial hierarchy could result in unequal access to research opportunities and funding, discouraging talented educators from pursuing careers in colleges.

g. **Questionable Eligibility Criteria (Clause 3.3):** A major concern regarding the draft regulations is the provision allowing candidates to qualify in a subject different from their discipline of study for NET/SET and still be eligible for faculty positions. This raises concerns about the dilution of subject expertise, which could negatively impact teaching quality. Subject-matter specialization is crucial for effective pedagogy and research, and broadening eligibility criteria without maintaining academic rigor may lead to a decline in higher education standards. To ensure quality education, faculty appointments should prioritize subject-specific qualifications and expertise.

h. **Mandatory Ph.D. Requirement for Promotion (Clause 5.2(III) and 5.3(II)):** The 2018 UGC regulations made a Ph.D. mandatory for promotion to Associate Professor (Academic Level 13A). However, the 2025 regulations further impose a Ph.D. requirement for promotion from Assistant Professor (Academic Level 11) to Academic Level 12. While academic credentials play a crucial role in ensuring high standards in teaching and research, a rigid Ph.D. mandate fails to recognize the diverse career trajectories within academia. Many experienced faculty members, especially those in disciplines where practical expertise is as valuable as theoretical knowledge, find this requirement exclusionary. Furthermore, with the abolition of UGC fellowships and limited study leave options, acquiring a Ph.D. has become a challenge for faculty members, particularly those teaching in institutions with high workloads and limited research infrastructure. There is also growing concern about the credibility of Ph.D. degrees from private institutions, raising questions about whether mandatory doctoral qualifications alone can serve as a benchmark for academic excellence or it badly effect the career progression for many faculty members.

i. **Inequitable Promotion Criteria (Clause 3.8):** The introduction of a system where faculty members must demonstrate notable contributions in any four out of nine notable contributions for appointment and promotion is inequitable. The requirement to fulfil a set of predetermined academic and administrative achievements disproportionately favours faculty members in well-funded institutions while disadvantaging those in resource- constrained environments. For instance, access to research funding, high-impact publications, and conference participation is not uniform across all universities. Faculty members from marginalized backgrounds and state universities often struggle to meet these stringent requirements due to infrastructural and financial limitations. By setting a rigid framework without accounting for these disparities, the draft regulations risk creating a hierarchical academic system where promotions become an indicator of institutional privilege rather than individual merit.

j. **Hierarchical Recruitment of Principals (Clause 7.0):** The regulations introduce differentiated recruitment procedures for principals of principals (Academic Level 13A) and PG college principals (Academic Level 14), reinforcing hierarchies within academic leadership. The stipulation that UG college principals must qualify under different academic levels than PG college principals undermines the parity between institutions. This division creates disparities in administrative autonomy, career progression, and institutional funding. Moreover, the five-year tenure restriction for principals, with eligibility for reappointment based on a new selection process, threatens stability in academic leadership. Frequent leadership turnover can disrupt long-term institutional planning, affect policy continuity, and lead to inconsistencies in institutional governance. These provisions fail to acknowledge that academic institutions require sustained leadership to implement meaningful educational reforms and ensure holistic institutional development.

k. **Contractual Employment Concerns (Clause 8.0):** The draft regulations propose the removal of the cap on contractual appointments, a change that has alarmed educators and faculty unions. The increase in contract-based faculty positions threatens the stability and security of academic careers, reducing incentives for long-term commitment to teaching and research. Annual reviews of contracts place faculty members under constant scrutiny, leading to increased job insecurity and potential exploitation. This move is also likely to widen inequalities in higher education, as permanent faculty positions become increasingly rare and contractual appointments fail to offer comparable benefits, research opportunities, and institutional responsibilities. Such a shift contradicts the objective of maintaining high academic standards, as faculty working under precarious

conditions may be less motivated to engage in long-term pedagogical innovation and research.

l. **Exclusion of Past Services (Clause 6.0):** The exclusion of guest, part-time, and contractual faculty services from being counted towards direct recruitment and promotion eligibility is a contentious issue in the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025. Many faculty members have spent years contributing to academia under temporary or part-time roles, yet their experience is not being considered on par with that of regular faculty. This exclusion ignores the significant contributions made by these educators in terms of research, mentorship, and institutional development. Moreover, it disproportionately affects young scholars and early-career academics who begin their professional journey in temporary roles due to a lack of immediate permanent opportunities. By failing to acknowledge these contributions, the regulations create an unjust career trajectory that disadvantages thousands of dedicated educators.

m. **Introduction of the Professor of Practice (PoP) (Clause 9.0):** The introduction of the Professor of Practice (PoP) position raises serious concerns about the dilution of academic qualifications, the erosion of tenure-track faculty positions, and the increasing corporatization of higher education. While the stated objective of the PoP role is to integrate industry expertise into academia, its implementation risks displacing traditional professorships and weakening the rigor of university teaching and research. One of the most critical issues is that the PoP position bypasses conventional academic qualification requirements. Professors are traditionally appointed based on their research credentials, teaching experience, and scholarly contributions. By introducing a category of faculty who may not possess Ph.D. degrees or extensive academic research experience, the regulation risks undermining academic standards. Allowing professionals from non-academic backgrounds to assume teaching roles without undergoing the rigorous scholarly training that defines academia may compromise the depth and critical inquiry central to university education. Additionally, this move aligns with a broader trend of contract-based employment in higher education, where tenure-track positions are being replaced with temporary or part-time appointments. The PoP model facilitates precarious employment practices, reducing job security for faculty members while granting universities greater flexibility in hiring based on short-term needs. This weakens academic freedom, as contractual faculty may feel pressured to conform to administrative or ideological expectations to secure contract renewals. Furthermore, the introduction of PoP opens avenues for corporate and ideological influences in academia. If individuals from private industries or political backgrounds dominate teaching roles without strong academic oversight, universities may prioritize market-driven or ideologically motivated curricula over critical and independent scholarship. The establishment of this role should not come at the expense of regular faculty appointments and must include safeguards to preserve academic freedom, research integrity, and faculty rights.

n. **Implementation of NEP-2020 without Consensus (Clause 11.0):** The alignment of the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been a source of contention, primarily because NEP-2020 has not been universally accepted by all states and academic bodies. Education is a concurrent subject in the Indian Constitution, meaning both the central and state governments have jurisdiction over it. However, the unilateral implementation of the UGC regulations without broad consultation undermines the federal nature of education governance. Many states have expressed concerns over the potential centralization of higher education policy, arguing that the new regulations strip universities of their decision-making autonomy. Furthermore, NEP-2020 emphasizes vocationalization and private sector involvement, raising fears about the commercialization of higher education. Without consensus, enforcing these policies could lead to institutional disruptions and opposition from state-run universities that have historically maintained a different approach to education governance.

o. **Impact on Research and Academic Standards:** The impact of the Draft UGC Regulation 2025 on research and academic standards is equally concerning. Higher education institutions are meant to foster an environment of critical inquiry, originality, and rigorous academic debate. However, the new regulations introduce several structural changes that threaten to dilute academic excellence and compromise the quality of research in Indian universities. A key issue is the increasing bureaucratic control over research funding and academic priorities. The new regulations create a framework where research agendas are shaped by bureaucratic oversight rather than scholarly inquiry. This shift could lead to a decline in research autonomy, as universities and faculty members may feel pressured to align their research with government priorities rather than academic curiosity. The introduction of performance-based funding mechanisms further complicates the issue. While accountability in research is important, over-reliance on quantitative indicators such as citation metrics and impact factors can distort academic priorities. Disciplines that do not fit neatly into these assessment frameworks, such as the humanities and social sciences, may face reduced funding opportunities, leading to an overall decline in diverse and interdisciplinary research. Additionally, the increasing focus on outcome-based evaluations could discourage long-term, exploratory research in favor of short-term projects that yield immediate results. Such an approach limits the ability of scholars to engage in in-depth theoretical and foundational research, which is essential for academic progress. Another concern is the potential decline in

faculty recruitment standards. If institutional governance prioritizes administrative compliance over academic excellence, universities may struggle to attract and retain top-tier faculty. This, in turn, would affect research output, international collaborations, and the overall reputation of Indian universities in global rankings. Furthermore, the weakening of institutional autonomy in research funding decisions could make universities more vulnerable to external influences, including political and corporate interests. If research priorities are dictated by non-academic factors, it could lead to a situation where critical and independent scholarship is actively discouraged. In the long run, these regulatory changes could create an environment where Indian universities struggle to compete with global institutions in terms of research innovation and academic rigor. Instead of fostering a culture of excellence, the new regulations risk turning universities into bureaucratic entities focused more on administrative efficiency than intellectual growth.

p. **Risk of Privatization and Commercialization:** A significant criticism of the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, is the increased emphasis on industry partnerships and private-sector involvement in higher education. While collaboration with industry can bring funding and practical exposure for students, over-reliance on private entities can also shift the focus of academic institutions from knowledge creation to profit generation. This shift risks marginalizing disciplines such as humanities and social sciences, which may not attract substantial corporate investments but are crucial for holistic academic development. Moreover, the push towards industry partnerships may lead to fee hikes, making higher education less accessible to economically disadvantaged students. The regulation changes could encourage universities to prioritize revenue-generating programs, leaving behind fundamental research areas that do not promise immediate financial returns but are essential for societal progress. If unchecked, this commercialization trend could fundamentally alter the character of higher education, reducing its role as a public good and transforming it into a market-driven enterprise.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, propose sweeping changes in faculty recruitment, promotion policies, and governance structures within higher education institutions. These reforms, while ostensibly aimed at ensuring uniformity and academic excellence, raise concerns regarding their potential impact on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and equitable career progression. A critical examination reveals that the regulations introduce a more centralized framework, increasing bureaucratic oversight while diminishing the role of universities and colleges in self-governance.

A significant concern is the mandatory Ph.D. requirement for promotions, which, while encouraging research-oriented faculty, risks marginalizing those who excel in teaching and other academic responsibilities. The exclusion of past services in career advancement further exacerbates disparities, disproportionately affecting faculty members who have dedicated years to the profession under previous regulations. Moreover, the introduction of differentiated recruitment procedures creates ambiguity in hiring practices, potentially leading to inconsistencies across institutions. Additionally, the provisions allowing non-academics to be appointed as Vice-Chancellors represent a fundamental shift in leadership selection. This change, coupled with increased political influence in academic appointments, risks eroding meritocratic leadership in universities. By opening the door to political and bureaucratic interference, the regulations may compromise the long-standing principles of academic governance and excellence. The potential privatization and industry-driven reforms further underscore concerns regarding the commercialization of education. Policies favoring private-sector influence in governance, curriculum design, and funding mechanisms threaten the accessibility of higher education, particularly for marginalized communities. The shift towards a market-driven model could also lead to a decline in research independence and the commodification of knowledge.

To ensure a more balanced approach to higher education reforms, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Preserve Academic Autonomy:** Ensure that universities retain the authority to appoint Vice-Chancellors and faculty members without excessive external interference.
- **Reform Faculty Recruitment Criteria:** Consider diverse pathways for faculty qualifications and promotions, balancing research credentials with teaching excellence and industry experience.
- **Protect Employment Stability:** Limit contractual employment in academia and provide clear pathways for faculty to secure permanent positions based on merit.
- **Standardize Promotion Policies Fairly:** Address disparities in research funding and institutional resources to ensure an equitable evaluation of faculty contributions.
- **Ensure Transparent Policy Formulation:** Engage all stakeholders—including educators, university administrators, and policymakers—in the decision-making process before implementing reforms.
- **Balance Public and Private Interests:** Establish safeguards to prevent excessive commercialization while fostering productive collaborations between academia and industry.

By incorporating these recommendations, the UGC can create a regulatory framework that fosters academic excellence while safeguarding the interests of faculty members and higher education institutions in India.

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