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Policy Brief

2014

University Grants Commission (UGC) to establish Centre for Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement (CFSRCE) in Universities

As part of its efforts to promote access of higher education, under the XII plan guidelines (2012-2017), the University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body for regulating higher education in India, has rolled out a scheme for establishment of a Centre for Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement (CFSRCE) in universities. Launched in October 2014, this scheme promotes community engagement in higher education institutions. The main objectives of the scheme include promoting community-university partnerships to develop knowledge for improving the lives of the people and to encourage participatory research, and to in alliance with community based organizations in planning and execution of projects. It seeks to propagate integration of service, service-learning and experiential learning into curricular/co-curricular programmes. It also aims at creating neighbourhood networks of educational institutions including schools and providing policy suggestions and technical assistance to help foster community engagement and social responsibility in higher education.

All Central Universities, centrally funded deemed-to-be Universities, and State Universities receiving development assistance from the UGC and accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) will be considered for UGC assistance under this scheme to set up the centre. Any university aspiring to receive financial assistance under this scheme should meet the following criteria:

- (i) It should have demonstrated competence and sustained commitment in carrying out community engagement and social responsibility fulfillment activities.
- (ii) It should have made distinct contribution to the development of knowledge in the field of social service, community engagement and inculcation of spirit of social responsibility in students.
- (iii) It should have adequate infrastructure in the major disciplines engaged in the proposal, and
- (iv) It should have conducted interdisciplinary research in some of the areas of knowledge involved in the community engagement scheme.

The overall ceiling for the financial assistance to be provided under this scheme is upto Rs 2.5 crore, which will be disbursed under different heads such as start-up costs, staff costs, yearly operational costs etc. As a first installment, 50% of the allocated grant shall be released to the selected universities by the UGC. The release of second installment of the grant, to the tune of 40% of the allocation, will be done after receiving the utilization certificate against the first installment. The final installment of 10% of the grant will be released after receiving the utilization certificate against the total allocation, and completion documents in case of construction activities.

Interested Universities are expected to submit their proposals in a prescribed format, which should deal with the following aspects of fostering social responsibility and community engagement:

1. Linking learning with community engagement
2. Linking research and community knowledge and engagement.
3. Promoting community-university research partnerships
4. Promoting knowledge sharing, knowledge mobilization and dissemination
5. Devising curricular structures and short term courses
6. Including practitioners in the learning-by-doing and community engagement processes, and
7. Promoting social innovation by students and documenting and rewarding innovative practices.

Two committees will function under this scheme. First, an Expert Committee will examine the proposals submitted by various universities, and give recommendations and feedback. The expert committee will comprise of 4 to 5 experts who have a sound background in community engagement and social responsibility in higher education, both from within the university and outside. This committee shall be constituted by the Chairman, UGC. Second, an Advisory Committee shall oversee the launching and implementation of various programmes/activities at the Centre established under the funding at the university. This committee will be chaired by the vice-chancellor of the university (or his nominee), and would have, in addition two experts, two academicians, and two well-known persons from community/social service organizations as its members. The director of the Centre shall function as its member-secretary.

The present scheme is expected to end by March 2017. Universities which are sanctioned the centres are expected to make a study of the outcome and impact created by this centre in the surrounding/target community and educational institutions catered to by the universities. For the continuation of this centre in the next plan period, it is necessary that Detailed Annual Reports (DPR) and the outcome and impact studies are submitted to the UGC. Additionally, the universities should ensure that the activities of the centre are published in the annual reports of the university. Since this initiative seeks to promote and facilitate community engagement, for maintaining transparency with respect to it, the university is obligated to post the DPR, allocations made and annual assessment reports on its website as well.



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