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Universities of India

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India has a huge number of universities. Its most famous institutes, the IITs and IIMs, are not ordinary universities at all. They hold a special legal status instead.

This lesson covers the regulator, the main university types and the exam history behind them. Read each short card, then try the quick checks.

UGC: the University Grants Commission. It coordinates and maintains standards in university education.

Deemed university: an existing institute that the Centre declares to be a university. The UGC advises on this.

Institute of National Importance (INI): a top institute with its own special status. IITs and IIMs are examples.

Letter of Intent (LoI): the first formal nod the UGC gives a foreign university to open a campus in India.

Who Regulates Indian Universities?

What is the UGC?

UGC stands for the **University Grants Commission**. It is the body that looks after university education in India.

The UGC was inaugurated on **28 December 1953**. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru addressed its inaugural meet.

Sources: ugc.gov.in

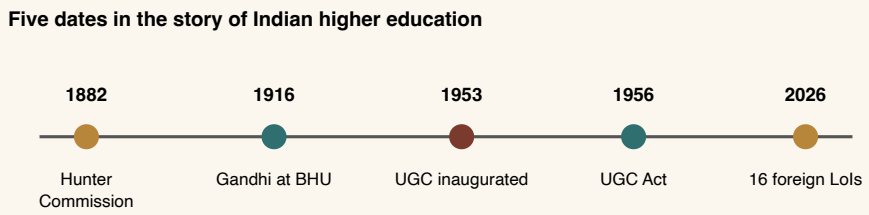
Quick check 1. The UGC was inaugurated in December 1953. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What did the UGC Act of 1956 do?

The UGC became a **statutory body** only in **November 1956**. An Act of Parliament created it for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education.

So the 1953 inauguration came first, and the 1956 law gave it legal force.

Sources: ugc.gov.in



Key dates in the story of university regulation in India.

Read the line left to right. Colonial commissions come first, then the national regulator, then today's foreign campuses.

What Are the Main Types of Universities?

What types of universities does India have?

The UGC keeps separate lists for **central**, **state**, **deemed** and **state private** universities. It also lists Institutions of National Importance on their own.

Each type has its own route to existence.

Type	How it comes into being
Central university	Set up by an Act of Parliament
State university	Set up by a state legislature
Deemed university	Declared by the Centre on UGC advice
State private university	Set up under a state law

The route tells you who controls the university.

Sources: ugc.gov.in

What is a deemed university?

A **deemed university** starts as an ordinary institute. Under **Section 3** of the UGC Act, the Central Government can declare it a university.

The Centre does this on the advice of the UGC, and it publishes the declaration in the Official Gazette. After that, the Act applies to it as if it were a university.

Sources: indiankanoon.org; ugc.gov.in

> **Quick check 2.** A state legislature declares an institute to be a deemed university. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Who sets up private universities?

Private universities are set up under state laws. They are listed by the UGC as a separate group called **state private universities**.

This separates them from deemed universities, which are declared by the Centre. Private does not mean unregulated, because a state law still governs each one, and every UGC-listed type has its own page.

Sources: ugc.gov.in

Which institutes are special?

The IITs, IIMs and NITs are **Institutes of National Importance**. The UGC keeps these institutions in a group of their own.

The Ministry of Education says **23 IITs** are working now. It counts **21 IIMs** after NITIE Mumbai was added to the IIM Act in 2023-24.

These counts change as new institutes join, so check the latest figure before an exam.

Sources: ugc.gov.in; rsdebate.nic.in

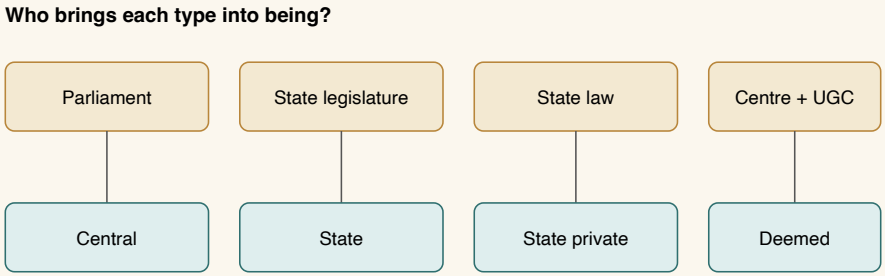
> **Quick check 3.** The IITs and IIMs are listed by the UGC as ordinary state universities. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What does the UGC actually do?

The UGC exists for the **coordination, determination and maintenance of standards** in university education. In plain words, it helps keep teaching and exams at a fair level across the country.

It does this for universities, not for schools. Remember the three verbs: coordinate, determine and maintain.

Sources: ugc.gov.in



Who sets up each type of university.

The top row shows the creator. The bottom row shows the university type it produces.

Which mix-ups cost marks?

Exam writers like to swap the creator of each type. A **deemed** university is declared by the Centre, not by a state. A **state private** university comes from a state law, not from Parliament.

Another trap is the date. The UGC was inaugurated in 1953, but it became a statutory body in 1956. Learn both dates together.

Sources: ugc.gov.in; indiankanoon.org

How should you revise the four types?

Use a simple chain: **who makes it, who controls it, who pays**. Start with the creator, as in the diagram above.

Then ask which government looks after it. A central university answers to the Centre, and a state university answers to its state. A deemed university began as an institute and was later declared a university.

Finally, remember that the UGC keeps a separate page for each of the four groups. That one fact links the whole topic together.

Sources: ugc.gov.in

Quick check 4. Parliament creates a state private university. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Which Education History Facts Come Up in Exams?

What was the Hunter Commission?

The **Hunter Commission** was officially the **Indian Education Commission, 1882**. It was the first education commission of modern India.

It reviewed the state of education since **Wood's Despatch of 1854**. CDS I 2020 asked about it.

Sources: en.banglapedia.org; mcqquestion.com

Where did Gandhi first appear in a major way?

Gandhi spoke at the opening of **Banaras Hindu University** on **4 February 1916**. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had invited him. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, laid the foundation stone.

Exams call this Gandhi's first major public appearance. CDS II 2021 asked this very point.

Sources: mkgandhi.org; mcqquestion.com

> **Quick check 5.** Lord Hardinge laid the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What did Gandhi say in his BHU speech?

He called it a matter of deep humiliation to address his countrymen in a language foreign to him. He also asked why even temples and lanes were not clean.

The speech tied education to character and self-government. CDS I 2017 asked statements on it.

Sources: mkgandhi.org; mcqquestion.com

> **Quick check 6.** Gandhi's Banaras speech praised the use of a foreign language. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Why does the BHU speech matter for exams?

Three facts are asked again and again. The date is **4 February 1916**. The host was Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Hardinge.

Exam writers also like the speech's themes. Gandhi spoke about language, cleanliness and self-government. Match each theme to the speaker before you answer.

Sources: mkgandhi.org

What Is New in Higher Education?

Can foreign universities open campuses in India?

Yes, the UGC allows it. A foreign university first gets a **Letter of Intent** and then a Letter of Approval. The 2023 UGC rules govern this path.

A Rajya Sabha reply in 2026 said the UGC had issued **16 Letters of Intent**. A Letter of Intent is not an open campus, so check each university's status.

Sources: freepressjournal.in; rsdebate.nic.in

How can you spot a fake university?

The UGC runs a page for **fake universities**. Check a university against it before you apply.

Only a university that the law recognises can award a valid degree. The list protects students from false claims.

Sources: ugc.gov.in

> **Quick check 7.** The UGC publishes a list of fake universities. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Practice MCQs

1. In which year did the UGC become a statutory body?

A. 1948

B. 1956

C. 1953

D. 1961

See answer ↓

2. Who laid the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University in 1916?

A. Lord Minto

B. Lord Ripon

C. Lord Curzon

D. Lord Hardinge

See answer ↓

3. The Hunter Commission, the first education commission of modern India, was appointed in which year?

A. 1902

B. 1882

C. 1917

D. 1854

See answer ↓

4. Who declares an institute to be a deemed university?

A. The Supreme Court

B. The UGC alone

C. A state legislature

D. The Central Government

See answer ↓

5. Where did Mahatma Gandhi make his first major public appearance in India, according to exam sources?

A. Sabarmati

B. Dandi

C. Champaran

D. Banaras Hindu University

See answer ↓

6. Which body issues a Letter of Intent to a foreign university that wants to open a campus in India?

A. The UGC

B. AICTE

C. NITI Aayog

D. The Supreme Court

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.**
   The UGC Act, passed in November 1956, made it a statutory body.
   Sources: UGC: Genesis · Indian Kanoon: UGC Act, Section 3.
   ↑ Q1
2. **D.**
   Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, came to lay the foundation stone in 1916.
   Sources: MKGandhi.org: BHU speech · MKGandhi.org: Story of Gandhi.
   ↑ Q2
3. **B.**
   The Indian Education Commission, called the Hunter Commission, was appointed in 1882.
   Sources: Banglapedia: Hunter Commission · CDS I 2020 paper, Q105.
   ↑ Q3
4. **D.**
   Section 3 of the UGC Act lets the Central Government declare it, on UGC advice.
   Sources: Indian Kanoon: UGC Act, Section 3 · Ministry of Education: deemed universities report.
   ↑ Q4
5. **D.**
   Gandhi spoke at the opening of Banaras Hindu University on 4 February 1916.
   Sources: MKGandhi.org: BHU speech · CDS II 2021 paper, Q45.
   ↑ Q5
6. **A.**
   The UGC issues Letters of Intent under its 2023 rules for foreign campuses.
   Sources: Free Press Journal: Rajya Sabha reply · British Council: UK campuses.
   ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The UGC was inaugurated on 28 December 1953, and the law came three years later. ↑ 1

2. **False.** The Central Government declares a deemed university, on the advice of the UGC. ↑ 2
3. **False.** These are Institutes of National Importance, which form a separate group. ↑ 3
4. **False.** A state law creates a state university, while Parliament creates central universities. ↑ 4
5. **True.** The Viceroy came specially to lay the foundation stone in 1916. ↑ 5
6. **False.** He called addressing his countrymen in a foreign language a matter of deep humiliation. ↑ 6
7. **True.** Students can check the UGC list before taking admission. ↑ 7

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