

## **Final Year Examinations - Risks Involved**

### **Why in news?**

On University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines, the Centre has insisted that final year examinations in all universities and institutions be held, in spite of the risks posed by COVID-19.

### **What are the concerns?**

- The UGC has suggested the students to take a pen-and-paper test, or an online examination, or a combination of the two.
- But in any case, expecting large numbers of students to give exam at a pandemic time is counterproductive.
- There is growing concern worldwide that the coronavirus infection is not always mild among young people.
- More importantly, youth with mild symptoms might pass it on to older family members who could become seriously ill.
- The situation on COVID-19 in India is particularly worrying.
- India has the third highest number of cases in the world, with more than 1 million as of 16 July 2020.
- So, any move to force a final examination scheme could endanger lives.

### **What are the other options?**

- In the unlock phase, States have been empowered to add restrictions to the Home Ministry's orders on public activity.
- This is being decided depending on the local situation.
- Given the incalculable risks involved, States such as Punjab, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal and later Delhi decided against holding final year examinations.
- Many large universities have shown readiness in devising alternatives to evaluate students in the present circumstances.
- They have done away with a final examination and chosen a formula that uses best past performance of students.

### **What is the way forward?**

- In its defence, the Department of Higher Education has gathered data to show that 454 out of 640 universities had either conducted examinations or

planned to do so.

- The rest should also now comply because of the legal position.
- But such a hardline approach does not cohere with the imperative of a consensus pandemic response.
- Notably, in the most affected nation, the U.S., major universities are placing health and safety first and academic enterprise next.
- Any decision to reopen institutions and conduct examinations requires careful assessment of local conditions.
- Given all these, it is better that the decision is left to the States.
- The Centre must take its own advice, of restricting public movement and gatherings during the pandemic, seriously.
- It should leave it to the States to determine the best course.

**Source: The Hindu**

