

# **Irregularities in the functioning of NAAC**

# Why in news?

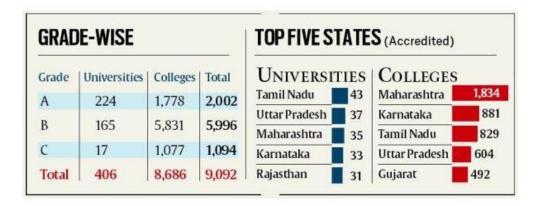
The chairperson of NAAC's executive committee, resigned after repeatedly demanding an independent inquiry into the functioning of the council.

# What is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)?

- The NAAC is an <u>autonomous body</u> set up in 1994 under the <u>University Grants</u> <u>Commission (UGC).</u>
- **Functions** NAAC is entrusted with assessing the quality of India's <u>higher</u> educational institutions.
- Following a multi-layered assessment process, it awards grades to colleges and universities.
- Its parameters include curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research and financial well-being.
- The ratings of institutions range from A++ to C and if an institution is graded D, it means it is not accredited.

### How is the accreditation process carried out?

- The first step involves an institute approaching the NAAC for assessment.
- Once the NAAC sets the process in motion, the applicant has to submit a self-study report (SSR) containing information related to quantitative and qualitative metrics.
- **Peer review** The data is then validated by expert teams of the NAAC, followed by spot visits by peer teams comprising assessors drawn from universities across India.



# Is a NAAC accreditation mandatory?

• **Voluntary** - While the UGC has over the years issued many circulars directing institutes to mandatorily undergo NAAC's assessment, the process still remains largely voluntary.

• **NEP** - The <u>National Education Policy (NEP) (2020)</u> has set an ambitious target of getting all higher educational institutes to obtain the highest level of accreditation over the next 15 years.

# What are the allegations on the NAAC?

- **Malpractices** People with vested interests are indulging in malpractices, leading to the awarding of questionable grades to some institutions.
- **Input based** The major problem with the ratings is the current approach of assessment is input-based, i.e., the NAAC relies heavily on self-assessment reports of applicant institutions.
- Influence on the reviews The data is then validated by NAAC expert teams, followed by peer team visits to the institutions.
- It is alleged that the education institutions influence the peer review teams.

# Why are so few institutes accredited?

- **Poor grades** The fear of obtaining poor grades holds institutes back from applying.
- **Paramarsh** In 2019, the UGC had launched a scheme named 'Paramarsh' to address the issue.
- Under the scheme, some of the best performing institutes were identified to serve as *mentors to at least 5 institutes* aspiring to get accredited.
- **Provisional Accreditation for Colleges (PAC)** NAAC explored the possibility of issuing PAC, under which 1 year old institutes could apply for accreditation with validity of 2 years.
- **Difficult criteria** Currently, only institutes that are <u>at least 6 years old</u>, or from where <u>at least 2 batches of students have graduated</u>, can apply and the accreditation is valid for 5 years.

#### References

- 1. The Indian Express | Claims of irregularities in the functioning of NAAC
- 2. The Indian Express | The controversy over NAAC's system for assessing higher education

