

National Institutional Ranking Framework, 2018

Why in news?

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Ministry of Human Resource Development recently released the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2018.

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What is NIRF?

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- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was approved by the MHRD and launched in 2015.

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- The framework outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.

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- The parameters broadly cover -

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1. Teaching, Learning and Resources
2. Research and Professional Practices
3. Graduation Outcomes
4. Outreach and Inclusivity
5. Perception

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- There were a total of 9 categories this year under which India's higher education institutions were judged.

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- The 2018 exercise newly added the disciplines of law, medicine and architecture.

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What are the latest rankings?

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- The ranking of most colleges and universities have remained almost the same this year.
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- Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, is again ranked first in both overall and university categories.
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- The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are the best among engineering institutes.
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- The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are the best among management institutes.
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- This is for the third time in row on the NIRF ranking that IITs and IIMs are leading.
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- IIT-Madras was adjudged the best engineering institute.
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- IIM-Ahmedabad was adjudged the best management institute.
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- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences was adjudged the top medical college.
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- There were some institutes, which could not be placed in any of the 9 categories.
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- These have been placed in special category because of the quality of research work.
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- Some of them include the National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, etc.

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What are the concerns?

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- **Participation** - India has around 860 universities, 40,000 colleges and 11,600 standalone institutions of higher education.

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- Of these, only around 4,500 institutes took part in the India Rankings 2018.

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- Even among the institutions that participated, there is a clear skew towards southern, south-eastern and western India.

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- The government is planning to cut some sort of funding to those which do not participate in the rankings.

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- **Parity** - Older institutions with historical advantages now enjoy a higher ranking.

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- This obscures newer entrants who may have stronger claims to excellence.

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- **Approach** - The ranking approach worldwide is critiqued for failing to capture the crucial metric of learning outcomes.

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- The rankings instead rely on proxy data on faculty strength and qualifications.

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What is the way forward?

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- **Funding** - The governing bodies should make available adequate financial and academic resources to colleges.

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- This is particularly essential for the developing colleges, to help them improve performance.

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- **Participation** - Ranking educational and research institutes has some significant practical uses.

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- It helps students make study choices, sponsors to identify research projects, and other universities to form partnerships.

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- Thus, for a reliable and relevant process, all recognised educational institutions should be enrolled, and not just the public ones.

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- **Objective** - Beyond competitive ranking, the higher order goal is to foster learning and scholarship.

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- Encouraging faculty to exercise complete academic freedom is essential to achieve this.

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- The NIRF ranking thus needs a fine tuning to incorporate these aspects.

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Source: Business Standard, The Hindu

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