



## Autonomy at Higher Education Level

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### ABSTRACT

Autonomy at Higher Education level refers to the freedom given to the people who are authorized to execute the job itself. Indian Education commission (Kothari Commission 1964-66) in light of the autonomy of colleges spoke that an autonomous status may be granted to the outstanding colleges to perform better markedly. In terms of management, autonomy is the innovative step to structuralize the educational management. UGC in its seventh plan also comes with the proposal of giving status to many autonomous colleges so as to implement the guidelines as envisaged in the National Policy on Education. In etymological terms autonomy means autonomous condition, power or right of self government. This paper will highlight the norms & system prevailing in autonomous colleges and the difference between deeming and autonomous colleges.

### Keywords:

Autonomy, Freedom, University,  
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### Introduction

Academic Freedom is central to the future of India's Higher Education System in its efforts to develop a knowledge economy and institutions of excellence comparable to the best in the world. Autonomy refers the right of an organization, country or region to be independent and govern itself. It is the ability to make own decisions without being controlled by anyone else.

### University Autonomy

In practical term university autonomy is the right of a university to determine its own strategy, taking into account the public interest as represented by the state, however, not controlling decision-making with the institutions. In Higher Education & generally at university level this connotes a teacher oriented system.



In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when three universities got established one each in Calcutta, Bombay & Madras they got an autonomous status at that time. The Govt. of India then got an example to establish more & more autonomous institutions in the country. So the Academic autonomy is a topic to be discussed in today's situations so as the quality of Higher Education may get enhanced.

#### **What does autonomy basically mean?**

Autonomy basically means to give free hand to the people who are responsible for the execution of the job itself. Autonomy is expected to provide good results when put through by an accountability for the academic well being of an institution. When the autonomy is executed by the sense of responsibility, sincerity, it will inevitably lead to the excellence in academics, governance & financial matters of the institution. If the same doesn't happen it means that the autonomy has led to the desecration.

#### **Ulterior Motive & Animus of Academic Autonomy**

Mostly Academic autonomy of an institution is put on the basis of past experiences that the institution can undertake the work itself as trusted by the society that supports that particular institute only when it has its own freedom of choice and action. This never meant that they are not accountable before the public, but are reviewed and their activities are surveyed by others. The important area of an autonomous institution is to choose the students and staff. Although emoluments, other conditions require the Govt's approval, but the selection and appointment of staff is wholly at the discretion of

the institute. UGC directions are implemented by the Govt. & subsequently adopted by the institute.

When we speak in broad terms Autonomy of an institution is the ability of to take all decisions regarding functioning of the institution but within the laws of the country. It has been seen that the autonomous institution fails in & fails out regarding financial matters. Here we can say that the institution may be labelled as fully autonomous in all its academic related matters.

#### **Academic Autonomy in Educational Institutions**

Academic autonomy here refers to the status given to the colleges by the UGC for the development & upliftment in academics.

#### **Need for Autonomy**

To Enable the colleges to award degrees on behalf of the University by providing academic freedom to function better with credibility.

#### **Role of UGC**

Highlighting the importance of autonomous colleges, the UGC document on the profile of Higher Education in India clearly states that *"The only safe and better way to improve the quality of undergraduate education is to delink most of the colleges from the affiliating structure. colleges with academic and operative freedom are doing better and have more credibility. The financial support of such colleges boost the autonomy"* The UGC (an autonomous body of MHRD-GOI) is therefore entrusted to provide autonomous higher stages for five years after



verification by UGC itself & the university to which the institution is affiliated. The parent university thus can grant autonomous status with the concurrence of the State Govt. & UGC.

#### **Eligibility for becoming Autonomous**

- All colleges (of any discipline) under Section 2 (f) of the UGC Act, whether aided, partially aided & unaided/self financing are eligible to apply for autonomous status.
- The college must have valid NAAC Accreditation with a minimum of 'A' Grade for being considered for fresh induction of autonomous status.
- The autonomous demanding college should have sufficient academic as well as non academic resources. Autonomous status covers certificate courses, diploma, degree, UG, PG & Research programs offered in the college.
- The major stakeholders of an autonomous college are:
  - a) Faculty.
  - b) Students.
  - c) Parents/Guardians
  - d) Alumni
  - e) Local community members.
- The parent university will award the degree to students evaluated & recommended by the autonomous college. The name of the college will be mentioned in the degree certificates.

- The colleges which have completed three terms of autonomous status can confer the degrees under their own title with the seal of the university.
- Five years will be the minimum term for autonomous college.

#### **What operations an Autonomous College can Adopt**

In order to fulfil the local needs of the people the autonomous college can design its syllabi & courses of study that too a student centric with option of electives. It can prescribe its rules in consonance with the policies of the State Govt. Student assessment, Examination conduct & result declaration are also a part of an operation to be carried by an autonomous college. Overall the autonomous college can undertake ample use of modern educational technology to improve standards.

#### **System of Examination**

Autonomous college shall have an Examination cell headed by the Controller of Examination. The principal of the college shall be chief controller Examinations. The controller of examinations will be assisted by Deputy Controller of Examinations along with other office support. The whole examination system viz; Conduct of semester exam, Evaluation, Tabulation, Preparation of Results, Grade cards, the SGPA, CGPA grades is wholly & solely responsibility of the Controller of Exams & its officials. With the proper permission of the university, the colleges will be entitled to give the provisional certificate.



### **Governance of an Autonomous College**

The college will have the following committees to ensure proper management of academic, financial & general administrative affairs. The following are statutory bodies in the autonomous college:

- Governing Body.
- Academic Council.
- Board of Studies.
- Finance committee.
- The Controller of Examinations.

### **Distinction between an Autonomous College & Deemed University**

It is necessary here to clarify the difference between an autonomous college and deemed university, so that the readers can have a clear viewpoint regarding the subject of the topic.

A Deemed University by itself is always autonomous, but it may not be vice versa. To explain a university is called “deemed” if it has been granted the status by act of a parliament to be considered equivalent to any UGC funded University while this is not the case with an autonomous college.

### **Audit & Internal Watch & Ward**

An internal mechanism regarding checking of working conditions of the autonomous college has to be build. An Academic Program Evaluation Committee (APEC) is a Non-statutory body made by the colleges to keep watch on the academics and submit its recommendations

every year. Every three years after the parent university conducts external inspection to check the standard and regularity of transparency & other parameters.

### **State Govt. Intervention/Role in Autonomous colleges**

- The state govt. will nominate an academican of repute as its nominee in the UGC Expert Committee at the time of fresh induction & extension of autonomous status to a college.
- The State Govt. will provide the nominee within 30 days of the request.
- If the State Govt. does not provide a nominee within 30 days,UGC will proceed with the visit to evaluate the college &
- The State Govt. will nominate eminent academican on the governing board & other bodies of the government colleges granted autonomous status.

Nature & Pattern of Financial Assistance and other enabling provisions to autonomous colleges after conferment of Autonomous Status.

The UGC will provide under the scheme to autonomous colleges to meet their additional and special needs such as:

- Up gradation of syllabus on a regular basis, making it skill oriented with quantifiable outcomes.



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- Orientation & re-training of teachers.
- Workshops and seminars.
- Examination reform.
- Furniture for office, classrooms, library & laboratories.
- Library equipments, books, journals, magazines.
- Renovation and repairs not leading to construction of new buildings.
- Extension activities.
- The guest is visiting faculty.
- Capacity building of teachers.
- However, the self financing colleges will not be provided autonomous grants.

**Status of Students & Teachers of Autonomous Colleges**

An autonomous college signifies much importance to its students and teachers. the autonomy reflects the efforts in excellence regarding academics and good quality higher education.

**Conclusion**

So, Academic autonomy is really a functional status given to colleges by UGC by giving them choice towards quality academic development. This research paper emphasized the value/need of academic autonomy in the prevailing situation in the country (India).

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