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**GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

(Education-1 Branch)

### **NOTIFICATION**

The 15th January, 2026

**No: 1028013:DPIHE-COLG0UNIV/16/2025/BD-DPI-HE/94.-** The Governor of Punjab is pleased to accord approval to issue the "Punjab Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026" for the purpose of establishment and incorporation of self-financed Private Digital Open Universities in the State of Punjab, as contained in Annexure-I.

2 This Policy shall be implemented with immediate effect.

Sd/-

**ANINDITA MITRA, IAS**

Administrative Secretary to Govt. of Punjab  
Department of Higher Education

Chandigarh  
The 15th January, 2026

## **Punjab Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026**

### **Preamble**

Whereas it is deemed expedient to attract high-quality private sector investment and expertise in the field of online, digital and open higher education and to provide for establishment and incorporation of private, self-financing *Private Digital Open Universities* in the State of Punjab;

Whereas it is desired to establish a fair and transparent framework for institutions and promoters with relevant experience in digital learning, educational technology, online programme delivery and higher education, so as to expand flexible, technology-enabled higher education opportunities for learners across the State;

Whereas an effective statutory mechanism for regulating online and open universities exists through the University Grants Commission, in particular the *UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020*, to which such Universities shall be mandatorily subject, and which govern programme recognition, quality assurance, learner support, technology standards and academic integrity;

Whereas these Universities shall be self-financed and not be entitled to receive any grant or aid from the State Government, yet a suitable mechanism is required for prescribing minimum digital infrastructure, accessibility norms, data governance systems, faculty standards, academic quality, and learner protection frameworks necessary for safeguarding student interests in online and open modes;

### **1. Short Title, Application and Commencement**

1.1 This Policy shall be called the *Punjab Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026*.

1.2 This Policy shall extend to the whole of the State of Punjab.

1.3 It shall come into force with immediate effect and shall apply to all Private Digital Open Universities to be established hereafter; amendments thereto shall apply prospectively.

1.4 Nothing in this Policy shall apply to any existing University established by an Act of the State Legislature unless such University seeks to be notified as a Private Digital Open University.

### **2. Definitions**

2.1 “AI” means Artificial Intelligence used for creation, curation or delivery of digital content or assessments.

2.2 “Commission” means the University Grants Commission (UGC) constituted under the Act.

2.3 “De-novo Institution” means an institution with the focus on teaching and research in unique and ‘emerging areas of knowledge’ so determined by UGC after a due process,

2.4 “Digital Ombudsman” means the person or body appointed by the University to receive and redress grievances of learners related to digital or open mode programmes.

2.5 “Domicile of Punjab” means a person who is a resident of the State of Punjab and holds a valid domicile or permanent residence certificate issued by a competent authority of the Government of Punjab, in accordance with the rules, instructions or notifications issued by the State Government from time to time.

2.6 “Employee” means a person appointed by the University, and includes teachers, officers (other than the Visitor), administrative and technical staff.

2.7 “Expert” means an academician or professional of repute in the field of higher education, digital learning or educational technology.

2.8 “Fee” means any amount collected by the University from students, by whatever name called, whether refundable or not, except as per notified rules.

2.9 “Government” means the Government of the State of Punjab in the Department of Higher Education.

2.10 “Higher Education” means study of programmes or course(s) for the pursuit of knowledge beyond 10+2 level for award of diploma, degree and other academic distinctions; and beyond 10th level for award of diploma, certificate and other academic distinctions.

2.11 “LMS” means Learning Management System used for hosting, delivering, tracking and managing digital learning content and assessments.

2.12 “Main Campus” means the campus of the University at its headquarters, as prescribed in the concerned University Act.

2.13 “ODL” means Open and Distance Learning as recognised by the UGC.

2.14 “Regulatory Body” means a body established by the Central Government for laying down norms and standards in higher education, including UGC, AICTE, NCTE, PCI, BCI, RCI and any other such body.

2.15 “Sponsoring Body” means a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, a trust registered under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, or a company incorporated under section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

2.16 “Statutes”, “Ordinances” and “Regulations” mean the Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University.

2.17 “Student of the University” means a person enrolled for any programme of study offered by the University in digital or open mode.

2.18 “Stipulated” means stipulated under this Policy or under executive instructions issued by the State Government from time to time.

2.19 “Teacher” means a Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor or any other person appointed for teaching, academic guidance or research as per UGC qualifications/norms.

2.20 “UGC” means the University Grants Commission, established under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956.

2.21 “University” means a Private Digital Open University established and incorporated through an Act of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in pursuance of this Policy.

2.22 “AICTE” means the All India Council for Technical Education, established under the All India Council for Technical Education Act, 1987.

2.23 “NCTE” means the National Council for Teacher Education, established under the National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993.

2.24 “PCI” means the Pharmacy Council of India, constituted under the Pharmacy Act, 1948.

2.25 “BCI” means the Bar Council of India, constituted under the Advocates Act, 1961.

2.26 “RCI” means the Rehabilitation Council of India, established under the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992.

2.27 “ICAR” means the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Government of India.

2.28 “MeitY” means the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India.

2.29 “WCAG” means the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), as adopted by the Government of India from time to time.

- 2.30 “ABC” means the Academic Bank of Credits, as notified by the University Grants Commission under the National Education Policy framework.
- 2.31 “MOOCs” means Massive Open Online Courses offered through recognised national or international platforms and permitted for credit transfer under UGC regulations.
- 2.32 “LOI” means Letter of Intent issued by the State Government for establishment of a Private Digital Open University under this Policy.
- 2.33 “National Credit Framework” means the framework notified by the Government of India for credit accumulation, transfer and redemption across academic, vocational and skill-based education.
- 2.34 “UGC ODL and Online Regulations” means the University Grants Commission (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020, as amended from time to time.
- 2.35 “Compliance Report” means the report submitted by the sponsoring body to the State Government indicating fulfilment of conditions stipulated in the Letter of Intent.
- 2.36 “Sub-Committee” means the Committee constituted by the Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab, under clause 5.3 of this Policy, for the purpose of scrutinising, evaluating and inspecting proposals for establishment of Private Digital Open Universities and making recommendations thereon.
- 2.37 “High-Level Committee” means the Committee constituted by the Government of Punjab, under clause 5.6 of this Policy, chaired by the Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab to examine proposals and compliance reports and to make recommendations for issuance of Letter of Intent and establishment of a Private Digital Open University.
- 2.38 “NAAC” means National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
- 2.39 “CIQA” means Centre for Internal Quality Assurance|| (CIQA) means a Centre established by a Higher Educational Institution for ensuring the quality of programmes being offered in Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode.
- 2.40 “Credit Framework for Online Learning” means the framework notified by the University Grants Commission for recognition and transfer of credits earned through online learning modes.
- 2.41 “Conventional mode” means a mode of providing learning opportunities through face to face interaction between the teacher and learner in regular class room environment but does not exclude supplementary instructions if any for the learner through use of online;
- 2.42 “e-Learning Material” means and includes contents in the form of structured course material, as a part of one or more courses in the Online Programme, in digital format delivered through Learning Management System, which is inter alia self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study, but does not include textbooks or guide-books; as defined in these regulations;
- 2.43 “Examination Centre” means a place where examinations are conducted, inter alia, for assessment of the learners pursuing programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode and is having the requisite infrastructure relevant to respective mode of education including adequate manpower for smooth conduct of examinations and adhering to such minimum standards as specified in these regulations;
- 2.44 “Information and Communication Technology” means the diverse set of tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, manage information and be deployed for realising the goals of interactive teaching-learning, enhancing access, ensuring knowledge cum information sharing, building capacities and

management of the educational system and resources;

2.45 “Learning Management System” means a system to keep track of delivery of e-Learning Programmes, learner’s engagement, assessment, results, reporting and other related details in one centralised location;

2.46 “Learner Support Centre” means a centre established or recognised by the Higher Educational Institution for advising, counselling, providing interface between the teachers and the learners, rendering any academic and any other related service and assistance required, inter alia, by the learners of Open and Distance Learning mode;

2.47 “MOOCs” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under sub-regulation 3.6 of regulation 3 of UGC (Credit Framework for Online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016;

2.48 “Online Mode” means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using internet, e-Learning Materials and full-fledged programme delivery through the internet using technology assisted mechanism and resources;

2.49 “Open and Distance Learning Mode” means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using a variety of media, including print, electronic, online and occasional interactive face-to-face meetings with the learners or Learner Support Services to deliver teaching-learning experiences, including practical or work experiences;

2.50 “Prospectus” includes any publication, whether in print or e-form, issued for providing fair and transparent information, relating to a Higher Educational Institution and its programmes, to the general public (including to those seeking admission in such Higher Educational Institution) by the management of such Higher Educational Institution or any authority or person authorised by such Higher Educational Institution to do so;

2.51 “Self-Learning e-Module” for Online mode means a modular unit of course material in e-learning form which is inter alia self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study and includes contents in the form of a combination of the following e-Learning content, namely:-

- (a) e-Text Materials;
- (b) Video Lectures;
- (c) Audio-Visual interactive material;
- (d) Virtual Classroom sessions;
- (e) Audio Pod casts;
- (f) Virtual Simulation; and
- (g) Self-Assessment Quizzes or Tests;

2.52 “Self-Learning Material” for Open and Distance Learning mode means and includes contents in the form of course material, whether print or in e-form, which is inter alia self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study, but does not include text-books or guide-books;

2.53 “SWAYAM” (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) means the learning management system as specified in the UGC (Credit Framework for online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016.

### **3. Objects of the University**

3.1 The broad objectives of a Private Digital Open University shall be to provide instruction, teaching and training in higher education through digital, online, distance or open modes, and to make provisions for research, innovation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge through technology-enabled systems.

3.2 The detailed objectives shall include:

- (a) to offer programmes of study at the undergraduate, postgraduate and professional levels through synchronous and asynchronous online delivery, digital assessments, virtual laboratories and other technology-enabled tools;
- (b) to ensure adherence to the UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020, the National Credit Framework, the Credit Framework for Online Learning, and the Academic Bank of Credits;
- (c) to create, curate and update high-quality digital learning materials, ensuring that a substantial portion, as per UGC regulations, is developed or curated by qualified faculty of the University, and that any instructional content generated through artificial intelligence is explicitly declared, critically reviewed, and formally approved through such academic processes as may be prescribed;
- (d) to ensure that all digital learning materials are updated regularly, as required under the applicable UGC regulations, and to maintain a structured system for periodic review and revision of instructional content, as approved by the Academic Council;
- (e) to ensure minimum standards for synchronous engagement (including live sessions, tutorials, mentoring etc.) and availability of faculty and academic advisors for structured office hours to support learners;
- (f) to develop and maintain secure, scalable and accessible digital infrastructure including LMS, digital content studios, cloud hosting, proctored examination systems, AI-enabled learning pathways, and support for low-bandwidth and mobile-first access in accordance with MeitY and WCAG norms;
- (g) to promote lifelong learning and credit mobility through recognition of MOOCs, online courses, micro-credentials and international credit transfer;
- (h) to adopt and uphold transparent, fair and inclusive admission and learner-engagement practices suited to digital and open modes, ensuring that prospective learners receive accurate information, adequate support and non-discriminatory access throughout the admission and onboarding process;
- (i) to provide robust digital learner support systems including call centres, helpdesks, counselling services and a Digital Ombudsman;
- (j) to promote research and development in digital pedagogy, virtual learning environments, artificial intelligence, accessibility, assessment integrity and education technology.

3.3 Detailed objectives may be included in the respective University Act.

### **4. Submission of Proposal for Establishment of a University and Evaluation**

4.1 The sponsoring body desirous of applying for establishment of a Private Digital Open University shall have 5 years of credible experience in online or digital learning, educational technology, programme delivery or content development.

4.2 The sponsoring body shall also demonstrate financial capacity, including maintenance of a corpus fund of at least ₹ 20 crore or may be prescribed by the State Government. The Fund so earmarked can only be used for the development of the University.

4.3 An application containing the proposal and the project report shall be submitted to the Department of Higher Education along with a processing fee of 5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakh Only) by a demand draft in favour of the Director, Department of Higher Education, Punjab.

4.4 The project report shall contain the following particulars:

- (a) details of the sponsoring body including registration certificate, constitution and bye-laws;
- (b) audited accounts for the preceding five years and details of financial resources available for establishing and maintaining digital infrastructure, technology systems, digital studios, LMS, servers and support centres;
- (c) name, location and headquarters of the proposed University;
- (d) vision and objectives of the University;
- (e) details of land, including proof of ownership or long-term lease (minimum fifteen years) of a minimum of three acres of contiguous land for establishing administrative offices, digital content studios, learner-support centres and technology infrastructure, along with requisite change-of-land-use approvals;"
- (f) detailed plans of the minimum 15,000 sq. ft. covered space in the first year and 20,000 sq. ft. by the third year, including:
  - 1. administrative offices,
  - 2. digital content creation studios,
  - 3. IT server rooms and LMS operations centres,
  - 4. faculty rooms,
  - 5. student support and call centre facilities,
  - 6. proctoring and digital examination control rooms;

Note: The physical infrastructure requirements prescribed under this Policy are intended solely for administrative, digital production, learner-support and regulatory compliance purposes and shall not be construed as mandatory classroom-based teaching infrastructure.

(g) The feasibility report for the establishment of the University in a particular geographical area with due regard to the respective Master Plan, if any, of the relevant Development Authority under the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the State Government

(h) the proof of 5 years prior experience and expertise in online or digital learning, educational technology, programme delivery or content development at the command of the sponsoring body and/ or its affiliate entity, as the case may be.

(i) details of academic and digital infrastructure proposed to be created, including LMS architecture, hosting systems, accessibility plans, virtual lab designs, digital assessment systems and AI governance protocols;

(j) details of the teaching faculty proposed to be appointed by the University, including the categories and minimum qualifications of faculty as prescribed by UGC, and the overall staffing plan necessary to support academic delivery, content development, evaluation and digital operations;

(k) the proposed digital programmes of study and research, including synchronous/asynchronous design, proctored digital examination structures, virtual labs, internship/practical components, and mechanisms for ensuring assessment integrity;

(l) the system to be followed for content development, including faculty involvement, quality review, and AI-generated content governance;

(m) detailed roadmap and timelines of compliance with:

1. UGC ODL and Online Regulations,
2. National Credit Framework,
3. Credit Framework for Online Learning,
4. ABC integration,
5. MeitY security guidelines,
6. accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA),
7. low-bandwidth/mobile-first delivery;

(n) scheme for technology adoption and data-governance including hosting on Indian servers or mirror storage in India, privacy systems and explicit learner consent protocols;

(o) the framework for learner support, including plans for call centres, helpdesks, counselling services and the structure of the Digital Ombudsman for redressal of learner grievances;

(p) mechanisms for international collaboration, credit mobility and acceptance of MOOCs for credit;

(q) a detailed public-information and disclosure plan specifying the manner in which the University shall publish information regarding fees, faculty profiles, academic offerings, technology architecture, support services, learning outcomes, and any other matter prescribed by the State Government;

(r) such other details as may be specified by the State Government.

## **5. Evaluation of Proposal**

5.1 The Administrative Department of Higher Education of the Government of Punjab will make a preliminary scrutiny of the proposal submitted as above and point out deficiencies, if any, and shall communicate to the sponsoring body for the removal thereof within 4 weeks from the date of the receipt of the proposal. Besides this, additional information may be sought from the sponsoring body for the scrutiny purposes.

5.2 The sponsoring body shall submit the report regarding the removal of the deficiencies communicated as above within 3 months or less and thereafter the proposal and the project report along with the aforesaid compliance report for establishment of the University shall be placed before the Sub-Committee constituted for reviewing the proposal.

5.3 The Chief Secretary shall constitute a Sub-Committee comprising:

1. Administrative Secretary, Higher Education (Chairperson);
2. Administrative Secretary from other concerned Department of the Government;
3. Vice-Chancellor of One State University;
4. External Expert(s) in online education, digital technology and data governance.
5. Director, Higher Education (Member Secretary)

5.4 The Sub-Committee shall review the proposal in detail, and make physical inspection, only if required, of the provisions mentioned in the proposal as above for adjudging the credibility of the sponsoring body and feasibility of establishment of the proposed University. Any additional information may be sought from the sponsoring body before, during and after the inspection.

5.5 The Sub-Committee shall submit its recommendations for issuance of the Letter of Intent or deficiencies shall be communicated to the sponsoring body for rectification along with reasonable timelines within which the

Sponsoring Body may rectify the deficiencies.

5.6 The sponsoring body shall submit a report regarding the removal of deficiencies and compliance with the recommendations of the Sub-Committee. After receipt of the compliance report, the proposal shall be placed before a High-Level Committee to be chaired by the Chief Secretary. The Committee shall consist of –

1. Administrative Secretaries of the Departments of Finance, Planning, Technical Education & Industrial Training, and Medical Education & Research, Higher Education;
2. Vice-Chancellor of One State University (Panjab University, Chandigarh; Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar; and Baba Farid University of Health Sciences);
3. Director, Higher Education – Member Secretary.

5.7 The High-Level Committee shall consider the proposal on the following parameters, besides any other criteria it deems relevant:

1. financial soundness and assets of the sponsoring body;
2. background, expertise, experience and reputation of the sponsoring body, and its commitment to follow norms of regulatory bodies;
3. potential and relevance of the proposed disciplines/domains, considering the availability of existing facilities in the State;
4. need of the University in the concerned geographical area, with due regard to the Master Plan of the concerned Local Development Authority;
5. any other parameter considered relevant in the interest of the State, the Country, society or industry.

The Committee may call for additional information from the sponsoring body as it considers necessary.

5.8 The decision regarding permission for domain-specific or multi-domain University shall lie with this Committee.

5.9 After considering the proposal, the High-Level Committee shall make its recommendation for issuance of the Letter of Intent (LOI).

5.10 The final approval for issuance of the Letter of Intent may be accorded by the Chief Minister, or if deemed appropriate, with the approval of the Council of Ministers. Nothing shall preclude the inclusion of further conditions at this stage for compliance by the sponsoring body.

5.11 Provided that the Chief Minister, or if deemed appropriate the Council of Ministers, may, on the recommendation of the High-Level Committee, permit calibrated relaxation in corpus fund or physical asset requirements for institutions demonstrating credible digital-first, asset-light models, subject to compliance with UGC norms and adequate financial safeguards.

## **6. Issuance of the Letter of Intent and Compliance Report**

6.1 After approval of the Chief Minister or Council of Ministers, the State Government shall issue a Letter of Intent subject to the compliance of following conditions by sponsoring body:

- (a) payment of Rs. 20,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Lacs Only) shall be made by a demand draft in favour of the Director, Department of Higher Education, Punjab at the time of issue of Letter of Intent (LOI).
- (b) subject to further clauses submission of proof of ownership/lease of at least 3 acres of contiguous land;

- (c) construction of minimum 15,000 sq. ft. of covered space for digital operations before commencement of academic activities, including studios, LMS/IT rooms, faculty spaces, support centres, and digital exam control rooms;
- (d) procurement of equipment, servers, computers, digital infrastructure, content development tools, proctoring systems etc, as per norms of concerned regulatory bodies;
- (e) submission of undertaking to appoint of teaching faculty and academic advisors, in accordance with the norms of the concerned regulatory bodies;
- (f) submission of undertaking w.r.t. operational readiness of the learner-support system, including helpdesks and call-centre arrangements;
- (g) compliance with MeitY security guidelines, data privacy norms, accessibility standards and server-hosting requirements;
- (h) submission of undertaking w.r.t. establishment of a Digital Ombudsman;
- (i) readiness of LMS, digital content and assessment systems for inspection;
- (j) submission of undertaking w.r.t. compliance with all UGC regulations applicable to online and ODL programmes.

6.2 The sponsoring body shall fulfil the requirements and conditions specified in the LOI and shall submit a Compliance Report to the State Government within a maximum period of two years from the date of issuance of the LOI.

6.3 On receipt of the Compliance Report, the Administrative Department shall scrutinise the same, point out deficiencies if any, and communicate such deficiencies to the sponsoring body for rectification. Additional information may also be sought as required.

6.4 The sponsoring body shall submit a report regarding the removal of deficiencies and compliance with the recommendations communicated as above. The proposal, along with the compliance report, shall thereafter be placed before the Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab for consideration.

6.5 The Sub-Committee constituted under clause 5.3 shall conduct a physical and digital inspection to verify LOI compliance, including infrastructure, LMS functionality, content studios, hosting arrangements, data-governance systems and digital assessment preparedness. The Sub-Committee may call for additional information before, during or after the inspection.

6.6 Any deficiencies observed during the inspection shall be communicated to the sponsoring body for rectification. Specific recommendations may also be issued for compliance.

6.7 The sponsoring body shall submit a report confirming removal of deficiencies and compliance with the recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

6.8 The Sub-Committee shall submit its report to the Administrative Department, specifying whether the sponsoring body has fulfilled all requirements and conditions stipulated in the LOI.

6.9 If the Administrative Department is satisfied, it shall place the proposal before the High-Level Committee constituted under clause 5.6, chaired by the Chief Secretary, for consideration of approval.

6.10 Upon satisfactory compliance, the High-Level Committee shall recommend the proposal for in-principle approval of the Chief Minister for establishment of the University.

6.11 At the time of issuance of final approval to establish the University, the sponsoring body shall make a payment of Rs. 1,00,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore only) through demand draft in favour of the Director, Department

of Higher Education, Punjab.

6.12 If the sponsoring body fails to comply with the requirements and conditions stipulated under the LOI within the maximum period of two years, the proposal shall be deemed to have been rejected and the LOI shall stand withdrawn. Provided that the State Government may, for reasons recorded in writing, extend the LOI for a period not exceeding one year, if satisfied that substantial compliance has been achieved and that full compliance is likely within the extended period.

## **7. Establishment of the University**

7.1 The State Government may, by an Act of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, establish a Private Digital Open University with such name, location, jurisdiction and infrastructure as specified.

7.2 After establishment, the University shall obtain recognition from UGC under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956.

7.3 The University shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession.

7.4 The University shall be self-financed and shall not be entitled to receive grants or any other financial assistance from the State Government.

7.5 A University shall operate from a single notified digital campus, comprising of its administrative headquarters, digital content studios, LMS operations centre, and learner-support facilities. The University shall not affiliate any colleges, centres or institutions other than those owned and managed by the same sponsoring body and located within the approved campus premises.

7.6 No off-campus centre shall be established by the University for online or open programmes, except with the prior approval of the State Government and in accordance with the norms of the UGC and other regulatory bodies. Any such facility may be considered only after completion of five years from the date of establishment of the University and shall require prior approval of the concerned central regulatory body, wherever applicable.

7.7 The University shall establish a Student Protection Mechanism including escrow arrangements, refund safeguards, and teach-out plans in case of discontinuation of any programme. The University shall ensure strict timelines adherence and transparency for all grievances filed by the students. The University shall ensure appropriate disclaimers prominently that the institution is self-financed and independently managed.

7.8 The University shall annually disclose outcome indicators including enrolment rates, learner completion rates, employability and employment metrics, learner satisfaction by means of internal and commissioned surveys, grievance redressal timelines and status of adherence to them, and accreditation status, in such manner as may be prescribed.

## **8. Power of the State Government to issue directions.**

The State Government shall have the power to issue directions to the University on their actions not consistent with stated Government policy/guidelines issued from time to time and the University shall be bound to comply with such directions. In case of failure of the University to adhere to those directions or to comply with the norms of the U.G.C. or other statutory authority, the State Government shall be authorized to take appropriate remedial action including suspension or withdrawal of recognition of the University.

## **9. University to Follow Rules, Regulations, etc. of Regulating Bodies**

9.1 The University shall operate in conformity with the regulations issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and other competent regulatory bodies. Compliance with technology, accessibility and digital governance standards shall be achieved in a phased and time-bound manner, as approved by the Academic Council, particularly

in respect of MeitY cyber-security norms and WCAG accessibility standards.

9.2 The University shall offer only such online or open programmes that are duly recognised or approved by the UGC, and wherever applicable, by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or any other central regulatory body with jurisdiction over that programme.

9.3 The University shall not confer any degree, diploma or academic distinction that is not recognised by the UGC under Section 22 of the UGC Act, or that requires approval from AICTE or another central regulatory authority unless such approval has been duly obtained.

9.4 Where a programme falls under the purview of bodies such as NCTE, BCI, PCI, ICAR or others, the University shall obtain the requisite approvals as applicable to online or open modes.

9.5 The University shall adopt appropriate standards relating to data governance, cyber-security and accessibility in alignment with:

1. MeitY guidelines;
2. WCAG accessibility norms, compliance with which shall be achieved within a reasonable and phased timeframe not exceeding one year;
3. any technology-related norms notified by UGC or other competent bodies.

9.6 All academic, administrative, digital and examination functions shall be governed by the University Act, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations and by the norms of the relevant regulators applicable to online and open modes.

9.7 The University shall fully comply with the University Grants Commission (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020, as amended from time to time, and any future amendments thereto (including but not limited to provisions relating to the use of artificial intelligence in assessments, updated credit frameworks, or other evolving standards). Such regulations and amendments shall automatically apply to the University, and the University shall ensure complete adherence thereto.

9.8 The University shall establish a Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) as per the UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020, and submit its annual CIQA report to the University Grants Commission as required. A copy of the said annual report shall also be submitted to the Department of Higher Education, Government of Punjab, for information and monitoring purposes.

## **10. Admission to Programmes**

10.1 Admission to the programmes of study offered by the University shall be open to Indian nationals in accordance with applicable UGC regulations and norms.

10.2 Fifteen percent (15%) of the approved intake in each programme shall be reserved for candidates domiciled in the State of Punjab, subject to the reservation policy of the State Government. Any seat(s) remaining vacant under the Punjab domicile quota shall be filled in the open category in the manner prescribed.

## **11. Fee Structure and Regulation of Fees**

11.1 The fee structure shall be determined by the University as a self-regulatory body but must be transparent and reasonable.

11.2 All programme fees, digital service charges, examination fees, certificate fees and any other charges shall be disclosed upfront and prominently.

11.3 No capitation fee or donation shall be collected.

11.4 The University shall provide full tuition fee concession or freeship to at least 5% of enrolled students, from among candidates belonging to the weaker sections of the Society and shall develop a fair and transparent mechanism to deal with such matters.

11.5 All marketing material must explicitly mention the digital/open nature of programmes and details of UGC recognition status.

## **12. Dissolution of the University**

12.1 The Sponsoring Body may, with the previous approval of the State Government, dissolve the University after giving due public notice to the effect in the stipulated manner to the various stakeholders, including the employees and the students of the University and other persons interested, at least one academic year in advance:

Provided that dissolution of the University shall take effect only after the last batch of students admitted to the regular courses have completed their courses and they have been awarded degrees, diplomas or awards, as the case may be.

Provided further that the dissolution shall be deemed to complete only upon the enactment of the repealing Act by the Legislative Assembly of the state of Punjab.

12.2 On the dissolution of the University, all the assets and liabilities of the University shall vest in the sponsoring body and shall be utilized in accordance with its bye-laws and rules and regulations.

12.3 Provided further that adequate financial and academic arrangements, including escrow funds and transfer mechanisms, shall be ensured for protection of enrolled students prior to dissolution.

## **13. Power of State Government to Act Against University**

13.1 The State Government, based on complaint or suo-motu, may show-cause the University/Sponsoring Body if it does not comply with the conditions outlined in this policy.

13.2 If the State Government is not satisfied with the explanation, it may conduct an inquiry to ascertain facts and evidence.

13.3 If the State Government is satisfied that the University/sponsoring body has failed to comply with the conditions outlined in this policy substantively, then the State Government may take action against the University/sponsoring body including but not limited to the following:

1. Issue binding directions for compliance with the timeline stipulated; or
2. Financial penalty up to Rs. 25 lakh against each violation.
3. Bar the fresh admissions in all or some of the degree or diploma or certificate programmes

Provided no action shall be taken against the university/sponsoring body without providing adequate opportunity and following principles of natural justice.

Provided, further, that the State Government shall ensure that the existing students' interests are not harmed in the process and the necessary remedial measures taken to secure their interests.

## **14. Power to remove Difficulties**

If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Policy, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Policy, as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

**15. Relaxations**

The State Government may, for reason(s) to be recorded in writing, relax any of the conditions contained in this Policy for the purpose of grant of approval to any sponsoring body for the establishment of a University of national or international importance if, in its opinion, this relaxation is in the interest of promoting higher education in the State.

**16. Powers of the Legislative Assembly**

Nothing in this Policy shall affect the Constitutional powers vested with the Legislative Assembly of the state of Punjab to enact any law in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India.

**17. Disputes to be settled in a court in Punjab**

All disputes/issues arising as a result of the provisions made in the Policy shall be settled in an appropriate statutory tribunal or court of law, in the State of Punjab.

Sd/-

**ANINDITA MITRA, IAS**

Administrative Secretary to Govt. of Punjab

Department of Higher Education

Chandigarh

The 15th January, 2026