



A GLOBAL DIGEST FOR THE MODERN EDUCATOR

GLOBAL POLICY & REGULATORY UPDATES

India's VBSA Bill 2025: Historic Higher Education Overhaul Referred to Joint Parliamentary Committee

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha on December 15, 2025 — proposing to replace UGC, AICTE, and NCTE with a unified apex regulatory body aligned with NEP 2020. The Bill establishes three independent councils for regulation, accreditation, and academic standard-setting, and introduces a faceless, technology-driven single-window system. A Joint Parliamentary Committee of 31 MPs was constituted to submit recommendations before the Budget Session 2026. Institutions of National Importance (IITs, IIMs, NITs) retain autonomy under their respective Acts; medicine and law remain under existing regulators.

Source: [Elets Digital Learning — VBSA Bill 2025](#) | [British Council Insight — Single Regulator](#)

NEP 2020 at Five Years: Outcome-Based Accreditation and Internationalisation as Core Priorities

Marking the fifth anniversary of NEP 2020 in July 2025, the Ministry of Education underscored progress on institutional autonomy, outcome-based quality benchmarking, technology-enabled regulation, and internationalisation. The VBSA Bill directly operationalises NEP's envisioned 'light-but-tight' regulatory framework, with internationalisation formally framed as a strategic priority for positioning India as a global knowledge hub.

Source: [British Council Opportunities Insight](#) | [Organiser — HECI Bill Explainer](#)

US Department of Education Allocates USD 167 Million for AI Integration and Accreditation Reform (FIPSE 2025)

Under its Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) priorities for 2025, the US Department of Education directed USD 167 million across priority areas including AI integration in education and accreditation reform. Two streams totalling USD 50 million specifically target deploying AI to improve postsecondary learning outcomes and expanding foundational AI and computer science exposure for future educators. Applications closed December 3, 2025, with awards expected by year-end.

Source: [EdTech Innovation Hub — FIPSE USD 167M](#)

ACCREDITATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE TRENDS

NAAC Overhauls Accreditation Framework: Binary Outcome, Fully Digital, Maturity-Level Grading (2025)

NAAC launched a comprehensively revamped accreditation framework in 2025. The traditional seven-point grading scale has been replaced by a binary accreditation outcome (accredited / not accredited). The new system is fully digital, eliminating mandatory

EMPLOYABILITY & FUTURE SKILLS TRENDS

WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025: 170 million New Roles by 2030; Analytical Thinking & AI Literacy Top Required Skills

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, surveying 1,000+ employers representing 14 million workers across 22 industries and 55 economies, projects 170 million new jobs created and 92 million displaced by 2030 — a net gain of approximately 78 million. Core skills are projected to change for 39% of workers by 2030 (down from 44% in 2023). Analytical thinking remains the top core skill (cited by 7 in 10 employers), with AI and big data literacy as the fastest-growing skill. Environmental stewardship now ranks in the top 10 growing skills.

Source: [WEF — Future of Jobs Report 2025](#) | [WEF — Skills Outlook Chapter](#) | [WEF — Full Report PDF](#)

Skills Half-Life Now Under 3 Years; Green Economy to Create 14 Million Jobs by 2026; 78% Global Talent Shortage Reported

WEF (2025) reports skill obsolescence now occurring in under three years, making continuous learning essential. The ILO estimates the green economy will generate 14 million new jobs by 2026 in roles such as climate risk analyst, circular economy designer, and ESG reporting specialist. ManpowerGroup's Global Talent Barometer reports a historic 78% talent shortage globally; LinkedIn data signals a 40% surge in demand for AI and automation literacy in 2026.

Source: [Rome Business School — 60% Workers Must Reskill](#) | [wherework.gr — Top Skills for 2026](#) | [MakerStations — Future of Work Statistics 2026](#)

INTERNATIONALISATION & STUDENT MOBILITY

UK International Student Enrolments Fall 5.9% in 2024–25; India Down 11.7%, Pakistan Up 10.6%; TNE Grows 7.8%

HESA 2024–25 data shows total international student enrolments in the UK fell 5.9% to 697,365, driven by sharp declines in postgraduate taught (PGT) enrolments. India recorded an 11.7% decline — particularly among female PGT students (–28.6%). Pakistan surged 10.6% with a 72.2% increase in postgraduate research students. Meanwhile, UK transnational education (TNE) grew 7.8% to 663,970 students studying for a UK qualification overseas. China remains the largest TNE market.

Source: [British Council — Student Mobility & TNE Overview 2024/25](#)

Stricter Visa Regimes Across USA, Australia, Canada, and UK Reshape Global Student Mobility in 2026

Australia replaced earlier assessment frameworks with a new Genuine Student (GS) requirement, with higher English language thresholds and stronger financial vetting. Canada extended its study permit cap of 437,000 for 2025 (including graduate students), reduced from 2024 levels. The US is under heightened scrutiny for CPT/OPT and STEM OPT work authorisation, with a possible new integrity fee of USD 250 proposed for 2026. UK's stricter dependent visa restrictions

physical inspections at entry levels. Accreditation cycles are shortened from five years to three years. A five-level maturity framework is introduced – Levels 1–2 are entirely online, Level 3 is hybrid, and Levels 4–5 meet global standards. Coverage is targeted to rise from 40% of universities and fewer than 20% of 50,000+ colleges to 90–95% of all HEIs.

Source: [Elets Digital Learning — NAAC Revamp 2025](#) | [Vaave Blog — NAAC RAF Guidelines 2025](#)

Three Indian B-Schools Earn AACSB Accreditation in October 2025; India Now Has 27 AACSB Institutions

On October 30, 2025, AACSB International awarded accreditation to three new Indian business schools, bringing India's total to 27 AACSB-accredited institutions in 2025–26. Globally, approximately 756 institutions hold AACSB accreditation. AACSB standards are organized under Strategic Management & Innovation, Learner Success, and Thought Leadership, Engagement & Societal Impact.

Source: [MBAUniverse — AACSB Accredited Colleges India 2025](#) | [MBA.today — AACSB Accredited Schools List 2025](#)

EQUIS Accreditation Reaches 234 Institutions Globally as of February 2026; UCAS Joins in October 2025

As of February 5, 2026, the EFMD's EQUIS accreditation scheme covers 234 institutions worldwide. Recent additions include the School of Economics and Management of the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences (UCAS), accredited in October 2025. EQUIS evaluates institutions across six dimensions: faculty, students, research, e-learning, community outreach, and corporate connections.

Source: [MBA.today — EQUIS Accredited Schools 2025](#)

GLOBAL RANKINGS & BENCHMARKING INSIGHTS

QS World University Rankings 2026: MIT Retains No. 1; New International Student Diversity Indicator Introduced

The QS World University Rankings 2026, released June 19, 2025, includes 1,500+ universities from 100+ countries. MIT retained the global top position. The 2026 edition introduced the International Student Diversity (ISD) indicator, measuring the breadth of international student recruitment across diverse geographies. QS also refined its normalisation methodology for more precise indicator-level assessment. Institutions in Asia, Latin America, the Arab Region, and Europe must now be ranked in their respective regional rankings to qualify for the global table.

Source: [TopUniversities — QS WUR 2026](#) | [QS Support — Methodology & Eligibility](#) | [Chandigarh University — QS 2026 Release Date](#)

THE World University Rankings 2026: 18 Indicators Across 5 Pillars; Post-Publication Corrections Issued for Merged Universities

THE WUR 2026 evaluates research-intensive universities across 18 performance indicators under five pillars: Teaching, Research Environment, Research Quality, International Outlook, and Industry. THE issued a correction in early 2026 for four universities formed through 2025 mergers – Adelaide University, Institute of Science Tokyo, City St George's (University of London), and Marie and Louis Pasteur University – following attribution errors in the Academic Reputation Survey. Adelaide University's corrected global position moved to 133rd. The 2026 survey incorporated 108,000+ academic reputation responses.

Source: [THE — WUR 2026 Methodology](#) | [THE — WUR 2026 Methodology PDF](#)

contributed to an 85% decline in dependent visas (to approximately 22,000). Overall, Indian overseas enrolments declined 5.7% in 2025.

Source: [IDP Education — 2026 Visa Rules Overview](#) | [IDP Education — US Student Visa 2026](#) | [studyabroadlife.org — Country-Wise 2026 Visa Guide](#) | [NAFSA — Changing Winds in Student Mobility](#)

SUSTAINABILITY & ESG IN HIGHER EDUCATION

THE Impact Rankings 2025: Asian Universities Lead 10 of 17 SDG Sub-Rankings; 2,526 Institutions Assessed

THE Impact Rankings 2025 ranked 2,526 universities from 130 countries on UN SDG contributions. Asian universities now lead 10 of 17 individual SDG sub-rankings – a landmark development reflecting rapid institutional investment in sustainability governance, climate research, and community partnerships. Research published in Springer's Higher Education journal (2025) confirms that participation in sustainability assessment frameworks (THE Impact Rankings, UI GreenMetric) provides actionable institutional benchmarks for SDG progress.

Source: [THE — Impact Rankings 2025](#) | [Springer — Sustainability Rankings in Higher Education](#)

QS Sustainability Rankings 2026: ESG Now a Core Indicator in Global University Rankings; Manchester MBA Tops UK ESG List

QS Sustainability University Rankings 2026 formally evaluates institutions on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, with sustainability now embedded as an indicator in QS's core flagship rankings. Over half of college applicants globally are influenced by institutional environmental commitments (Princeton Review). The Financial Times ranked Alliance Manchester Business School's MBA 1st in the UK for ESG and net zero teaching; THE Impact Rankings 2025 placed it 2nd globally for societal impact.

Source: [QS Sustainability Rankings 2026](#) | [MBA Crystal Ball — Top MBA Programmes for ESG](#)

INNOVATION & UNIVERSITY ECOSYSTEMS

Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre Establishes Cross-Continental Bio Innovation Corridor with La Trobe University

India's Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre (BBC) established a Bio Innovation Corridor with Australia's La Trobe University, creating structured international pathways for life-sciences startups to access cross-border mentorship, research infrastructure, and commercialisation support. The BBC is recognised among India's Top 50 Startup Accelerators for 2025 by Indian Startup Times (December 2025).

Source: [Indian Startup Times — Top 50 Accelerators 2025](#)

AICTE Restructures Research Promotion Scheme as 'RPS: Lab to Market' — Targeting TRL 6/7 Translational Research

AICTE has revamped its Research Promotion Scheme (first launched in 2003–04) into 'AICTE RPS: Lab to Market', targeting translational research at Technology Readiness Levels 6 and 7. Focus areas include AI, Machine Learning, Quantum Computing, and Big Data. Separate funding tracks support technology commercialisation and industrial applications – aimed at closing the gap between academic research output and market deployment.

Source: [AICTE — Staff Development & Research Schemes](#)

THE Impact Rankings 2025: 2,526 Universities Ranked on SDGs; Western Sydney University No. 1 for Fourth Year

The THE Impact Rankings 2025 assessed 2,526 universities from 130 countries on their contribution to all 17 UN SDGs. Western Sydney University topped the overall table for the fourth consecutive year. Indonesia's Universitas Airlangga (joint 9th) was the most sustainable institution from an emerging economy. Asian universities claim more than half of all places and lead 10 of 17 individual SDG sub-rankings.

Source: [THE — Impact Rankings 2025](#)

EDTECH & AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

AI in Higher Education Shifts from Pilot to Embedded Infrastructure in 2026; Global AI-Education Market at USD 7.57 Billion

Industry leaders surveyed by Campus Technology (January 2026) project AI will be embedded across admissions, advising, student services, learning, and administration in 2026. The global AI education market reached USD 7.57 billion in 2025, projected to exceed USD 112 billion by 2034. A Center for Democracy & Technology report (October 2025) found 85% of teachers and 86% of students used AI in the preceding academic year, with 69% of teachers reporting improved teaching methods.

Source: [Campus Technology — 2026 AI Predictions](#) | [Faculty Focus — 2026 Classroom Trends](#) | [Inside Higher Ed — AI in Higher Ed 2026](#)

US AI Degree Programmes Surge 114% from 2024 to 2025; Northwestern University Launches Dedicated AI Major

Bachelor's AI degree programmes in the US grew from 90 to 193 between 2024 and 2025 — a 114% increase. MBA in AI programmes rose 1,260% since 2022. Northwestern University is among the latest to debut an AI major in 2026. The expansion has raised concerns about faculty shortages, academic rigour, and marketing-driven programme development.

Source: [pursuit.us — AI in Education News 2026](#)

AICTE–NPTEL MoU: Advanced MOOC Certifications Recognised as FDPs for Academic Career Progression

AICTE and NPTEL formalised an agreement whereby advanced NPTEL online certification courses (1–3 credit MOOCs) are officially recognised as equivalent to Faculty Development Programmes for career progression in AICTE-approved institutions, effective from January 2024 onwards. The ATAL-FDP 2025–26 scheme launched May 6, 2025, with online FDPs running August 18, 2025 to February 15, 2026.

Source: [NPTEL — AICTE FDP Portal](#) | [AICTE — Staff Development Schemes](#)

FUNDING & RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

India's Education Budget 2025–26: INR 1,28,650 Crore Allocated — a 13% Increase Over 2024–25

The Union Ministry of Education received an allocation of INR 1,28,650 crore in Budget 2025–26, a 13% increase over revised estimates of 2024–25. The Department of Higher Education funds IITs, NITs, IISERs, and IIMs, as well as UGC and AICTE. A non-lapsable reserve fund — the Madhyamik and Uccharar Shiksha Kosh (MUSK), funded by the Health and Education Cess — provides supplementary resources for higher education schemes.

Source: [PRS India — Demand for Grants 2025–26: Education](#)

Atal Innovation Mission: 60 AICs Active Across India; Only 2.8% of DPIIT Startups Originate from Campus Incubators

India's Atal Innovation Mission established 60 Atal Incubation Centres (AICs), 46 of which are active and have collectively incubated 6,500+ startups. Yet an April 2026 review reveals these contribute only 2.8% to India's 226,000+ DPIIT-recognised startups. Key structural gaps include weak industry–academia linkage, insufficient mentoring for deep-tech ventures, and institutional incentive misalignment. Improving AIC performance has emerged as a strategic priority in the post-VBSA regulatory reform agenda.

Source: [TICE News — College Incubators Falling Short](#) | [Startup India — Incubator Schemes Portal](#)

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

The following insights are derived directly from the developments reported in this edition:

1. India's VBSA Bill 2025 signals the most consequential shift in higher education governance since UGC's founding — institutions must proactively prepare for outcome-based compliance, technology-driven self-disclosure, and a unified regulatory interface well before enactment.
2. The convergence of NAAC's maturity-level accreditation, AACSB's India expansion to 27 schools, and global ESG ranking criteria indicates that institutions pursuing multiple international quality markers will gain outsized reputational and funding advantages over those relying solely on national accreditation.
3. WEF's finding that 39% of core skills will change by 2030 — with skills' half-life shrinking below three years — demands that higher education curricula adopt agile, continuous-update mechanisms, with AI literacy, green economy skills, and analytical thinking as non-negotiable core competencies.
4. International student mobility is undergoing a structural reset: India's 11.7% decline in UK enrolments, Canada's capped permits, and Australia's Genuine Student requirements collectively signal demand redistribution — Indian institutions and alternative destinations stand to gain if they act swiftly on quality and recognition.
5. The USD 167 million US federal investment in AI-for-education and accreditation reform, alongside 114% growth in AI degree programmes in one year, signals that institutions without a credible, embedded AI education strategy risk falling behind in both research competitiveness and graduate employability.
6. India's college incubator ecosystem contributing just 2.8% of DPIIT-recognised startups — despite a decade of Startup India policy — points to an urgent need for structural redesign of AIC mandates, faculty incentivisation for entrepreneurship, and deeper industry-academia co-governance.
7. THE Impact Rankings placing Asian universities at the top of 10 of 17 SDG pillars, combined with QS embedding sustainability as a core ranking indicator, establishes that ESG integration is now a direct driver of ranking scores, accreditation eligibility, and student recruitment globally.

ICSSR Major & Minor Research Projects 2025–26: Grants up to INR 30 Lakh Open for Indian Scholars

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) invites proposals for Major Research Projects (up to INR 30 lakh) and Minor Research Projects (up to INR 15 lakh) for 2025–26. Eligible disciplines include economics, governance, social sciences, environment, technology, humanities, and Indian Knowledge Systems. Projects are evaluated via blind peer review followed by expert committee presentations.

Source: [fundsforNGOs — ICSSR Research Projects 2025–26](#)

Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral and Postdoctoral Research Fellowships 2026–27: Applications Open for Indian Scholars

The Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Research Fellowship (deadline: July 1, 2026) supports Indian PhD scholars for 6–9 months of dissertation research in the US. The Fulbright-Nehru Postdoctoral Fellowship (deadline: July 15, 2026) offers 8–24 months at US institutions. Both prioritise research in AI, energy security, critical minerals, space science, and defence — funding J-1 visa support, living expenses, travel, and professional allowances.

Source: [fundsforNGOs — Fulbright-Nehru Fellowships 2026](#)

GLOBAL COMPETITIONS & ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

India's College Incubators Account for Just 2.8% of DPIIT-Recognized Startups Despite Decade of Policy Push

A review published by Mint and TICE News (April 2026) reveals that 60 Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) have collectively incubated 6,500+ startups across 46 active centers — representing only 2.8% of India's 226,000+ DPIIT-recognized startups. Core gaps include weak industry–academia linkage, inadequate mentoring for deep-tech ventures, and institutional incentive misalignment.

Source: [TICE News — India's College Incubators Falling Short](#) | [Startup India — Incubator Schemes](#)

DPIIT GI Promotion Anthem Contest & Japan Photo Contest 2026: Cross-Cultural Academic Competitions Open

DPIIT and MyGov launched the GI Promotion Anthem Contest (deadline: March 29, 2026) inviting original musical compositions celebrating India's Geographical Indication products. The Embassy of Japan and Japan Foundation New Delhi announced the Japan Photo Contest 2026 (deadline: February 15, 2026) for Indian photographers who travelled to Japan between March 2025 and February 2026, with prizes including Canon camera kits and JAL return air tickets.

Source: [fundsforNGOs — Grant Opportunities India 2026](#)

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT — INDIA + GLOBAL

UGC Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP): Six-Day FDPs on AI, Climate, SDGs, and Indian Knowledge Systems

The UGC's Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centres (MMTTCs) conduct six-day Short-Term Programmes covering Academic Leadership, Research Methodology, Climate Change, SDGs, Net Zero, Indian Knowledge Systems, Gender Studies, and ICT Applications. Each MMTTC must conduct at least one FDP on ICT themes — including MOOCs development, Learning Management Systems, e-content, blended learning, and Open Education Resources.

Source: [UGC-MMTTC Official Portal — Short-Term Programmes](#)

AICTE-ATAL Online FDP 2025–26: AI in Healthcare, Advanced Materials, and Research Methodology Among Key Themes

The AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Academy's 2025–26 online FDP series — open to faculty, research scholars, and PG students from AICTE-approved institutions — covers AI and Innovative Engineering in Healthcare, Advanced Materials, Precision Metrology, AI for Smarter Research, Statistical Analysis, and Research Paper Writing. All programmes are delivered online (6 PM–9 PM IST) to maximise accessibility for working faculty.

Source: [AICTE ATAL Academy](#) | [Mody University — ATAL FDP Notice 2025](#) | [ATAL Calendar 2025–26 \(Scribd\)](#)

AI Professional Development for Teachers Doubles Globally: 29% to 50% in One Year; ETS Launches AI Teaching Assessment

EdWeek Research Center data shows AI-related professional development for teachers nearly doubled from 29% (early 2024) to 50% (late 2025). ETS has launched FutureNav Adapt AI — the first standardised tool measuring teachers' capacity to use AI ethically and effectively — covering recognition, ethical navigation, evaluation, and classroom application of AI tools. The test takes fewer than 30 minutes and targets professional development planning rather than high-stakes licensure.

Source: [pursuit.us — AI in Education News](#)