

Tuesday, Feb 28, 2023

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Premium

Australia's Deakin University to be the first foreign varsity to set up campus in India

An official announcement of Deakin's intention to open its first offshore campus in GIFT City will be made on March 8 during Australian Prime Minister Anthony Norman Albanese visit to Ahmedabad. Deakin is ranked 266th in the QS World University Rankings and features among the top 50 young universities in the world.

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Ahmedabad, New Delhi | Updated: February 28, 2023 08:52 IST





Deakin is ranked 266th in the QS World University Rankings and features among the top 50 young universities in the world. (Graphics by Abhishek Mitra)

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Australia's Deakin University is set to become the first foreign university to enter India via an independent campus in Gujarat's GIFT City, The Indian Express has learned. An announcement is likely on March 8 during Australian Prime Minister Anthony Norman Albanese visit to Ahmedabad.

Deakin is ranked 266th in the QS World University Rankings and features among the top 50 young universities in the world. That apart, the university is placed in the 250- 300 band in the Times Higher Education World Rankings.

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The Indian Express had first reported on Sunday that at least two Australian universities have reached out to the union government to set up independent offshore campus in India. According to sources, the Deakin has already applied to the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) — GIFT City

Ravneet Pawha, CEO (South Asia), Deakin University did not wish to comment on the matter when The Indian Express reached out via email Saturday. IFSCA Chairman Injeti Srinivas was not reachable for comment.

Deakin has four campuses in Australia — Melbourne (Burwood), Geelong (Waurnd Ponds and Waterfront) and Warrnambool. It hosts students from 132 countries with Indians making up 27% of the student community followed by China (22%). With nearly 60,000 total students, the highest number is at its Melbourne Burwood campus where over 26000 students are enrolled.

Deakin's decision to set up its first offshore campus in India comes a year after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had first announced in her Budget speech in February 2022 that world-class foreign universities and institutions would be allowed in GIFT City to offer courses in financial management, FinTech, science, technology, engineering and mathematics "free from domestic regulations..."



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IFSCA formally started inviting applications from foreign universities for the same last Thursday. According to a government official, apart from Deakin there are more foreign universities that are in talks with the GIFT City regulator. Among them is another Australian University — University of Wollongong (UOW), which is ranked 85th in the world and 10th in Australia as per the QS World University Rankings. As per the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by

EXPLAINED

After many failed attempts

Multiple governments since the 1990s have unsuccessfully attempted to allow the entry of foreign varsities. The idea is now coming to fruition with the entry of Deakin, which will start operations next year. Australia's University of Wollongong is also expected to follow suit.

A UOW spokesperson said the varsity might have a couple of floors in GIFT City to start classes by May 2023. UOW Vice Chancellor Patricia Davidson is travelling to India this week along with the Australian Education Minister Jason Clare to meet with the Indian Education Minister, [Dharmendra Pradhan](#) to discuss plans to set up a campus in GIFT City.

The UOW will be offering undergraduate programmes in the areas of finance, STEM and business. Sources said that this might change based on the VC's meeting with Pradhan this week.

UOW hasn't fixed the fee structure yet. Admission criteria would be similar to what other Indian universities follow, the source added.

The UOW spokesperson told The Indian Express that they have seen a huge number of Indians enrolling in their Australian campus which has encouraged the university to set up a campus in India.

In 2023, Indian students make up QOW's largest international cohort, representing nearly a quarter of their total international enrollment. In total, more than 2,500 Indian students are enrolled at UOW, with business, engineering and information sciences being the most popular degrees. UOW has more than 8,300 Indian alumni.

However, unlike Deakin University, UOW already has a few offshore campuses in Dubai, Malaysia, Hongkong and the UAE.
