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What draft rules on VC appointments say, why states are upset

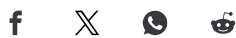
The Chancellor – or Visitor in a central university – appoints the VC from among the recommended names.

Written by [Abhinaya Harigovind](#)
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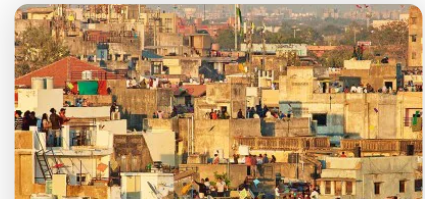
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Central universities – there are 56 currently – are established under an Act of Parliament, and are administered by the Centre.

Several states have objected to provisions in The UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, that could give the Chancellor – who is typically the state

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Governor – a **bigger role in appointing Vice Chancellors (VCs) of state universities.**

How VCs are appointed

Regulations notified by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2018 said that a search-cum-selection committee comprising eminent persons in higher education shall shortlist 3-5 candidates by public notification, nomination, a “talent search process”, or a combination of these processes.

The Chancellor – or Visitor in a central university – appoints the VC from among the recommended names.

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In the case of state and private universities, one member of the search-selection committee is nominated by the UGC Chairman. For state universities, the rest of the committee is constituted in accordance with state law.

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The Kerala University Act, 1974, for example, says the VC will be appointed by the Chancellor “on the unanimous recommendation of a committee appointed by him consisting of three members”, one elected by the university Senate, and one each nominated by the UGC Chairman and the Chancellor (Governor).

Central universities – there are 56 currently – are established under an Act of Parliament, and are administered by the Centre. The Visitor, their ceremonial head, is the President of India.

The composition of the committee to appoint the VC of a central university is determined by the Act that governs the university. For the University of Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University, for example, the committee has two nominees of the university Executive Council, and one of the Visitor.

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States vs Centre over VCs

Uttarayan, or Makar Sankranti, is a widely celebrated festival in North India. In Old Ahmedabad, the festival has given rise to a new trend of “terrace tourism” where people can rent terraces to witness the intense kite fights and unique atmosphere in the walled city.

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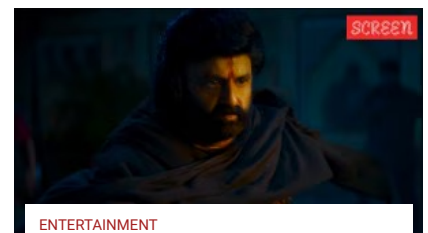
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Over the past several years, non-[BJP](#) governments in states have clashed with the Governor, who is a nominee of the Centre, over the appointment of VCs.

KERALA: The tussle began in 2021, when then [Governor Arif](#) Mohammad Khan claimed he had been forced to act against his conscience by the LDF government in the reappointment of Gopinath Ravindran as VC of Kannur University.

In 2023, the Assembly passed a Bill to replace the Governor with eminent educationists as Chancellors of universities in the state. The Bill is yet to receive the assent of the President.

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WEST BENGAL: The Supreme Court is currently seized of the matter arising out of the West Bengal government's challenge to a June 2023 order of the Calcutta High Court upholding the unilateral appointment of interim VCs in 13 state universities by Governor C V Ananda Bose.

In July 2024, the SC appointed former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit to head separate search-selection committees to shortlist candidates for the positions. There has been some progress in this process since.

Earlier, the West Bengal Assembly passed The University Laws (Amendment) Bill 2023 to replace the Governor with the Chief Minister as Chancellor of all state-aided universities. The Bill is yet to receive the Governor's assent.

KARNATAKA: In December 2024, the Assembly passed a Bill to replace the Governor with the Chief Minister as Chancellor of Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayati Raj University. The Bill is yet to receive the Governor's assent.

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In November, the Karnataka Cabinet had decided to do the same for other state universities as well. The state Higher Education Minister had said a draft Bill was in the works to amend the Karnataka State Universities Act to bring in critical administrative reforms for the 42 universities under the state government.

MAHARASHTRA: In 2021, when Uddhav Thackeray's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power, the legislature passed a Bill that restricted the Governor's power to only approving VC candidates recommended by the state government, and gave greater authority to the state's Higher and Technical Education Minister instead.

The Bill remained pending with then Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari. After [Eknath Shinde](#) became Chief Minister in 2022, the new government withdrew the Bill and the original process, in which the Governor had the final say in the appointment of VCs, was restored.

TAMIL NADU: In 2022, the DMK-led government passed two Bills to allow the state government to pick VCs for state universities, but these Bills were not approved by

bottle



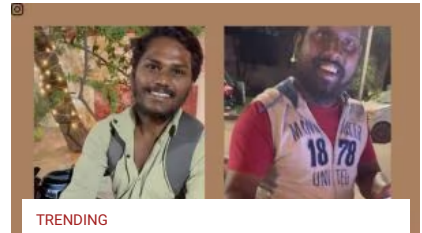
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the Governor.

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Last year, Governor R N Ravi asked the government to recall the notifications to set up search committees for VCs of several state universities on the grounds that they did not include the nominee of the UGC chairman. The appointments remain pending.

New UGC regulations

* The draft regulations say “the Chancellor/ Visitor shall constitute the Search-cum-Selection Committee comprising three experts.” The 2018 regulations did not specify who would constitute the committee.

* Unlike the 2018 regulations, the new regulations specify the composition of the committee: a member each nominated by the Visitor/ Chancellor, the UGC Chairman, and the apex body of the university (Senate/ Syndicate/ Executive Council). This gives nominees of the Centre the majority in the committee.

* Besides professors, individuals at senior levels in industry, public policy, public administration, or public sector undertakings, can also become VCs, says the draft.

Question of federalism

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Kerala Chief Minister [Pinarayi Vijayan](#) has said that the draft regulations “undermine federalism by stripping states of their rights to appoint” VCs for state-run universities, and “vest unchecked power in the Chancellor”.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly has asked the Centre to withdraw the draft regulations. Chief Minister M K Stalin has said giving Governors broader control over VC appointments is a “direct assault on federalism and state rights”, and an attempt to “undermine democratically elected state governments”.

However, UGC chairman M Jagadesh Kumar has said the draft regulations seek to provide a “robust process” for selecting VCs, “aligning with the overarching goals of quality and transparency in higher education”. The 2025 draft removes the ambiguities of the 2018 regulations, he said. The draft is also aligned with the “objectives of the National Education Policy 2020, he said.

(With Shaju Philip, Sanath Prasad, Sweety Kumari, and Pallavi Smart)

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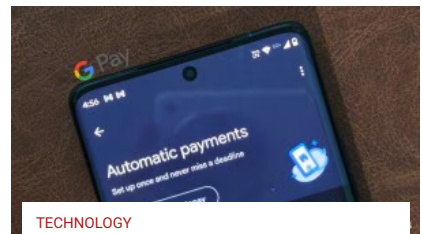
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