

Pan-India admission test for postgraduate medical, dental courses, to be held on Feb 2015

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BENGALURU: Some big names from the private sector in Indian higher education have come together to offer a new pan-India test for admissions to postgraduate medical and dental courses. They hope this would reduce the burden on students who presently appear for a long list of entrance exams.

Uni-GAUGE is projected as the Indian version of the Graduate Record Examinations, in which the score obtained by students would determine their admissions. The first Uni-GAUGE for postgraduate medical and dental courses, which would be an online test, is scheduled to be held on February 15, 2015.

Scores from this exam could be used by private and deemed universities for admissions. "We've been working on this for two years. With the number of private and deemed universities increasing, it has become almost impossible for students to write each entrance exam. Universities that join us won't conduct their own tests. Students can get their scores and apply for admissions," said MR Jayaram, chairperson of the Gokula Education Foundation that runs the MS Ramaiah group of institutes.

Jayaram is also a co-promoter of ERA Foundation, which has come up with the test. The foundation comprises VIT University Chancellor G Viswanathan and Manav Rachna University Chancellor Prashant Bhalla. Jayaram said about 30 of universities are expected to join the UniGAUGE testing platform.

A PG medical seat aspirant from Bengaluru said she wrote nine entrance exams a year ago. "Seven deemed universities in Karnataka offer their own entrance tests, but I didn't appear for any because of the widespread perception that there are discrepancies in their admission processes," she said. Apart from tests conducted by deemed universities, students commonly write the CET, COMEDK, AIPGMEE, DNB, AIIMS, JIPMER, NIMHANS and PGI Chandigarh for PG medical seats.

"Our exam is only for universities and institutions that accept the UniGAUGE scores," Jayaram clarified. In 3-5 years, the foundation wants to have a similar test for engineering, law, pharmacy and other disciplines.

"It is good if one test can help us apply to multiple universities, but it would truly benefit us if the number of universities accepting this test were more. Also, how foolproof is this test?" the student said.

The ERA Foundation has roped in former Karnataka Chief Secretary SV Ranganath to head its board of governors and has asked Tata Consultancy Services to conduct the online test. "Our focus is to set up standards so that our testing procedure is among the best in the world. This is going to be a gamechanger," Ranganath said.

A similar proposal was floated by the Medical Council of India for a national eligibility test. "But this was not supposed to be an entrance test, which it later became, and so it didn't work," Narayana Health founder-chairperson Dr Devi Prasad Shetty told ET. "A single exam would help students if the new exam can pull it off."

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