

How does the introduction of accelerated and extended degree programs by UGC reflect a student-centric approach in education? Evaluate the benefits and challenges of this initiative.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced accelerated and extended degree programs to offer students more flexibility in completing their undergraduate degrees. This initiative reflects a student-centric approach by allowing students to tailor their academic journeys based on their individual needs and circumstances¹.

Benefits:

Flexibility: Students can choose to complete their degrees earlier (Accelerated Degree Program) or take more time (Extended Degree Program) based on their personal, academic, or financial situations.

Inclusivity: This approach accommodates students with varying learning abilities and commitments, such as part-time jobs or family responsibilities.

Alignment with NEP 2020: The initiative aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes learner-centric education and skill development.

Global Trends: It brings higher education in India in line with global trends where flexible learning paths are increasingly recognized.

Equal Recognition: Degrees completed in an accelerated or extended timeframe are treated at par with standard duration degrees for employment and academic purposes.

Challenges:

Implementation: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to develop frameworks and guidelines to effectively implement these programs.

Resource Allocation: Institutions must ensure they have the necessary infrastructure and academic resources to support these flexible programs.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establishing committees to evaluate student eligibility and monitor progress can be resource-intensive.

Perception: There might be a perception that accelerated programs compromise the quality of education, which needs to be managed through proper communication and quality assurance measures.

Balancing Workload: Ensuring that students in accelerated programs do not face an overwhelming workload while maintaining academic standards.

Overall, the UGC's initiative is a significant step towards making higher education more adaptable and student-friendly.