

The Telegraph

New hiring norm for varsities

The draft of a new set of rules drawn up by the state government for the administration of colleges and universities gives it a say in recruitment, previously the prerogative of the institutions.

The draft states that state universities need to send a shortlist of potential recruits, teachers as well as other employees, for the government's "consideration" before issuing appointment letters.

Sources said the draft, a copy of which is with Metro, would be forwarded to governor Keshari Nath Tripathi for his assent once the model code of conduct for the panchayat polls is withdrawn.

A seven-member committee set up by the higher education department drafted the rules in accordance with the West Bengal Universities and College (Administration and Regulation) Act, 2017.

The bill had been passed in the Assembly in February 2017 and has since become a law.

The draft of the new rules states that the recommendation of the selection/standing committee on the appointment of teachers, officers and other employees "shall be submitted to the syndicate/executive council along with all necessary papers and documents, a copy of which shall also be sent to the state government for consideration".

The syndicate or executive council can approve the candidates and authorise the vice-chancellor or registrar to issue provisional appointment letters based on the state government's opinion on the selections and scrutiny of the documents submitted by the selection or standing committee.

In the existing system, vice-chancellors of state universities are authorised to issue appointment letters with the approval of the syndicate or executive council. There is nothing in the law that requires the university heads to wait for the government's sanction.

Asked about the provision in the draft that brings the government into the equation, education minister Partha Chatterjee contested its existence

during a news conference. "There is no truth in this. In no uncertain terms, I am saying that how the rules will be applied is to be determined through discussions with all sides," he said.

Another potential game-changer in the draft is biometric attendance for teachers and other employees, a provision that had been dropped from the 2017 bill following a protest by the Opposition.

Minister Chatterjee said a proper method of tracking attendance was the key to implementing changes in the education system. "Attendance is of paramount importance in the choice-based credit system (CBCS) that is being introduced. So, will it be said that CBCS will stay but biometric attendance will not?"

The draft rules also recommend a six-day week for college teachers, replacing the current system that has a provision for "preparatory days" so that they can research and prepare for lectures.

"Preparatory days are essential for college teachers. How else will they prepare for academic interaction with students in the classroom?" said Srutinath Praharaj of the West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association.

Parthaprartim Ray of the Left-backed Jadavpur University Teachers' Association said if the draft rules were accepted, they would allow the government to further undermine the autonomy of universities.