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# Engg, medical colleges to begin session in Nov-Dec

Due to delay in entrance exams, govt to prepare a new schedule

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

THE Covid-19 pandemic is set to push the new session of engineering and medical colleges to November while the session for first-year students in the Indian Institutes of Technology and the National Institutes of Technology could start only by December.

Government officials told this newspaper that due to the unprecedented delay in entrance examinations, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is set to prepare a new schedule for admission to MBBS and BDS courses in medical colleges across the country.

At the same time, universities in states including IITs and the AICTE are also preparing afresh for the batches of students enrolling in the first year.

As per the new schedule, the National Testing Agency under the Union HRD Ministry will conduct the JEE Main from September 1 to 6 and the results will be released by September

10 or 11. After this, the process of counselling for admission to BTech programme and seat allotment in engineering colleges across the country will start.

"Online seat allocation is being planned to start from mid-September to October. For vacant seats, spot rounds of seat allocation will be held in November," said an NTA official.

The NEET for entrance to medical colleges, also organised by the NTA, on the other hand has been rescheduled for September 13. "The results for this test may take 15 to 20 days or even more to be released so we are expecting the online seat allocation to begin only after mid-October," explained a health ministry official in the medical education section adding that this would mean that classes in medical colleges

could start only by November.

Meanwhile officials in the IITs said that there would be 5 rounds of counselling in these institutes this year, instead of usual 7.

JEE Advanced, the admission test for IITs and NITs has been scheduled for September

27. "The results are likely to be ready by the first week of October. After this, counselling will commence but given the disruption we are planning to complete the admission process in five rounds only this year," said a senior IIT official. "This will allow us to begin the session for new students at the earliest."

To make up for the lost time in the new session, IITs are looking to convert Saturdays into working days and also cut down summer and winter holidays in 2021.



Online seat allocation (for JEE Main) is being planned to start from mid-September to October. For vacant seats, spot rounds of seat allocation will be held in November

NTA official

# Safety norms drawn up for university exams

HRD Ministry sends guidelines to NTA, UGC and AICTE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Two metres space between examination desks; disinfection of walls, floors and doors; thermometers and sanitisers at all entry and exit points are some of the measures the Centre wants universities to take to safeguard students taking examinations physically.

Students having symptoms such as fever, cough and cold should "either be made to sit in a separate room or given a chance to appear on another day", according to guidelines framed by the Human Resource Development Ministry and sent to the National Testing Agency, University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education. Engineering and medical entrance examinations, as well as final year university examinations are scheduled to be held by the end of September, leaving many students apprehensive about health risks.

While insisting that examinations are necessary to ensure "merit and lifelong credibility", the guidelines directed institutions to address student concerns, including "anxiety and stress developed during the lock-



**Ensuring safety:** The guidelines recommend 2 m space between desks and disinfection of walls, floors and doors.

down period and fear of COVID-19 after opening of campuses". Apart from students, staff also face the risk of serious illness, it said.

## Staff advisory

Staff conducting exams must self-certify their health status and submit to temperature screening.

If they fail to meet health criteria, they will be requested to leave the centre immediately. For students showing symptoms, the guidelines are more circumspect, offering the choice of a separate room or an alternative examination date without stipulating who will get to make that decision.

"The downloading of Aar-

ogya Setu app may be advised for every staff and student," the guidelines said.

The standard operating procedures, which have been vetted by the Health Ministry, call for the floors, walls, doors, gates, staircase railings and lift buttons at all examination centres to be sprayed with disinfectant. Desks and chairs in the candidate seating area should be sanitised after every session, it said.

Social distancing of two metres must be ensured at entry and exit as well as during the examination. All students must wear face masks and clean their hands, while staff must wear masks and gloves, it added.