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### HC reprieve to Annamalai University; can continue to offer open and distance education

1 min read Updated on: Jun 26, 2018



Vipra Shrivastava

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The Madras High Court on Monday, stayed University Grants Commission's regulation limiting universities from offering open and distance learning programmes.

The First Division Bench of Chief Justice Indira Banerjee and Justice P.T. Asha on Monday, granted a stay on the implementation of the regulation for six weeks, asking the UGC to respond within three weeks. The Bench was hearing the case on a petition filed by [Annamalai University](#), Chidambaram, challenging the amended regulation.

In 2017, the UGC came up with a set of regulations for offering open and distance learning programmes which were amended on February 6, 2018. Under the amended set of regulations, a new rule was introduced under which it was mandatory for every university to have scored a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.26 out of 4 in the NAAC assessment to be able to offer open and distance learning programmes.

Annamalai University was allowed to impart open and distance learning programmes till academic session 2019-20 as it has 'A' Grade accreditation awarded to it by NAAC for scoring 3.09 out of 4 points.

Over seven state universities across the country including Annamalai University, [Tamil Nadu University](#) and [Bharathiar University](#) were affected by the move. On approaching the Higher Education Authority, the latter asked the UGC to relax the norms so that the universities continue to run open and distance education courses. The Higher Education Authority had also asked the universities to make individual representation to the UGC in the matter. The UGC rejected the recognition of Annamalai University for open and distance learning education on June 6 this year. The university made a representation to the UGC seeking exemption from the rule but the plea was rejected. Consequently, the varsity filed a petition in Madras High Court.

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