

## JEE Main, NEET likely in June; check dates of other entrance exams

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Human Resources Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal speaks to The Indian Express on the impact of the lockdown extension on the academic calendar, and learning loss. Edited excerpts:

**How will the lockdown extension affect the academic calendar, especially for Class 12 students entering higher education this year?**

The (new) academic session is likely to get delayed. Examination for the final semester will be held after universities and colleges reopen. After this, the admission process for the new batch will begin, which is likely to take about a month. The new academic session will start only after first-year students are admitted to both UG and PG programmes. However, for the old batches, it may begin early after completion of the terminal semester examination. A committee has been set up to look into the issues related to examinations and the academic calendar, which is likely to submit its report soon. But the safety of students and teachers is our priority.

**Assuming the lockdown would end on April 14, the National Testing Agency (NTA) had announced it would conduct JEE-MAIN in the last week of May. When can we expect the examination now?**

It is likely that JEE-MAIN will be conducted in June. The HRD Ministry is consulting stakeholders like the boards of examinations, IITs, and other agencies involved in logistical operations of JEE and NEET before announcing

the next dates. To assess the possibility of conduction of online exams for higher education, the HRD ministry has constituted a task force under UGC. We will issue guidelines based on the report.

**Given the pressure the current batch of Classes 10 and 12 (which will appear for Board exams next year) is under to complete syllabus, will CBSE consider reducing their curriculum load?**

CBSE will assess the loss of instructional time for a proportionate reduction in curriculum load for Board Exams 2021... course committees of the Board have initiated work on reducing syllabus under different scenarios.

**The Union government is encouraging online classes to make up for learning loss. Many students do not have access to a digital device or even a TV set to watch educational channels. How does the ministry plan to address the digital divide?**

Along with states, we are trying our best to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised students. The HRD Ministry is running content on Swayam Prabha channel. We are also trying to explore the option of All India Radio. More strategies are being developed, and these will be implemented soon.

**The pandemic has affected campus placements. You have appealed to companies not to withdraw job offers. What if they do that despite your appeal?**

The government is working on limiting the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and that the effect doesn't last for a long time. Therefore, I humbly request all recruiters and organizations to align their strategy accordingly and not withdraw any job offer. The students recruited are among the best talent of the country.

I have also held a meeting with directors of all IITs, directing them to ensure that campus placements are not affected due to the situation. All IITs' Placement Committee (AIPC) have also reached out to different recruiters, requesting them not to rescind placement offers made for the academic year 2019-20. Also, a task force has been set up in the HRD Ministry to look into placement and internship issues.