

University admission: Cluster system's fate hangs in balance

No decision comes following ministry's meeting with VCs



A uniform admission test for all public universities is the need of the hour, but care must be taken to address the concerns of relevant departments and protect the interests of the candidates of all groups. Photo: Star

The fate of cluster system admission test for next academic year still hangs in balance, as the education ministry did not make a decision yesterday in this regard following its meeting with university vice chancellors.

Special Assistant to Education Adviser Prof Aminul Islam held the meeting with VCs of different universities, along with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and other officials, at the ministry.



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"No specific decisions were made. However, the ministry plans to arrange further discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including representatives of admission seekers, as well as the leaders of Anti-Discrimination Student Movement," said a vice-chancellor who attended.

Besides, in a press release, the ministry said it will adopt a universally accepted system after discussions with all stakeholders involved in university admissions.

After talking to at least seven university VCs who attended the meeting, it was learnt that universities were divided into different groups, each expressing their views.

A vice-chancellor from the General, Science, and Technology (GST) cluster said, "Each university vice-chancellor shared their views on the pros and cons of holding tests under the cluster system. I presented our decision in favour of conducting independent tests, which has been approved by our academic council."

"Comparatively older universities with a large number of students spoke against the cluster system, preferring to hold their own admission tests," the vice-chancellor said.

"Universities established after 2014, supported the cluster system, as they do not have that much capacity to conduct the test properly," he added.

Another vice-chancellor from an engineering university said, "We have already decided to opt out of the cluster system, as approved by our academic council. However, during the meeting, we were instructed to hold off on making further decisions until the government reaches a final decision."

A VC, whose university had already published its admission circular, said, "We will await the ministry's decision. This doesn't mean we will revoke our independent admission circular."

"If the government instructs us to revert to the cluster system, we will bring the matter back to our academic council. Ultimately, every decision will be made based on the university act," the vice-chancellor added.

"As university teachers, we welcome this approach of the interim government, that they involve more stakeholders in the decision-making process," he said.

Contacted, Prof M Aminul Islam said, "It is not that we could not come to a decision. For now, we have taken opinions from the VCs. Soon, we will seek opinions from more stakeholders -- those in favour and against the cluster system. We will also consult with guardians and admission seekers to make a proper and timely decision."

"Ultimately, we will present the results to the chief adviser for a final decision," he added.

The cluster admission system initially included 20 general and science-technology universities, later expanding to 24 general, three engineering, and nine agricultural universities.

However, a few prominent universities like Jagannath University, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology have already published circulars for 2024-25 session, to hold admission tests independently.