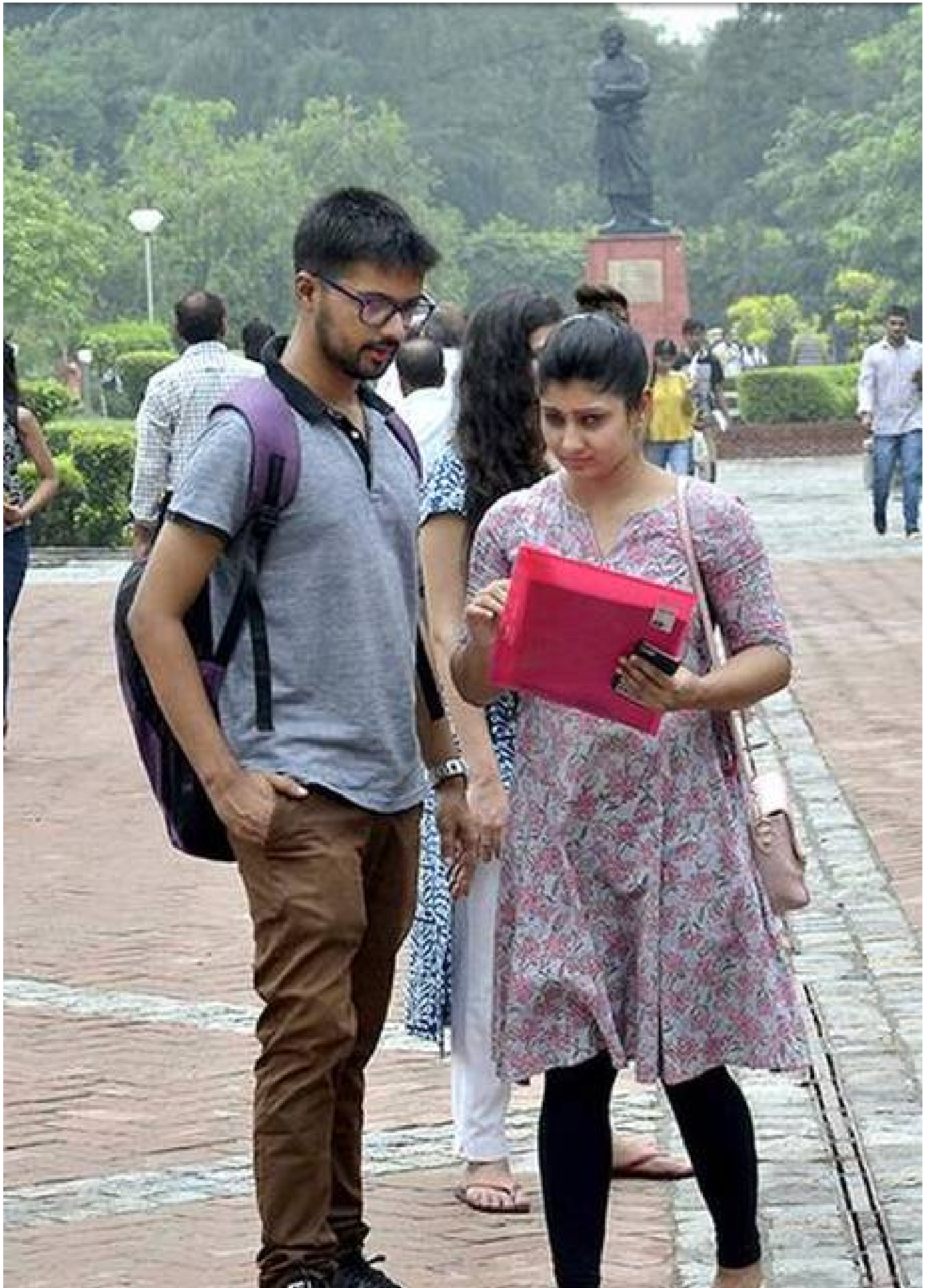


DELHI

Indian universities get free access to Urkund software





SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Swedish software was chosen through a global tender process

All universities in India, public and private, have been given trial access to anti-plagiarism software Urkund August 2.

Final subscription to access the Swedish software will begin from September 1, 2019, according to a notice from the University Grants Commission (UGC).

“We have a two-pronged approach. As part of the exercise to prevent plagiarism in the coming years, we are providing free of cost anti-plagiarism software to all 900 universities, including private players. It will be available to teachers, students, researchers, everyone,” said Human Resource Development Secretary K. Subrahmanyam. The Urkund software was chosen through a global tender process. While Turnitin is more commonly used by global academics, it was found to be 10 times more expensive without a proportionate increase in features or reliability.

The second step was put in place last July, when the Centre notified the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018. It called for departmental and institutional-level panels be set up to deal with plagiarism complaints, and set up four severity levels of offences with appropriate penalties for students – only from Masters level and above – as well as faculty. All theses, dissertations and academic papers meant for publication must be checked using plagiarism software.

Similarities and offence

There are no penalties for minor similarities, up to 10% of the document. If a thesis or dissertation has similarities up to 40%, it is considered a level 1 offence and students will be asked to submit a revised version within six months.

In a level 2 offence, the similarities are between 40% and 60%, and the student will be debarred from submitting a revised script for one year. Similarities above 60% are considered a level 3 offence and will lead to expulsion, with student registration for that programme being cancelled.

In case of plagiarism in academic and research publications, a level 1 offence will result in being asked to withdraw the manuscript. In case of level 2, the offender will also be denied

of PhD student for a two-year period. A repeat offence will result in denial of two annual increments and debarment from research supervision for three years.

Repeated offences will result in higher level penalties, including suspension and termination. If plagiarism is detected after a degree or credit has been awarded, that will be suspended for a set period.

Academic standards

A UGC panel on improving research culture, headed by former Indian Institute of Science director P. Balaram, warned that such central regulations could not replace the need for institutional vigilance.

“Plagiarism and data manipulation are issues of great concern, which damage the credibility of research emanating from our institutions. Institutions must take the responsibility for ensuring academic standards and for emphasising, to both students and faculty, the importance of maintaining the highest standards of integrity in academic research,” said the report submitted by the panel last month.

“Centralised rules and regulations, imposed across a large and diverse higher education system, cannot serve as a substitute for strict and vigilant internal academic processes at our institutions,” it said.

The report also noted that Indian academics have contributed 35% of all articles published in about 11,000 fake journals between 2010 and 2014. Most of these articles were in fake engineering journals, followed by articles in fake journals of biomedicine and social sciences.

There have been several high-profile cases of plagiarism in the last few years, including the case of Chandra Krishnamurthy, who was removed as Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University in 2016 after a UGC panel found her guilty of serious academic fraud and plagiarism.

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