

WITH 50 STUDENTS

# IISER to resume research this month

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PUNE, AUGUST 2

AFTER FOUR months of inactivity, laboratories at Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER), Pune, will slowly come alive with experiments and research activities later this month.

The nationwide lockdown due to the pandemic had forced all the residential students to vacate the campus and the institute had shut down its research activities. Barring a handful of essential research work contributing towards the fight against Covid-19, major researches have been on hold since mid-March.

In May, a Covid-19 testing facility was set up in partnership with Savitribai Phule Pune University. Last week, this centre completed 11,000 tests.

Sanjeev Galande, dean, Research and Development, told *The Indian Express*, "We received the ministry's approval to restart research. Students have been informed and laboratory-based activities will begin later this month."

The institute has chalked out elaborate plans as it gears up to host students back on the campus. "Students whose doctoral studies are in advanced stages have been given preference. The plan is to resume research by gradually increasing the number of researchers working in our labs during the next two to three months," said Harinath Chakrapani, convenor, Covid-19 Task Force.

Initially, 50 students will report at the institute. "Since students involved in theoretical research do not necessarily need to work at labs, the institute could facilitate remote access to systems,



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so that they too can continue work remotely," said Galande.

The interiors of the laboratories have undergone minor modifications with spaces earmarked in line with the SOPs required for maintaining physical distancing inside laboratories.

With the number of tests having been scaled up, more student volunteers would be required in order to keep the centre's operations going. Galande said, "Having students back in the labs, the planned Covid-19 related research will also pick up pace."

But the challenge ahead for the students remains the timely completion of their doctoral studies, as many of them have their fellowships expiring this year. Students here are pursuing studies through funding obtained either from Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), University Grants Commission (UGC) or Department of Science and Technology (DST).

"This is a crucial period as many students have lost out nearly five months due to the pandemic. Regarding the fellowship, we have written to the ministry but are yet to hear anything on the matter," Galande said.

## Online classes from Sept 1

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THE CLASSES for the existing undergraduate students pursuing BS-MS degree will commence on September 1 in online mode. Teaching and evaluation for the previous semester have been completed.

About 1,000-1,200 students pursue this five-year residential course. Presently, online interviews of students aiming to pursue doctoral studies is underway. Even though the MHRD recently announced a reduced syllabi for school and college education for the current academic year, no such step has been initiated for IISERs, also functioning under the MHRD.

"There will be no reduction of syllabus, but some courses are being re-organised. Courses are being shuffled from one semester to another. Especially labora-

tory courses or those requiring hands-on work under supervision are being deferred to the next semester. No portions have been deleted, so far," said Bhas Bapat, dean, Academics.

The date of commencement of online classes for the new batch stands undecided as the entrance test for the same has been rescheduled. Since the online sessions are planned for the upcoming few months, the institute will bear the data expenses for students who cannot afford it. In some cases where internet facility is unavailable, the institute shall facilitate students with USB or SD cards with study material from time to time.

"Students who are unable to participate in online teaching will be given the option of dropping the semester and extending their tenure, without penalty. Students are given the option of registering for fewer credits than the usual minimum requirement," he said.



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