

# Will only IITs lead the way in SPARC scheme

SHUTTERSTOCK

Out of 282 research proposals, 151 projects chosen in the first phase of MHRD's research funding were submitted by IITs

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In 2018, Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) was launched with an aim to improve the overall research ecosystem in the country, including private institutions. However, strict eligibility criteria made the scheme restrictive with only country's premier

institutes benefitting from it. This year, out of a total of 282 research proposals made under the scheme, 151 from various Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) of the country have been selected in the first phase.

"Based on the merit of proposals, IITs will get the majority of initial SPARC funding. Mid-level institutes will come in the forefront only after they collaborate more, strengthen their faculty and researches," said Timothy A Gonsalves, director, IIT Mandi.

Institutes not as established as IITs or National Institutes of Technology (NITs) in terms of infrastructure and research facilities

are still dependent on collaborative researches with premier insti-



tutes. "The criteria for the first phase did not allow mid-range institutes to compete. At the moment, the scheme will target the overall research scenario through collaborative projects. But, gra-

## PROJECT PROPOSALS OF SOME KEY INSTITUTES

IIT Kharagpur	27
IIT Madras	22
IIT Bombay	12
IIT Kanpur	11
IIT Bhubaneswar	10
IIT Indore	8
IIT Gandhinagar	8
IIT Guwahati	7
IIT Hyderabad	7
IIT Mandi	7

dually in the upcoming phases, other institutes might be able to participate directly," said Adrijit Goswami, professor, IIT Kharagpur and joint national coordinator for SPARC.

"Initially, the premier institutes such as IITs, NITs will lead the way for average performing institutes because of eligibility and

quality benchmarks. As Indian institutes ranked within the bracket of overall top-100 are eligible to submit proposals, it automatically takes a number of institutions out of the league," adds Gonsalves. As many as seven faculty-led projects have been selected from IIT Mandi for the first phase of SPARC scheme. Gonsalves gives credit to the institute's strong foreign collaborations and network of visiting faculty for the selected research proposals.

"Students' participation is limited at the moment. However, PhD level students will get an opportunity to work at certain foreign universities for a period of three months to one year, which will be funded through the SPARC grants. Also, a considerable amount of the research grant will be spent on getting faculty and researchers to India from foreign universities," added Gonsalves.

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