



## **INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRES AUTHORITY**

### **Consultation Paper on the revised Draft IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026**

#### **A) Background**

1. The Hon'ble Finance Minister of India in the Union Budget for FY 2022-23 proposed to allow foreign universities and institutions to offer courses in financial management, fintech, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in the GIFT City, free from domestic regulations, except those by International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) to facilitate availability of high-end human resources for financial services and technology.

2. To implement the Union Budget announcement and bring such foreign universities and institutions under the regulatory ambit of IFSCA, Government of India issued a notification dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 under Sec. (3)(1)(e)(xiv) of IFSCA Act 2019 notifying courses offered in Financial Management, FinTech, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics by the foreign universities or foreign institution in the IFSC as '*Financial Service*'.

3. Consequently, IFSCA notified enabling regulations i.e. IFSCA (Setting up and operation of International Branch Campuses and Offshore Education Centres) Regulation, 2022. These regulations provided a comprehensive regulatory regime for foreign universities to establish and operate International Branch Campuses (IBCs) and Foreign Educational Institutions to establish and operate Offshore Education Centres (OECs) in GIFT IFSC and offer courses in permitted subject areas. The regulations, *inter alia*, specified eligibility criteria, permissible subject areas, procedure for grant of registration, and other requirements for setting up IBCs/OECs in GIFT IFSC.

4. Further, IFSCA vide Circular dated December 14, 2023 permitted IBCs and OECs in GIFT IFSC to avail infrastructure services from Academic Infrastructure Service Providers (AISPs) including campus facilities, facility management, student onboarding, student welfare services, etc.

5. Over the last three years, GIFT IFSC has witnessed significant momentum in attracting foreign universities to set up their IBCs under the extant regulations. So far, three foreign universities have established their IBCs and commenced academic operations in GIFT IFSC.

Additionally, one foreign university has received in-principle approval from IFSCA for setting up its IBC in GIFT IFSC.

## **B) Objective**

6. The objective of this Paper is to seek feedback/ comments/ views/ suggestions from the public and market participants on any amendments or additions that are required to be made to the revised Draft IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026.

## **C) Statement of Object and Reasons**

7. Over the course of past few years, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City, India, has witnessed considerable interest from foreign universities seeking to establish their presence in GIFT IFSC and cater to the broader educational, talent, and skill requirements. The strong interest in GIFT IFSC has been catalysed by progressive policy reforms carried out by Government of India and facilitative regulatory regime created by the IFSCA, which has enabled foreign universities to establish their presence in GIFT IFSC.

8. Based on the interaction with the stakeholders and the experience of the existing market participants, it was considered appropriate to undertake a comprehensive consultation process to seek comments/inputs from the public and market participants on important amendments which are required to be made to the existing regulations.

9. Therefore, with a view to further align the IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses and Offshore Education Centres) Regulations, 2022 with global best practices, and in accordance with Regulation 11 of the IFSCA (Procedure for Making Regulations and Subsidiary Instructions) Regulations, 2025, the IFSCA conducted an initial public consultation exercise from 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2025 - 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2025. Through this consultation process, comments, views, and suggestions were invited from the public and other stakeholders on the proposed modifications, changes, or amendments to the existing regulations.

## **D) Public Comments**

10. Based on the comments and suggestions received from the public and market participants during the first round of public consultation, IFSCA has prepared the Draft IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026, which are provided below as **Annexure**. As the draft regulations incorporate certain material changes, it has been decided to undertake a second round of public consultation from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2026 to 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2026.

11. Accordingly, the public, market participants, and other stakeholders are requested to submit their comments or suggestions on the Draft IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026, by email to Shri Akshat Ganeriwala at

[akshat.ganeriwala@ifsc.gov.in](mailto:akshat.ganeriwala@ifsc.gov.in) and Shri Ajay Prakash Ghanghav, Assistant Manager, IFSCA, at [ajay.ghanghav@ifsc.gov.in](mailto:ajay.ghanghav@ifsc.gov.in), on or before **10<sup>th</sup> July, 2026**. The subject line of the email should read: **"Comments on the Draft IFSCA (Setting up and Operation of IBC) Regulations, 2026."** **Comments may be submitted in the following format (MS Word or MS Excel only):**

| Name and details of the person or entity: |                |                |                                      |                    |                       |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Organization name, if applicable:         |                |                |                                      |                    |                       |
| Contact Details:                          |                |                |                                      |                    |                       |
| S.No.                                     | Regulation No. | Sub-Regulation | Comments/<br>Feedback/<br>Suggestion | Detailed Rationale | Global Best Practices |
|                                           |                |                |                                      |                    |                       |
|                                           |                |                |                                      |                    |                       |

Issued on July 01, 2026

## ANNEXURE

### INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRES AUTHORITY NOTIFICATION

Gandhinagar, the \_\_ July, 2026

#### **Draft International Financial Services Centres Authority (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026.**

**No. IFSCA/-----.**—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 28, read with sub-section (1) of Section 12 of the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019 (50 of 2019), the International Financial Services Centres Authority hereby makes the following Regulations, namely: -

#### **Objectives**

1. To enable Foreign Higher Educational Institutions to establish International Branch Campuses in the International Financial Services Centre (hereinafter referred to as the “IFSC”).
2. To make the IFSC an international education centre catering to both Indian and foreign students in the specified disciplines.
3. To encourage research and innovation in Banking, Insurance, Capital Markets, Fund Management, FinTech, Longevity Finance, Sustainable Finance, Quantum Computing, and other emerging areas in Finance, Science, Technology, Engineering, and related fields.
4. To encourage executive education in the specified disciplines and related areas.
5. To bring world-class education and institutions to the IFSC.
6. To safeguard the interests of the student community pursuing educational courses in the IFSC.
7. To put in place an objective and transparent process for registration of a Foreign Higher Educational Institution for offering courses including research programmes and executive education programmes in the permissible subjects, that are accredited in their respective Home Jurisdiction and duly approved by the Authority for being offered in the IFSC.

#### **1. Short title and commencement:**

- (1) These regulations may be called the International Financial Services Centres Authority, (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses) Regulations, 2026
- (2) These regulations shall come into force from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

#### **2. Applicability:**

These regulations shall be applicable to an International Branch Campus (“IBC”) of a Foreign Higher Educational Institution, registered and/or seeking registration under these regulations.

### 3. Definitions:

- (1) For the purpose of these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, the terms defined herein shall bear the meanings as assigned to them below, and their cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly,-:
- (i) “Act” shall mean the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019;
  - (ii) “Authority” means the International Financial Services Centres Authority established under sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Act;
  - (iii) “Academic Infrastructure Service Provider” or “AISP” shall mean a unit established in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Special Economic Zone under relevant rules of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2005, which provides non-academic support services to an IBC, including built up campus facility, research and development facility, library, laboratories, incubation centres, teaching classroom, or other similar support services, as specified by the Authority;
  - (iv) “Course” shall mean an academic or research programme of study in the permissible subject area, which is approved under these regulations, and when successfully completed leads to the award of a certificate or diploma or degree by a Foreign Higher Educational Institution at undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and post-doctoral level, as the case may be;
  - (v) "Executive Education Programme" shall mean a structured non-degree programme of professional learning and development in permissible subject area, including short-term courses, certificate courses, management development programmes and corporate training programmes;
  - (vi) “Fees” means all fees, including tuition fees and developmental charges, by whatever name called, payable by the students enrolled for a course with an IBC;
  - (vii) “Foreign Higher Educational Institution (FHEI)” shall mean a University or an Educational Institution, established in its home jurisdiction and duly authorized by the competent authority in its home jurisdiction to offer academic and research programmes at undergraduate or higher levels, within and outside its jurisdiction, as the case may be;
  - (viii) “GIFT IFSC” shall mean the International Financial Services Centre established under Section 18 of SEZ Act 2006 in Gujarat International Financial Tec City (GIFT City);
  - (ix) “Home Jurisdiction” means the foreign country in which the Foreign Higher Educational Institution is incorporated or otherwise established under law, and where it holds its primary institutional accreditation or recognition from the competent authority in that jurisdiction;
  - (x) “International Branch Campus" or "IBC" means a campus set up in the IFSC as a branch of a Foreign Higher Educational Institution for the purpose of conducting academic programmes including research programmes and executive education, in the permissible subject areas which are duly accredited in its home jurisdiction, and is registered with the Authority;
  - (xi) “Parent Entity” or “Applicant” shall mean the Foreign Higher Educational Institution that intends to establish and operate an IBC in the IFSC.
  - (xii) "Single Window IT Systems (SWIT)" refers to an online platform specified by the Authority, to facilitate the processing of applications submitted by the applicants for obtaining certificate of registration under these regulations;
- (2) Words and expressions used and not defined in these regulations but defined in the Act or Acts mentioned in the First Schedule to the Act, or any rules or regulations made thereunder, shall

have the same meanings respectively assigned to them in those Acts, rules or regulations or any statutory modification or re-enactment thereto, as the case may be.

#### **4. Permissible Subject Areas**

Courses and Executive Education Programme in Financial Management, FinTech, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics shall be permitted to be conducted by an IBC in the IFSC.

#### **5. Eligibility**

The Applicant shall, at the time of making the application, have secured a position within Top 500 in overall category and / or subject-wise category, as the case may be, of a global ranking system as specified in Schedule I.

#### **6. Application for Registration**

- (1) An Applicant satisfying the eligibility conditions specified in these regulations, shall apply to the Authority, in the specified format, for the grant of registration to conduct courses, research programmes or/and executive education programme in the permissible subjects.
- (2) An Application shall be accompanied by-
  - (i) a resolution passed by the Applicant's Board of Trustees, Senate or other Governing Body, by whatever name called, resolving to establish an IBC in the IFSC;
  - (ii) details of financial capability to establish and ensure the continuity of the proposed activities in the IFSC;
  - (iii) details regarding proposed plan for campus infrastructure and facilities to conduct the Courses, research programmes and Executive Education Programme in the permissible subjects.
  - (iv) details regarding courses, curricula, faculty, fees, academic plan, and requisite funds to operate the campus, along with other details as may be specified;
  - (v) details of the alternative arrangements for students in the event of discontinuation of any approved Course for any reason;
  - (vi) an undertaking by the Applicant stating that the quality of education imparted to the students in the IBC shall be similar to the quality of education imparted by the Parent Entity in its Home Jurisdiction.
  - (vii) an undertaking by the Applicant declaring that the degrees, diplomas or certificates issued to the students in the IBC in the IFSC shall be recognized in the Home Jurisdiction of the Parent Entity and shall be treated equivalent to the corresponding degrees, diplomas or certificates awarded or issued, as the case may be, by the Parent Entity in its Home Jurisdiction; and
  - (viii) the latest Quality Assurance Audit report from a recognized Quality Assurance Agency in the Home Jurisdiction of the Applicant.

#### **7. Procedure for Grant of Registration**

- (1) An applicant desirous of obtaining certificate of registration for setting up its IBC in the IFSC shall submit the application to the Authority through SWIT, along with the requisite documents and application fees, in the manner specified by the Authority.

(2) An application received under these regulations shall be referred to a Standing Committee constituted by the Authority for appraisal and recommendations. The Standing Committee shall submit its recommendations to the Authority within 45 days from the date of receipt of the application from the Authority.

(3) After considering the application and recommendations of the Standing Committee, if the Authority is of the opinion that the certificate of registration cannot be granted due to any defects or deficiencies, it shall communicate the same to the applicant, advising it to rectify those defects or deficiencies within thirty (30) days from the date of communication, failing which the application shall be liable to be rejected:

*Provided* that no application shall be rejected without giving the applicant a reasonable opportunity of being heard by way of written submissions.

(4) Based on the recommendations of the Standing Committee, the Authority may upon its satisfaction, in the first instance, grant an in-principle approval to the Applicant, and allowing the Applicant a period of one (1) year to set up the required infrastructure, engage necessary manpower, and complete such other arrangements as may be necessary.

*Provided* that if an applicant is not able to set up the required infrastructure and /or engage necessary manpower within the specified period of one (1) year, it may, atleast 7 days before such expiry make an application, for extension of time, to the Chairperson of the Authority.

(5) On receipt of an application under the proviso to sub-regulation (4), the Chairperson may, if satisfied with the reasons for the delay, extend the validity of the in-principle approval for a further period not exceeding one (1) year, beyond the initial one-year period.

(6) The Authority on being satisfied that the applicant fulfils all the conditions for the grant of registration, may issue a certificate of registration with or without conditions.

(7) The certificate of registration granted under these regulations shall be valid, unless suspended or cancelled by the Authority or voluntarily surrendered by the Foreign Higher Education Institution in accordance with these regulations:

*Provided that*, the voluntary surrender of certificate of registration shall be effective only upon its acceptance by the Authority.

(8) The registration may be cancelled by the Authority, for reasons to be recorded in writing, after following due procedure and giving due opportunity of being heard to the registered Parent Entity.

(9) The IBC shall immediately furnish to the Authority information of any material changes, having bearing on the certificate of registration granted to it including any change in the information or particulars previously furnished.

## **8. Course Recognition:**

- (1) Every Course and Executive Education Programme conducted by an IBC in the IFSC shall be similar in all respects with the corresponding course conducted by the Parent Entity in its Home Jurisdiction and identical degree, diploma or certificate shall be conferred upon the students of the IBC directly by the Parent Entity in the same manner as it confers to its students for the same course in its Home Jurisdiction.

*Provided* that an IBC may make modifications in the approved Course curriculum, pedagogy, assessment or other aspects of delivery of courses with prior intimation to the Authority, if the same is necessitated due to the change effected in the course offered by the Parent Entity in its home jurisdiction.

*Provided* further that an IBC, with the prior approval of the Academic Council, governing board, or any other competent body, by whatever name called, in its Home Jurisdiction, may make modification to the approved course curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, or other aspects of course delivery, and shall intimate the Authority prior to effecting such modification.

*Provided further* that not more than ten percent (10%) of the total credits of a course may be delivered through online or virtual mode, where such mode of delivery is permitted for the corresponding course in the Home Jurisdiction of the Parent Entity.

- (2) The degree, diploma or certificate awarded with respect to Courses or Executive Education conducted in the IFSC shall enjoy the same recognition and status as if they were conducted and awarded by the Parent Entity in its Home Jurisdiction.
- (3) The IBC shall undergo quality assurance audit, by such agencies and at such intervals, as may be specified, and submit such reports to the Authority.

## **9. Non-Permissible Activities:**

No IBC shall act as a representative office of their Parent Entity for the purpose of undertaking promotional activities for the courses of such Parent Entity at their Home Jurisdiction or any other jurisdiction outside the IFSC.

## **10. Admission Process:**

- (1) The IBC shall follow a similar process for admission of students as is followed by the Parent Entity in its home campus.
- (2) The IBC shall make available the prospectus on its website at least sixty days before the commencement of admissions, including Fee structure, refund policy, number of seats per course, eligibility qualifications, and admission process.
- (3) The IBC may provide full or partial merit-based scholarships in accordance with the approved policy of the Parent Entity.

## **11. Other Conditions:**

- (1) The IBC shall use the same or similar name as that of the Parent Entity, unless permitted otherwise by the Authority.

- (2) The IBC shall provide the Authority with a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Parent Entity and its IBC, in the IFSC.
- (3) The faculty recruitment plan and process followed by the IBC shall be similar to the recruitment plan and process followed by the Parent Entity in its Home Jurisdiction and any relaxation from it shall require prior approval of the Authority, subject to adequate justification.
- (4) The IBC availing services from an AISP shall comply with such terms and conditions as may be specified by the Authority, from time to time.
- (5) The policies and internal regulations of the IBC in relation to the student complaint and grievance redressal shall be in accordance with the approved policy of the Applicant. In case the IBC fails to redress the grievances of students, the students may appeal to a Committee, as may be constituted by the Authority, from time to time, for redressal of their grievances.
- (6) All activities conducted by an IBC shall be in accordance with the Applicant's mission, vision and objectives.
- (7) All marketing communications or advertisements made by the IBC, shall be factual and shall not be misleading or exaggerated.
- (8) The IBC shall adhere to dispute resolution policy as may be specified by the Authority.

## **12. Action in case of default**

Non-compliance with any of the provisions of these regulations may attract appropriate remedial and/or enforcement action including suspension, cancellation of registration and/or imposition of penalty by the Authority.

## **13. Inspection**

- (1) The Authority may, *suo motu* or upon receipt of information or complaint, appoint one or more persons as Inspecting Authority to, *inter-alia*, visit and inspect the campus of the IBC to ascertain the infrastructure, quality and suitability of the IBC and its Courses.
- (2) The Inspecting Authority may take help of such persons or professionals as he may deem fit and it shall be the duty of the IBC to extend full co-operation to the Inspecting Authority or persons authorised.

## **14. Safeguarding the interest of Students**

- (1) No IBC shall wholly or partially discontinue, suspend or close any of its approved Courses for any reason without the prior written approval of the Authority.
- (2) In the eventuality of disruption or discontinuation of a Course or Executive Education programme for any reason, it shall be the responsibility of the Parent Entity to provide an alternative to the affected students, including reallocation to the course conducted by it and/or payment of such compensation, as may be determined by the Authority.

## **15. Currency for Conduct of Business:**

All transactions undertaken by the IBC shall be in freely convertible foreign currency.

*Provided* that the IBC may defray their administrative expenses in INR by maintaining a separate Special Non-Resident Rupee Account.

*Provided further* that IBC may maintain a separate Special Non-Resident Rupee Account to receive Fees and research grants in INR from a person resident in India, which shall be converted into a permitted foreign currency and remitted into an account maintained by the IBC with an IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) in the IFSC within such period, as may be specified by the Authority.

#### **16. Maintenance of Accounts and Annual Report:**

- (1) The IBC shall maintain such records and documents, as may be specified by the Authority.
- (2) All the books of accounts shall be maintained in such foreign currency, as may be declared at the time of making the application.
- (3) The IBC shall submit an annual report giving details of the number of students admitted, programmes conducted, total Fees collected, amount repatriated to Parent Entity, investment made, number of students awarded degree/ diploma/ certificate, and other details as may be specified by the Authority.
- (4) The IBC shall submit such other information to the Authority, as may be specified by the Authority, from time to time.

#### **17. Deposit and Fees:**

- (1) The Authority, after considering the scale of operation, may require the IBC to submit such deposits, in such form, as it may deem fit.
- (2) An Applicant desirous of setting up an IBC shall pay to the Authority such fees, as may be specified by the Authority, from time to time.

#### **18. Miscellaneous**

- (1) The Parent Entity shall, at all times, maintain a valid authorisation/registration from the competent authority in its Home Jurisdiction to award degrees at the undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, or post-doctoral level.
- (2) All the obligations of the Parent Entity in its home jurisdiction for the conduct of courses in any offshore jurisdiction shall be complied with by the Parent Entity.
- (3) The Parent Entity shall be permitted to repatriate profit, if any, without any restriction.

#### **19. Power to remove difficulties and relax strict enforcement of the regulations**

- (1) In order to remove any difficulty in the application or interpretations of the provisions of these regulations, the Authority may issue clarifications through guidance notes or circulars.
- (2) On an application, received along with non-refundable processing fees as may be specified by the Authority, the Authority, may for the reasons to be recorded in writing, relax the strict enforcement of any of the provisions of these regulations.

#### **20. Repeal and Saving**

- (1) On and from the commencement of these regulations, the International Financial Services Centres Authority, (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses and Offshore Education Centres) Regulations, 2022 stand repealed.
- (2) Notwithstanding such repeal,-

- (a) anything done or any action taken or purported to have been done or taken including registration or approval granted, suspended or cancelled, fees collected, any adjudication, enquiry or investigation commenced, or show-cause notice issued under the repealed regulations, prior to such repeal, shall be deemed to have been done or taken or commenced under the corresponding provisions of these regulations;
  - (b) any application made to the Authority under the repealed regulations, prior to such repeal, and pending before it shall be deemed to have been made under the corresponding provisions of these regulations;
  - (c) the previous operation of the repealed regulations or anything done or suffered thereunder, any right, privilege, obligation or liability acquired, accrued or incurred under the repealed regulations, any penalty incurred in respect of any violation committed against the repealed regulations, or any investigation, legal proceeding or remedy in respect of any such right, privilege, obligation, liability, penalty as aforesaid, shall remain unaffected as if the repealed regulations had never been repealed.
- (3) After the repeal of International Financial Services Centres Authority, (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses and Offshore Education Centres) Regulations, 2022, any reference thereto in any other regulations, guidelines or circulars issued by the Authority shall be deemed to have the reference to the corresponding provisions of these regulations.
- (4) The circulars or guidelines issued by Authority under the International Financial Services Centres Authority (Setting up and Operation of International Branch Campuses and Offshore Education Centres) Regulations, 2022, shall be deemed to have been issued under these regulations unless and until they are specifically superseded or modified by the Authority

## **Schedule I**

1. List of global overall rankings:-
  - (i) QS World University Rankings
  - (ii) Times Higher Education World University Rankings
2. List of subject wise ranking:-
  - (i) QS World University Rankings by Subject
  - (ii) Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject
3. Any other global overall or subject wise rankings as may be specified by Authority, from time to time.

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