

Dear Students,

GITAM leadership empathizes with you and has listened to the feedback we got from various quarters in the last week. Even though we had good reasons for our earlier announcement, we are happy to inform you about some policy decisions that have been taken to make it easier for you all during this pandemic.

GITAM has decided to extend the date for payment of fees from 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 to 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 and those who pay the full fees can still avail 5% concession up to 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Please find below in more detail –

- Those who choose to pay the full annual tuition fees for the academic year 2020-21 can avail the 5% concession until 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- Those who choose to pay the semester tuition fees for the academic year 2020-21 can do so without any penalty until 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- After 5<sup>th</sup> September, you will have a 2-week grace period until 19<sup>th</sup> September to pay the Semester or annual fees without any penalties. You can no longer avail the fees concession during this period.
- After 19<sup>th</sup> September, you will be liable for a late fee penalty based on your program of study.

Apart from the above, some of the other updates are –

- No hostel fees will be collected starting from July 2020 until students return to their hostels. If and when you choose to come back to campus this year, the hostel fee will be calculated on a pro-rata basis from your date of return to bring in financial flexibility.
- We are expediting the processing of scholarships and are looking to deduct the scholarship amount from fees for eligible students. This software update may take us a few weeks.
- In the meanwhile, we request you to pay the fees as soon as possible. Refunding the scholarship amount to eligible students who have already paid the fees is being expedited.

## **Brief background on GITAM operations since COVID lockdown**

The pandemic COVID-19 is forcing us to change our routine and learn new things from many perspectives. This has become the new normal, and has brought about many changes to what we know about teaching and learning.

At GITAM we have stepped up our preparations to face the challenges posed by the pandemic. We believe that we should embrace the change, get better of the situation and turn the adversity to our advantage. Keeping this in mind, we are transforming our traditional methods of imparting education into a blended learning model. A blended model is not just a substitution of classroom teaching with online lectures, but one that blends the online and offline pedagogies in a manner that leverages technology to offer a unique student-centric 360-degree learning experience. This switch alone involves a long-term commitment and significant investments both in infrastructure, software, technology and training.

While most other educational institutions are still struggling to figure out how they will cope with the changes, GITAM has used the past few months of “downtime” to introspect, brainstorm and plan our approach, preparations and investments that put us clearly ahead of the curve. I want to give you a peek into some of our preparations and the associated investments below:

1. A three-year agreement with Coursera for 20,000-25,000 licenses to augment your learning with curated courses from world-renowned professors, some of which are compulsory while several others are available as electives and general education options.
2. A two-year agreement with Zoom Video communications for Zoom licenses with several features, such as polls, breakout rooms, etc., which were not available before, to give the teacher and the learner the best online experience.
3. Creation of a Directorate of Digital Learning, headed by a seasoned digital learning expert, who has been actively curating software tools, platforms and training programs for faculty development in the optimal use of technology and pedagogy for fostering an enriched learning experience.

4. A tie-up with Harappa Education (<https://harappa.education/>) for expert training of our teachers to handle the change to digital methods as seamlessly as possible.
5. Creation of state-of-the-art recording studios rooms for creating content
6. Recruitment of high-caliber new faculty across all disciplines of the university for the academic year 2020-21
7. Creation of three directorates - Student Life, Sports and Hospitality each headed by a competent professional with outstanding pedigree, to make your study and stay and dining on campus a memorable experience
8. Commitment to faculty and employee welfare. While several of our peer institutions are either laying off or are cutting salaries of their faculty and staff, GITAM has stood by all of its faculty and employees in this hour of need, and has been paying their full salaries promptly
9. Establishment of a Venture Development Center in partnership with Northeastern University, Boston, USA, to prepare students for their entrepreneurial careers
10. Setting up a GITAM Career Guidance Center (GCGC) to help prepare students for fulfilling their career aspirations, including job placements, higher studies, competitive exams, etc.

We candidly admit that there are certain cost savings on account of not operating the campuses fully due to the pandemic. The savings are mainly in the areas of electricity, consumables and some repairs and maintenance. However, these modest savings in costs are more than offset by the significantly higher investments incurred as indicated above. We want you to appreciate that the majority of our costs are fixed, such as paying salaries to employees, maintenance of facilities, admissions expenditure and finance costs (bank loans and interest payments) and need to be incurred regardless of whether the students are on campus or not. In fact, due to the delay in starting the academic year, we are heavily reliant on bank loans to pay salaries and run the organization. Without fee collections, it will be a major challenge to keep GITAM running smoothly. Availability of financial resources is crucial for smooth operations of any enterprise, and GITAM is no exception.

We hope that this detailed note clarifies our position. We have decided to give this extension of fee payment to everyone since we cannot identify the level of financial difficulty each student's family is in. We request all parents and students who are in a position to pay the fees, to do so as soon as possible so that GITAM can run smoothly and focus its energies on improving the

education experience during Covid. We are placing our trust in you, as even this extension we have given is going to further exacerbate the serious financial stress we have been in for the last few months. For those of you who are paying early, please know that you are also indirectly helping your fellow classmates by enabling GITAM to restart the academic operations successfully.

VICE CHANCELLOR