

JJ Arts, Architecture schools may be converted into varsity

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Mumbai: The state government is planning to convert the iconic JJ Schools of Art and Architecture into a state university. Currently, all three institutions – school of fine art, applied art and architecture – are affiliated to Mumbai University. The government, on Monday set up a committee to explore the possibility of making it an affiliating public university.

About two years ago, the same government had sought a deemed university status under the de novo category from the UGC. It recently even got a letter of intent from the commission. The de novo status would have allowed the institutions to focus on innovations in emerging areas.

Higher education minister

Uday Samant told TOI that the de novo plan would take about three years to materialise.

“But we are trying to explore the possibility of making JJ a state affiliating university. The deemed status would have benefited only these three institutions. We want other colleges to also benefit from its academics and expertise. We are looking at setting up sub-centres and making it a degree-awarding university,” said Samant, adding that it was a proposal and a final call will be taken based on a report submitted by the expert committee. Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is an alumnus of the premier institution.

The government resolution, issued by higher education department, directed the formation of an eight-member committee under the chairmanship of for-

mer Mumbai University vice-chancellor Vijay Khole.

The committee will look at the availability of basic infrastructure, syllabus for the university, sources for revenue generation and additional financial burden on the state, among other things. It is expected to submit the report within 30 days.

An alumnus of one of the institutes said that the de novo status was expected to give the institutions a special status and was granted by UGC.

“It would have given more autonomy to start new courses in specialised areas and to help the brand flourish. A state university, with affiliating colleges, could dilute the brand. The institutions are understaffed and are facing shortage of funds, having a university would add to the burden,” said the alumnus.