

Towards Quality Assurance: A Himachal Pradesh University Perspective

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One of the major concerns of present day higher education scenario in the country is the following key question: How to assure quality in delivery system of the higher education to produce human resource which is ready to extend the frontiers of knowledge on a value based foundation? The answer to this is linked with the fact that it is a big challenge to put in place those well defined processes which bring transparency both qualitatively and quantitatively with an ultimate goal towards quest for excellence. National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India in its Guidelines for Re-accreditation (2004) has identified five core values to achieve this objective. These are

- (i) Contributing to national development
- (ii) Fostering global competencies among students
- (iii) Inculcating a value system in students
- (iv) Promoting the use of technology
- (v) Quest for excellence

As a premiere higher education institution in the state of Himachal Pradesh which must strive to attract best students, researchers and faculty in its portals, in the fast changing educational climate in the state that is in a state of flux, demands from each one of us involved in carrying out this to be ready to

- (i) face competition
- (ii) provide customer satisfaction
- (iii) maintain and upgrade standards
- (iv) bring accountability in every aspect of its functioning
- (v) improve working conditions and raise the motivation level of its teaching and non teaching employees
- (vi) bring consistency in its functioning so that quality becomes a way of life on the campus
- (vii) create an image and visibility to attract best students, best stakeholder support and get increased endowments, grants and placements

The pulse of this need was felt during the declaration of result of re-accreditation of the Himachal Pradesh University in December 2010. The stakeholders had a feeling that they deserved a better accreditation score. This led to lot of debate privately on the campus and the need was felt that peer report of the re-accreditation report presented to the University at the time of exit meeting needs to be discussed widely with the stake holders to have a clear perspective and action plan by involving as many constituencies of the stake holders as possible not merely as members of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell but as responsible partners in inculcating culture of quality assurance. The most heartening aspect of this effort is that Management of the University is committed to move forward and University grants Commission has provided a sum of Rs. five Lacs to strengthen Internal Quality Assurance activities on the campus out of which Rs. Four and a half Lac were released by UGC in Sept 2011.

As a first step in this direction Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Himachal Pradesh University, Prof. ADN Bajpai reconstituted and invigorated the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Himachal Pradesh University to bring it out of its dormancy. In the last one year IQAC has worked in a mission mode to identify the areas on which the focus has to be related to seven criteria of assessment of quality assurance as enunciated by NAAC:

1. Curricular aspects
2. Teaching Learning and Evaluation
3. Research Consultancy and Evaluation
4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
5. Student Support and Progression
6. Governance and Leadership
7. Innovative Practices

On its way to drawing the action plan which is ready and is being implemented, IQAC in Collaboration with Department of Geography HPU, Association of Indian Universities and Department of Public Administration HPU held three widely attended national seminars on *Choice based and Credit System for Assesment and Evaluation*, *Emerging trends in Information Technology University Management* and *Reforms in University*

Administration were held to bring awareness about quality aspects in governance of the University. To chalk out a well thought out action plan it was desired that IQAC facilitates communication among other stake holders on the campus and beyond and to develop a participatory approach. As a result IQAC formed fifteen working groups to look at various dimensions of NAAC criteria separately and in greater details to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to undertake various tasks under the care of a chairperson of the working group. In this direction the most important document which acted, as a beckon has been the *Drishti Swaran Jayanti 2020: Vision and Mission Document* of the Himachal Pradesh University. Working groups prepared interesting working papers on the following themes after in depth discussions and deliberations:

- (a) Revision of Accounts Manual as per the Contemporary Needs of the University
- (b) ICT tools for Quality Assurance
- (c) Cleaning the Junk Through Write Off Mechanism
- (d) Moving towards Choice based Credit Based Grading System
- (e) Web Portal: A Need of Higher Education System
- (f) Adoption of Result Frame work Document Approach to Bring Efficiency in the Functioning of the University
- (g) Student Charter: Towards Responsible Ambience
- (h) Best Practices of The University and their Documentation
- (i) Teacher Evaluation, Course Evaluation and Department/Institute Evaluation: Student Feed back Mechanism
- (j) Identification of Process design of forms for maintaining records pertaining to Quality Assurance initiatives and activities in various teaching and research Departments and Branches of the Administration.
- (k) Academic auditing and drafting of evaluation sheets
- (l) Financial health, improvement of financial resources of the University
- (m) Innovations in teaching and research
- (n) Computerisation of library and Converting it into an Academic Information Hub
- (o) Environment and cleanliness

This detailed effort has helped university to plan out a quality assurance network in the campus and is being implemented in the right earnest. This exercise also benefited immensely the University in preparing an exhaustive 12th five year plan proposal which

stands submitted to University grants commission, New Delhi. This document has turned out to be a perspective plan for quality assurance, inclusive growth and qualitative expansion of higher education in the state of Himachal Pradesh and making Himachal University a global competitor in the field of higher education.

With these latest initiatives, University has embarked upon a path of total quality management. This will be possible only if everyone feels responsible for enhancing the quality and maintaining the quality with a sense of belonging and service for the overall well being of society at large. For this focus has to be on action, we will have to walk the talk to maintain and enhance our credibility. We must remember only constant towards quality assurance is constant change and innovation.