



Research Paper

IQAC: Quiest for Excellence in Indian Higher Education

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Abstract

Higher Education in India is undergoing a transformation due to rapid changes happening in the environment due to socio-economic changes and drastic technological advancement. The current pace of accelerated growth of Indian economy, significantly accompanied by surge in growth in certain sectors, primarily services, puts tremendous pressure on the need for human resources to keep up to the momentum and pace of change and growth. The challenge then to the higher education system in the country is to create a skilled resource of the young population it has, to unleash their potential to take on the baton of change and growth. In turn, the Government has a key role to play in aiding to give impetus to provide adequate and high quality education system. In this paper an attempt has been made to describe the major role of Internal Quality Assurance Cell in maintain quality assurance in higher education. It emphasizes the composition and goals of the IQAC. It describes the major functions of the cell and major benefits for higher education institutes to maintain excellence.

Keywords: Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Academic Excellence, Research and Development.

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I. Introduction

Quality and excellence should be the vision of every higher education institute. Acquisition and quality enhancement is the major challenge of almost all the higher education institutes. Maintaining this momentum of quality consciousness is of crucial importance. It is a common knowledge that no single strategy works on its own. Multiple methodologies should be used at the same time and these should be intended to overcome the barriers and setbacks that come in the way of quality assurance and quality sustenance. To make quality assurance mechanism an integral part of the education system and at the same time attain academic excellence, it is expected that the higher education institutions establish the IQAC. Internal Quality Assurance Cell is conceived as a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level. The IQAC is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the college.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the role of IQAC in maintaining overall quality standards in a college/institution.
- To examine the functioning of IQAC as a quality monitoring body.
- To analyse and work out various opinions of coordinators and non-members of IQAC regarding the role of IQAC in the development of a college/institution.
- To find solutions to issues/problems if any are discovered in the working of IQAC.

Goals

- To develop a quality system for conscious, consistent and catalytic programmed action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the college
- To promote measures for institutional functioning towards quality enhancement through internationalization of quality culture and institutionalization of best practices

Composition of IQAC

The composition of the IQAC will depend on the size and complexity of the institution. It helps the colleges in planning and monitoring. IQAC also gives stakeholder beneficiaries, across-sectional participation in the institution's quality enhancement activities. The guidelines are only indicative and will help the institutions in having quality sustenance activities. The role of the coordinator of the IQAC is fundamental & critical in ensuring the effective functioning of all the members. The coordinator of the IQAC may be a senior person of high repute with expertise in the relevant field. It is preferable that the coordinator may have a sound knowledge on usage of computers for effective communication. It is essential for the members of IQAC to shoulder the responsibilities of generating and promoting awareness in the institution and to devote time for working out procedural modalities. It is advisable to choose persons from varied antecedent, who have earned respect for integrity and excellence in their teaching and research.

Strategies of IQAC

- Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks.
- The relevance and quality of academic and research programs.
- Equitable access to affordability of academic programs for various sections of society.
- Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning
- The credibility of evaluation procedures.
- Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and functioning of the support structure and services.
- Research sharing and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Principles of IQAC

- Promote shared value and attitudes about quality rather than simply managerial processes and ensure that the internal evaluation processes develop professional attitudes and competence thus fostering creativity and innovation.
- The cycles and scope of internal evaluations should be linked in a pragmatic and cost effective way and Attention should be paid to the global picture that emerges through the internal evaluations of the different activities.
- The role of leadership consists in communicating the need for these processes framing them in consultation with the campus community-students, alumni, academic and administrative staff and using these results in strategic cycle.
- Ensure data collection and analysis to measure institutional performance.

Functions

- Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters for the various academic and administrative activities of the colleges;
- Facilitating the creation of a learner-centric environment conducive for quality education and faculty maturation to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process;
- Arrangement for feedback responses from students, parents and other stakeholders on quality related institutional processes;
- Dissemination of information on the various quality parameters of higher education;
- Organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles;
- Documentation of the various programs/activities of the College, leading to quality improvement
- Acting as a nodal agency of the college for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of good practices
- Development and maintenance of institutional database through MIS for the purpose of maintaining / enhancing the institutional quality.
- Development of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) of the College based on the quality parameters/assessment criteria developed by the relevant quality assurance body (like NAAC, NBA, AB) in the prescribed format;
- Bi-annual development of Quality Radars (QRs) and Ranking of Integral Unites of Colleges based on the AQAR;
- Interaction with SQACs in the pre and post accreditation quality assessment, sustenance and enhancement endeavours.

Benefits

- Ensure heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement.
- Ensure internalization of the quality culture
- Ensure enhancement and integration among the various activities of the college and good practices.
- Provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning;
- Act as a dynamic system for quality changes in the Colleges
- Build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication

Major Role of IQAC in maintaining Quality Assurance

➤ **Academic Excellence:** IQAC will always set standards for academic excellence in the college. It acts as the backbone of all type of academic activities which leads to students capacity building, improve academic records and overall development of the students.

➤ **Research & Development Initiatives:** College is considered as the laboratory of learning. IQAC plays a pivotal role in research and development activities it provides platform to develop innovative ideas and it promotes research and development activities periodically. It always supports faculties to participate and contribute to advancement of knowledge through active research. The institution should always adopt a vigorous publication program and encourage faculty and students to publish.

➤ **Student-Centric Programs:** IQAC always dedicate itself to the service of students, it conducts student's centric programs, curricular and co-curricular activities should be conducted for the benefit of the student community. The institution must follow an effective mechanism for student feedback for quality enhancement and students have access to placement and counseling services.

➤ **Extension Activities :**

IQAC shall be responsive to community needs and conducts relevant extension and outreach programs. It should conduct impact studies of the extension programs on the community and review the processes from time to time. So that students and faculty shall actively participate in the extension activities periodically.

E-Learning Initiatives: The last two decades have witnessed the inclusion of developments in ICTs in higher education systems in India. IQAC should focus on ICT enabled teaching and learning activities. IQAC must conduct workshops, seminars on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) ,SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) and other various e-learning platforms so that students will be empowered with good knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of the digital era.

II. Conclusion

Quality and accountability are two sides of the same coin; quality assurance is the outcome of the expected functions and responsibilities of the different stake holders as per the aims and objectives of higher education. The IQAC has to ensure continuous improvement in all the operational aspects of an institution and also assure its stakeholders of the accountability of the institution for its own quality. It may channelize and systematize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence. It should not be yet another hierarchical structure or record-keeping exercise in the institution; it would be a facilitative and participative organ of the institution. The IQAC should become a driving force for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality.

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