



UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

Guidelines For Schemes of Autonomous Colleges

1. Introduction

Highlighting the importance of autonomous colleges, the UGC document on the X Plan profile of higher education in India clearly states that: “The only safe and better way to improve the quality of undergraduate education is to delink most of the colleges from the affiliating structure. Colleges with academic and operative freedom are doing better and have more credibility. The financial support to such colleges boosts the concept of autonomy. It is proposed to increase the number of autonomous colleges to spread the culture of autonomy, and the target is to make 10 per cent of eligible colleges autonomous by the end of the Plan.”

Need for Autonomy

The affiliating system of colleges was originally designed when their number in a university was small. The university could then effectively oversee the working of the colleges, act as an examining body and award degrees on their behalf. The system has now become unwieldy and it is becoming increasingly difficult for a university to attend to the varied needs of individual colleges. The colleges do not have the freedom to modernise their curricula or make them locally relevant. The regulations of the university and its common system, governing all colleges alike, irrespective of their characteristic strengths, weaknesses and locations, have affected the academic development of individual colleges. Colleges that have the potential for offering programmes of a higher standard do not have the freedom to offer them. The 1964-66 Education Commission pointed out that the exercise of academic freedom by teachers is a crucial requirement for development of the intellectual climate of our country. Unless such a climate prevails, it is difficult to achieve excellence in our higher education system. With students, teachers and management being co-partners in raising the quality of higher education, it is imperative that they share a major

responsibility. Hence, the Education Commission (1964-66) recommended college autonomy, which, in essence, is the instrument for promoting academic excellence.

2. Objective

(a) The National Policy on Education (1986-92) formulated the following objectives for autonomous colleges. An autonomous college will have the freedom to:

-determine and prescribe its own courses of study and syllabi, and restructure and redesign the courses to suit local needs; and

- prescribe rules for admission in consonance with the reservation policy of the state government;

- evolve methods of assessment of students' performance, the conduct of examinations and notification of results;

- use modern tools of educational technology to achieve higher standards and greater creativity; and - promote healthy practices such as community service, extension activities, projects for the benefit of the society at large, neighborhood programmes, etc.

(b) Relationship with the parent university, the state government and other educational institutions:

Autonomous colleges are free to make use of the expertise of university departments and other institutions to frame their curricula, devise methods of teaching, examination and evaluation. They can recruit their teachers according to the existing procedures (for private and government colleges).

The parent university will accept the methodologies of teaching, examination, evaluation and the course curriculum of its autonomous colleges. It will also help the colleges to develop their academic programmes, improve the faculty and to provide necessary guidance by participating in the deliberations of the different bodies of the colleges.

The role of the parent university will be:

- to bring more autonomous colleges under its fold;

- to promote academic freedom in autonomous colleges by encouraging introduction of innovative academic programmes;

- to facilitate new courses of study, subject to the required minimum number of hours of instruction, content and standards;
- to permit them to issue their own provisional, migration and other certificates;
- to do everything possible to foster the spirit of autonomy;
- to ensure that degrees/diplomas/certificates issued indicate the name of the college;
- to depute various nominees of the university to serve in various committees of the autonomous colleges and get the feedback on their functioning; and
- to create separate wings wherever necessary to facilitate the smooth working of the autonomous colleges.

The state government will assist the autonomous colleges by:

- avoiding, as far as possible, transfer of teachers, especially in colleges where academic innovation and reforms are in progress, except for need-based transfers;
- conveying its concurrence for the extension of autonomy of any college to the Commission within the stipulated time of 90 days after receipt of the review committee report, failing which it will be construed that the state government has no objection to the college continuing to be autonomous; and
- deputing nominees on time to the governing body of government colleges and other bodies wherever their nominees are to be included.

(c) Conferring autonomous status

Autonomous status covers certificate, diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate and M.Phil. programmes offered in colleges that are autonomous and those seeking autonomous status.

The parent university will confer the status of autonomy upon a college that is permanently affiliated, with the concurrence of the state government and the University Grants Commission.

The Act and Statutes of the universities ought to be amended to provide for the grant of autonomy to affiliated colleges.

Before granting autonomy, the university will ensure that the management structure of the applicant college is adequately participatory and provides ample opportunities for academicians to make a creative contribution.

3. Target Group / Eligibility Target Group:

All Colleges under Section 2(f) & 12(B) of the UGC Act are eligible CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS FOR GRANT OF AUTONOMY

- (a) Academic reputation and previous performance in university examinations and its academic/co-curricular/extension activities in the past.
- (b) Academic/extension achievements of the faculty.
- (c) Quality and merit in the selection of students and teachers, subject to statutory requirements in this regard.
- (d) Adequacy of infrastructure, for example, library, equipment, accommodation for academic activities, etc.
- (e) Quality of institutional management. (f) Financial resources provided by the management/state government for the development of the institution.
- (f) Responsiveness of administrative structure. (h) Motivation and involvement of faculty in the promotion of innovative reforms.

4. Nature of Assistance

Pattern of Financial Assistance and Other Enabling Provisions

The Commission will provide assistance under this scheme to autonomous colleges to meet their additional and special needs.

- (i) Guest/visiting faculty
- (ii) Orientation and re-training of teachers.
- (iii) Re-designing courses and development of teaching/learning material
- (iv) Workshop and seminars
- (v) Examination reforms

- (vi) Office equipment, teaching aids and laboratory equipment
- (vii) Furniture for office, classrooms, library and laboratories
- (viii) Library equipment, books/journals
- (ix) Expenditure on meetings of the governing body and committees
- (x) Honorarium to Controller of Examinations (full-time) not exceeding Rs. 5000/- p.m.
- (xi) Accreditation (NAAC) fee

UGC funds cannot, however, be used for creation of posts, payment of salary to any of the college staff, paying honorarium (except clause [x] above) to existing staff to meet normal college contingency requirement or to subsidies. Examination fee should be fixed so that income from fee can meet the expenditure on examinations and other staff appointed in examination branch. In government colleges the principal has to obtain administrative approval from the director of collegiate education before apportioning the grant that causes undue delay. Hence, the principal of the college has to be authorised to spend the autonomy grant as soon as it is received from the UGC.

The ceiling of normal assistance will be as follows:

(a) Undergraduate level only:

- i. Arts/science/commerce: One faculty only: Rs.5.00 lakh p.a.
- ii. Arts/science/commerce More than one faculty: Rs.7.00 lakh p.a.

(b) Both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels:

- i. Single faculty: Rs.6.00 lakh p.a.
- ii. Multi-faculty: Rs. 12 lakh p.a.

Normal assistance as detailed above will be available to autonomous colleges offering not fewer than six programmes, of which two may be at the postgraduate level. The UGC will provide VSAT to each autonomous college for Internet connectivity.

Colleges that provide professional courses in education, law, physical education, etc. will also be eligible to receive grants from the Commission. The sanction of such grants will depend on the size and stage of development of these colleges after attaining autonomous status. Since self-financing colleges also want autonomous status, their cases may be considered after they have completed 10 years of existence.

They will have to follow the same procedure as applicable to other colleges. However, conferment of autonomy does not entitle them to an autonomy grant.

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5. Procedure for Applying

The UGC will advertise and call for proposals from eligible colleges seeking autonomous status. The individual university can also send circulars asking the colleges to apply. [Annexure I].

6. Procedure for Approval by the UGC

The approval for the grant of autonomous status will be done in two stages. At stage I a screening committee will be constituted by the UGC. The composition of the committee will be as follows:

- (a) Three to five experts nominated by the UGC (one of the experts will be nominated as convener).
- (b) Secretary of Higher Education or his/her nominee.
- (c) Chairman, State Council for Higher Education or his/her nominee
- (d) Director of Collegiate Education or his/her nominee.

(e) Vice-Chancellor or his/her nominee.

(f) Joint Secretary (Autonomous Colleges), Member Secretary.

The convener will chair the committee. The cases of short-listed colleges shall be sent to the state government for approval, wherever required. If no response is received from the state government within a period of six weeks, it will be assumed that it has no objection to the proposal.

At stage II short-listed colleges will be visited by another expert committee constituted by the UGC. This committee will submit its report with its findings and recommendations to the UGC. Thereafter, the UGC may send its recommendation to the university concerned for conferment of autonomy.

The university will notify the colleges concerned. Autonomy will be conferred initially for a period of six years.

7. Mechanism for Implementation of Autonomy

Repairing a College for Autonomy

There are several areas where proper preparation is necessary if college autonomy is to be implemented successfully. These are: faculty preparation, departmental preparation, institutional preparation, and preparation of students and the local community. Such multi-pronged preparation should be completed well before autonomy is sought and conferred upon a college so that no part of the college community is found unprepared for the new responsibility which it is called upon to shoulder.

Faculty Preparation

It is essential to get the staff of the college involved in the thinking and planning processes from the very beginning. Seminars, workshops and consultations may be organised to make the staff familiar with the concept, objectives and rationale of autonomy. (This will help them have a sense of participation in decision making and motivate them to get involved in the entire exercise.) This could form part of the academic calendar of the college.

Departmental Preparation

An important responsibility of the department is that of designing suitable courses in the major and related subjects, introducing new courses of study, renaming obsolete courses by changing their content, updating existing courses to match the current state-of-the-art in each discipline, and preparing course materials and human resources.

These will be done in the light of the general objectives of autonomy and the specific objectives of the education institutions.

Common programmes to be adopted are:

- (a) Semester pattern of study
- (b) Continuous internal assessment
- (c) Credit/grading system
- (d) Student feedback
- (e) Self-appraisal by teachers

Institutional Preparation

Since an autonomous college is called upon to perform many of the functions that the university has hitherto performed, it must study the academic, administrative/management and financial implications of such a changeover and prepare itself to discharge its new functions efficiently.

8. Governance of an Autonomous College

The college will have the following committees to ensure proper management of academic, financial and general administrative affairs.

The following are statutory bodies:

- Governing Body *
- Academic Council
- Board of Studies
- Finance Committee

(*The Governing Body is different from Trust Board/Board of Management/Executive Committee/Management Committee).

The composition and functions of the above committees are given in Annexures III to VII.

The college will, in addition, have other committees such as the Planning and Evaluation Committee, Grievance Appeal Committee, Examination Committee,

Admission Committee, Library Committee, Student Welfare Committee, Extra-Curricular Activities Committee and Academic Audit Committee.

Governing Body

The constitution of this body will be according to the structure given in Annexure III.

Academic Council

The Academic Council will be solely responsible for all academic matters, such as, framing of academic policy, approval of courses, regulations and syllabi, etc. The Council will involve faculty at all levels and also experts from outside, including representatives of the university and the government. The decisions taken by the Academic Council will not be subject to any further ratification by the Academic Council or other statutory bodies of the university. The composition and functions of the Academic Council are given in Annexure IV.

Board of Studies

The Board of Studies is the basic constituent of the academic system of an autonomous college. Its functions will include framing the syllabi for various courses, reviewing and updating syllabi from time to time, introducing new courses of study, determining details of continuous assessment, recommending panels of examiners under the semester system, etc. The composition and functions of the Board of Studies are given in Annexure V.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will advise the Governing Body and meet at least twice a year. The constitution and functions of the Finance Committee are given in Annexure VI.

Procedure for Release of Grant

The first-year grant will be released on the conferment/extension of the autonomy to the college, and subsequent grants will be released on receipt of statement of expenditure and Utilisation Certificate duly signed by the competent authority (Annexures VII and VIII). Normally grants sanctioned in a particular year will lapse if they are not claimed and approved by the Commission in succeeding year.

Procedure for Monitoring /Evaluation

(a) The right of autonomy may not be conferred once and for all. It has to be continuously earned by the college. The status of autonomy will be granted initially for a period of six years.

(b) Each autonomous college will, with the approval of its Academic Council, formulate an appropriate mechanism to evaluate its academic performance, improvement of standards, and assess the extent and degree of success in the utilisation of autonomy. Self-evaluation will be made annually. In addition, there will be two external evaluations, the first after four years and the second after six years. The latter will determine the continuance or revocation of autonomous status.

(c) The university will review the functioning of autonomy in an autonomous college at the end of the fourth year with the help of a committee constituted for the purpose. This committee may consist of:

- one nominee of the UGC;
- one nominee of the parent university;
- one nominee of the State Council for Higher Education or the state government where such a council does not exist; and
- two experts from outside the state to be nominated by the university.

Towards the end of the sixth year, the UGC will conduct a review with the help of a committee to be constituted by the Commission. In the event of delay in the review report and renewal of autonomy, the college will continue to enjoy autonomy with the entitlements of benefits, fiscal or otherwise so conceived under the scheme, unless the government or parent university by a special order withholds such continuation. The college should submit the proposal in the prescribed pro forma (Annexure II) duly forwarded by the university for the extension six months prior to the date of expiry of the autonomy tenure.

In the event of the availability of evidence confirming decline in standards in an autonomous college, it shall be open to the UGC and the university to revoke the autonomous status of that college after careful scrutiny, and mutual consultation and due notification to the management. In such cases the students already admitted under the autonomous scheme would be allowed to complete the course under autonomous status.

An autonomous college should get themselves accredited by the NAAC within a period of two years from the date of conferment/extension of autonomous status.

General Matters

Starting of New Courses

An autonomous college is free to start diploma (undergraduate and postgraduate) or certificate courses without the prior approval of the university. Diplomas and certificates shall be issued under the seal of the college.

An autonomous college is free to start a new degree or postgraduate course with the approval of the Academic Council of the college. Such courses shall fulfill the minimum standards prescribed by the university/UGC in terms of number of hours, curricular content and standards, and the university shall be duly informed of such courses.

An autonomous college may rename an existing course after restructuring/redesigning it with the approval of the college Academic Council as per UGC norms. The university should be duly informed of such proceedings so that it may award new degrees in place of the old.

The university should have the right to review all new courses of an autonomous college. Where there is evidence of decline in standards or quality, the university may, after careful scrutiny, and in consultation with the UGC, either help modify them, wherever possible, or cancel such courses.

Awards/Medals

Autonomous colleges are free to institute medals for meritorious students. The value and other terms of reference may be decided with the approval of appropriate bodies in the college.

Examination System

In order to avoid victimization by either teachers or students of any group, there should be various alternatives to the internal examination system. Students' performance may be evaluated both internally and externally. Question banks may be prepared by internal examiners, and examinations conducted by external examiners or by internal examiners, or by both. Remuneration for examination work should not be less than that paid by the university.

Award of Degrees Through Parent University

The parent university will award degrees to the students evaluated and recommended by autonomous colleges. The degree certificates will be in a common format devised by the university. The name of the college will be mentioned in the degree certificate, if so desired. Autonomous colleges that have

completed three terms can confer the degree under their title with the seal of the university.

Others

(a) All recruitments of teaching staff will be made by the Governing Body/state government in accordance with the policies laid down by the UGC and state government.

(b) Universities shall consider both internal and external assessment of students in autonomous colleges for admitting them to higher-level courses.

(c) Organisation of special need-based short-term courses under the college's department of continuing education may be an important activity of an autonomous college. Such courses ought to benefit the students of the college besides outsiders who may enrol for them.

(d) The time spent by teachers on projects and extension work shall be counted for reckoning their workload as prescribed by the Commission.

(e) An autonomous college should prepare a calendar for meetings of various bodies to ensure that the implementation of the recommendations made by them is not unduly delayed for reasons of non-convening of such meetings.

(f) A wide variety of courses may be evolved in modules so that students may opt for them according to their convenience. Such courses may help them acquire additional credits.

(g) All autonomous colleges should make a formative continuous assessment of students' work during each semester.

(h) Teacher evaluation in autonomous colleges may include periodical self-evaluation, institutional assessment of teacher performance, student feedback, research appraisal and other suitable forms of teacher appraisal.

(i) Autonomous colleges in a given region may form a consortium for mutual cooperation/collaboration in chosen areas such as management skills, national services, entrance examinations, services projects, inter-collegiate/intra-collegiate sharing of expertise and human resources for teaching programmes.

(j) Credit system and credit transfer among colleges in general and autonomous college in particular may be suitably adopted.

(k) All autonomous colleges should undergo NAAC assessment.