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An Overview of the Initiatives of HEIs for Enhancing Learning Experiences

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Abstract - All HEIs aim to provide ideal academic atmosphere and impart in-depth knowledge and expertise through innovative methods of teaching and learning. The ultimate mission and vision of HEI is to extend all possible resources and methods for the holistic growth and development of its learners. This is executed at the level of Information, Infrastructure, Finance, Counselling and Exposure. Criterion V of SSR deals with Student Support and Progression. This Criterion is designed to assess the initiatives and efforts of HEI in extending support and assistance in their learning process. The Campus experience and outcome of those learning experiences on the campus are instrumental in holistic development and growth of the learners. The Criterion also emphasizes and assesses the role of alumni and its participation towards their alma mater. The metrics that deal with the progression of students highlights the progression of learners with respect to higher education, employability and achievements. This paper analyses the key metrics of Criterion V with reference to SSR and the initiatives of HEIs in the direction of student support and progression.

Key Words: Support, Progression, Alumni, Participation

I. Introduction

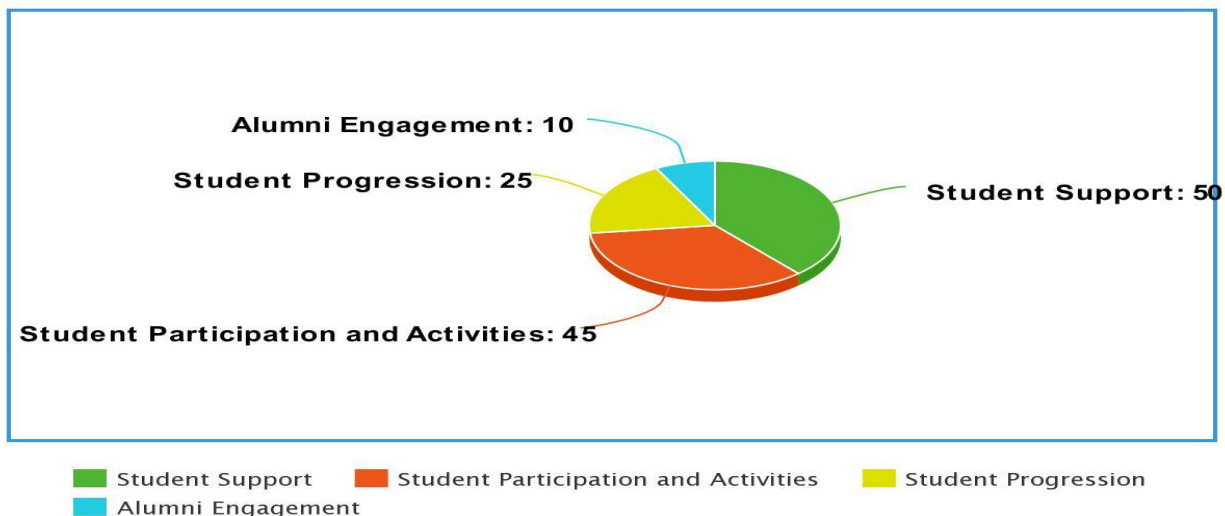
Higher Education has undergone a lot of transformation with the advent of technology and under the impact of globalization. When we talk about higher education it mainly includes teaching, research, and rigorous practical work and the activities in the arena of social and community service being carried out at colleges and universities. In the sphere of teaching, it involves both the graduate as

well as postgraduate-levels. Over the last three decades, India has witnessed speedy and notable growth in the number of Universities and Colleges more so with the increasing involvement of the private individual or agencies. But with this increased number, these Institutes are continually challenged to grow and compete with the global competitive standards. For India with the largest and the most diverse educational systems, high fees, low quality of education, regional disparities, access to technology, etc. are some of the constant challenges. Other than these quality and sustenance are in fact the most important ones and therefore for NAAC also, quality assurance is the prime objective. As an autonomous institution NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) is constantly working towards quality assurance in Education Institutions (HEIs).

II. Discussion

NAAC has taken cognizance of continuous changes, needs and challenges of HEIs and so the manuals designed by NAAC for three types of HEIs respectively focus and vary accordingly. Criterion V of SSR deals with Student Support and Progression. This Criterion is designed to assess the initiatives and efforts of HEI in extending support and assistance in their learning process. The Campus experience and outcome of those learning experiences on the campus are instrumental in holistic development and growth of the learners. The Criterion also emphasizes and assesses the role of alumni and its participation towards their alma mater. The metrics that deal with the progression of students highlights the progression of learners with respect to higher education, employability and achievements. The key indicators and respective weightage for PG affiliated College is as follows:

CRITERION V



meta-chart.com

The Data Templates and Metrics of Criterion V revolve around the above mentioned four indicators wherein the first three are about Student Support and their progression while the fourth one is about the engagement of alumni in the institution:

5.1.1 Average percentage of students benefited by scholarships and freeships provided by the Government during last five years: This metrics covers up the data related to scholarships provided by the Government for the benefit of the students. The objective of NAAC aims to look for welfare measures and schemes to extend support to the learners in all possible ways. The scholarships work as a great booster in financially helping students from economic backward sections and to students who are meritorious and wish to continue their higher studies.

5.1.2. Average percentage of students benefitted by scholarships, freeships etc. provided by the institution / non- government agencies during the last five years: This metrics is seeking data of scholarships and freeships provided by non-govt agencies. This works as a motivating step for those who wish to encourage education and learners.

5.1.3. Capacity building and skills enhancement initiatives taken by the institution include the following 1. Soft skills 2. Language and communication skills 3. Life skills (Yoga, physical fitness, health and hygiene) 4. ICT/computing skills: This is one of the most important metrics in terms of student support. The all-inclusive initiatives reflect the vision of NAAC in empowering the learners in all types of skills in the best possible ways. Even after hardcore skills and technical skills, the students from rural backgrounds lag behind in interviews and employability skills. Keeping this in mind the emphasis on language and communication skills along with ICT empowers them to compete with the global standards. Soft skills and life skills further helps them to face the real life situations. Therefore, this metrics investigates the role and initiatives of HEI in exploring capacity building programs for its learners.

5.1.4. Average percentage of students benefitted by guidance for competitive examinations and career counselling offered by the Institution during the last five years: It is the responsibility of HEI to create a platform for its learners for employment. The placement career counselling cells of HEIs are established with this vision and provide counselling and guidance regarding competitive examinations and other job opportunities that can benefit all groups of learners.

5.1.5. The Institution has a transparent mechanism for timely redressal of student grievances including sexual harassment and ragging cases: In this metrics NAAC is expecting the HEI to have a proper mechanism for redressal of grievances. All HEIs should form Internal committees / Grievances Committee or other such committees as per UGC norms. The record, minutes should be maintained as a document and displayed on the HEI's Website.

5.2.1 Average percentage of placement of outgoing students during the last five years: Placement of the students is a priority issue for HEI. The courses, programs and their learning outcomes should aim towards getting good placements for the students. This metrics focuses on the data related to outgoing students who have secured jobs. The placements achieved through placement drives and pool campus interviews / recruitment drives are considered.

5.2.2. Average percentage of students progressing to higher education during the last five years: Student progression to higher studies reflect the efforts and initiatives of the HEI in thinking about the future of its learners and measures that facilitate vertical movement of students from one level of education to the next higher level.

5.2.3. Average percentage of students qualifying in state/national/ international level examinations during the last five years (eg: JAM/CLAT/GATE/ GMAT/CAT/GRE/ TOEFL/ Civil Services/State government examinations): This metrics seeks data regarding students qualifying for the mentioned examinations. The vision behind this is very pertinent from the perspective of developing competency and proficiency among the students.

5.3.1 Number of awards/medals for outstanding performance in sports/cultural activities at university/state/national / international level (award for a team event should be counted as one) during the last five years: Besides academics, sports and cultural activities also play a very significant role in personality development of the students. Cultural and sports events essentially groom sense of social and community responsibility and also help the students secure bonus points. This metrics therefore emphasizes the participation of students in all these activities. Participation in Republic Day Parade at Rajpath, New Delhi by NCC candidates are also considered here.

5.3.2 Institution facilitates students' representation and engagement in various administrative, co-curricular and extracurricular activities (student council/ students representation on various bodies as per established processes and norms)

:This metrics seeks to explore the democratic process that finds its roots in academic institutions. Student Union representatives play a major role in planning and execution of all the developmental activities related to academics and administration of the HEI. Student's union acts as an important channel for the generation of feedback, responses, and grievances of the students at large. This helps the administration to work and improve in the areas demanding immediate attention and resolving of issues.

5.3.3. Average number of sports and cultural events/competitions in which students of the Institution participated during last five years (organised by the institution/other institutions): For holistic development of the students, their active participation and representation is essential. This metrics aims to look at the initiatives and opportunities provided by the HEI in fostering the talent of its learners and extending a platform for overall development of their potential. It also seeks to collect data which is a continuous practice in the Institution.

5.4.1 There is a registered Alumni Association that contributes significantly to the development of the institution through financial and/or other support services: Alumni and its participation is undoubtedly the key to sustainable philanthropic support and long term success of any educational institute. This metrics collects data regarding active Alumni Association that contributes in academic matters, student support as well as mobilization of resources – both financial and non-financial.

5.4.2 Alumni contribution during the last five years (INR in Lakhs) :The financial support of the Alumni is the focus here and it looks at the growth of alumni association/chapters and how over the years they have contributed towards the development of the institution.

III. Conclusion

The key indicators of Criterion V are: Student Support, Student Progression, Student Participation and Activities, and Alumni Engagement. In this criterion, NAAC is seeking information regarding financial, academic, professional and personal support that is extended by the institution with respect to student support and guidance. It also emphasizes the true meaning of education as in the holistic development through extra and co-curricular activities. To conclude we can say that the HEI can extend support at various levels viz. information, infrastructure, finance, counseling and exposure:

- Informational support – helping the students know about their college, courses, programs, learning outcomes, teaching pattern through college prospectus, college website, time table, academic calendar, quarterly newsletter etc.
- Infrastructural support – the college campus, its ambience state of art laboratories, well-furnished classrooms, medical center, library, computer and internet facility, playgrounds.
- Finance – liberal fee structure and scholarships.
- Counseling – career counseling cell, NCC, NSS, YDC, Women Cell, skill development programme in personality development and communication skills, Placement Cell, Anti Ragging Cell, Internal Complaints Committee, Remedial classes etc.
- Exposure – co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, sports, academic events like seminars, workshops, symposium, literary activities, and college magazine.

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