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INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION MECHANISM OF PAKISTAN: DEFINING NEW HORIZONS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Abstract

The need for quality assurance in higher education has become a global phenomenon nowadays. Pakistan also felt the need to assess and improve the quality of higher education in the country, with the objective of achieving international competitiveness and compatibility of its academic programs and research quality with the global standards and criteria. The paper sheds light on the challenges faced by the Higher Education Commission when carrying out accreditation of educational programmes. The results of the institution performance evaluation report and follow-up activities aimed at improvement are provided in the paper.

Key word

Institutional performance evaluation report, quality assurance in Pakistan, quality assurance standards and criteria, sustainable development, higher education.

Introduction

Higher Education Commission has developed Institutional Performance Evaluation Standards with the aim to implement high standards of quality across all university activities and making them compatible with the global ones. A total of eleven standards are defined and each one of these articulates a specific dimension of institutional quality.

These standards are titled as Mission Statement and Goals, Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, Integrity, Faculty, Students, Institutional Resources, Academic Programmes and Curricula, Public Disclosure and Transparency, Assessment & Quality Assurance and Student Support Services. Initially pilot study has been conducted by evaluating 10 institutions on 4 standards by IPE Panel of 3 members including a foreign expert Dr. Marry-Linda Armacost. After the completion of a pilot study a comprehensive Institutional Performance Evaluation Manual has been developed.

Institutional Performance Evaluation Manual comprises guidelines for IPE Process, the role of University IPE Panel and QAA in order to carry out evaluation.

IPE STANDARDS

Mission and Goals

This standard is aimed at evaluation of the mechanism of development the university mission and goals and the analysis of university strategy alignment with its mission and goals.

Planning and Evaluation

This standard is aimed at the analysis of the development processes and activities undertaken by the university with regard to its mission and goals achievement.

Organization and Governance

This standard aims to examine the existing organizational setup and governance with respect to statutory requirements and deployed regulations and rules.

Integrity

This standards aims to consider the transparency factor of program implementation, dealing with students and faculty, making outbound contacts with employers and the general public.

Faculty

Faculty qualification, quantity and quality oriented performance is evaluated with respect to the university mission and objectives.

Students

Under this standard, the success of students during and after their enrollment in the intuition is evaluated. The quality of admission practices for all kinds of students including transfer, graduation, non-degree, part time, self-financing, etc. is evaluated.

Institutional Resources

Institutional management of resource acquiring, appropriate allocation and utilization for planning, goals achievement, mission fulfillment and integrity.

Institutional resources such as financial, physical, technological, equipment & supplies, research, staffing, and all kind of other resources.

Academic Programs and Curricula

Consistency of academic programs with its mission and goals. Identification of student competencies and degrees, diplomas or certificates in widely recognized fields of study. The institutional effectiveness to plan, provide, evaluate, assure, and improve the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs, curricula, credits and degrees awarded.

Public Disclosure and Transparency

Publication of information for general public about mission, objectives, and expected learning outcomes; admission requirements, procedures and policies; student fees, rules and regulations for student conduct; academic programs, courses offered, academic policies and procedures.

Assessment & Quality Assurance

Implementation status of Quality Assurance mechanism for Internal and as well as external quality assurance.

Student Support Services

Availability of appropriate services including; sports and extracurricular activities, general cleanliness and pleasant outlook of the campus & classrooms, cafeteria and health centre facilities, efficient system of dealing with complaints etc,

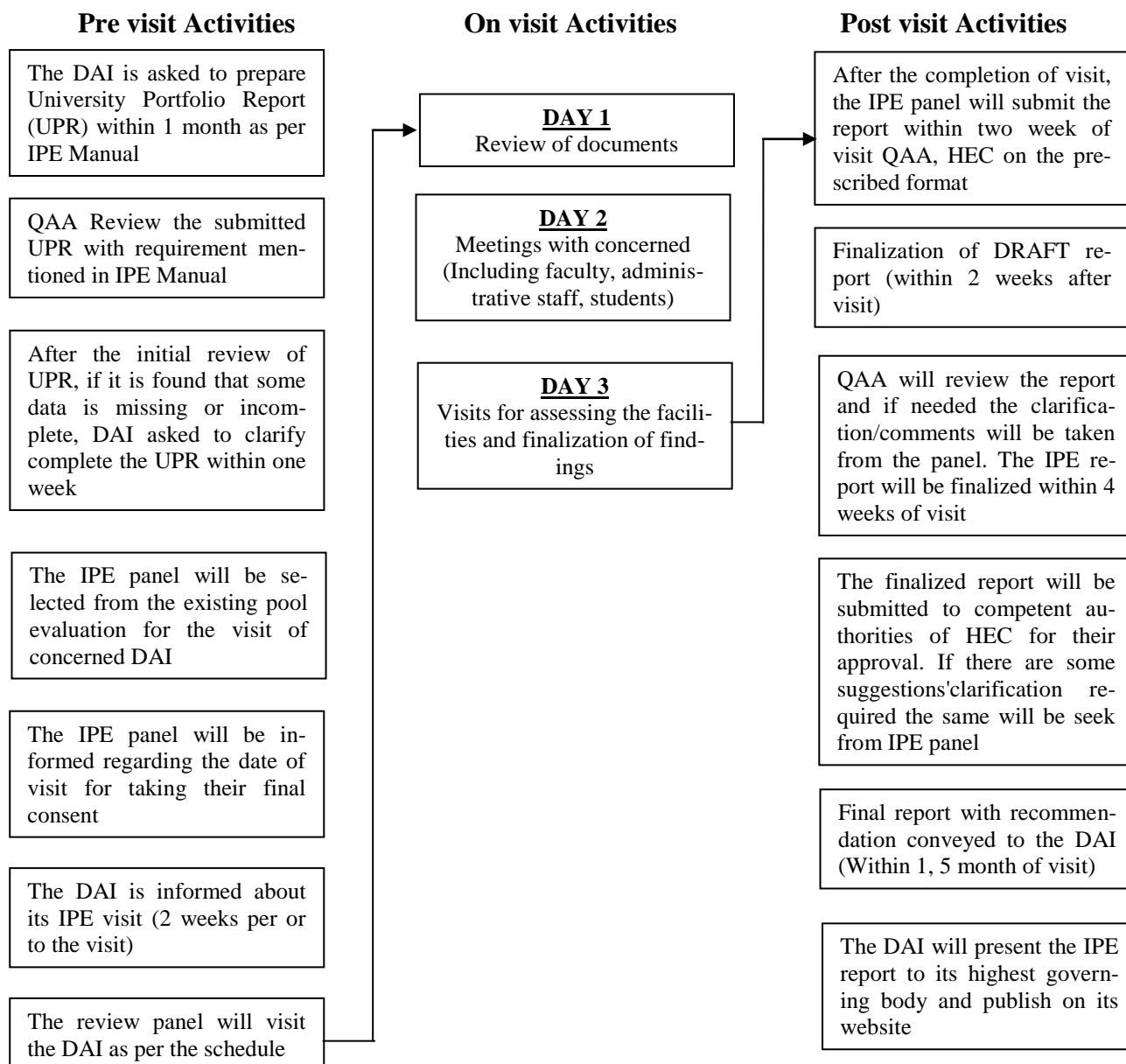
Evolution of Sustainable IPE Process:

The Process evolved by piloting the standards and mechanism. Initially there were 4 standards selected for the accreditation process at 5 pilot Universities i.e. Organization & Governance, Faculty, Institutional Resources and Academic Programs & Curricula. The outcomes of that pilot study were incorporated in the process. In the next phase, two more standards i.e. Mission & Goals and Planning & Evaluation were added for piloting purpose and another 5 universities were evaluated on six standards. The same mechanism was adopted for third and fourth phase in which two standards i.e. Students and Assessment & Quality Assurance and three standards i.e. Integrity, Public Disclosure & Transparency and Student Support Services were added to evaluate 13 and 14 universities respectively.

The outcome of this exercise was in a form of uniformed template for University Portfolio Report (UPR) and the mechanism for conduction of IPE i.e. IPE Manual.

IPE Process

As per the manual, there are three sets of activities. Pre-Visit Activities, On Site Review and Post-Visit Activities.



Sustainable Development of Quality Assurance Culture

Initially the universities were reluctant to undergo external quality assurance evaluations.

The series of awareness activities, meetings involving the Director QECs and other administrative staff were convened to limelight the importance of IPE and the role of IPE in enhancing the overall quality of the universities. QAA maintained close cooperation with the key personnel in order to prepare the University Portfolio Report and when needed QAA visited the respective university for the preparation of university portfolio report. Effective cooperation with the universities enabled to develop mutual understanding and confidence in the process, as a result the universities started understanding the importance of this activity. QAA extended its coordination with the universities for preparation of university portfolio report in a presentable manner for smooth conduction of IPE Visit.

Up till now 47 IPE visits have been conducted from its inception, both in public and private sector universities. These 47 universities are selected from all the provinces of Pakistan and all categories including Public and Private Universities, General University, Medical University, Engineering and Technology University, Agriculture University, newly established university and Women University.

The IPE Reports consists of Affirmation, Commendations and Recommendations. Universities have shared IPE Reports with their governing bodies and published on universities' web site. On the basis of recommendations, universities prepared the compliance reports which included the action plans.

Commendations highlighted are used as a marketing tool which increases the marketability of the universities.

In order to elaborate the sustainable development of Quality Assurance at the universities through IPE Process, a case study of one university is being discussed in detail. IPE Manual was shared with the university for preparation of Institutional Performance Evaluation which included the prepared of University Portfolio Report. IPE conducted on the basis of IPE Process defined above and the following report was shared with the university.

INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

The Evaluation of the Institute was conducted on December 11 - 12, 2013 on the basis of eight IPE Standards. Prior to the Panel visit, the Institute provided the University Portfolio Report (UPR) which was prepared based on the guidelines provided by HEC. This also included a series of answers to the questions related to each of the standards. During the visit to the Institute, the Evaluation Panel saw the infrastructural facilities, acquainted itself with the institutional resources and held discussions with the faculty members, administrative officials and students. The well prepared UPR facilitated the job of the Evaluation Panel to the great extent.

Efforts put in the preparation of the UPR and cooperation extended by all administrative and academic officials are gratefully acknowledged. Vice Chancellor's extended meeting with the Panel and elaborate discussion on the matters relating to uplift the functioning of the Institute and enhancing the quality of teaching and research was appreciable.

Affirmations

- The Institute was established in 1985. Initially it imparted training to managers, supervisors and operators in the industry.
- In 1994 the undergraduate program of Chemical Engineering was launched. In 2001 two more programmes were added: Electronic Engineering and Computer System Engineering. The Institute got its Federal Charter with degree awarding status in 2012.
- The institute has expanded in the course of time and the number of students is currently 1,400. Around 1,200 alumni are employed in the industry, nationally and internationally. The institute is progressing at a good pace.
- The Federal Charter of the institute was adopted on 8th May, 2012. The Senate has not been constituted so far, even after a lapse of 14 months. It is recommended that this regulatory body should be established. Its two meetings are mandatory every year and all sanctions/expenditures/approvals are to be given by the Senate.

- Academic Council has not yet been formed.
- Statutes, Rules & Regulations have not been framed, in line with the directives of the Federal Charter.
- The senior faculty is critically deficient in the institute. There is only one professor against the required 4, only 2 Associate Professors against the required of 4 (only Electrical, Chemical, Computer and Environmental Departments have been considered for working).
- Overall student/teacher ratio is much higher i.e. > 20. (Electrical Engineering-26, Chemical Engineering-29.5, Computer Engineering-34, Environmental Science-25).
- Out of 5 available PhDs, only one is an approved supervisor. The remaining need to register themselves with the HEC to achieve the approved status. Their registration/approval with HEC will help in improving the ranking of the institute in the future.
- M.Sc./PhD opportunities for senior faculty staff should be enhanced using institutional resources.
- In Electrical Engineering Department, the feedback on teaching performance given by the bright students only. This is not recommended at all for obvious reasons. All the students should be treated equally.
- Working instructions on machines at the laboratories should be displayed.
- There should be a regular review of courses every 2-3 years carried out by the Board of Studies, the Board of Faculties and the Academic Council.
- Subscription to IEEE journals and other journals related to other fields should be made in order to make them more accessible to students.
- Teaching staff and students do not have an access to a digital library.

Commendations

- The Institute has an elegant, compact & decent campus with a potential for expansion capacity to accommodate 10,000 plus students in the future.
- Efficient pick & drop service available for students. The teaching staff use the same facilities.
- Coal Research Center and Pilot Plant located at the Chemical Engineering Department premises are rarely available to other counter parts of the institutes in the country.
- The salary payment mechanism is good.

Recommendations

- It is recommended to establish the Senate, which would have 2 mandatory meetings every year and all sanctions/expenditures/approvals are to be carried out by this regulatory body.
- In an academic institution, the Academic Council has to meet quarterly to grant all kind of academic approvals.
- The institute must develop its Statutes, Rules & Regulations in line with the directives of the Federal Charter.
- Statutory Bodies and other committees like Planning and Development Committees, Plagiarism Committee should be established.
- The institute must encourage its faculty to become HEC approved Supervisor. Their registration/approval with HEC will help in improving the ranking of the institute in the future.
- The training of newly enrolled faculty before letting them into the classes is desirable. The training sessions are conducted by HEC through its Learning Innovation Division. Training sessions should be agreed upon with HEC.
- Internet bandwidth is recommended to be increased up to 20 MB. All the students/faculty members should be offered Wi-Fi access. Its full utilization and the use of personal laptops by the students/faculty members will increase the ranking of the institute.
- QEC Office should be established. For further information and guidance, QAA-HEC may be contacted.
- HEC collects the feedback. This enables the institute to learn the opinion of students, alumni and employers in order to improve the courses syllabi and other academic aspects.

- The access to a Digital Library should be offered. This will be possible after the increase in the bandwidth and increase in a number of dedicated computer terminals for faculty and students.
- Computer terminals at the library should be increased. A library should be made more attractive for students in order to increase visitation.
- No scholarship either need based or merit based may be increased.
- HEC ranking parameters regarding the university ranking should be given wider publicity and pursued by everyone in order to promote the ranking position of the institute.
- With the opening of the four new departments the institute's mission statement would be re-considered.

The present Compliance Report was prepared and submitted within the six months the following actions taken:

COMPLIANCE REPORT

(Dated: 06-01-2015)

1. Mission Statement & Goals

The mission statement of the Institute was posted on the website of the Institute and it was arranged to mention it at conference Halls and the Committee Room of the Institute as well.

A committee comprising all the stakeholders of the Institute was constituted with a task to review the mission statement if it was necessary. Since the opening of the new departments of management and applied sciences, new directions were added to the future vision of the Institute vis-à-vis already existing engineering education set up at the Institute.

2. Planning & Evaluation

Development projects following the Master Plan of the Institute have already been designed and the development work at the Institute is being carried out as per the budgetary amount allocated for the development projects in a yearly budget of the Institute.

3. Organization & Governance

The Senate establishment is in progress. A number of nominations from the quarter concerned have already been received. The 1st meeting of the Senate was carried out in summer 2015.

The meetings of the syndicate are being convened quarterly since the award of charter to the Institute became valid.

The formation of the academic council is in progress.

The first draft of the Statutes, rules & regulations has already been prepared. Currently it is under review of the administrative staff of the Institute in consultation with the experts.

The Statutes is approved by the Senate

4. Faculty

Since the grant of Charter to the Institute in 2012, there was a ban on hiring of new faculty members imposed by the Federal Government until October 2014. This created the shortage of faculty at every department of the Institute. Now the ban has been lifted, the Institute is going to advertise new positions of academic staff. There is a hope that the shortage of faculty at the Institute will be made up when the process of recruitment is finalized.

The training sessions for the faculty and the staff of the Institute are conducted on a regular basis. Currently, there are two training sessions entitled Good Governance and Quality Assurance on Campus Training (IoT) Program of HEC conducted at the institute.

Another training session on finance and audit was conducted in February 2015.

As for the training of newly employed faculty, a centralized training system in consultation with the concerned HoDs has been formulated and will start functioning soon with the hiring of new faculty at the Institute.

At present more than 90% of faculty members have over 18 years experience. The institute is also encouraging and extending all its support to the faculty members who want to pursue their Ph.D studies under local or foreign studies programs.

5. Students

In order to provide proper student guidance, all the rules and regulations are communicated in the prospectus of the Institute published yearly. However, the preparation of a separate hand book is underway.

Orientation of newly enrolled scholars is already in practice.

The number of scholarships for students has been increased in accordance with the addition of new departments and increase in enrolments at the Institute.

6. Institutional Resources

HEC has facilitated the Institute with the access to PERN (Pakistan Education Research Network). All the students and faculty have access to digital library and Wi-Fi facilities all over the campus. A new library, in addition to other two libraries at the Institute, has been made functional so as to facilitate easy access of students to the library.

With the provision of PERN, internet bandwidth has been increased to 16 MB.

7. Academic Programs and Curricula

All the courses included in the curriculum are reviewed by the Board of Studies (BoS) on a regular basis every 4 years.

8. Assessment & Quality Assurance

A Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) has been established at the Institute. A training session on quality assurance under Indigenous on Campus Training Program of HEC has already been conducted for the staff of the Institute.

During the follow-up visit to the university, a remarkable improvement has been witnessed, which is the evidence of the sustainable development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions through the Institutional Performance Evaluation Process.

BUILDING UP A STUDENT-THREE-EVALUATION SYSTEM BASED ON THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE OF TEACHING QUALITY

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Abstract

Classroom teaching, course content and professional training are the main teaching components at a university. A new system has been built according to the total quality management (TQM) theory, in which students evaluate the teaching methods, the course contents and specialized course arrangement. That is so called student-three-evaluation system. Within the system, teaching evaluation focuses on an individual teacher and his/her classroom activities; course evaluation emphasizes the course contents and its teaching effects, while specialty evaluation pays attention to the professional training for students' future career development. All the evaluations provide the feedback of students' satisfaction on their education from three aspects, thus guiding the continuous quality improvements.

Key words

Total Quality Management, custom-perception quality, "student-three-evaluation system", quality of education