

# Academic Audit

Prof. S.Muthukumaran

---

## 1. Academic Audit

1.1 An academic audit is an evaluation of an educational institution. The objectives of the audit are:

\*To assess the status of the effectiveness of the teaching learning process in the institution.

\*To assess the reliability of the internal mechanisms to enhance the teaching learning process

1.2 A good educational institution will continuously strive to achieve better results because education by itself is a process to improve oneself. The need for the audit therefore arises out of a desire of the teaching community to strive to assess its present potential and achievements so that it can plan its future course of action.

## 2. Experiences of Other Countries

2.1 Academic Audit was introduced in England in the 1980s, when the Government became concerned about the quality of teaching in the universities as a result of the rapid expansion in the higher education sector. A committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals was constituted as 'Academic Standards Group' which recommended the creation of 'Academic Audit Unit' to provide external and independent assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness mechanisms and structures for monitoring, maintaining and improving the quality of education.

2.2 In Sweden a 'National Agency for Higher Education' was created with a number of responsibilities including academic auditing of the performance of the Universities.

2.3 In New Zealand an Act was passed in 1990 for establishing a VC's Committee. This Committee established an Academic Audit Unit to audit the academic quality of the universities.

2.4 In Europe the Association of European Universities initiated 'Institutional Evaluation' in 1993.

2.5 In the USA, during the 1980s the increasing concern about the quality of teaching learning in the undergraduate programmes and realization of the need for accountability in education led to legislation fostering assessment movement in many States. Since then, many States in USA have sought more rigorous forms of accountability of the quality of teaching learning in the Universities. Many States have framed State policies which tie up performance and state funding of Universities.

2.6. In the last 20 or 30 years, there is a general trend throughout the world to demand independent review of academic performance of the Universities and to relate State funding to the performance.

### **3. Approaches to Quality Assurance**

3.1 The different types of academic review may be broadly grouped under the following heads:

- \* Assessment and Accreditation
- \* Programme Review
- \* Review of the work of the individual Teacher

Whereas the first one reviews the work of the institution or department as a whole, the second is in respect of a particular programme and the last is aimed at performance of individuals. All these may be in the form of self assessment and may be followed by an external review. In the case of the review of the class work of teachers, student's feedback is also collected and used as a review by the beneficiaries.

### **4. Existing Arrangements**

4.1 Presently there are the following types of University level institutions in this State:

- \*Universities established by the State Legislature
- \* Institutions declared as Universities under the UGC Act
- \*Institutions established by the Government of India as Central Universities or as Institutions of National Importance.

4.2 The work of the Universities established by the State are audited by the Local Fund Auditors and the Accountant General. These are generally restricted to the utilization of the funds released by the Government. The UGC also reviews the work once in five years while deciding on the release of plan grants. This is restricted to the utilization of the plan grants apart from a cursory review of the progress made by each department in research etc. All the funding agencies make scheme wise review in respect of the schemes for which they have released grants. More recently the UGC has constituted an assessment body known as NAAC to assess and accredit the Universities. AICTE has also constituted an assessment body known as NBA to perform a similar work in respect of the Courses under its purview. These are in the nature of reviewing the academic performance of the departments

4.3 In respect of the second category of Universities, the inspections are similar except for the fact there is no audit by the LF as the State Government does not provide grants to these institutions.

4.4 In respect of the Central Institutions, in addition to the foregoing, there is generally a provision to place the annual report and audit report in the Parliament.

4.5 The performance of the individual teachers is reviewed by some of the institutions through what is known in the Government, as a confidential report.

## **5. Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)**

5.1 NAAC has proposed recently that every accredited institution must establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell a post accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality assurance is not a one time affair but is a continuous process, the IQAC will naturally become a part of the institution which ensures quality enhancement and sustenance.

5.2 According to the NAAC the purposes of the IQAC are:

- \* To ensure continuous improvement in the entire operations of the institution
- \* To assure stakeholders connected with higher education of the accountability of the institution for its own quality and probity.

5.3. The proposal of NAAC includes assessment of the academic aspects of the working of the institution as well as that of the individual teacher.

5.4 The suggestions in this paper also is in two parts - evaluation of the institution as a whole and that of the individual teacher. These assessments are to be made internally every semester / year periodically, say every five years the assessments are to be made externally.

## **6. Self Evaluation of the Institution:**

### **6.1 Need for Self-Evaluation**

Evaluation of working of an institution can be effected either by an external agency or by itself. For instance, Government of India appoints Review Committees at periodic intervals to review the working of autonomous institutions set up by it. The autonomous institutes prepare annual reports on their own and send them to the Government for placing them on the table of both the Houses of Parliament. The former is an external evaluation and the latter is an internal evaluation meant for compliance of statutory requirements.

Any external evaluation or internal evaluation meant for public scrutiny can at best provide only an overall evaluation of the working of the institution, an assessment of the extent of satisfaction of its broad objectives and the general direction in which the institute must grow. They are not likely to provide a detailed evaluation. Such evaluation is possible only when it is done internally. Further, as already pointed out an institute is responsible for its proper functioning and growth; as such, an institution must provide checks within itself with a view to improve its working, its efficiency, its effectiveness and its usefulness. It should also plan for its future. These can be achieved only by a systematic self-evaluation.

## **6.2 Objectives of Self-Evaluation:**

The main objective of self-evaluation is to evaluate the extent to which the aims and objectives of the institute are fulfilled and to arrive at relevant decisions for future development plans of the institute. It is but natural that the institute would be interested in evaluating the extent of fulfillment of both long-term and short-term objectives. While the long-term objectives would be stated in broad terms (as such broad aims are likely to remain without substantial alterations over long periods), the short-term objectives would be in the form of operational objectives. These detailed or operational objectives are derived from time to time and are likely to remain true or relevant for the time being or for the immediate future or occasionally for longer periods.

The objectives of an institution may be broadly classified into (i) Organisational and (2) Academic. These are overlapping areas between these broad classifications. However, it is convenient to group the objectives under these two heads. In general, the broad objectives of an institution may be illustrated as follows:

### **Organizational objectives:**

- Generate and utilize resources to meet the academic aspirations.
- Manage the affairs of the institute to fulfill the academic objectives.
- Manage hostels for students.
- Develop staff for efficient discharge of their duties.
- Co-operate with industry/community.
- Disseminate information about the institute to the public at large and the future employers in particular.
- Review the objectives continuously and periodically.

### **Academic objectives:**

- Provide admissions to deserving candidates commensurate with national policies.
- Educate and train the students admitted in the relevant field of knowledge.

- Design, develop and implement appropriate curriculum.
- Conduct research in the relevant areas of knowledge.
- Award fellowships, scholarships, prizes and medals.
- Award degrees and distinctions.
- Develop and utilize innovations.
- Collaborate with other institutions with similar objectives.
- Participate in curriculum development and other academic matters at National / State levels.

An example of detailed objectives is as follows:

Design, develop and implement appropriate curriculum (Academic Objective 3)

- Prepare question bank for the subjects of the first year.
- Prepare lesson plans for the following subjects:

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

The foregoing is only an illustration and may not be taken to be a complete list of all objectives.

Once the objectives have been identified, the objectives of Self-evaluation can be spelt out. In order to perform this evaluation, data will have to be collected, based on the identified aspects which require measuring and/or recording. For each item of information to be collected, the source, the method and the person responsible for collection, will have to be identified.

### **6.3 Development of Instruments:**

Collection of information may be done in several ways such as perusal of records, direct observation, getting answers to questionnaires, check-lists, personal interview, discussion, etc., The method of collection would depend upon the nature of information, local conditions, etc. Each institution will have to develop suitable instruments for

collection of data; the nature of instruments adopted in each institution may vary for different items of collection of information.

## **7. Performance Appraisal of the Teachers**

7.1 Some form of performance appraisal of the teachers is necessary as even good things if left without review or check may deteriorate and degenerate in course of time.

.Thiruvalluvar says:

The king with none to censures him, bereft of safeguards

Though none his ruin work, shall purely ruined fall

(Thirukkural, 448, Translation by Rev. G.U. Pope)

Anyone whatever may be the exalted position that he may hold, should still have someone to review his performance.

7.2 The National Policy on Education, 1986 envisages the development of a system of appraisal of performance of teachers which is open, participatory and data based. Many Education Commissions and educationists have emphasized the need for developing a satisfactory system of evaluation of teachers, which will help their career development and also provide a feedback for self improvement.

7.3 The University Grants Commission had circulated the recommendations of a Task Force constituted by it for 'Developing a system of evaluation of the Performance of Teachers'. The form of appraisal report in that recommendation consists of self appraisal and verification of factual data by an authorized person.

7.4 The appraisal suggested by the author may have three parts i.e. self appraisal, remarks of the head of the department and potential assessment by the head of the department. It must have the following components:

- \* What was planned or what was expected?
- \* What was achieved?
- \* Reasons for the difference between what was achieved and what was planned?
- \* What are the deficiencies and how can they be rectified in future? What further education or training may be necessary?
- What are the areas in which the person has made some special contributions?

What are the potential areas in which the person can contribute? How can the talents be used to the maximum advantage of the institution, community or country?

\*The person must also be able to state how he kept himself engaged during the working hours of the year; i.e. he must be able to state what he was doing for all the 1760 hours (say 40 hours per week multiplied by 44 working weeks =1760hours) of the year.

These could be incorporated in the self appraisal portion of the report in which the teacher will review his plans as stated in the last report and his actual achievements; he may also furnish his plans for the next academic year or session. In the second part, the head of the department will give a report on verification of factual data and his comments on the self appraisal. This report may be shown to the teacher, who will sign the same as a token of his having seen the report. The third part will be confidential and will give a potential assessment by head of the department. If there is anything adverse in this part the same will have to be communicated to the teacher.

## **8. CONCLUSION:**

8.1. It is expected that apart from presentation of Annual Reports, preparation of evaluation reports in the form of Academic Audit may provide the management with a clear picture of – what is it that was planned, what was the achievement, what are the deficiencies and strong points, what is the direction in which the institute is progressing, what are the corrective measures to be taken, what will be the future requirements of resources for the institute; in short, a clear, comprehensive and detailed picture of the state of performance and development of the institute, so that the institution can be governed effectively and efficiently.

8.2 The performance appraisal system suggested in Para 7 will be useful both to the teacher for his self development and for the institution to identify good work deserving recognition and bad work requiring improvement. Good work may be recognized and



suitably rewarded. Bad work may be pointed out to the concerned teacher who may be required to improve within a specified reasonable time.