

CESS Feedback on UGC "Guidelines for Transforming Higher Education Institutions into Multidisciplinary Institutions"

1. Converting single stream institutions into multidisciplinary HEIs does not look like an objective of Multidisciplinary HEI or the title need to be changed.
2. The term Online and ODL mode of education needs clarification. The known full form of ODL is 'Open and Distance Learning.' The later part of the guidelines mentions as Online Distance Learning. Clarification is required on the usage of the term.
3. With regard to Statutory or Regulatory bodies, such as: All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Medical Council of India (MCI), Dental Council of India (DCI), National Council for Teachers Education (NCTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), and Indian Nursing Council (INC),etc. The NEP has clearly stated that all these councils (except Indian Medical Council and Bar Council of India) will become Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs) and become members of UGC's General Education Council (GEC). So they will not dictate the terms as suggested here but suggest standards in the GEC.
4. Does every universality or Autonomous college require "studios"? What are virtual cloakrooms? Propagating use of "Smart Boards" must be stopped. Further NEP is trying to remove the dichotomy of "Theory and Practical" by recommending the curriculum which is oriented towards real life issues and challenges.
5. Referring to prevailing rigid disciplinary boundaries and lack of collaboration between institutions single-stream institutions, the guideline mentions
6. Calling on the need for collaboration and cooperation among single-stream institutions in offering multidisciplinary education, the guideline refers to single-stream institutions in subjects such as Education, Engineering, Management, and Law. The guideline has limited to only these 4 single-stream institution. All professional colleges like medical, nursing, architectural Fashion design, Pharmacy, agriculture all professional colleges are single stream institutions. Therefore, it must bring in all these institutions as well.
7. The concept of dual-major degree must be clearly defined and criteria proposed for B.Ed must be relooked. There is a danger of continuation of status quo with regard to

B.Ed. If B. Ed. college takes help from nearby multidisciplinary HEI offering BA programme, it may not think of being an interdisciplinary HEI. The term "integrated" also implies all 4 years Education component is taught and not only in the last year. This kind of collaboration should not be suggested. In integrated B.Ed. programme run by the Regional Institutes of Education of NCERTs, many professors teaching science and Arts courses do have B.Ed. M.Ed. Degrees. Professional programmes like BA B.Ed. should not be offered like this. This is devoid of the spirit of the NEP 2020.

8. The colleges and universities must get the Concerned Professional Council(s) to start the degree programmes under the Approval process is missing the word 'permission'. The sentence must be rephrased as...'colleges and universities must get the permission of Concerned Professional Council(s) to start the degree programmes'.
9. With regard to awarding degree in case of collaboration between two colleges, there could be a third alternative that the affiliating colleges of two different universities are offering the dual degree program then the two affiliating universities will award the degrees.
10. The composition of the Board of Directors of the cluster of the government colleges may be reconsidered. The Director of HE is a very busy person and can hardly attend meetings of so many clusters. It is difficult for him/her to even attend meetings of statutory bodies of the state universities and he/she nominates someone. That person many a times does not know what happened in the last meeting as there is no consistency in nominating. It is advisable not to have DHE as a member of Cluster Colleges. Secondly, the VCs will have no time for these meetings. It is advisable to have a Senior Professor or a Director of the Institute under the University. The third point to reconsider is to make all the principals of the cluster colleges as the Directors. The same reconsideration is applicable to the Board of Governors of the Cluster of the Private Colleges.
11. On the composition of the Finance Committee, in the proposed structure, the chairman of the Academic Council is the Chairman of the Finance Committee. It would be appropriate to have a person knowledgeable in Finance to be the Chairman of the Finance Committee.
12. The guideline states that the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) may take the suggestions of UGC and the concerned Statutory Councils to revise and review the

curricula. However, as per the NEP, the statutory councils will not have a big role in suggesting or developing curriculum. They should give the standards and not the curriculum. They take a role of PSSB (Professional Standard Setting Bodies). The proposal may hold good only for the time being till the GEC is constituted as the 4th vertical of HECI.

13. There could be challenges in merging two institutions. Every college has a name and most of the time the donors give substantial donation for naming the institution in their name.
14. More clarity is needed on establishing education departments. What is "Departments in education"? Most of the universities do have "Department of education" on university campus which generally offers M. Ed. and Ph. D. programmes. Now the Department of Education shall start offering Integrated 4 year BA B.Ed. and/or B. Sc. BEd Programme. Generally, universities do not have Bachelor degree colleges on campus. Most of the departments offer Masters and Ph.D programmes. SO this will be a new addition to all universities to establish a college on university campus. This may require change in the University Act in most cases.
15. The draft guideline mentions of the State university or Central University, or deemed-to be university, or private university in the paragraph on Constituent Colleges in the Universities. This may be reconsidered as the NEP recommends to do away with such terminology (deemed to be university),, and address HEI either as University or a college.
16. The idea of multidisciplinary & holistic education along with ending of affiliation system and multiples entry & exit is very transformative idea which can make higher education leap frog into a next level. The draft misses the revolutionary potential of the proposed changes and gets caught in mere logistic/administrative straight-jacket. This is not to undervalue the administrative dimensions but the focus has been exclusively on the logistic/administrative aspect.
17. The draft leaves out holistic and focus on multidisciplinary without realising the fact that proposed changes go beyond the 'disciplines' and includes co-curricular and extracurricular, vocational aspect of education. The objective was to educate the 'whole' person and in this sense it is holistic.

18. There is a need to define the meaning of concept of Multidisciplinary and need for Multidisciplinarity to respond to the complex problem solving expected by life and professions in fast changing world. Higher education system as it exists is very disciplinary focused- institutional structures, appointments, career progression and certification/credentialization are all driven by disciplinary boundaries. Hence there is need to define and demonstrate the relevance of Multidisciplinarity and holistic approach to education. The draft missed the opportunity to explicate this and build a larger acceptability to the idea.
19. The draft looks at “clustering of the institutions” as the most important aspect of transforming the institutions into multidisciplinary institutions. The spirit of the policy clearly spells out that each institution should become multidisciplinary institution while “clustering” is an option suggested in case institutions cannot become multidisciplinary due to lack of resources of geographical disadvantage.
20. As the draft gets ‘caught up’ in the administrative part misses the essential conceptual dimension. The draft seems to be stuck in the ‘affiliated college mind-set’ as the committee meant for forming collaboration for a cluster still has ‘vice-chancellor’ of an affiliating university as a director of the committee.
21. There is a need for a position paper on the meaning and relevance of multidisciplinary holistic education encompassing not just academic disciplines but extra-curricular , co-curricular and vocational dimensions of higher education
22. The UGC Draft Guidelines for Transforming HEIs into Multi-Disciplinary Institutions states as follows on Page 15: A holistic education to help develop well rounded individuals is possible by exposing students to multiple disciplines. Only a multidisciplinary institution with no disciplinary boundaries, enabling free flow of ideas, can aspire for and ensure holistic education.
23. While there is no disagreement with the first statement quoted above, there appears to be a fundamental flaw with the second statement, because multi-disciplinary institutions do have disciplinary boundaries. Different disciplines are taught here by experts in various disciplines. Multi-disciplinary institutions are rarely able to transcend or rise above disciplinary specializations.

24. Whereas ‘Multi-Disciplinary Education’, by definition, is a desirable concept, there are several issues that need to be discussed before attempting to introduce it into the existing system of Higher Education in India.
25. The first is the ideologically sanguine assumption that ‘Multi-Disciplinary Education’ is, by definition, a ‘good thing’. The fact that this is so widely assumed to be the case is linked, in part, to the considerable conceptual confusion surrounding the use of terms. Terminological uncertainties create methodological problems. The salient differences between ‘inter’, ‘trans’ and ‘multi-disciplinary’ educational initiatives require deep examination.
26. One also needs to understand that the academic reward structure for hiring, promotion, salary, grants and prizes provides powerful incentives to specialize narrowly, and offers few opportunities to integrate knowledge from other fields of study.
27. Also, the jargon and shorthand in which members of disciplines often speak and write, and the profound difference in cultures across disciplines, make cross-disciplinary forays arduous. While Faculty say they see the value in multi-disciplinary scholarship, organizational, economic, and cultural barriers keep most from pursuing cross-disciplinary work.
28. Most Faculty also discourage cross-disciplinarity in graduate education, ensuring that the next generation of scholars will also find it difficult to break out of disciplinary confines.
29. Given the above reality, the need of the hour is not the creation of Multi-disciplinary Research Intensive Universities, but Inter-disciplinary Research Universities. The distinction between the two terms, ‘Multi-disciplinarity’ and ‘Inter-disciplinarity’ needs to be carefully understood.
30. Multi-disciplinarity Research is associated with the following features: It implies working with several disciplines. Members from different disciplines work on different aspects of a project, in a parallel or sequential manner, and later add up the research. Individual goals from different professions are applied to the given problem. Participants maintain own disciplinary roles while working together. Disciplinary boundaries remain unchanged. While there is external coherence, research projects are motivated by a desire to focus on client’s needs. Researchers work individually on the

specific issue addressed by their respective disciplines, and the results are added up in the final report. Methodologies are discipline-specific. There is not much scope for epistemological innovation involving creation of new knowledge or even new disciplines. And the final outcome of a research project is the sum of the individual parts.

31. Contrast this with Inter-Disciplinary Research. Here, the project involves two or more disciplines. Members from different disciplines work jointly on the same project, and produce integrated outcomes. Goals are shared among the members. Researchers accept common roles, in the true spirit of inter-disciplinarity. There is a blurring of disciplinary boundaries. In a research project, there is external as well as internal coherence, motivated by a desire to focus on different dimensions of the issue at hand, and the overall objective of the project. Participants work together and share ideas through mechanisms like meetings and workshops, and give a concrete shape to ideas and outcomes. The report includes the analysis in an integrated form. Common methodologies are framed out of integration of the methodologies of different disciplines. There is tremendous scope for epistemological innovation, the possibility of creation of new knowledge, even new disciplines. And the outcome of research is much more than the sum of the individual parts.
32. If the UGC is able to understand and appreciate the epistemological distinction between Multi-disciplinary and Inter-disciplinary Research, it may wish to change the nomenclature of ‘Multi-disciplinary Research Intensive Universities’ to ‘Inter-disciplinary Research Intensive Universities’. The students’ exposure to multiple disciplines at lower levels must result in their ability to come out of their respective disciplinary silos and compartments, while entering Research-Intensive Universities. Their research must transcend disciplinary limitations.

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