QUALITY A BYWORD
NAAC aims to bring greater awareness about quality in higher education through a National Quality Renaissance Initiative

GUIDING LIGHT
One of the greatest contributions of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country, is carrying the message of quality to higher education institutions for the last 19 years. Not only does the accrediting agency assess and grade the quality level of a college or university after evaluating it against specific parameters as well as peer review, it also generates a report elaborating on the strengths and weaknesses of the educational institution. Those desiring to improve their quality have a ready reckoner.

With 38,000 higher education institutions in the country, the NAAC team faces a Herculean task of rating the institutions. At the first level, higher education colleges desirous of having themselves rated have to qualify in an automated round by submitting an Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA) form.

Assessment and Accreditation is done using the seven crite-
ria (covering 32 key aspects) and frame work of NAAC, including Curricular Aspects, Teaching-Learning and Evaluation, Research, Consultancy and Extension, Infrastructure and Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression, Governance, Leadership and Management, and Innovations and Best Practices. On the completion of this exercise, the institution is assigned a grade (A, B, or C) and CGPA (1-4).

More than the rating, the accompanying detailed report and remedial recommendations help the institution being assessed understand the areas of improvement as well as how to go about it.

AWARENESS DRIVE

"We felt that there was not enough awareness about quality among many colleges," expresses Prof. AN Rai, Director-NAAC. Therefore NAAC has introduced a program that aims to bring about a renaissance in quality through National Quality Renaissance Initiative (NQRI) and sensitise people towards quality. Under this initiative, assessors will be trained by experts in quality assessment methodologies.

Since NAAC alone cannot handle the existing and growing number of higher education institutions, it has proposed that branches be created and team strengthened. In addition, Rai also welcomes the proposal for the formation of state-level assessment and accreditation agencies. "There should be healthy competition and quality should be the focus," he points out.

Some of Prof Rai's recommendations based on the assessment of educational institutions across the country include: filling the vacancies, which is an area of concern; improving the quality of teacher training; improving the quality of libraries; improving infrastructure; among others. Each of the stakeholders in the higher education system has a role to play in ensuring meeting these goals, especially the government in helping the financially backward institutions.

NAAC also shares its feedback with the regulatory organisations such as UGC and AICTE, to help them with their policy framework. By putting up the reports online for each of the assessed and rated institution, the agency has also brought in a measure of transparency. The heartening fact is that several institutions are coming forward to have themselves assessed.

If they fail in the EQA stage, they apply again the next year after effecting the necessary improvements. Those that get lower grading seek the recommendations and implement them, as evident when the grade improves during the subsequent assessment.

Parallel to seeking to strengthen the team, NAAC is also in the process of automating the entire accreditation process except peer review, which is indispensable. "We are getting ready for competition," Prof Rai says with relish. He believes that NAAC has set a benchmark that others should not only follow but improve on so that the youth of today can truly benefit, and contribute better to the progress of the country.

The NAAC accreditation facilitates:
- An institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process
- Identification of internal areas of planning and resource allocation
- Collegiality on the campus
- Funding agencies look for objective data for performance funding
- Institutions to initiate innovative and modern methods of pedagogy
- New sense of direction and identity for institutions
- The society look for reliable information on quality education offered
- Employers look for reliable information on the quality of education offered to the prospective recruits
- Intra and inter-institutional interactions
NAAC ratings to help students choose best colleges, varsities

Neha Pushkarna
neha.pushkarna@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is all set to start rating colleges in the Capital from this summer to help students make better and informed choices.

NAAC will also rate all universities in the city on the basis of the quality of education they offer.

Since the accreditation of higher education institutions became mandatory last year, NAAC has been flooded with applications from universities and colleges country-wide. This time though, many sought-after universities in the city, which so far have refrained from an external assessment, have decided to go through with the rating process.

"NAAC has already accredited seven universities and 14 colleges in Delhi. The universities which are under process are Delhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar University and School of Planning & Architecture," said Professor AN Rai, director of NAAC. The good news is that the institutes that have already gone through the process have fared quite well.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, which was assessed under the new methodology - Cumulative Grade Point Average - received an A Grade as did Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Dwarka. In fact, GGSIPU, a state university, was one of the firsts to be accredited in the city. The other A-Graders include Jamia Hamdard University besides Teri University and Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, which are both deemed universities.

NAAC describes the performance of an A-grade institute as very good. As for colleges, four of the 13 that were assessed received an A grade. All others were found to be good with a CGPA between 2.01 and 3. NAAC assesses these institutions at two main levels after receiving a letter of intent - submission of self-study report by the institution and a peer team visit.
BATTING FOR QUALITY CULTURE

Director of National Assessment and Accreditation Council Amar Nath Rai feeds the need for more accreditation agencies

Bharath Joshi | Bangalore

One would say that Amar Nath Rai took over as director of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in June 2013 at a crucial phase in Indian higher education, right after accreditation was made mandatory for institutions in March 2013. For Prof Rai, however, it was just an opportunity to explore a new dimension. "I’ve been a teacher, researcher and university administrator. But I thought this would give me an opportunity to work in quality assurance; a very niche area worth exploring," he says.

As NAAC director with another two years left as vice-chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, he says, "IUC/UGC are not mandatory for a different reason. In our country, unless there is a law passed, nobody takes things seriously. As far as the accreditation process is concerned, it is mainly a voluntary exercise. If you aren’t interested in the quality of your institution, the law cannot do anything," he says.

As a national agency whose mandate also is to facilitate quality culture among higher education institutions, Prof Rai said NAAC has started the National Quality Renaissance Initiative. "This initiative will sensitise principals and vice-chancellors and convince them to embark on the process of quality improvement. Once the culture sets in, it’ll get into an auto-catalytic mode."

More agencies required

One of the perks of mandatory UGC accreditation is that institutions become eligible to receive grants. The NAAC is expected to see a surge on this front. But with only 179 out of 651 universities graded, can NAAC do it alone? "Well, no. We’ll take a very long time. We need more agencies, but it requires government policy to regulate them so that agencies don’t start selling accreditation certificates," he says.

Informing us that Parliament is looking at a proposal to allow National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Education to permit private agencies to take up accreditation independently, he says if it comes through, NAAC’s burden will be lessened. "Even the UGC has set up a committee to draft guidelines for recognition and functioning of multiple accreditation agencies," he adds.

Unchitur Shiksha Abhiyan too provides for multiple agencies. "These private accreditation agencies that do not have their own assessment manuals could use NAAC’s seasoned and tested methods, he suggests.

Private institutions are more conscious about the quality they offer, he observes. “This is a good thing. At least someone is showing interest.” Government institutes are cocooned in their own comfy chairs and vice-chancellors are not very bothered. Even if it is for profit that a private institution

had talked about him and we read his book while doing my master’s, I did exceptionally well in PhD, which I finished in less than three years. I was offered a post doc position there and stayed for six years,” he reminisces.

Science was serious

“Science was serious. In my time, science was a very serious business. People thought being a scientist was extraordinary; that you’d make discoveries. Engineering was pretty for jobs. I joined the Public Works Department,” he says. However, Prof Rai laments the decreasing seriousness among researchers. “The seriousness with which people pursue research seems to have come down. We never worked in a fixed 9 am to 5 pm schedule and no one forced us to work. That culture is disappearing.”

On the question of funding for science, Prof Rai says it is critical to ensure that available funds are targeted better. “Our project review system needs to be strengthened. We always try to accommodate more, so we give less. This is not right,” he opines.

“Getting to Know Amar Nath Rai”

Amar Nath Rai was appointed NAAC director after having served Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and North-Eastern Hill University as VC. Born on November 1, 1956, at Farasa (Garhawal), Uttar Pradesh, he did his MSc (bacteriology) from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, and PhD as well as postdoc from University of Dundee. He also served as Member of Central Advisory Board on Education and Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet.

“Dundee serendipity”

After completing postgraduation in biology with a gold medal from Banaras Hindu University in June 1979, Prof Rai went to University of Dundee, Scotland, for his PhD with a national scholarship. His work dealt with plant-microbe interactions.

“The story of how I applied for the scholarship is interesting. One day, I was unwell and stayed back in my hostel room. I was reading a novel borrowed from a friend. The form for this national scholarship was in this book. I asked him if he’d fill it up and he said he didn’t have the required first class mark. So, it just happened to come my way,” Prof Rai laughs.

Dundie was an easy choice for him compared to the other options of Michigan and Liverpool. “I wanted to work with Sir William Stewart, one of the young fellows of Royal Society, where the world’s most eminent scientists come together. All my teachers...”
Code of Conduct for Higher Edn Institutions

Express News Service

Bangalore: Education institutions which provide false information about their accreditation, infrastructure and fee structure will be penalised by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

The NAAC is formulating a code of conduct to prevent institutions from misleading the public. “We have developed ten different codes of conduct. But NAAC has no authority over institutions. So, we are forwarding the same to the University Grants Commission (UGC),” said A N Rai, Director, NAAC. He said the instructions aim at controlling bogus institutions.

A source in the NAAC said some institutions manipulate their accreditation. “Though institutions have B or C grade, they claim to have an A or A+ rating. There are some which have not renewed accreditation and still continue with the old status,” the source added. Accreditations will be withdrawn if institutions are found violating the code, a source in the NAAC said. Criminal cases will be filed against erring institutes apart from penalties, he warned.

NAAC is a national body which assesses and accredits higher education institutions across the country. As per a UGC direction, it is mandatory for all institutions to have an accreditation. The accreditation should be renewed every five years.
Only 9 Varsities Have Valid NAAC Certification

NAAC assesses institutions on seven criteria - curricular aspects, teaching-learning and evaluation, research, infrastructure and learning resources, student support, governance and innovation.

Cumulative grade scores are awarded on a four-point scale and corresponding grades (A, B, C or D) are issued to denote the quality of an institution, which is valid for five years.

BU, whose Grade A certificate lapsed last September, is yet to apply for the second round of accreditation. “We are still working on it. We have to fill up posts to improve our scores. At least 225 teaching posts are vacant and the government should permit us to fill them up. We also have to complete pending civil works. But we have to meet the deadline,” said Vice-Chancellor B Thimme Gowda.

Under the UGC (Mandatory Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2012, deemed universities which fail to get accredited may also lose the ‘deemed’ tag. The state is home to six of the 44 deemed universities that were recommended for de-notification by the P N Tandon Committee for irregularities.

While the SC has ordered status quo and asked UGC to take a relook, NAAC has decided not to entertain accreditation requests from the six. “Our executive council has decided not to process such applications till their position is cleared by UGC,” Prof Rai said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTIONS WITH VALID ACCREDITATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulbarga University (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS University (Deemed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannada University, Hampi (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLE Academy of Higher Education and Research, Belgaum (Deemed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuvempu University, Shimoga (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Mysore (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NITTE University, Mangalore (Deemed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVYASA University (Deemed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumkur University (State)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - NAAC (as of February 21, 2014)
NAAC Sees 3-fold Surge in Accreditation Requests

Express News Service

Bangalore: A year after the University Grants Commission (UGC) made it mandatory for all higher education institutions to get accreditation, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has seen a nearly three-fold increase in the number of applications from such institutions compared to previous years.

Speaking to Express,

The UGC made it mandatory for all higher education institutions to get NAAC accreditation.

Prof A N Rai, director of NAAC said, "Between January 19 and December 19, 2013, a total of 2,978 institutions from across India have approached us for accreditation. It is really a big increase," he declared.

In early 2013, the UGC made it mandatory for all higher education institutions to get NAAC accreditation.

"NAAC accreditation and the subsequent grades given will be considered while releasing grants," said a senior official from the State Higher Education Department. Before the UGC made accreditation mandatory, the NAAC used to, on average, assess about 800 institutions in a year.

"We can see the jump in number of institutions approaching after January 2013. Up to December 2012, the number was between 50 and 200," Prof Rai added.
UGC Recognition of Six Universities Hang in Balance

by Neelima Jacob, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, CUET

Though they have applied for it, any delay in further proceedings could prove to be risky as the accreditation process is time consuming. With only nine months left for UGC to take action against those without accreditation and NAAC being the only body to accredit such universities in the entire country, the delay could cost them dear.

"The process could take anytime between four and twelve months. Though it is easier for universities to get it done than colleges, they cannot take it for granted. Unless the accrediting body is convinced that the universities have complied with UGC regulations, it will not approve their application," said a NAAC official.

Meanwhile, Central University, Kannur University and Kerala Kalamandalam, which too are up for accreditation, are not on the list of applicants. However, in a last move, Kannur University forwarded its application three weeks ago. "The University submitted a LOI only three weeks ago. We are awaiting their response following which we would go ahead with the procedures," said K Balachandran, Registrar, Kannur University.

The authorities of two other universities said that they need more time to apply for the accreditation as they need to fulfill the pre-requisites specified by UGC.

Of the two, Kerala Kalamandalam faces yet another roadblock. "To be eligible for a NAAC accreditation, the UGC specifies that we should have postings as per its regulations. We follow a Gurukula system of education and the faculties' qualification is not like that of other universities," said P Suresh, VC, Kerala Kalamandalam.