

Government of Andhra Pradesh
Commissionerate of Collegiate Education

Developing Centres of Excellence

Concept Note

Introduction

Universities and colleges offer higher education that deals with imparting knowledge, values and skills leading to social progress and economic development. They shape students towards achieving these objectives. These primarily happen through research, sharing of wisdom, training and related activities in specialised areas. While the finer outcomes are produced in universities, colleges that offer Under Graduate and Post Graduate programmes carry out the preliminary work to mould them into suitable man-power. These graduates have a choice either to make a research career in universities or a professional career. In either case, it is desired that these graduates shall have suitable knowledge, skills, expertise, training and attitudes.

If the undergraduate colleges are not effective in producing the right students, it affects the functioning of universities, professional institutions, public spheres and social currents as well. Unfortunately, such a scenario exists now. The experts point out that most of the graduates coming out of our institutions do not possess the required knowledge, skills and drive either for taking up innovative work or for securing employment or for starting their own enterprises. In the present affiliation system, where uniformity and redundancy tends to prevail, undergraduate colleges are unable to train their students in diverse areas. This is one of the reasons for the inability of most of our universities and institutions to find place in the list of world class institutions. For this reason, the University Grants Commission and other funding agencies have been, as a policy, promoting research and other professional activities in undergraduate colleges and earmarking substantial funds for this purpose.

There is, therefore, a great need for strengthening the colleges offering undergraduate courses for exposing students to such spheres as frontline research, professional activities, extension work and advanced skills in various areas of specialisation in science, technology, arts and humanities. Since it is not possible to bring the desirable changes in all institutions at a time, a step by step approach is required. One of the first steps envisaged in this direction is starting of a few '**Centres of Excellence**' in select colleges across the state based on the resources of the institution.

The Proposed 'Centres of Excellence'

There are 146 Government and 126 Aided Degree Colleges in the state of Andhra Pradesh under the administrative control of the Commissionerate of Collegiate Education. Of them, to start with 54 colleges have been identified for developing them into '**Centres of Excellence**'. The colleges are identified based on parameters like student strength, infrastructure facilities, faculty and their research experience, results obtained in the respective stream for the last three years and best practices followed.

The details of the objectives, what is expected of the college, the support to be provided and the expected outcomes are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The objectives and functions are two-fold.

- **The first set** pertains to the contributions at the institutional level for its direct contributions in research, professional service etc.
- **The second set** deals with the additional training to the students in order to prepare them for better careers in research, leadership and societal progress

Objectives:

- a. To make available sophisticated facilities including ICT enabled facilities to the teachers and students in identified subjects or group of related subjects
- b. To conduct original research in science, arts and humanities as a forerunner of the university-level research, especially on local problems
- c. To facilitate developing new knowledge, skills and modern value systems by conducting professional academic activities like seminars, debates, workshops, consultancies, social interactions etc.
- d. To undertake systematic ways for extension work and community service
- e. To evolve means for better use of ICT and educational technology
- f. To facilitate participation of industry by establishing long term linkages and collaborations in diverse areas
- g. To expose students to frontline research and motivating them to take up research as a career
- h. To promote inculcation of qualities like creativity, scientific temper, problem solving, compassion, leadership, team spirit etc. by encouraging student participation in professional and academic activities
- i. To enhance placement opportunities with better training and internships
- j. To provide better learning opportunities to the students of the other colleges in the area through short term programmes
- k. To successfully carry out such activities that enhance quality and relevance of education in the identified areas
- l. To empower the college and students in a phased manner to become one of the best colleges in the country and to find a place in the list of top colleges in the next three to five years

What the college is expected to do

The colleges identified as 'Centres of Excellence' shall meet the following requirements.

- a. To arrange all the required facilities, equipment and other support within their reach to the departments of the 'centre' identified
- b. To provide the best and suitable teachers among the available staff to act as the core team for the 'centre'
- c. To promote all such measures that will fetch funds from the funding agencies like UGC as well as from the industry
- d. To support the academic and professional activities of the departments of the 'centre'
- e. To provide the required autonomy to the departments concerned
- f. To encourage and support students for their participation in the centre's activities
- g. To use its good offices for arranging tie ups with industry, professional institutions and other peer educational institutions.
- h. To promote use of ICT and advanced educational technology
- i. To provide all other kinds of support towards furtherance of the cause of the 'centre'

The Support from the Commissionerate/Government

I. For Government Institutions:

- a. Academic support and guidance
- b. Financial support for improving infrastructural and other facilities
- c. Support in providing staff
- d. Help in securing funds from the funding agencies
- e. Arranging support from the universities, industry and other departments

II. For Aided/Private Institutions:

- a. Academic support and guidance
- b. Help in securing support from funding agencies
- c. Arranging support from the universities, industry and other departments

The Expected Outcomes (progressively over a period of five years)

- a. Establishment of sophisticated laboratories, e-classrooms, seminar halls, reading rooms etc. with advanced equipment and ICT facilities
- b. Development and use of advanced educational technologies including ICT enabled technologies
- c. Running of the 'centres' by suitable teaching and non-teaching staff
- d. Linkages with the affiliating university in all matters concerned for obtaining maximum cooperation and guidance
- e. Carrying out major and minor research projects
- f. Research publications and running of a magazine or journal
- g. Carrying out locally relevant projects in collaboration with universities, research institutions, local industry, professional agencies and community

- h. Regular extension programmes for the benefit of local community (for various sections of local population), industry and professionals
- i. Periodical academic programmes like research seminars, workshops, training programmes, summer camps, refresher courses etc.
- j. Consultancy projects
- k. Certificate and diploma courses for skill development (for staff, students, professionals and local youth)
- l. Development of online programmes, like teaching, testing etc.
- m. Special assistance for students belonging to economically and socially marginalised sections and to rural students (by way of summer programmes etc.)
- n. In case of Autonomous Colleges, curricula and teaching learning practices in the departments concerned shall be enriched by the participation of local industry and professional agencies.
- o. Activities by '**Centres of Excellence**' are expected to be diverse and not uniform or one following the other. Some benchmarks and best practices can, however, be adopted

Action Plan (July & Aug 2014)

- a. A Working Group and a Coordinator will be nominated at the Academic Cell of the CCE office and for coordinating and assisting the efforts by the colleges individually and collectively. A databank will be maintained.
- b. The Principals and coordinators of the centres/departments will visit the colleges ranked at top by India Today Nielson survey in AP/Hyderabad
- c. Later on they also visit such colleges located outside the state
- d. The colleges to initiate identifying, earmarking and establishing of infrastructure and other facilities for the 'centre'. Identifying coordinator for the 'centre' and respective departmental 'conveners'
- e. In case of Autonomous colleges, the process shall be adopted to suit to the autonomous system
- f. The colleges shall conduct a basic awareness programme for their staff and select students on the concept and functioning of '**Centre for Excellence**'
- g. Members from Academic Cell visit the colleges and help in establishing the 'centres'. They also look for other possible colleges for developing as centres of excellence in the next batch.
- h. A workshop will be conducted at one of the Academic Staff Colleges on all aspects of 'Centres of Excellence'**
- i. A review meeting will be conducted for assessing progress and sharing of experiences among the 'Centres of Excellence'**

Visits by Principals and Faculty to the Top Colleges Ranked by the India Today and Nielsen survey

India Today and Nielsen have conducted a national survey on educational institutions in 17 cities and ranked colleges offering courses in the streams of Arts, Science and Commerce. Some of the colleges in Hyderabad were listed among the top 50 colleges in the country. In order to aid exchange of ideas, receive inputs and to share best practices, the Commissionerate of Collegiate Education has facilitated visits by the Principals and select Faculty of the colleges identified to be groomed as 'Centres of Excellence'. A total of 54 colleges have been identified to be developed as 'Centers of Excellence' of which 39 are GDCs, 14 are Pvt Aided Colleges and 1 Pvt Unaided College. A workshop was conducted for 36 Principals of Government, Pvt Aided and Unaided colleges identified under Phase-I at O/o CCE on 14th July, 2014. Another workshop was organized for Principals of 14 GDCs identified under Phase-II and 4 GDCs were identified under Phase-III.

The Principals and faculty of the colleges were requested to visit top ranking colleges in Hyderabad in the India Today Nielsen survey and were advised to take note of the following criteria during their visit to these colleges, gather structured information and submit their report, stream wise, college wise to the O/o CCE after the visit. These observations are in addition to the points mentioned in the 'concept note on 'Centres of Excellence' given above.

1. Student centric activities:

- Does the college adopt any student centric activities that promote student literacy and enhance the critical thinking skills of students?

2. Community service:

- Are students involved in Community service as a part of giving back to the society?
- What are the areas of community service covered by the college?

3. Publications:

- How many faculty have their articles published in National and International journals?
- In which areas? What is unique about them?

4. Live Projects:

- How many faculty members involved in live projects?

- Are students involved in Study Projects?

5. Outreach Programmes:

- Is the college engaged in any outreach programme?
- Has the college adopted any school or Junior College to mentor or tutor the students?

6. Autonomy:

- What kind of autonomy does the college have? Does it pertain to course curriculum/examinations?
- Does the college subscribe to Choice Based Credit System?
- What is the student strength, course wise?
- General profile of the students, their social and economical background etc
- How are the students placed after passing out?

7. Institutional Linkage:

- Does the college have any institutional linkage within the country or abroad?
- What kind of support did the college receive?
- What kind of support did the college extend?

8. Results of University Examinations:

- Is there any progress/marked improvement in the college results for the last three years?
- Progression of students and their Performance
- Are the results placed on the college website?
- Are parents updated about their ward's performance and how?
- What are the measures/methods adopted by the college to record student progress?

9. Finishing school:

- Does the college offer any Finishing School courses?
- What is their duration?
- How does it benefit the students?
- How is it different from Jawahar Knowledge Centre?

10. Participation in Government Projects/Programmes:

- Whether students/teachers took part in Government projects/programmes?
- What projects were/are they involved in?

11. IT/ICT Programmes in the College:

- ICT applications/usage in the College
- IT infrastructure in the college

12. Curriculum delivery

- Methods that they followed in delivering the curriculum
- Innovative methods adopted

13. Best Practices/ innovations

- What are the best practices in the college
- Any innovative methods that they are student centric

14. Governance

- E-Governance initiatives
- Leadership

15. Any other Extension activities

- NSS
- NCC