

Need for Autonomy and Guidelines for Autonomous Colleges by University Grant Commission

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Royal Book Publishing

Book Title	Need for Autonomy and Guidelines for Autonomous Colleges by University Grant Commission
Book Size	6.6 * 9.8 Inch
Publisher	 <p>Royal Book Publishing 21/11, K M Nagar, Ayodhiyapatinam, Salem. Tamil Nadu-636103 Cell:+91 7598141199 Email: contact@royalbookpublishing.com Website: www.royalbookpublishing.com</p>

ISBN Assigned by Raja Ram Mohun Roy National Agency for ISBN, New Delhi – 110066 (India)

ISBN: 9789391131708

Need for Autonomy and Guidelines for Autonomous Colleges by University Grant Commission

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Abstract

Colleges with academic and operative freedom are doing better and have more credibility. The financial support to such colleges boosts the concept of autonomy. The system has now become unwieldy and it is becoming increasingly difficult for a university to attend to the varied needs of individual colleges. One of the objectives of Autonomous Colleges is to determine and prescribe its own courses of study and syllabi, and restructure and redesign the courses to suit local needs. The autonomous college is to be governed by the statutory bodies, i.e. Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies and Finance Committee. The parent university will award degrees to the students evaluated and recommended by autonomous colleges.

Keywords: University Grant Commission, Autonomous Colleges, Autonomy,

Introduction

Highlighting the importance of autonomous colleges, the UGC document on the XII Plan profile of higher education in India clearly states that: "The only safe and better way to improve the quality of undergraduate education is to the link most of the colleges from the affiliating structure. Colleges with academic and operative freedom are doing better and have more credibility. The financial support to such colleges boosts the concept of autonomy." It is proposed to increase the number of autonomous colleges to spread the culture of autonomy, and the target is to make 10 per cent of eligible colleges autonomous by the end of the XII Plan period.

Need for Autonomy

The affiliating system of colleges was originally designed when their number in a university was small. The university could then effectively oversee the working of the colleges, act as an examining body and award degrees on their behalf. The system has now become unwieldy and it is becoming increasingly difficult for a university to attend to the varied needs of individual colleges. The colleges do not have the freedom to modernize their curricula or make them locally relevant. The regulations of the university and its common system, governing all colleges alike, irrespective of their characteristic strengths, weaknesses and locations, have affected the academic development of individual colleges. Colleges that have the potential for offering programmes of a higher standard do not have the freedom to offer them. Unless such a climate prevails, it is difficult to achieve excellence in our higher education system. With students, teachers and management being co-partners in raising the quality of higher education, it is imperative that they share a major responsibility. Hence, the Education Commission recommended college autonomy, which, in essence, is the instrument for promoting academic excellence.

Objectives and Freedom to Autonomous Colleges (UGC, 2021)

1. To determine and prescribe its own courses of study and syllabi, and restructure and redesign the courses to suit local needs
2. To prescribe rules for admission in consonance with the reservation policy of the state government
3. To evolve methods of assessment of students' performance, the conduct of examinations and notification of results
4. To Use modern tools of educational technology to achieve higher standards and greater creativity
5. To promote healthy practices such as community service, extension activities, projects for the benefit of the society at large, neighbourhood programmes, etc.

Relationship with the parent university, the state government and other educational institutions:

Autonomous colleges are free to make use of the expertise of university departments and other institutions to frame their curricula, devise methods of teaching, examination and evaluation. They can recruit their teachers according to the existing procedures (for private and government colleges). The parent university will accept the methodologies of teaching, examination, evaluation and the course curriculum of its autonomous colleges. It will also help the colleges to develop their academic programmes, improve the faculty and to provide necessary guidance by participating in the deliberations of the different bodies of the colleges.

The state government will assist the autonomous colleges by:

1. Avoiding, as far as possible, transfer of teachers, especially in colleges where academic innovation and reforms are in progress, except for need-based transfers
2. Conveying its concurrence for the extension of autonomy of any college to the Commission within the stipulated time of 90 days after receipt of the review committee report, failing which it will be construed that the state government has no objection to the college continuing to be autonomous
3. Deputing nominees on time to the governing body of government colleges and other bodies wherever their nominees are to be included
4. All three stake holders, the parent University, the State Govt. and UGC have to play a very harmonious and pro active role as facilitators in letter and spirits.

Target Group and Eligibility Target Group:

All Colleges under Section 2(f), aided, unaided, partially aided and self-financing which are or are not covered under 12(B) of the UGC Act are eligible to apply for autonomous status. This includes Engineering Colleges also.

Criteria for Identification of Institutions for Grant of Autonomy (UGC, 2021)

- a. Academic reputation and previous performance in university examinations and its academic/co-curricular/extension activities in the past.
- b. Academic/extension achievements of the faculty.
- c. Quality and merit in the selection of students and teachers, subject to statutory requirements in this regard.
- d. Adequacy of infrastructure, for example, library, equipment, accommodation for academic activities, etc.
- e. Quality of institutional management. (f) Financial resources provided by the management/state government for the development of the institution.
- f. Responsiveness of administrative structure. (h) Motivation and involvement of faculty in the promotion of innovative reforms.
- g. Self – Financing colleges can also apply for autonomy after they have completed minimum 10 years of existence. However, conferment of autonomy will not entitle them to receive autonomy grant. They will have to follow the same procedure as applicable to other colleges.
- i. Unaided/aided colleges: Minimum 10 years of existence and accreditation by NAAC/NBA. Henceforth non-accredited colleges would not be eligible for autonomy and the existing colleges be asked to undertake accreditation within one year.
- ii. The NAAC accredited colleges should have a minimum of B Grade accreditation. The Commission further decided that in respect of Engineering/Technical/Management Colleges, NBA accreditation should be insisted for at least three courses while considering them for fresh/extension of autonomy tenure. However, for single faculty institutions accreditation for only one course should be insisted upon while considering them for fresh/extension of autonomy tenure.
- iii. While NAAC/NBA is compulsory, those institutions which have been evaluated by NBA should apply for NAAC accreditation within two years.

- iv. All those colleges which were earlier accredited and their accreditation status has now expired, but has applied for NBA/NAAC accreditation, should be granted fresh autonomous status /extension.
- v. The constituent colleges may be asked to undergo a separate accreditation by NAAC for the purpose of granting autonomy to it unless the NAAC report specifically mentions the names of the constituent colleges that have been covered along with the accreditation of the parent university

Preparing a College for Autonomy (UGC, 2021)

There are several areas where proper preparation is necessary if college autonomy is to be implemented successfully. These are: faculty preparation, departmental preparation, institutional preparation, and preparation of students and the local community. Such multi-pronged preparation should be completed well before autonomy is sought and conferred upon a college so that no part of the college community is found unprepared for the new responsibility which it is called upon to shoulder.

Faculty Preparation:

It is essential to get the staff of the college involved in the thinking and planning processes from the very beginning. Seminars, workshops and consultations may be organised to make the staff familiar with the concept, objectives and rationale of autonomy. (This will help them have a sense of participation in decision making and motivate them to get involved in the entire exercise). This could form part of the academic calendar of the college.

Departmental Preparation:

An important responsibility of the department is that of designing suitable courses in the major and related subjects, introducing new courses of study, renaming obsolete courses by changing their content, updating existing courses to match the current state-of-the-art in each discipline, and preparing course materials and human resources. These

will be done in the light of the general objectives of autonomy and the specific objectives of the education institutions.

Common programmes to be adopted are:

- a. Semester pattern of study
- b. Continuous internal assessment
- c. Credit/grading system
- d. Student feedback
- e. Self-appraisal by teachers

Institutional Preparation:

Since an autonomous college is called upon to perform many of the functions that the university has hitherto performed, it must study the academic, administrative/management and financial implications of such a changeover and prepare itself to discharge its new functions efficiently.

Procedure for approval by the UGC:

An Expert Committee may be constituted for all fresh cases with representation of university and State Government nominees. The existing procedure of Screening Committee may be scrapped and the Chairman shall constitute Expert Committee for on the spot inspection for consideration of each proposal”.

The Chairman, UGC may constitute a Standing Committee of 3-4 members to look into the Expert Committee reports for conferment of fresh autonomous status and extension of autonomy to colleges before the recommendations are placed before the Commission. Any inconsistencies in the reports may also be informed to the Commission.

Once the autonomy is granted by UGC with the concurrence of representatives of University and the State Govt. concerned, the University will issue a notification to the effect within a period of not more than three (3) months. Autonomy will be conferred initially for a period of six years.

Pattern of Financial Assistance

The Commission will provide assistance under this scheme to autonomous colleges to meet their additional and special needs.

Guest/visiting faculty; Orientation and re-training of teachers; Re-designing courses and development of teaching/learning material; Workshop and seminars; Examination reforms; Office equipment, teaching aids and laboratory equipment; Furniture for office, classrooms, library and laboratories; o Library equipment, books/journals; Expenditure on meetings of the governing body and committees; Honorarium to Controller of Examinations (full-time) not exceeding; Rs. 8000/- p.m.; Accreditation (NAAC) fee; Renovation and repairs not leading to construction of a new building; Extension Activities

Following shall be the guiding principles for utilization of autonomy grant.

- Autonomy grant cannot be used for creation of posts, payment of salary to any of the college staff, payment of honorarium to existing staff, to meet normal college contingency requirement or to subsidies.
- Examination fee should be fixed so that income from fee can meet the expenditure on examinations and other staff appointed in examination cell.

Governance of an Autonomous College (UGC, 2021)

The college will have the following committees to ensure proper management of academic, financial and general administrative affairs.

The following are statutory bodies: Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies and Finance Committee (The Governing Body is different from Trust Board/Board of Management/ Executive Committee/Management Committee).

The college will, in addition, have other non statutory committees such as the Planning and Evaluation Committee, Grievance Appeal Committee, Examination Committee, Admission Committee, Library Committee, Student Welfare Committee, Extra-Curricular Activities Committee and Academic Audit Committee.

Governing Body:

The constitution of this body will be according to the structure given in

Number	Category	3 members, Educationist,
one of them industrialist,	to be professional	chairperson
2 members Teachers of the college	1 member State government	nominee
1 member University nominee	1 member State government	nominee
1 member Principal of college	Nature	Nominated by the university, persons of proven
academic interest with at least PG level	qualification.	Nominated by the Principal based on seniority.
Nominated by the state government.	Nominated by the UGC	Nominated by the

Academic Council:

The Academic Council will be solely responsible for all academic matters, such as, framing of academic policy, approval of courses, regulations and syllabi, etc. The Council will involve faculty at all levels and also experts from outside, including representatives of the university and the government. The decisions taken by the Academic

Council will not be subject to any further ratification by the Academic Council or other statutory bodies of the university.

Board of Studies:

The Board of Studies is the basic constituent of the academic system of an autonomous college. Its functions will include framing the syllabi for various courses, reviewing and updating syllabi from time to time, introducing new courses of study, determining details of continuous assessment, recommending panels of examiners under the semester system, etc.

Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee will advise the Governing Body on financial matters and shall meet at least twice a year.

Award of Degrees through Parent University

The parent university will award degrees to the students evaluated and recommended by autonomous colleges. The degree certificates will be in a common format devised by the university. The name of the college will be mentioned in the degree certificate, if so desired. Autonomous colleges that have completed three terms can confer the degree under their title with the seal of the university.

Conclusion

Target Group and Eligibility Target Group can be stated as All Colleges under Section 2(f), aided, unaided, partially aided and self-financing which are or are not covered under 12(B) of the UGC Act are eligible to apply for autonomous status. This includes Engineering Colleges also. The college will have the following committees to ensure proper management of academic, financial and general administrative affairs. The following are statutory bodies: Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies and Finance Committee. There are several areas where proper preparation is necessary if college autonomy is to be

implemented successfully. These are: faculty preparation, departmental preparation, institutional preparation, and preparation of students and the local community.

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