



# UGC

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## UGC Chair Visits Bangladesh



UGC Chairperson, Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, participated in the seminar entitled "Higher Education and Research in Bangladesh: Constraints and Prospects" organized by Chittagong University Teachers association (CUTA), Bangladesh from the 16th of February to the 19th of February, 2020. The seminar highlighted the prospects of higher education in South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular. Participants discussed the constraints, prospects and what can be done to remove the constraints to ensure quality higher education in future. The consensus was on making higher education research oriented and developing a culture of research and collaboration at national, regional and global level would make higher education more meaningful.

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## UGC Issues the Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of Learning in Higher Education

University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued the Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of Learning in Higher Education on 13 July 2020. This is as part of the Commission initiative to address the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on regular academic activities of universities and higher education institutions. Earlier on 29 May 2020, Government of Nepal has formed the high level committee headed by the UGC Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi for providing

the suggestions and preparing a guidelines to address the problem focusing on alternative mode of education in universities and higher education institutions. Prof. Dr. Dev Raj Adhikari, Secretary, UGC and Mr. Ram Sharan Sapkota, Joint-Secretary, Ministry of Education were in the committee as members.

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented disturbances in humans and their daily activities throughout the world.

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# UGC Chair Visits Bangladesh

Vice Chancellors and several members of different universities and educational institutes of Bangladesh participated in the seminar. Sharing Nepal's experience on higher education the Chairperson called attention to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) status of the campuses in Nepal. He stated that Quality Assurance and Accreditation is the mission to improve the quality of higher education in Nepal. The UGC, Nepal intends to ensure that all higher education institutions in the country are in the process of QAA assessment for accreditation by the end of 2022.

During the seminar, challenges faced in higher education in Nepal were also highlighted. During the course of the



seminar, it was also noted that challenges faced in higher education in Bangladesh and Nepal were similar. There is an increased flight of huge amounts of capital to foreign countries because the number

of students leaving the country in search of quality education is increasing. A lack of quality education and opportunities in the area of technical education was noted despite an increase in the number of higher education institutions and student enrollment in both the countries.

Along with the status of QAA and research activities carried out in higher education, the Chairperson also shared the experience of implementing Higher Education Reforms Project (HERP) under the assistance of The World Bank. The status of research in higher education and priority areas for research in Nepal were highlighted. As identified by the National Planning Commission, the priority areas include -energy, transportation, tourism, forest, environment, agriculture, urban development and foreign employment and social development.

## Bilateral Meetings

The Chairperson, after participating in the seminar, met with the Chairperson of UGC Bangladesh, Prof. Dr. Kazi Shahidullah, and shared his experience regarding the activities of UGC Nepal for higher education, his relationship with the government, governance of universities and the recruitment policies of Vice-Chancellors in Nepal. Furthermore, issues related to institutional Quality Assurance Cell and National Qualification Framework, Accreditation was also brought up and discussed in the meeting. During the meeting members of UGC Bangladesh were also present.

Moreover, The Chairperson also met with Prof. Shireen Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University, Prof. Dr. Md. Narul Anwar, Vice Chancellor, Port City International University and Prof. Dr. Md. Ismail Khan, Vice Chancellor, Chittagong Medical University. During the discussion with Vice Chancellors the importance of networking in higher education in South Asia and what can be done to properly network in the days to come was also pointed out.

# Restructuring and Reallocating funding for Alternative Mode of Learning in Response to Covid-19

University Grants Commission, working in close collaboration with the World Bank, the development partner for Higher Education Reform Project (HERP), 2015-2020, restructured its funding mechanism of HERP which was due to end on June 2020. This restructuring has been designed for conducting online classes and carrying out research projects on corona virus in the universities and campuses.

The UGC Board meeting held on 6th May 2020 made a decision to incorporate an additional disbursement link indicator, DLI 8, in the Higher Education Reform Projects (HERP) Implementation Guidelines, 2071, with grants amounting to Rs. 470000000. The grants were managed from HERP

and funded by the World Bank.

The support will be provided to the all central departments, schools and constituents campuses of all the universities of Nepal. The community campuses will receive on a priority basis, with QAA accredited campuses and other campuses that have been participating in the QAA process. Eleven thousand four hundred poor students will be supported for e-learning under this scheme. UGC will provide financial assistance to amounting approximately 3 crore to 3 collaborative projects to carry out research on various aspects of Covid-19.

The research projects will be selected from an open competition among the universities and its organizations. The projects are in

the process of selection after an open call in newspapers.

Eleven universities, 39 central departments, 19 schools, 115 constituent campuses and 127 community campuses will be benefited from this program. The support is provided to facilitate learning management systems, teacher training activities, live classes, video recording for online classes and logistics supports.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced universities to bring their courses online. The pandemic has affected educational systems nationwide, leading to the total closure of universities and colleges. Nepalese universities and colleges have initiated the use of video-conferencing apps for teaching learning.

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## UGC Issues the Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of Learning in Higher Education

Nepal could never be spared of this epidemic. The Government of Nepal has imposed lockdown and the timing to return life into normal is uncertain. Consequently, the education sector in the country has been adversely affected with this ongoing lockdown. Universities and campuses have not been able to follow their academic calendar since students and the staff and faculty cannot continue

their academic programs, such as running classes and taking exams in normal physical classrooms Nepal's educational institutions, including campuses and universities have been managing their programs and organizing classes through alternative e-learning platforms.

In these lights, colleges and universities should be following directives issued by the government, it is also equally

important to adopt measures, so that the loss incurred is mitigated to the extent possible without compromising the objectives of the curriculum.

In such uncertainties and difficulties, it is the joint responsibility of all stakeholders, universities, students and parents to educate students address the issues and continue educational activities.



# Government Appoints Two Members of UGC

The Government of Nepal has appointed two remaining board members of the Commission on 27th Jan 2020. Prof. Dr. Dharma Kanta Baskota, VC, Tribhuvan University and Prof. Dr. Ramkantha Makaju Shrestha, VC, Kathmandu University have been appointed as the members of the commission for a four year tenure.

The post of two members was vacant after the tenure completion of vice chancellors; Prof. Dr. Tirtha Raj Khaniya, VC, TU and Prof. Ishwori Prasad Dhakal, VC, Agriculture and Forestry University.

The Commission consists of



*Prof. Dr. Ramkantha Makaju Shrestha*



*Prof. Dr. Dharma Kanta Baskota*

eleven members, all appointed by the Government of Nepal. The Chairperson and the Secretary are full time office bearers. The other nine members include a member of the National

Planning Commission, two Vice-Chancellors, the two Secretaries of the Ministries of Education and of Finance, two prominent educationists, and two distinguished professors.

## Covid-19 and UGC Response

As University Grants Commission (UGC) is closely monitoring the Covid-19 pandemic situation and its impact on higher education, the Commission held a video conference meeting of University Coordination Committee (UCC). Headed by UGC Chairperson the committee comprises of the Vice-Chancellors of the all Nepalese universities. The meeting was held on the 3rd of April 2020 to discuss challenges faced by the universities amidst the pandemic.

UGC Chairperson, Prof. Bhim Prasad Subedi, shared serious concerns regarding challenges brought about by the pandemic and urged

universities to design and implement immediate and long-term strategies to address the situation. The Vice-Chancellors outlined the various challenges faced by the universities as a result of the outbreak and their initiations to address these challenges. They expressed their readiness to further strengthen the online linkage and to continue to exchange ideas and experiences in the areas of teaching, research and innovation.

The Covid-19 outbreak has caused a major disruptions in universities and higher education institutions across the country. Regular face to face classes,

scheduled examinations, and other research and administrative activities have been stopped due to the pandemic. This has adversely affected more than 400,000 students enrolled at various programs of the universities.

The conclusion of the meeting was switching to an online program as much and as early as possible was essential. This will help avert the risk of long-term negative socio-economic impacts in the country and delays in curriculum delivery due to Covid-19. Engaging students in academia was considered critical in order to reduce possible psychological impacts on them and their families .

# UGC Releases Grants to Six Hundred Community Campuses

## Physical Development Grants

University Grants Commission has recently made the decision to disburse the grants for developing physical facilities, strengthening libraries and purchasing books and equipment to community campuses for the fiscal year 2076/77. The total amount of the grants is Rs.400000000. One hundred forty seven campuses have been selected for the grants in this fiscal year.

The grants under these programs are provided to enhance physical capacity of campuses in order to foster quality of education and to improve capacity of campuses to enhance the access number of students every fiscal year in the education system of the whole country. The grants are provided to extend physical facilities such as classrooms, library, toilet and administrative buildings in community campuses. The scheme further extended other categories with specific purposes. Purchasing books aimed to provide facility of both textbook and reference book available in the library so that needy students can easily access the resource in convenient manner. Furniture for classroom and library support is aimed to make comfort and ease teaching learning. Equipments support is aimed to improve technology in the teaching learning sphere, better execution of administrative work and to capacitate to link the campus to the world.

UGC also acknowledged the importance of extra curriculum activities in higher education. To achieve the better result, community campuses are provided grant to improve the ECA infrastructure and materials, this year 8 campuses were selected to improve the ECA with support of 10 lakhs per campus.

To receive this support, campuses must apply within the stipulated deadline, and the grants received must be used as per agreement done with UGC.

The submitted proposals, number of faculty, number of students, location of the campus and pass rate are the criteria used to select the campuses for the grants. To get a grants for construction of buildings, the minimum number of students required is 75.

## Regular Grants

As affiliated community campuses are provided with regular grants to develop the quality of education every year, the Commission has also decided to provide regular grants to 457 campuses with the total amount Rs. 3840 00000 for the fiscal year 2076/77.

The grants have been provided according to the Regular Programs Giddiness, 2076 approved by the Commission. The regular grants are provided to the campuses that have completed at least one academic year of Bachelor's or Master's level programs. The community campuses are provided regular grants based on given criteria and justifiable documents submitted to the Commission. The regular grant amount varies based on academic programs, academic level, number of students, science and technical programs and campus location.

The grants have been made available to community campuses that satisfy the following criteria:

- must have completed one academic cycle (that is, they must have completed at least three years of academic performance);
- must have "campus constitution or statute" with the clear provision of regular re-constitution of executive board, open membership for anyone interested to support the campus, and the provision of property transfer to the affiliating university or government of Nepal in case of the dissolution of the campus;
- must have legal evidence of community campus status (that is, they must have obtained a certifying letter from community campus association, the village development committee, or the district development committee)
- must have an audit report by a registered auditor.

# Four Campuses Receive Accreditation Certificates

University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently awarded accreditation certificates to Siddhartha Campus, Kapilvastu, Nilkantha Multiple Campus, Dhading and Sahid Narayan Pokhrel Ramapur Campus, Rupandehi. The UGC Board meeting held on the 6th of May 2020 has decided to award the accreditation certificates to these campuses. With this, the total number of accredited campuses has reached 49.

Siddhartha Campus is a community campus established in 1992 in Banganga, Kapilvastu. It offers different academic programs at bachelor and master's level to its 588 students. The campus submitted a letter of intent (LoI) for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process in 2014. It submitted a self study report (SSR) to UGC on 2019 and a peer review team (PRT) visit, led by Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi, Former VC of Far Western University, was conducted from 23-26 December 2019. It completed the QAA cycle on the 20th of February 2020.

Nilkantha Multiple Campus was established in 2000 in Nilkantha-3, Dhading. It is a community campus affiliated to Tribhuvan University and offers different programs at bachelor and master's level. It has 880 students and 26 faculties. It entered the process of



quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) after the approval of its LoI by the UGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. UGC approved its SSR in September 2018. A PRT Team led by Prof. Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley visited the campus from 20-24 January 2020. It completed the QAA cycle in February 2020.

Sahid Narayan Pokharel Ramapur Campus entered the QAA process in September 2015 and completed the QAA cycle in December 2019. It is a community campus established in 2003 in Sainamaina-6, Rupandehi. It has 787 students and 26 faculties. The campus offers different bachelor's and master's level programs.

The Commission awards the accreditation to the campuses after the successful accomplishment of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process that encompasses the detailed evaluation of the campus against the eight different criteria,

benchmarks of policy and procedures, curricular aspects, teaching-learning and evaluation, research, consultancy and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and guidance, information system, and public information.

With these institutions, 49 higher education institutions have been accredited, and 10 others have completed the QAA assessment cycle. A total of 110 institutions are at different stages of assessment, with 320 institutions expressing their interest to go through the QAA process. Furthermore, 3 institutions have been given academic autonomy based on their performance after the QAA award.

UGC has launched the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) system as an important aspect of reform in higher education in Nepal. UGC Nepal initiated the Institutional



Accreditation System in higher education in 2007 with the first HEI having been accredited in 2009.

The participation of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in institutional quality assessment for

QAA is still voluntary.

The UGC, however, is gradually planning to make the system compulsory and have already made a public call to all HEIs to go through a self-study process and complete it within the next

three years so peer evaluation for assessment can be made for accreditation. The UGC made a decision in 2017 to make participation in QAA compulsory and to have eligible HEIs peer reviewed within 2022.

## Approval of Research Sustainability Plan

University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved the Research Sustainability Plan on 6 May 2020. The Plan has focused on strengthening research capacity and inculcating research culture in higher education institutions (HEIs). In addition, the highlights of the plan included ensuring regular and sustainable funding in national priority research areas and maximizing meaningful investment in quality research and innovation.

UGC has been playing a key role in setting research agendas and stream-lining funding to strengthen the research and development capacity of HEIs. Taking national priority areas into account and realizing increasing demands for research and development activities in HEIs, the UGC experience shows that the existing source of research funding and budget allocation grossly inadequate. As a result, conducting research

in the set priority areas is difficult. The sustainability plan has been developed to address such resource gaps and promote research activities in HEIs.

The plan has proposed the provision of establishing National Research Council (NRC) under the umbrella of UGC. It is expected to function as national apex body for advancing research and innovation in the country as National Education Policy-2076 has envisioned.

The major objectives of establishing the National Research Council (Foundation) is to energize research, development and innovations across the country in all academic disciplines and in all higher education institutions.

Higher Education Policy-2076 has emphasized making research and innovation relevant to the national priority and at par with international trends and practices. In

its policy measures, it has emphasized provisioning grants for undertaking quality research on the basis of national needs and priorities. The policy states that higher education in Nepal should be research-based and innovative. Accordingly, higher education institutes are expected to function as education hubs and innovation centers in the country. HEIs should maximize research impact by introducing research based academic programs, quality publications, and market-driven product development both at national and international levels.

UGC has been promoting research activities at HEIs since its establishment. Currently, it has been providing funding support under research grants, fellowships, research infrastructure development and capacity development programs.

# QAA – Strategic Plan 'Destination 2030'

University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved the QAA-Strategic Plan 'Destination 2030' on 26th Jun 2020. The document was prepared by an Expert Committee led by UGC Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi which consisted of six professors.

The 'Destination 2030' intends to observe the emerging global trends in QAA system and make Nepali QAA system compatible with. The vision of the strategic plan is to make Nepali HEIs capable of producing competitive knowledge and human resources to respond the changing national and global demands. To support this vision, the plan adopts its mission of promoting and nurturing an enabling environment – particularly, adopting a dynamic QAA system that is compatible to international practices, and applicable to different types of HEIs and academic programs in the country.

To approach to the defined vision and mission, the plan adopts important core values such as quality culture, research and development, efficiency in inputs and their management for result-oriented outcomes. This plan is striving for academic excellence in HEIs and sustainability of the QAA system in the country.

The goals of the strategic plan are to enable HEIs to offer quality academic programs for enhancing knowledge, skills and abilities of learners; develop core competencies of HEIs in demand-driven niche areas; prepare them for continuous changes in capabilities, faculties, engagement, and outputs. The major strategic objectives considered are: to design and implement a QAA framework-guidelines, and criteria and indicators for nature-specific (governance, program) HEIs; strengthen Nepali QAA system to bring it to the international recognition; improve the academic environment at HEIs by integrating innovative teaching - learning process; prepare HEIs for scale-specific leadership and engagement and sustain the quality and standard of higher education; make HEIs and other stakeholders ethically responsible for quality higher education; and enhance educational management systems and academic outputs (e.g., research and publications, consultancy, graduates, and outreach, capability of faculties and managers).

The plan has been approved by the UGC Nepal on recommendation of HEQAAC and is in effect from the fiscal

year 2077/78.

UGC Nepal is adopting Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) System in Nepal since 2007 as a pilot project at first and formally from 2009. In a decade long journey of QAA, UGC has accredited 49 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). At the end of Fiscal Year 2076/77, 357 HEIs are enrolling in QAA system and are at different stages of assessment.

Nepali HEIs are taking surprisingly long time i.e. almost five and a half year, to meet the very basic criteria of QAA. In such context, accrediting over 1500 HEIs of the country is very challenging.

Furthermore, the performance of accredited HEIs is not impressive, they also require to go through re-accreditation process in a five year cycle. In such circumstances, the QAA Council has developed and approved a strategic plan 'Destination 2030' to upgrade and strengthen Nepali QAA System and speed-up the assessment of HEIs for accreditation. Effective monitoring of accredited HEIs annually is also one of the primary tasks to perform, until the quality culture in the country is established and strengthened.