

Institutional Best Practices 2019-20

1. Title of the Practice: Orientation Programme for teachers and students:

Goal: Every year the college organizes a series of orientation lectures for the newly admitted students. The goal is to acclimatise students with the college, its history, culture, the resources and services available to them and the duties and responsibilities expected out of them. In view of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) implemented last year across disciplines the college expanded the scope of the Orientation Programme to abreast students regarding the structure and application of the CBCS. Along with that the process of orientation also included creating awareness among students against all forms of ragging and bullying and also against all forms of sexual harassment.

Context: The academic session starts on 1st July. The commencement of actual teaching learning process takes place at around the end of July and the beginning of August. Most of the students get detached from the schedule of study and develop a reluctant attitude after the H.S examinations, as for the case of the new admissions at the U.G. level. Our experience of last two years, since the phased initiation of the CBCS, based on feedback from both teachers and students has been that students often find it difficult to navigate through the mechanism of the CBCS, its process of evaluation and combination of subjects and papers. At the same time, we believe that in order to create a spirit of cohabitation and collaboration among students the campus should be free from all forms of bullying and discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or gender. Particularly after the implementation of POSH Act 2013 it is imperative on part of all institutions of Higher Education to ensure gender justice and gender equality on campus. As per the requirements of the POSH Act the college has constituted an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC). The IQAC, in collaboration with the Anti-Ragging Committee and ICC decided that these two vital issues should be made part of the basic orientation of students towards higher education and not just students but teachers and office staff should also be made part of it.

The Practice: It has been an established practice of the institution that at the beginning of the Academic Session the principal, departmental heads and teachers address newly admitted students. The primary objective is to articulate the academic as well as ethical responsibilities of the students and to impart the knowledge of the available academic resources and aids that the college provides. It is also to facilitate the familiarisation of the new students with the college by informing them about the history, tradition, campus culture and opportunities. This year however, the special objective was also to familiarise students with the new system. In order to facilitate the process, the Orientation

Programme was conducted in phases - after the initial, centralised orientation, respective departments organised separate meetings with students to provide them with more subject specific guidance. Special Orientation Programmes were organised for B.A. General students in which teachers from different departments participated to counsel students about their choices and their application.

The college maintains zero-tolerance towards ragging and sexual harassment. These two serious issues pertaining to campus life have been made part of the Orientation Programme. Right at the beginning of the Academic Session the Anti-Ragging Committee conducts an awareness programme. Both the newly admitted students as well as senior students participate in this programme. They take pledge against ragging. Members of the Anti-Ragging Committee clearly iterates what constitutes 'ragging', its legal definition as well as social and psychological implication. There is also an interactive session where students can share their experience and points of view regarding this matter.

The Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) organised a gender-sensitisation workshop specially for the newly admitted students in which they were made aware of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 (POSH Act), the structure and functioning of the ICC, the rights that are ensured in the Act as well as about the socio-political aspects of gender relations in general. They are also made aware of gender-appropriate behaviour on campus. The ICC also conducts a similar Orientation Programme for teachers and office staff as well to discuss the basic tenets of the POSH Act in order to ensure gender equality and gender justice on campus.

Evidence of Success: Success is evident under quantitative and qualitative parameters. Our Orientation Programme is being conducted over many years and we have received positive feedback from students. The focus on CBCS this year has also benefitted students which was evident in the interactive sessions during and after the departmental orientation programmes. As far as orientation against ragging and the gender sensitization workshops are concerned, they yielded healthy and fruitful discussion within the student community as well as among students and teachers.

Challenges: The implementation of such programmes along with the curricular routine and library services is sometimes hectic. Also, more effort needs to be made to involve trained counselors, legal experts and organisations working against discrimination to make such programmes a sustained success. The active involvement of girls and students from marginalised sections of society need to be ensured and a safe space need to be provided for them to open up and share their experiences.

2. Title of the Practice: Digitisation of Data and Resources

Goal: The college recognises the need for digitisation of data and resources in order to ensure efficiency of administration, creation of a pool of resources and accessibility of those resources to students and all stakeholders. Digitisation is required:

- To ensure availability and transparency of data
- To ensure various benefits and services such as students' aid, scholarships etc. reach the targeted beneficiary
- To ensure all service-related data of teaching and non-teaching staff are preserved in a transparent manner
- To ensure students have regular access to study material
- To ensure free and unhindered exchange of information

Context: In view of the overall drive towards digitisation in higher education, the IQAC proposed a massive drive towards digitization of all academic, administrative and student-related data. The proposal was discussed and debated in various forums of the college including the Academic Subcommittee, the Teachers' Council and the General Body. The suggestions of all stakeholders, teachers, students and non-teaching staff were sought. All stakeholders took this new measure as a positive step forward and accepted it wholeheartedly. This step became not only necessary but imminent in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in the later part of the 2019-20 Academic Session. It forced us to completely reconstitute the procedures of teaching-learning.

The Practice: The college regularly uploads teacher, staff and student-related data on AISHE and Banglar Uchha Siksha portal. Earlier in the Academic Year the college had already started the process of creating a comprehensive data bank of students that would include their basic information, registration, fees, result-related data. This data could be used to connect to students during the lock down, to communicate with them, provide them with benefits and services or to include them in digital classrooms. This year even the feedback system of students was turned online. The data collected from the feedback of the students have been digitally stored.

The college has also initiated a process of creating a digital archive of study material, both textual as well as audio-visual, question papers and other academic resources. Much of it are made available online either through the college website or through Google Classroom. Teachers took personal and collective responsibility of digitizing texts and reference books for the benefit of students during the pandemic. An important aspect of this collective effort at digitization has been the formation of Collaborative Learning Group – a platform where teachers can share their digital expertise with each other, they can come up with new and innovative steps to facilitate the process of online learning, they can also share the problems they face and inculcate inter-departmental collaboration.

Evidence of Success: The practical evidence of success of this drive could be seen in the last few months of the Academic Session, when the college had to shut down due to the Covid pandemic. In spite of the restrictions in place we could continue the process of teaching-learning by conducting classes and sharing study material online. We could also stay in regular contact with students, can learn about their problems and provide with aid and resources as and when required due to the digital database in place.

Challenges: Complete digitization of data requires massive overhauling of infrastructure. Also, a balance needs to be struck between procurement of data and ensuring privacy. Checks and balances need to be placed to ensure complete data protection.