

TERI School of Advanced Studies

Department of Policy Studies

Minutes of the Board of Studies (BoS) and Internal Review Meeting

A meeting of Board of Studies (BoS) of Department of Policy Studies (DoPS) was held on **6th June 2019** at 10.30 am in the Conference Room of the TSAS.

Following members were present in the meeting;

1. Prof. Avanish Kumar (BoS member)
2. Prof. Kanchan Chopra (BoS member)
3. Dr. Gopal Sarangi (BoS member)
4. Dr. Nandan Nawn (BoS member)
5. Dr. Seema Sangita (BoS member)
6. Dr. Smriti Das (BoS member)
7. Dr. Sukanya Das (BoS member)
8. Dr. Swarup Datta
9. Dr. L.N. Venkataraman
10. Dr. Shantanu De Roy
11. Dr. Chandan Kumar
12. Dr. Kavita Sardana

Following members were absent with prior notice.

1. Dr. Leena Srivastava
2. Dr. Soumendu Sarkar

Prof. Ram Singh could not attend the meeting due to prior commitments.

Agenda:

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the last BoS meeting.
2. Discussion of Internal Review Document of DoPS

Attachments to the minutes:

1. Presentation by HoD
2. Comments made by Dr. Avanish Kumar on the Internal Review Document.

Leena

Smriti Das
12/7/19

Minutes:

Agenda 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the last BoS Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held of 10th May 2019 were confirmed.

Agenda 2: Discussion of Internal Review Document of DoPS

The meeting started with a welcome note by the Head of the Department and a general presentation of the Department of Policy Studies, which was followed by an invitation to the reviewers (BoS members) to comment on the Department report submitted to them on 14th May 2019

The following issues came up for discussion

1. NAAC requires data only in their specific framework. *Is the data in our documents/PPT in accordance to the NAAC requirement?* For instance, the issue of how our curriculum enhances *skills and employability* of students.¹ *Do we have evidence, since abstract arguments don't work well with accreditation agencies?*
Clarification by HoD: The presentation was a generic profile of the Department that was not associated with Quality Framework of NAAC (but was required as a general presentation). The quality framework criteria were used in the report and all related data were appended as Enclosures with clear reference to the criteria to which it was linked.
2. The discussion extended to the basic purpose and outcome of the framework indicators. It was impressed upon by the external members that the University should have guidelines to interpret the meanings of the terms/phrases underscored by NAAC and justify associated data. To explain this Dr. Avanish cited that currently the "evidence" shows that *48% of the DoPS curriculum leads to enhanced skills and employability*, however, this is a very low score in term of what is done. There is a need to reflect on how and why we reached figure of 48% and what is missed out? At a masters' level one expects this number to be closer to 100% and certainly higher than 80%. So, it is not that enough is not done on this aspect, but there is absence of a sound mechanism for creating evidence. Process of creating evidence should start with defining the terms used by the NAAC based on our unique placement.
3. Further discussions related to the above, also including issues with respect to creating hard evidence were:

¹ Some issues, like that of *skills and employability* was used as an example throughout the meeting to conceptualize the challenges, but similar analysis would be required for every aspect of NAAC report.

Leena

Savitri Das
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- a. With reference to NAAC Metric 1.1.3, it was discussed that perhaps research techniques create employable skills, but can one argue that theory components of the programs are not creating skill/employability? Or, perhaps they are creating skills and employability that is relevant to specific sectors like doctoral programs or research organizations.
- b. Even the argument of, say, *theory can lead to employability* needs to be converted into concrete data supported by evidence. While the course coordinator can have some perception about the extent to which *theory* in the curriculum leads to employability, quantification of this perception requires a clear background policy document on "what is considered *employability*?"
- c. Learning outcomes can become a source of evidence. One example of the course "Cultural and Political Ecology" was discussed in more detail. This topic may not have much employability in a traditional sense, but then for some sectors the learnings from this course may be critical for employability. How can we reframe "employability" so that the employability of this course can be projected better?
- d. Similarly, questions pertaining to the NAAC Metric 1.3.1 that inquires whether institution integrates cross cutting issues relevant to gender, environment and sustainability. In courses where students carry out various individual projects, like *the MS Economics Masters Thesis*, how can one say that there is no component of 'gender'? Perhaps some students work on 'gender'? Such details require that the course outcomes be clear and there should be mechanisms for collecting such data consistently over semesters.
- e. The above might also be true for PhD program, how does one assess PhD program's alignment with curricular design aspects of NAAC when each student works on different issues. Consistently generated data could help establishing this alignment (for instance, such data on alignments can illustrate QIF Metric 1.1.1).
- f. Another example that was discussed in detail was local-national-regional-global focus of the curriculum (with reference to Metric 1.1.1). The external member again used the example field study undertaken by students to illustrate the significance/necessity of having consistent definitions. For instance, even if a study is done in a remote village, it might be linked to national or global events.
- g. In response to the above discussion, a point raised by DoPS faculty member was that alongside consistent definitions, there should also be clear mapping along these criteria by the course instructor, who best understands the objectives and outcomes of the course (rather than leaving it on the administration or on the HoD).
- h. Another issue that was taken up for discussion in detail was the metric 1.3.1 (pertaining to the aspect of institution integrating cross cutting issues relevant to gender, environment and sustainability, human values and

Seema

Smriti Das
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professional ethics into curriculum). Taking the example of *human values*, it was discussed – why is it that we do not score a 100% on this metric? Is it possible that any course of TERI SAS does not contribute to human values? Even courses like Statistics or Macroeconomics may contribute to human values through examples used in the curriculum and other indirect means. But a concrete answer is not possible without a clear idea of what the University considers to be acceptable as "Human Values".

- i. In another example, the course titled 'Society and Development Policy' indicates a 'no' against metric of Environment and Sustainability, however the justification involves global goals on sustainability. Similarly, the course titled 'Industrial Development and Sustainability' indicates a 'no' against human values and professional ethics. In the same vein, every course at TERI SAS is likely to be linked to environment and sustainability, human values, etc.
- j. It was agreed upon that these matters are not a pure 'yes' or 'no' thing – the question is really about the degree and form.
- k. Issues with feedback (Reference Metric 1.4): It was discussed and agreed upon that the policy and purpose of feedback needs clarity, with clear information on purpose behind taking 'student/teacher/employer/alumni/parents' feedback. *On what parameters are the feedback taken and how is it used?*
- l. Teaching-learning and Evaluation: The external members raised the point with reference to Metric 2.1 and 2.2, *Can mentorship be a part of catering to student diversity, especially international students in the context of TERI SAS?* The University policy on diversity should create benchmarks for assessment on these parameters.
- m. It was strongly emphasized by the external members that the presence of counsellors on campus is not only essential for well-being of the students during stressful times like placements but is also helpful in creating evidence of student support (that can be used for accreditation purposes).
- n. Experiential learning (Reference Metric 2.3.1): how much time is given to participative learning in a course? Rather than leaving this as an abstract explanation, there is need for creating proper evidence.
- o. Regarding Research, Innovation, and Extension (Reference Criterion III of QIF): The external members emphasized that since this criterion holds maximum weightage, there is a need to seriously consider research aspects and identify scope for improvement. In the same discussion, the questions raised by the external members were: Is there a policy on research? How does the institution promote research? How is the research and innovation policy formulated – how much corpus is there for these activities and is it enough? Can CSR funding be used to create a corpus specifically for research, innovation and extension? They proposed that these discussions should happen at University level. Where the members of the Department are




working in collaborative projects with other departments, Research Project contribution for such projects can be documented in the form of time contributions, perhaps. Questions were also raised on: How are researchers rewarded? Is there funding for books, travel or rewards for publications in the form of monetary benefits or other form? With reference to innovation, Prof. Chopra specifically proposed that interdisciplinary research (that cuts across departments) could be showcased as research innovations. PhD Supervision policies may be highlighted in the same vein– thus the interdisciplinary composition of SRCs could also be showcased.

- p. The external members advised that while this meeting is being undertaken at Department level, the linkage with the University policy is important. Without a clear idea of University policy, all these issues may remain unresolved. Hence the discussion needs to be initiated at the university level. For example: research innovation is not something that can be done in a piecemeal fashion by each department. Similarly, to resolve the issues with data reporting and consistency on several parameters, for example under Metric 1.1., 1.1.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.2 etc., it was suggested that there should be University level discussion and standard definition should be prepared for various terms used in the QIF.

4. Discussions on Way forward:


- a. It was felt that with clarity on University policies, a lot of issues could be resolved. It would help in overcoming problems of missing information, including quantitative data.
- b. To illustrate the above point, Prof. Avanish stated, Does the university have a policy document that clearly defines the indicators? Using the example of *skill and employability* he asked, how are these terms defined by the University? If the university has/develops a policy document that clearly lays down the definition and parameters, it would become easier for the course instructors to convert an abstract assertion (for example *theory aspects in a course curriculum/outline can also lead to skill enhancement or employability*) to concrete measurable outcome. Same is the case with the example of human values above. A concrete assessment of whether a course contributes to human values is possible only after the university defines what it considers to be human values.
- c. Following this institution level clarity, the course outcomes could be mapped to the policy document for a numeric scoring, for instance, to what extent a course enhances employability/skill development/entrepreneurship?
- d. Once such policy document is created, the next step could be to incorporate the requirement of NAAC/other accreditation agencies into the course outlines itself.
- e. The course instructors/coordinators may then be asked to submit a report on aspects such as how well they address the above components?



- f. The above suggestions, however, came with a warning that in absence of University level policies, such an exercise will lead to even greater abstraction and confusion.
- g. An example of how such reports are collated by an office of research and accreditation in MDI, Gurgaon, and mapped to the evidence required by accreditation agencies was elaborated in the meeting.
- h. It was stressed that there should be creation of on-campus student-counselling facilities (over and above the stated facts of mentoring by the faculty members).
- i. A hope was expressed that the discussion in this meeting could lead to creation of the methodology for collecting, processing and presenting the data.

The meeting was concluded with a Vote of Thanks to the external members, by the HoD.

Smriti Das
[SMRITI DAS]


(SEEMA SANGITA)
DRL SECRETARY