



BEST PRACTICES – YEAR 2019-20

Best Practice – I

INTERDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Objectives of the Practice

To nurture an interdisciplinary and engaged academic environment in the University

The Context

AUD began its academic programmes espousing an interdisciplinary approach to studying complex social realities. The initial schools and postgraduate programmes focused on niche interdisciplinary areas and the Undergraduate (UG) programmes were organised along disciplinary lines. With the multicampus expansion of the University the academic nature of the UG programmes has also diversified and the University now offers interdisciplinary programmes at UG level as well.

The Practice

The academic structures at AUD are organised on an interdisciplinary basis with a vision to create new knowledge(s) through engagement with contemporary concerns and challenges, such as development, gender, environment, social innovation, artistic, literary and creative practices and psychosocial issues, among others. These structures create an imperative for the academic programmes of study and research to foster an interdisciplinary environment with the potential to engender cross-fertilisation of ideas across knowledge formations and structures to transcend the artificial divisions across disciplines and between academia and the world of practice. Innovatively conceptualized curricula and commitment to engaged pedagogy enables students to reflect, rethink, and be sensitive to social and political realities. Innovation in the faculty appointment structure has facilitated a vibrant and dynamic academic environment for faculty members as well as students. AUD Statutes mandate that teachers are appointed to the University and not to a specific School or Centre an AUD teacher, thus appointed, could

be concurrently attached to more than one School or Centre. This system of concurrence supports the interdisciplinary character of programmes, Schools and Centres it also ensures that the very same teachers who undertake postgraduate teaching and research also teach the undergraduate students. These practices prevent the growth of insularity and formation of rigid disciplinary silos but more importantly they enable lateral movement in students' research interests and other academic pursuits.

Evidence of Success

AUD has been able to fill in a gap in the HE ecosystem in the city with respect to strengthening liberal arts education and offering interdisciplinary programmes across UG, PG, and Research. AUD has been able to offer UG programmes in distinctly interdisciplinary liberal arts domains, like, the BA in Law and Politics programme offered by School of Law, Governance and Citizenship, or BA in Global Studies, and BA in Sustainable Urbanism, offered by the School of Global Studies. AUD's attempt to promote engaged interdisciplinary scholarship has also translated into its endeavour to blend academic and professional/ vocational programmes in a meaningful way as evident from the School of Vocational Studies' B. Voc. programmes. As a University, AUD has drawn on its unique advantage, unavailable to the polytechnics or professional colleges, of bringing the two domains, knowledge and skills, in conversation. It has resulted in fostering a rethinking around the scope of the professional/vocational by enriching it with the sensibilities drawn from liberal arts and humanities domain.

Problems encountered and Resources Required

a) perceived lack of demand for unconventional BA programmes b) lack of faculty resources at present to teach interdisciplinary UG programmes.

Best Practice II

ACADEMIC FLEXIBILITY AND DECENTRALIZATION

Objectives of the Practice

To create a facilitative environment for productive academic functioning and strengthening greater ownership among university staff and faculty.

The Context

With a focus on the liberal arts, humanities and the social sciences the University aspires to combine equity and social justice with excellence and pioneer a non-hierarchical institutional culture. Keeping in line with the vision and mission, the leadership of the University through regular (weekly) meetings of its Core Management Team (CMT), and the Senior Management Team (SMT) (comprising all School, Centre and Division Heads) has tried to develop a collective leadership for the development, management and improvement in the functioning of a fledgling University which is trying to adopt and implement some innovative practices. The University has a decentralised structure of governance with Schools and Centres as the foci for all academic matters. The academic heads (Deans and Directors) are guided by programme teams (or Academic Coordination Committees in the case of large schools like SUS and SLS) in day-to-day matters, while the Board of Studies (BoS) of each school, with membership also from external experts in the respective areas of knowledge, meets at least once every semester. The Standing Committee on Academic Programmes (SCAP) and the Standing Committee on Research (SCR), guide and regulate academic related matters. While the BoS, SCAP and SCR are the statutory bodies of the University, it is at the programme level that most decisions are taken. Programme teams are empowered to design and manage academic matters, including issues related to assessment, evaluation and results. For Schools with more than one programme, their Deans have set-up Academic Coordination Committees (ACC), with representation from each programme.

The Practice

The University's perspective on teaching and learning has been distinct. The focus is on processes and an ethos that integrates the quest for knowledge in experiential mode. The process is regularly revisited and discussed to make learning a living experience. Such a perspective requires facilitative decision making processes that are dialogic and

participatory in nature. There is, therefore, autonomy/ flexibility for schools and programmes to deliberate and decide upon curriculum, pedagogy, assessment structure within a broad framework provided by the statutory bodies, programme teams are empowered to take decisions at programme level. There is no centralized examination system at University level—there is, however, oversight provided by the Division of Assessment, Evaluation and Student Progression (AES) headed by a senior Professor as Dean, AES. Such a structure enables a significant amount of flexibility and scope for decentralised planning and implementation. Innovation in assessment and examination reforms since the formation of University have facilitated innovation in curricular practices as well. In addition to establishing structures like continuous assessment and decentralizing assessment practices, University has made an effort to support continuous capacity building of teachers by organising regular workshops on intensive understanding on course design, adequate knowledge and skills involved in integrating digital learning applications and designing course outlines and assessments, like the two workshops on Pedagogy of Reading and Writing in 2017, Workshops to develop learning outcomes and programme outcomes, and an FDP organised on Digital Learning Integrated Curricular Design in 2019.

Evidence of Success


These initiatives and academic decentralization helped the University to swiftly cope with the challenges that came up as institutions closed due to Covid-19 induced disruption. AUD faculty members were able to switch to online teaching, conduct planned assessments according to the schedule in an online mode and support students during the times of crisis. University organised additional workshops during the month of April 2020 to facilitate the transition process to online teaching-learning and assessment. While other universities in the city of Delhi struggled to complete their semester in time, AUD was able to help its students graduate in a timely manner and ensure rigour in the teaching learning process. This achievement of the University was even lauded by the Hon'ble Chancellor Sh. Anil Baijal and various newspaper/media reports.

Problems encountered and Resources Required

Deliberative processes require time and effort and do put additional demands on faculty and staff alike. Incentives may be required to validate the intensive efforts. More open and smoother channels of communication across divisions and wings need to be promoted.

PERFORMANCE IN AN AREA OF INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Aligned with the University's vision of social justice and inclusion, we have made sustained efforts to translate the vision of "access with success" into practice. University offers free-ships and scholarships to students exceeding the stipulated government norms. In 2019-20, 1214 students were awarded merit scholarships (an amount of INR 76.47 Lakh). As part of the Learning Enhancement Fund (LEF), 952 students were supported for field work etc. in 2019-20 (amounting to INR 27.19 Lakh). During the pandemic, the University supported online education of students by reimbursing internet expenses: A total of 148 students have been supported since the pandemic began (INR 76,000). Complete Fee Waivers for SC/ST/PWD students and income-criteria based fee waivers for EWS students (INR 4.73 Crores). Student Welfare Fund: 271 students were supported during 2019-20 (INR 12.5 Lakh). Earn While You Learn Scheme: 68 students benefited during 2019 (INR 4.23 Lakh). These financial support schemes have enabled students to access education at the University meaningfully. These have also enabled students to undertake field-based research outside and within the city of Delhi.


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