

Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Guwahati
Minutes of Departmental Faculty Meeting (No. 74/2021: November 17th, 2021)

Opening Remarks

Special Department faculty meeting on discussing the PhD Admission Policy headed by the Head of the Department (Prof K.S.R Krishna Murthy) was held in online mode on November 17th, 2021 at 5:00 PM. A total of 29 faculty members attended the meeting.

Agenda

1. HoD informed the faculty members about the statistics on the PhD admission for the January-July 2022 session. Following inputs from the faculty members through survey in the month of October and November, a total of 35 PhD possible vacancies were floated by the department which consists of 23 Regular and Full-Time, 4 Sponsored and Full-Time, 1 Employed and Part-Time, 4 Foreign candidates and 3 Inter-disciplinary vacancies. A total number of 262 candidates have applied for these vacancies. However, there were no applicants for the inter-disciplinary and project mode category.

2. Continuing with the previous PhD admission policies, HoD informed that two screening rounds conducted in online mode will be done for regular and full-time candidates, whereas the non-regular (sponsored/part-time) will directly be interviewed by the panel(s). The initial GATE cut-off (in case of Regular and Full-Time, non-IIT candidates) or CPI cut-off (for IIT Regular and full-time and non-Regular candidates) for the various categories of students were informed. Prof. M. Pandey pointed out that the GATE cut-off for OBC/SC/ST/PwD categories should be according to the prescribed institute-wide policy. HoD agreed that he will consult the Academic section on the same.

3. HoD proposed to re-introduced the “takers” system for selection of the candidates. Towards this, an appropriate form will be shared with the chairperson of the respective interview panels seeking information on the evaluation of the candidates and list of takers. HoD replied that re-introducing “takers” system was suggested since there were several PhD students from the last semester PhD admission procedure who were unable to find their supervisors even after six months. HOD also discussed the merits and need of time tested “Takers” system in detail.

4. As per the proposed policy, the candidates will be awarded marks on the basis of their performance in the final interview. The faculty members willing to guide these candidates will be asked to vouch for the candidates as “takers”. The Chairman shall note down (in the form given) the names of the faculty members who are willing to take a candidate. The marks scored in the interview will be used for selection of the supervisor after the candidates are admitted to the IIT Guwahati. After joining the institute, the students should visit and discuss about the possible PhD research work with all the faculty members (of the stream in which he/she got selected) who wish to guide PhD(s) students (and who have informed the number of candidates they wish to guide to the department). The students will be asked to fill a form listing the order of preference of their guides. In the proposed supervisor allocation policy, supervisor allocation will be handled according to the choices of the students with the order based on the marks scored in their interview performance. At the same time the choice of the faculty members given during the interview will also be considered while allocating the supervisor. HoD explained the proposed supervisor allotment policy with the help of tabulated

example. HOD opined that the proposed allotment of supervisor to a student by simultaneous observation of the choice of the students and that of the faculty members is not a logically fool-proof system and expressed that it need to be seen its effectiveness after implementation for the Dec 2021 admissions.

Prof. M. Pandey raised that the “takers” system was removed recently and, as per directive of the department, any reversal of policy within two years should have support of 50% of faculty members. HoD replied that re-introducing “takers” system was suggested since there were several PhD students from the previous PhD admission procedure who were unable to find guides even after six months. Prof. A. Banerjee suggested continuing with the existing policy without takers for one more PhD admission round. Prof. A. Nandy and Prof. P. Kumari raised the concern that the students might not have enough freedom to work in an area of their interest. Prof R. Tiwari enquired if a candidate getting more marks in the interviews but not vouched by any faculties will be selected or not. HoD responded that such candidates will not be selected since no faculty members find them suitable for their research works. Prof. R. Tiwari and Prof. M. Pandey raised that there should not be any compromise on merit. Prof. N. Muthu opined that selecting a candidate without a taker will be detrimental for the student and also pointed out that there is huge difference in marks given by the panel members against a candidate. Due to such large difference in the marks, Dr. Nelson opined that the merit should be defined first. Most of the faculty members, (except for Prof. M. Pandey, Prof. R Tiwari, Prof. T. K. Mankodi and Prof. S. Mandal who raised their objection on the online poll), accepted the proposal and the same will be implemented for the upcoming PhD Admission interviews. Some faculty members asked the HOD to circulate the names and details of the students who were selected in the last-semester and unable to select their supervisors. HOD agreed to send the list of the students.

4. HoD proposed that the shortlisted candidates for the final round of interview should decide the panel/stream (FT, MD and Design panels) beforehand and also choose three subjects from the pre-decided list corresponding to the three streams. The chairperson of the interview panel will request the faculty members in their respective committees to conduct interviews corresponding the choice of the subjects.

HoD sought opinion on the list of stream-wise subjects. Prof. R. Tiwari and Prof. M. Pandey suggested that the candidates should be asked questions pertaining to core courses which can be opted out in this proposition. Prof. M. Pandey further suggested that the highly specialized subjects should be avoided. Prof. P. Kumari and Prof. P. Mondal suggested that the students should be asked from three additional subjects over and above the fundamental subjects in their respective streams. Prof. A. Banerjee suggested that instead of providing a list of subjects, the students should be asked to fill in their choice of preferred subjects in a blank form. The members agreed on the policy of asking questions on fundamental subjects and over and above this, the candidates may be asked from the list of their preferred subjects.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm with vote of thanks.