

Report of the UGC Committee

On

Examinations and Academic Calendar



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

University Grants Commission
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi

April, 2020

Report of the UGC Committee on Examinations and Academic Calendar for the Universities in View of COVID-19 Pandemic and Subsequent Lockdown

Introduction:

The University Grants Commission vide its Notification No.F.1-1/2020 (Secy) dated 6.4.2020 constituted a Committee to deliberate and make recommendations regarding the issues related to Examinations and Academic Calendar. The Committee consisted of following:

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| 1. | Prof. R.C. Kuhad
Former Member, UGC
Vice Chancellor,
Central University of Haryana
Mahendergarh, Haryana. | Chairman |
| 2. | Prof. A. C. Pandey
Director,
Inter University Accelerator Centre
ArunaAsaf Ali Marg, New Delhi. | Member |
| 3. | Prof. Aditya Shastri
Vice Chancellor,
BanasthaliVidyapith, Banasthali, Rajasthan. | Member |
| 4. | Prof. Raj Kumar
Vice Chancellor,
Panjab University, Chandigarh. | Member |
| 5. | Prof.UpinderDhar
Vice Chancellor,
Shri VaishnavVidyapeeth
Vishwavidyalaya, Indore, M.P. | Member |
| 6. | Dr.Surender Singh
Joint Secretary, UGC | Member |
| 7. | Dr.Vikas Gupta
Joint Secretary, UGC | Member Coordinator |

The following members were co-opted:

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| 1. | Prof. V.K. Jain
Vice Chancellor,
Tezpur University, Assam. | Member |
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2.	Prof. G.D. Sharma Vice Chancellor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee University, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.	Member
3.	Prof. Appa Rao Podile Vice Chancellor, Central University of Hyderabad, Telangana.	Member
4.	Prof. Rajesh Kumar Malik Dean, School of Law, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh.	Member
5.	Prof. Sanjiv Kumar Dean Academic, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh.	Member

Considering the difficult times when the entire world is grappling with COVID-19 pandemic, it is the joint responsibility of all the stakeholders to manage multiple key issues relating to academic activities in the institutions because of the uncertainty due to lockdown. While it is crucial to follow measures taken by the Governments to contain the spread of COVID-19, it is also important to get back to work so that one doesn't get stressed about the virus all the time and have something constructive to do. Future may be burdened with many unforeseen uncertainties but, as teaching fraternity, we must be optimistic that we can, in fact, reinvent work yet again, and engage the students in more effective and sustainable ways. Broadly, the issues to be looked into are as under:

1. Continuity of educational services and also ensuring the safety and security of the students, faculty and staff.
2. Timely completion of syllabi, conduct of the examinations and declaration of results.
3. Facilitating the students to participate in further admissions, placement processes, research and training etc.
4. Charting out a plan for the next academic session.

The Committee interacted with stakeholders, viz., Vice-Chancellors of central, state and deemed universities, Principals of the colleges and academia through various electronic means such as email, phone, WhatsApp, online meetings etc.

Four meetings of the Committee were held through audio and video conference to deliberate the various relevant issues involved.

Based on interaction and many rounds of deliberations, the following issues of facts and rules/ regulations have arisen:

- i. Minimum teaching days in a semester/ year.

- ii. Existing modes of teaching-learning process.
- iii. Existing modes of examinations.
- iv. Academic calendar of the universities for academic session 2019-20.
- v. Academic calendar of the universities for academic session 2020-21.
- vi. Functioning of laboratories.

Observations:

The Committee discussed all the issues at length and observed as under:

1. Minimum Teaching Days in a Semester/Year

The issue has been dealt in the light of the Clause-14 of the UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualification for Appointment of Teachers and Other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education, 2018.

2. Existing Modes of Teaching-learning Process

On the basis of the feedback obtained from various sources, the Committee noted that all the universities are adopting offline mode, i.e., conduct of the classes in a face to face interaction with a few exceptions and that too for very few courses. The Committee also observed that some of the universities lack adequate IT infrastructure for effective delivery of education through e-learning mode. The Committee also observed that the duration of the lockdown and effect of COVID-19 in the country, specifically with regard to the educational institutions, is uncertain.

In order to tackle the pandemic COVID-19 in the educational institutions and to ensure continuity in teaching- learning process, MHRD and UGC have issued certain guidelines from time to time and have taken some concrete steps to impart online education by making the best use of e-resources. The Committee perused the guidelines/ notifications issued by MHRD and UGC, so far, in this regard which are placed at **Annexure -I**.

The Committee noted that through all the communications made by the UGC and the MHRD, emphasis has been made to continue with teaching-learning processes using online modes such as Google Classroom, Google Hangout, Cisco Webex Meeting, You Tube Streaming, OERs, SWAYAM Platform, SWAYAMPRAHBA (available on Doordarshan (Free dish) and Dish TV), etc. The Committee feels that the faculty members have contributed a lot in benefitting students during this lockdown period but the students also expect that the faculty must maintain a "substantive contact" with them as online instructions solely consist of "asynchronous" instructions, such as solely posting all lectures online. Lecture material can be posted online, but there is a need for the teachers to initiate communication with the students to engage, ask questions and discuss course material on a regular basis.

The Committee is of the view that the faculty has devoted and is devoting a substantial amount of time which they usually do to answer questions during lectures, group work, discussions, etc. They have achieved the desired objectives by

using one or more of the tools such as WhatsApp groups, emails and social media platforms. Actually providing feedback on work submitted electronically by students also counts as a form of substantive interaction. Therefore, such interaction, during this tough time of Corona pandemic, counts for active attendance. The Committee is also of the opinion that the pooling of available online resources on an integrated portal shall pave the way for easy access of all relevant resources at one platform.

3. Academic Calendar of the Universities for Academic Session:2019-20

The Committee perused the academic calendars of several universities, including Central, State, Deemed, Private etc. for wider understanding so that uniform application of the recommendations is feasible. The academic calendars referred by the Committee are attached as **Annexure-II**.

The Committee observed that most of the universities are following semester system of education. It also noted that the institutions of higher learning have completed the examinations of the odd semester held during December-2019/ January-2020, and the results have been declared. Further, most of the institutions had already covered 60% to 70% of teaching-learning process for ongoing Even Semester before the dispersal of classes on 16.03.2020.

The Committee is of the opinion that even if the normalcy returns by the first week of May, 2020, it is in the interest of students/ institutions that the norms of "social distancing" in the educational institutions are maintained for quite some time.

4. Existing Modes of Examinations

The learning process is a dynamic interaction where the only way to figure out what students know is to seek evidence of their knowledge and to evaluate it. Maintaining the sanctity of academic expectations and integrity of examination process, the universities may adopt alternative and simplified modes and methods of examinations to complete the process in shorter period of time in compliance of CBCS requirements as prescribed by UGC from time to time. These may include MCQ/ OMR based examinations, Open Book Examination, Open Choices, assignment/ presentation-based assessments etc.

Like the modes of teaching-learning, most of the universities follow the physical mode with a few exceptions. On this aspect also, the Committee noted that some of the universities lack adequate IT infrastructure for conducting online examination. The hiring of private agencies for the conduct of online examination does not seem feasible in view of the fact that examinations are to be conducted simultaneously by all the universities.

The Committee deliberated the issue at length regarding options of conducting online/ offline examination and opined that keeping in view the basic infrastructure at institution level and accessibility of the internet to the students, especially in remote areas, it is not feasible to uniformly adopt the online mode of examination. However, the universities may choose offline/ online mode at their level following due

procedure, depending upon the support system available with them and ensuring fair opportunity to all the students.

5. Academic Calendar of the Universities for Academic Session: 2020-21

The Committee perused the prospective academic calendars of several universities, including Central, State, Deemed and Private, approved by the respective academic bodies for the session 2020-21 and is of the view that only minimum amendments may be required to be made by the universities to tackle the problem due to COVID-19.

The Committee also observed that, as on date, several School Boards are yet to complete their Class XII Examinations. In the larger interest of the student community, the Committee felt that a Common Admission Test may be conducted at National/ State Level for admissions to the UG, PG courses and Research Programmes in the Universities and Colleges.

6. Functioning of Laboratories

The issue regarding the functioning of the laboratories in the light of the loss to the research was deliberated at length by the Committee. After exhaustive discussions, the Committee is of the view that during the period of lockdown, the laboratories may be maintained by the research staff/ teachers of the concerned departments on rotation basis.

However, the universities may take appropriate decision to allow PIs/ Ph.D. scholars and Post-Doctoral Fellows, with strict compliance of the guidelines/ directives issued by the appropriate authorities/ Governments from time to time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Taking a holistic view of the present scenario and keeping in mind the fact that educational institutions will be required to follow social distancing for some more time even after the lockdown is lifted, the Committee makes the following recommendations which are advisory in nature. The Committee is also of the view that each university should be at liberty to chart out a contingent plan of action, if the situation so demands, to deal with any sort of exigency.

1. All the universities may follow a 6-day week pattern to compensate the loss for the remaining session of 2019-20 and the new session 2020-21.
2. The Committee recommends the following calendar for the academic session: 2019-2020.

Start of Even Semester	01.01.2020
Suspension of Classes	16.03.2020
Continuation of effective delivery of education through e-learning mode	16.03.2020 to 15.05.2020

Finalisation of Dissertation/ Project Work/ Internship Reports/ E-labs/ Completion of Syllabus/ Internal Assessment/ Assignment/ Students Placement Drive (Through Online Resources Only)	16.05.2020 to 31.05.2020
Summer Vacations	01.06.2020 to 30.06.2020
Conduct of Examinations:	
(i) Terminal Semester/ Year	1.07.2020 to 15.07.2020
(ii) Intermediate Semester/Year	16.07.2020 to 31.07.2020
Evaluation and Declaration of Result:	
(i) Terminal Semester/ Year	31.07.2020
(ii) Intermediate Semester/ Year	14.08.2020

3. Regarding the requirement of minimum percentage of attendance for the students/ research scholars, the period of lockdown may be treated as 'deemed to be attended' by all the students/ research scholars.

4. Examinations

- i. Maintaining the sanctity of academic expectations and integrity of examination process, the universities may adopt alternative and simplified modes and methods of examinations to complete the process in shorter period of time in compliance with CBCS requirements as prescribed by UGC from time to time. These may include MCQ/ OMR based examinations, Open Book Examination, Open Choices, assignment/ presentation-based assessments etc.
- ii. Most of the Universities follow the evaluation of a student on the basis of 100 Marks [70 External (University Examination) + 30 Internal (Internal evaluation)]. The university may conduct the examinations offline/ online as per their Ordinances/Rules and Regulations, Scheme of Examinations, observing the guidelines of social distancing.
- iii. If need arises, the universities may adopt efficient and innovative modes of examinations by reducing the time from 3 hours to 2 hours assigned to each examination without compromising the quality, so that the process may be completed in multiple shifts and, at the same time, the sanctity to evaluate the performance of a student is also maintained.
- iv. In order to maintain social distancing, one of the possibility for grading of the students could be composite of 50% marks on the basis of the pattern of internal evaluation adopted by the universities as continuous evaluation, prelims, mid-semeseter, internal evaluation or whatever name is given for student progression and the remaining 50% marks can be awarded on the basis of performance of previous semester only for intermediate semester/year students.

OR

In lieu of final examination (of 50% marks), the students should be given assignments, project work, term paper, mini review, open book exam etc. during the period.

This may also be adopted for the 1st year students on annual pattern of examination.

- v. Terminal semester/year students' examination for PG/UG courses/programmes.

The examination will be conducted by university as soon as feasible on the basis of relaxation of the lockdown. The timing of the examination may be considered appropriately by the universities, and examination will be conducted keeping in mind the guidelines of social distancing.

- vi. In addition to the above, following steps are required to be taken:

i. The scheme of "Carry forward" (*for the subjects in which the student has failed*), will be allowed for the current academic year in the universities and every student will be promoted to next semester. However, such students may clear the examination for the course in which he/ she has failed/ remained absent, whenever the examinations are held next.

ii. The students will be allowed to improve their grades by offering one additional opportunity to appear in the current semester courses in succeeding semesters/ years or through supplementary examination.

vii. The modalities for examination and other related activities be applied uniformly across all courses in a university.

viii. The students should be informed well in advance (at least one week) about the conduct of examinations and other related activities.

5. In the prevailing circumstances, the universities may adopt appropriate strategies to facilitate the UG/ PG students pursuing Projects/ Dissertations. These students may be assigned review-based/ secondary data based projects or software-driven projects, instead of laboratory-based experiments or field/ survey-based assignments.

6. The universities may conduct the practical examinations and Viva- Voce through Skype or other meeting apps, and in case of intermediate semesters, the practical examinations may be conducted during the ensuing semesters.

7. A Common Admission Test may be conducted at National/ State Level for admissions to the UG, PG courses and Research Programmes in the universities and colleges.

8. The universities shall make admissions to the UG and PG programmes for the session 2020-21 latest by 31.08.2020. If necessity arises, provisional admissions may be made and the last date of submission of relevant documents of qualifying examination will be 30.09.2020.

9. The Academic Session: 2020-21 shall commence from 1.8.2020/ 1.09.2020 for old/ fresh students. Accordingly, the Committee recommends following Academic Calendar for the session 2020-21:

Admission Process	01.08.2020 to 31.08.2020
Commencement of Classes	
i. Students of 2 nd Year and 3 rd Year	01.08.2020
ii. Fresh batch (First Semester/Year)	01.09.2020
Conduct of Examinations	01.01.2021 to 25.01.2021
Commencement of Classes for Even Semester	27.01.2021
Dispersal of Classes	25.05.2021
Conduct of Examinations	26.05.2021 to 25.06.2021
Summer Vacations	01.07.2021 to 30.07.2021
Commencement of Next Academic Session	02.08.2021

10. The M.Phil. or Ph.D. students, whose maximum period for submission of M.Phil./ Ph.D. Dissertation/ Thesis prescribed under relevant rules/ regulations/ ordinances of the concerned Universities is expired/ expiring during the Corona pandemic period, may be allowed to submit their Dissertation/ Thesis including completion of pending formalities within six months from the date of expiring of regular prescribed period. The period of six months extension will also be applicable in case of all those students who are yet to submit their Dissertation/ Thesis.
11. The universities may conduct the Ph.D. and M.Phil. Viva Voce Examinations through Video Conferencing using Google, Skype, Microsoft Technologies or any other reliable and mutually convenient technology subject to the approval of the concerned statutory authority of the university in compliance of Clause 9.6 to 9.9 of the UGC Regulations 2016 regarding award of M.Phil./ Ph.D. Degree. While conducting the Viva Voce Examination through Video Conferencing using electronic means, it may be ensured that it shall be open to be attended by members of the Research Advisory Committee, all faculty members of the department, research scholars and other interested experts/ researchers, besides the Research Supervisor and Expert(s)/Examiner(s), as applicable. It is imperative on the part of the university to maintain due record of the same, including the report signed by Expert(s)/Examiner(s) appointed for conduct of same.
12. The universities should develop a fool-proof plan before the resumption of session, strictly following the norms of "social distancing" and other required precautions, to avoid any eventuality arising due to COVID-19.
13. The universities may devise a proforma to record the Travel/ Stay history of the staff and students for the period when they remained away from the university due to lockdown so that necessary precautions may be taken in specific cases, if required. In addition to that, the universities shall strictly comply with all precautions and preventive measures to curb the spread of Corona Virus.

14. In view of the importance of social distancing, universities may take necessary steps to ensure that the students are given exposure to laboratory assignments/ practical experiments through virtual laboratories, sharing of the recorded visuals of laboratory work and digital resources available for the purpose. The link provided by Ministry of Human Resource Development for virtual laboratories to facilitate the students of science/ engineering/ technology streams may be suitable for such purposes.
15. In order to overcome such challenges in future, the faculty should be adequately trained for the use of ICT and online teaching tools, so that they complete about 25% of the syllabus through online and 75% syllabus through face to face teaching.
16. Every institute should develop virtual classroom and video conferencing facility and all teaching staff should be trained with the use of the technology.
17. Universities should prepare e-content/e-lab experiments and upload the same on their websites.
18. The universities should strengthen the mechanism of mentor-mentee counselling through a dedicated portal on university website to impart timely guidance and counselling to the students. Besides, the faculty advisors and supervisors assigned to each student should maintain regular communication with the students.
19. In view of the present scenario and future uncertainties, it is suggested that:
 - i. The universities may be at liberty to remove any difficulty in implementing the proposed recommendations by making alteration/ addition/ modification/ amendment with the approval of competent statutory bodies/ competent authorities to deal with a particular situation in the best interest of students, educational institution and the entire education system.
 - ii. If the university faces difficulty in making admissions as per the existing policy, it may adopt alternative modes of admission process, if otherwise legally tenable.
 - iii. In case of educational institutions located at the places where the Government (Centre/ State) has imposed restrictions on gathering of public, the institution may plan accordingly. In any case, the recommendations of the Committee shall not cause any restrictions on the guidelines/directions issued by the appropriate Government/competent authority.

Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Committee regarding the resumption of session, conduct of examinations and commencement of next academic session, every university/ college has to ensure that it is prepared in all respects to carry out the academic activities following necessary advisories/guidelines/directions issued by the Central/State Government/MHRD or UGC from time to time to prevent the spread of COVID-19.