OFFICE OF DEAN ACADEMICS

Policy Document

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Title: Informal Learning

Policy:

Departments should promote a positive learning attitude and enhance students' learning ability to prepare them for the challenges of the future through informal learning. Informal learning should be designed based on a challenge to be addressed from a multi-disciplinary context enabling students to gain the necessary knowledge to address the problem, involve in the activities towards addressing the problem and benchmark their solution at national and international setup leading to better collaborative opportunities. Every program should have necessary provisions to support informal learning across the years.

Outcomes:

- Exposure to multiple ways of handling a problem and solving it through collaborative approach.
- Enhances learner engagement through unstructured and need-based learning.
- Enables the learner to benchmark their learning with their national and international peers thereby enhancing their confidence levels.
- Attain a higher most level of learning through a set of activities

Introduction:

Informal learning refers to learning that occurs away from a structured, formal classroom environment. Informal learning comes in many forms, including viewing videos, self-study, reading articles, participating in various problem-solving activities, forums and chat rooms, performance support, coaching sessions, and game-based learning. In Informal learning, the learning outcomes are formed based on the identification of a problem to be solved. Furthermore, the instructional design and delivery methodology is decided based on the type of problem to be solved by the coordinator or the course instructor.

The informal learning should be more focused on interdisciplinary / multi-disciplinary activity rather than being specific to the program of study of the students. Informal learning should address problems of larger context like energy, healthcare, agriculture, environment, etc., These are called the domains and the problems identified under these domains or their sub domains are to be solved through a sequence of steps viz. training, activity, and benchmark. Identification of the suitable technology and the domain background needed for the learners are decided based on the problem statement. For Ex. the state-of-the-art of technology like IoT, Blockchain, etc. can act as a background for developing solutions for the problems through their application like IoT on smart health care, smart city, the introduction of EV (Electric Vehicles), etc.,

The overall evaluation of informal learning is on the following categories of outcomes:

1. Learning
2. Activity
3. Benchmark

Learning Outcome: The knowledge or skills students should acquire as a part of informal learning and apply towards solving the problem. These outcomes include the background knowledge of the domain, the context and the potential application of knowledge and skills to solve the problem.

Learning outcomes emphasize the application and integration of knowledge with respect to the problem context. Instead of a formal approach to learning like a traditional classroom setup, the students are made to learn in different spaces and in different informal pedagogical styles viz. Interacting with the stakeholders, self-learning, work in lieu mode courses, customized learning modules, etc.

Activity Outcome:

Activity Outcomes are the list of expected outcomes to be attained through the application of the knowledge gained as a part of informal learning. These outcomes help to measure the active involvement of the students in the process of solving the domain-based problem. The following parameters shall be considered to evaluate the students on the attainment of the activity outcomes identified:

1. Commitment
2. Contribution (individual/role based)
3. Knowledge acquired
4. Application of Knowledge
5. Innovation
6. Progress made with respect to solving the problem – Milestones attainment

Benchmark Outcome: Benchmarking is a tool for assessing the performance of the learners with respect to the problem statement they have chosen. This is done to create competitiveness among the learners and give them exposure to the competitions or opportunities that can help them to hone the skills required to create sustainable & cost-effective solutions for the future. The following are the objectives of Benchmarking student solutions at national and international levels:

- Focuses on processes rather than outcomes
- Encourages information sharing & Collaboration
- Enhances the willingness to adapt to volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments of the future.

The following activity shall be considered to measure the effectiveness of benchmark outcomes:

1. Participation in Hackathons
2. Consultancy projects
3. Collaborative projects (interdisciplinary)
4. Recognitions in national and international forums like project competitions, project expos, etc.,
5. Securing an opportunity with an industry project

Activity Points and credit equivalence:

The student involvement in informal learning is duly recognized through activity points wherein the learner acquires the points by attaining the milestones of the learning outcomes. Activity points are more like the credit system however they differ from the later in the way they are acquired. Instead of the traditional way of measuring the credits based on the number of learning hours spent, activity points are acquired based on the evaluation of the parameters listed earlier and its reflection on the attainment of the Activity and Benchmarking outcomes.

Students who wish to redeem their activity points against credits on certain courses are required to apply for the same and the necessary mapping of the equivalence should be carried out by the Student Activity Centre (SAC) in coordination with the department through a detailed understanding on the way activities were conducted and are to be approved by Dean Academics. In such cases, the equivalence letter will be issued by the Office of Dean Academics and subsequently considered by the Controller of Examinations for the award of grade in the respective subject.

Guidelines for Informal learning:

- Framing the course, activities and benchmarks based on the challenge is to be decided by the SAC with due approval from the Board of Activities. The activity points computed as a part of the specific problems to be solved are then reviewed by Dean Academics and passed through the Academic Council.

- SAC is responsible for the following

- To promote and encourage the interest of the students in informal learning by creating awareness on the broad domain areas and the problems to be solved

- To arrange lectures by eminent speakers on emerging areas of science, technology, engineering, arts and management

- To promote and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship among students by exploring the opportunities available in various domains

- To support and connect the students with the resources from academia, research, and industry to identify and solve the domain specific problems

- To identify, support, monitor, and mentor the student's activity with the help of mentors identified from across the domains.

- Challenging problems should be identified, and the activities be designed in such a way that it enhances the learning and retainment of knowledge.

- Necessary awareness be given to the students on the domain areas at an early stage and kindle their interests to identify one.

- The students enrolled for the informal learning be given necessary academic flexibilities in the form of mapping of their internships, projects and open electives towards the activities of informal learning.

- This mapping needs to be done by matching the learning outcomes of the internships and projects with that of the outcomes of the challenges identified through informal learning.

- Open electives act as a means for the students to take up more courses relevant to the domain of their interest thereby enabling them to do a multi-disciplinary study.

- Since informal learning does not have a structured approach or a traditional pedagogical intervention, the students must be given necessary support to make learning more focused and driven when it happens in an informal way

- Informal learning should give the learner the necessary provision to choose the content as per their needs, preferences, and relevance to the context of the problem.

- Learning informally should allow the learner to satisfy their natural interest / passion areas and improve their knowledge on the same.
- The learners should be allowed to learn at their own pace once the appropriate contents relevant to the problem statement are identified. Also, learners working as a team should be allowed to choose the appropriate responsibilities with respect to their problem statement

Evaluation Plan:

The distribution of weightage of components in informal learning is as follows:

1. Learning outcome – 20%

2. Activity outcome – 50%

3. Benchmark outcome – 30%

SAC must list the required / essential number of outcomes on learning, activity, and benchmark category of informal learning. Students can earn the activity points through informal learning only by attaining a minimum 60% in the evaluation components of learning and activity outcomes.

Well-structured evaluation rubric should be created for each of the informal learning courses to be offered through the SAC duly approved by the Board of Activities, and Board of studies, and reviewed by the Dean Academics before being passed through the Academic Council.

The feedback on the effectiveness of the informal learning approach should be taken from the students and other stakeholders twice during the activity period and should be justified through the performance of the students and the outcome attainment.

Students who can't cope up with the informal learning approach should be given the flexibility to drop from the same as and when required without causing any inconvenience to their regular studies. Also, slow learners identified in the "learning phase" should be given the necessary support to ensure that they are able to take part in the activity and benchmark phases. In case, if a student who has cleared the learning

phase and activity phase, however, they couldn't succeed in the benchmark phase immediately, they may redeem the activity points through credit mapping (to be proposed by SAC in coordination with the department and approved by Dean Academics).

Since informal learning happens in individual and group projects, students should be evaluated on the Individual learning parameters, or the group parameters listed below as the case may be.

Individual Learning

1. Identify what learners learned.
2. Identify how learners can apply their learning towards solving the problem
3. Recognize the efforts made by the learner in benchmarking the solution

Learning across groups

1. Participation of the learner in group activities
2. Impact of the role and responsibility taken in solving the problem
3. Moral support extended to the team

Dr. N. Venkatram
Pro Vice Chancellor

Dr Raghuveer VR
Dean Academics