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TOPICS

PAGE

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP).....3

Program Development Objectives (PDOs)3

UC Chair as a Keynote Speaker at "National Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education".4

Approval of Programs and Budgets6

Scholarships to Children of Martyr and Conflict Victim7

UGC Chair as a Speaker in the International Webinar7

QAA Activities7

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Launching Ceremony of Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program



The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) was jointly launched on 26th October 2021 by the University Grants Commission, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the World Bank.

A launching ceremony was organized at University Grants Commission with the participation of Authorities from the UGC, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, World Bank, Universities, *Contd. in Page 2*

Training Program on Higher Education Planning and Administration

Training Program on Higher Education Planning and Administration With the view to improve the organizational efficiency of constituent and affiliated community campuses, University Grants Commission organized the Training Program on Higher Education Planning

and Administration for Campus Chiefs to improve their skills and capacity in the area of planning and administration. The program was organized at National Water Supply and Sanitation Training Centre (NWSSTC) located at Nagarkot, Bhaktapur on 12th September 2021.

Contd. in Page 5

Nepal Telecom and FNCCI. Rectors, Registrars, Deans, Department Heads and Professors from the universities and heads of the different higher education institutions were also attended the program physically and virtually.

The project cost is US\$ 60 million funded from the World Bank for five years periods. To be implemented under the leadership of the University Grants Commission, the project aims to strengthen labor market relevance and quality of higher education, boost collaborative research and innovation, and enhance equitable access for underprivileged and disaster affected groups. It also aims to strengthen governance and extend digitalization of higher education sector.

“The NEHEP will support the Government of Nepal’s National Higher Education Program (NHEP) 2021-2030. The objectives of NHEP are to develop knowledge based society and economy in the country by making higher education scientific, innovative, research oriented, technology – friendly as well as employment oriented and inclusive,” said Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chairperson, UGC, in the program. “Building on the successful partnership with the World Bank in earlier projects that improved research and innovation, quality assurance and accreditation, digitization and Covid responses, the NEHEP will further enhance quality and relevancy in higher education in Nepal and foster the partnership for regional collaboration of higher education institutions across South Asia and beyond.”

“Investing in human capital from early childhood to higher education is key to helping young people in Nepal realize their development potential,” stated Mr. Ram Prasad Thapaliya, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. “This program will help strengthen the higher education sector in collaboration with industries and ensure students across Nepal including those from disadvantaged groups have access to quality higher education.”

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program builds on the success of earlier higher education projects in Nepal to align its higher education sector with labor market needs, boost collaborative research and entrepreneurship, improve governance, and enhance access to quality higher education in general and especially for disadvantaged students. The Covid-19 pandemic has created strong incentives to expand online platforms and blended learning, which the program will help scale up across all universities in Nepal.

“By improving access of students, especially those from disadvantaged communities, to quality higher education and skills that are in demand in the labor market, this program will support Nepal’s COVID-19 recovery,” said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. “This is critical as the country forges efforts towards green, resilient, and inclusive development, which the World Bank is committed to support.”

Prof. Shankar Prasad Bhandari, Secretary, UGC, welcomed the

participants and highlighted the objectives, components and result areas of the project in the program. Prof. Bhandari also focused on the result area-wise overview and expected outcomes of the project in his remarks.

Prof. Dharma Kanta Baskota, Vice Chancellor, Tribhuvan University, put the expectations of the university from the project and thanked the World Bank for this support. Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology expressed his commitment to support the UGC and universities in the areas of communication, information and technologies. Mr. Dinesh Shrestha, Vice President, FNCCI, expressed his willingness to work with UGC for entrepreneurship development and research. Experts and UGC officials presented on the results areas and expected outcomes of the project in the program.

The project has expected outcomes on socioeconomic relevance of academic programs, availability of graduates for the labor-market needs, quality of teaching-learning, collaborative research and entrepreneurship and culture of innovation in the universities, environment for human capital development, inter-university collaboration in program delivery in areas of their comparative advantages, partnership between Government/ Ministries and Academia, capacity building of UGC, higher education governance and EMIS and resource outreach to lagging regions/ underprivileged students, including female.

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP)

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) is yet another pragmatic and systematic effort of the government of Nepal (GoN) including University Grants Commission (UGC) to sustain the achievements from the previous reform initiatives and also to add to the new endeavors for the overall expansion and development of the higher education sector in Nepal. NEHEP is the sub set of the National Higher Education Program (NHEP) and will contribute to

attain development objectives set by the NHEP. The major objectives of NEHEP revolves around three intended outcome areas viz. (a) to strengthen labor market relevance and quality of higher education, (b) to boost collaborative research and innovation, and (c) enhance equitable access for underprivileged and disaster affected groups.

The overall responsibilities of the implementation lies at UGC with the MoEST in the supervisory role. Additionally, Tribhuvan University

will establish a dedicated office/unit which will be a subsidiary agency to implement NEHEP interventions specific to TU's constituent campuses, schools and central departments.

The total estimated cost of NEHEP will be USD 60 million which will be financed from the International Development Agency (IDA)/ World Bank credit. The program will be implemented for the period of five year commencing in 2021/22 till 2025/26.

Program Development Objectives (PDOs)

The PDOs are “to strengthen labor market relevance and quality of higher education, boost collaborative research and innovation, and enhance equitable access for underprivileged and disaster affected groups”.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to measure achievement of the PDOs:

- Indicator 1: Number of students completed first year in labor market relevant programs;
- Indicator 2: Number of HEIs/ Programs Accredited/ completed peer review for quality assurance and accreditation
- Indicator 3: Number of collaborative research projects awarded
- Indicator 4: Number of higher education students supported from bottom quintiles
- Indicator 5: Share of students registered in online/ blended learning

Components: There are two major components embedded to the NEHEP. The first component supports reform of higher education through four results areas. The second component is designated to

support the capacity development of MoEST, UGC and subsidiary implementing agencies.

Component 1: The program is structured in the Program for Result (PforR) instrumental approach of the IDA/ WB. This component supports the key reform areas identified under the national higher education program through result based financing. There are four result areas for reform interventions briefly mentioned as the following:

- a) **Results Area 1 - Improved Labor-market relevance, Entrepreneurship, and Collaborative Research:** This Results Area aims to improve the overall graduate employability and boost research and innovation by HEIs in Nepal.
- b) **Results Area 2 - Strengthening Governance and Financing of Higher Education:** This Results Area aims to strengthen quality assurance, financing, and governance systems to improve the quality and market relevance of higher education.
- c) **Results Area 3 - Widening Access to Quality Higher Education for Disadvantaged**

Students: This Results Area aims to enhance equitable access to higher education in Nepal, focusing on underprivileged students, particularly from disadvantaged provinces and disaster affected regions.

- d) Results Area 4 – Extending Digitization of Higher Education:** This Results Area aims to improve the policy and governance system for digitization and connectivity and strengthen the institutional capacity to digitize teaching and learning and administration of higher education.

Component 2: This component will support the capacity development of MOEST, UGC and subsidiary implementing agencies in strengthening their core regulatory and financing functions of the higher education sector. The capacity building will cover key reform actions under the four Results Areas.

This component will also support the implementation of all activities under the Results Areas, including fiduciary and safeguard management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), strengthening the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), undertaking assessments and evaluation studies, and commissioning Independent Verification Agency (IVA). The component will finance the costs of program activities including, but not limited to the following:

Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) and Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs)

The NEHEP has a total of six Disbursement Link Indicators (DLIs) across the four results areas which are as follows:

DLI 1 - Labor market-driven autonomous courses, faculty members training and academic leaders' sensitization: This DLI will map the scope of the achievements of the targets set to boost the interventions intended by the result area 1 viz. 'Improved Labor-market relevance, entrepreneurship, and collaborative research'.

DLI 2 - Collaborative research and entrepreneurship program: The DLI 2 will also support the result area 1.

DLI 3 - Quality Assurance and Accreditation, and Quality Enhancement: This DLI will support the result area 2 which intends to strengthen governance and financing of higher education for quality assurance and enhancement.

DLI 4 - Performance Based Grants: The DLI will also support the result area 2.

DLI 5 - Enrollment of disadvantaged students and in lagging and/or disaster affected provinces: This DLI comes under the result area 3 which focuses on widening access to quality higher education for disadvantaged students.

DLI 6 - Online teaching, learning and digitized administration: This DLI will support the result area 4 which intends to extend digitization of higher education.

UGC Chair as a Keynote Speaker at "National Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education"

Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chairperson, UGC, participated as a Keynote Speaker at "National Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education" organized by Green Mentors, India on November 9, 2021. The conference was conducted

through virtual mode with the engagement of speakers from 12 different countries around the globe. The Chairman delivered a presentation on "Creating a culture of quality & valuing people" accentuating on the status of Higher Education

in context of Nepal. The presentation also focused on Quality enhancement, culture of quality and valuing people of/ for quality along with Nepal's practice in Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) and Quality Enhancement.

Training Program on Higher Education Planning and Administration

...During the opening ceremony, UGC Chairperson Prof. Dr Bhim Prasad Subedi was the chief guest. In his opening remarks, he emphasized the role of campus chiefs in improving the delivery of quality education. UGC secretary Prof. Shankar Prasad Bhandari was the special guest in the program.

Mr. Kedar Prasad Acharya, Finance Controller of UGC welcomed all the participants. He stated that the training program was organized in order to enhance the capabilities of the campus chiefs in different spheres of higher education planning and administration. Mr. Hari Prasad Upadhyay, Training Coordinator, presented objectives and highlights of the training program.

UGC Secretary Prof. Bhandari highlighted on UGC's future plan to reshape higher education, quality assurance, plan to increase enrollment and good governance in higher education. Chairperson of UGC, Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi in his closing remarks stated that we have to respect the value of all concerned. He said "You already know it, but you have to have courage to understand and to draw meaningful conclusion the things. No one knows really, all the things are either borrowed or rented." Further he added that campus chief is the pivotal position to bridge between parents, students, community, and higher university officials.

The program was organized in two rounds. Both the training rounds lasted for five days. The First Round



of training started from 12th Sep and ended on 16th Sep 2021. Similarly, the Second Round of training started on 18th Sep and ended on 22nd Sep 2021. Each training program had 22 sessions, and each session lasted for 90 minutes.

The overall objective of this training program was to enable the Campus Chiefs to bring changes in their activities and behavior so that organizational efficiency and effectiveness of campuses could be enhanced. Major objectives of this training program were: to enhance understanding in planning and administration of academic institution; to provide information and enhance knowledge in leadership, decision-making, communication, negotiation, quality and budgeting and to enable Campus Chiefs with skill in implementation of the program and administration of colleges.

Altogether 61 Campus Chiefs participated in the program. These Campus Chiefs belonged to both constituent and community

campuses. In the selection, efforts were made to involve newly appointed Campus Chiefs so that they could find enough time to implement what they learn in the training. Experts were drawn from a pool of experts and included professors, educationists, senior government officials and freelance experts.

The participants expressed their happiness and felt privileged to take part in the training program. As mentioned by the participants, they were curious to get knowledge and skills on the various aspects of education management including planning, administration, execution of several activities that will help in dealing with many campus problems and enhancing the quality. As they expressed during the closing session they were satisfied as their concerns were addressed and most of their expectations were fulfilled. According to them they were more confident in leadership and in executing their roles.

Approval of Programs and Budgets

The Board Meeting of the University Grants Commission held on 26th August approved the annual programs and budget for the fiscal year 2021/22 (2078/79) with a total amount of Rs. 18.19 billion. This amount has incorporated both the recurrent and developmental budget of higher education sector. Out of this budget, Rs 5.4 billion has been allocated for the capital development of higher education institutions in the country. It constitutes 30.2% of the total budget while 69.8% has been allocated for the operation. Rs. 9.5 (i.e. 52.4%) billion of the total budget has been allocated to Tribhuvan University. Rs. 1.25 billion has been allocated as grants to community campuses as regular and physical facility development grants. The grants to the community campuses will be provided on the basis of formula funding and other defined criteria.

Likewise, UGC has approved the different programs and activities under the Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) with the estimated cost of Rs. 638.5 million for the fiscal year 2021/22. The Commission has been implementing NEHEP since 2021 with the soft loan support of the World Bank. The five-year program aims to improve the quality and labor market relevance of Nepal's higher education, scale up collaborative research and online learning, and expand access to academic institutions for underprivileged and vulnerable students from disadvantages areas. The total cost of the project is NRs. 6.0 billion.

UGC allocates grants to higher education institutions for their smooth operation and to help them

achieve academic excellence, as it is provisioned by its Act (1993). UGC disburses grants to higher education institutions broadly under two categories: operation grants and capital development grants. The funding for universities are provided in the form of block grants, core funding and formula based grants. Block grants are for the operation of the institutions and it is calculated on the basis of number of teachers and administrative staffs; whereas the formula-based grants is calculated on the basis of cost recovery.

The budget was based on the following policies and programs for higher education.

- The modality of grants provided to all higher education institutions will be improved and the pattern of investment through the government will be based on results,
- Efforts towards conducting National Eligibility Test will be done to improve the quality of higher education,
- In order to make higher education efficient, relevant, employment oriented and enrolment in technical subjects will be increased by launching new educational program. The new programs will be based on higher education mapping and areas of national priority through developing new or through revising the existing curriculum,
- Support for patentable innovative research projects and programs of national importance will be extended by emphasizing research and invention which would contribute to achieve national goals of 'Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali'. Furthermore, this support is expected to help brand

the country a destination of higher education in the international arena,

- Research projects on national priority will be conducted in collaboration with the research centers of the universities,
- The focus will be given on research and study regarding the socio economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic. Study, teaching and research will be improved by making maximum use of information, technology and communication to cope with the current global pandemic Covid-19,
- Programs of mutual benefit and social responsibility will be conducted between the university and the industry sector.
- Policy initiative will be taken to extend coordination and collaboration between national and provincial universities/ higher education institutions and TU will be restructured.
- Gross enrollment in higher education will be increased by focusing on technical subjects.
- Policy on establishing new universities and study and research will be revised in order to enhance the effectiveness of established universities.
- Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) system will be strengthened for institutional development of HEIs.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation system will be strengthened in order to assess the investment and its outcomes in higher education institutions.
- A single-window system will be developed for all scholarship programs in higher education and mechanism for easy access to target groups will be improved.

Scholarships to Children of Martyr and Conflict Victim

University Grants Commission recently provided the scholarships to 21 students for the study of higher education from the children of those declared martyrs and conflict victims by the government. The scholarships has been designed to the sons and daughters of persons who have been martyr, disappeared or wounded during the different political movements between the period of 13th Feb 1996 to 15th May 2006. Issuing a public notice on 17th March, the

Commission has called for application for scholarships to the students who are currently enrolled at Bachelor first year/semester.

The scholarships has been provided as per the criteria and norms set by the 'Guidelines for Scholarships to the Children of Martyrs and Conflict Victim for the Study of Higher Education, 2076'. The Commission has made the provision of budget in the current fiscal year for the same purpose.

UGC Chair as a Speaker in the International Webinar

Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chairperson, UGC, participated in the International Webinar on Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Assessment in Higher Education organized by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) on May 19, 2021. The program was conducted through virtual mode where the Chairperson presented a paper entitled "Quality Issues in Higher Education: Nepal's Journey to QAA". The paper highlighted the scenario of Higher Education in Nepal along with the basic features, status and achievements, lessons learnt and challenges faced by QAA system in Nepal.

QAA Activities

Assessments

In the first trimester of the FY 2078/079, the Peer Review Team's assessment visit of Marsyangdi Multiple Campus (MMC), Besisahar, Lamjung, has been completed. During the four day assessment visit, a number of consultation meetings with campus stakeholders was carried out.

During the same period preparatory assessment visits of the following institutions have been completed.

1. Shanker Dev Campus, Kathmandu
2. Kathmandu School of Law, Bhaktapur
3. Chautara Multiple Campus, Sindhupalchowk
4. Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu
5. Sirjana College of Fine Arts, Kathmandu
6. Bageshwori College, Bhaktapur
7. Bhairahawa Multiple Campus, Rupandehi

8. Rapti Babai Campus, Dang
9. Pokhara Nursing Campus, Kaski
10. Koteswor Multiple Campus, Kathmandu.

Similarly, the follow up visit of three following HEIs have been completed.

1. Baneshwor Multiple Campus, Kathmandu
2. Kanya Campus Pokhara, Kaski
3. Tridev Multiple Campus, Jhapa

Policy Changes

The Council has made various decisions in order to bring changes in the policies of existing QAA system. The changes mainly related to eligibility criteria for the submission of LoI and SSR. The minimum requirements for the institution to be eligible for accreditation and renewal of LoI. Categorically, the major changes in the policy areas include :

Submission of Letter of Intent (LoI)

- Minimum number of students in the institution should be 200 except the Central Departments, Central Schools/Campuses of universities and HEIs offering quota based programs. However, institutions under exception must have fulfilled at least 80% of total enrollment of approved quota in each program. HEIs having both quota based programs and general programs should have at least 200 students enrolled and 80% admission fulfilled in Quota or in approved seats.
- At least 5% of the total operating budget of the institution should be allocated for the promotion and sustenance of research culture within the institution. This research budget should be reflected in the annual budget plan of the institution.

Submission of SSR:

- The HEI should produce documents ensuring that institution has met at least : (a) average national pass percentage, (b) average pass percentage of the affiliating university, (c) average pass percentage of the concerned faculty and (d) level –wise pass percentage of the program.
- The management, finance, examination and all other related administrative records of secondary school till grade 12

and programs related to CTEVT should be separated from higher education institution.

- Detail Human Resource Management (HRM) Plan of the HEI incorporating minimum qualification consistent to affiliating university and recruitment policies/processes of the affiliating university.

Renewal of LoI

QAA Council has decided that institutions should submit its SSR within one year of acceptance of LoI. Upon logical request with application, 6 months shall be extended by the Director of the QAAD. However, failing to submit SSR within 1.6 years will lead institution towards renewal of LoI before submitting the SSR. And the renewal charge has been set Rs. 10,000/-. The details on this regards shall be retrieved from the following link: <https://ugcnepal.edu.np/singleNotice/1/465>

Deactivation of LoI Submitted Status of HEIs

The Council has also decided to deactivate the status of various LoI Submitted HEIs as they remained short in submitting the SSR even in the time frame of 5 years. However, the deactivated HEIs can reactivate themselves by renewing the LOI in given format. The notification regarding this can be retrieved from the following link: <https://ugcnepal.edu.np/specialmsg/7>

Revision of Benchmarks & Indicators of QAA System

Taking in learning of applicability of the existing benchmarks and indicators of the QAA system of Nepal, the UGC Nepal in recommendation of EQAAC has initiated the revision on it to align with the globally changing dimensions of higher education,

needs and demands. The UGC has formed a 7-members committee to undertake this task under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chair of the UGC Nepal. As reported, the team is about to finalize its given task.