

Review Article

Internal quality assurance cell as a “think tank:” Taking initiative!

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ABSTRACT

Quality in higher education is the key to stepping up the ladder for being among the top, be it accreditation, ranking, admissions, etc. But how do we achieve the highest quality is a challenge. The internal quality assurance cell (IQAC) makes an institute work harder, guiding its institute to take an efficient pathway and achieve success. The vision and mission of IQAC is to achieve and maintain excellence in academics, administration, research, teaching, extracurricular activities, and community work. This article focuses on the important role that the IQAC plays in guiding the institutes and universities to achieve excellence.

Keywords: Internal quality assurance cell, Quality, Higher education, Academics, Excellence

INTRODUCTION

Quality in higher education is the key to step up the ladder for being among the top be it accreditation, ranking, admissions, etc. But how do we achieve the highest quality is a challenge. The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) makes an institute work harder, guiding its institute to take an efficient pathway and achieve success. The vision and mission of IQAC is to achieve and maintain excellence in academics, administration, research, teaching, extracurricular activities, and community work. This article focuses on the important role that the IQAC plays in guiding the institutes and universities to achieve excellence.

WHAT IS IQAC?

IQAC is the Internal Quality Assurance Cell. The IQAC is an internal mechanism for sustenance, assurance, and enhancement of the quality culture of education.^[1] It is that cell that makes the colleges prepare their specific objectives to attain the highest quality in academics, research, administration, outreach, and extension activities and remain up to date. University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced IQAC at colleges and universities with U.G.C.-XI plan and XII plan focusing on quality, access, equity, and promotion of talent and skill development.

GOALS OF IQAC

The very first goal of IQAC is to make quality education a continuous process. With that basic agenda, the various roles

IQAC performs are,

1. Holding academic audit in terms of self-assessment.
2. Continuous quality check.
3. Teaching and learning assessment.
4. Valuing faculty and students.
5. Ensuring a good mechanism of feedback and evaluation.

Quality assurance and quality enhancement are like two sides of the coin for IQAC.^[2] It helps in planning and implementing academic work in higher education among stakeholders.

IQAC plays an important role in the Governance mechanism.^[3] IQAC takes initiative, and all other departments conducts activities. IQAC promotes initiatives that mean that IQAC is a “Think Tank.” IQAC conducts planning and invites proposals throughout the year. Once these proposals come, they are lined up, they are made valid, the finer aspects are understood, and they are processed so that funds are made available for conducting the activities and that’s why it is called as “IQAC taking an Initiative.” IQAC should take maximum initiatives, IQAC should take new initiatives.

WHAT IS AN INITIATIVE?

Anything or any aspect that makes the organization better is an initiative.^[4] Like, any new courses planned can be an initiative, new programs can be an initiative, sports promotion and cultural promotion can be a new initiative, intellectual property rights (IPR)-related activities can be an initiative, “Swachhata Abhiyan” can be an initiative,

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Received: 21 June 2024 Accepted: 28 June 2024 Published: 01 August 2024 DOI: 10.25259/SRJHS_12_2024

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E-governance initiative can be taken, and technology-based teaching can be an initiative.

Now, these initiatives are suggested by the IQAC to the organization so that the organization accordingly progresses in those areas. This is how IQAC works.

HOW MANY QUALITY INITIATIVES THE ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE?

At least 15 quality initiatives need to be taken or conducted for a good grade from National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) by the organization. When a greater number of quality initiatives are taken, more people get involved in these initiatives. Responsibilities can be shared and this helps in the organization becoming a better place to learn and work. Initiatives play a very important role. As per the reviewing of NAAC, more than 10 initiatives need to be taken every year.

QUALITY ASSURANCE INITIATIVE OF THE INSTITUTION

Academic and administrative audits should be conducted by the IQAC every 2–3 years. Any audit has a purpose, any audit has an objective, and every audit has an outcome. The suggestions that come from audits such as participation in National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification or any other kind of quality audit, and green audits, are extremely welcome in the IQAC system.

IQAC is a vibrant body and IQAC must remain a vibrant body for performing better. As per NAAC every accredited college has to establish IQAC. Quality enhancement is an ongoing activity and IQAC is the main committee of the college to look after quality maintenance and after that, gradually quality enhancement. Based on the feedback from different stakeholders and also from Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOC) analysis, the IQAC can evaluate and fix such areas in which they have to work. Thus, IQAC plays an important role in the development of the institute.

The vision of IQAC must be to make certain that the best quality ways are kept as the primary process for the higher educational institutes through institutionalizing all the initiatives taken with university and institute support. The primary aim of IQAC is to ensure a system that plays conscious action to increase the academic performance of the institute. IQAC promotes actions for the institute to excel toward quality strengthening through institutionalization of best practices. In this way, IQAC has to create a quality culture and has to play a key role to ensure and comply objectives.^[5]

Strategies of IQAC

IQAC shall involve mechanisms and approaches for,

- Verifying prompt, methodical and cumulative execution of managerial, educative, administrative, and budgetary

functions.

- Reliable and valid academic and research programs.
- incorporating modernized methods of education.
- The credibility of assessment and evaluation methods.
- Sharing of research findings and networking with other institutes.
- Sharing of academic and extra co-curricular activities with all staff members and students.

Functions of IQAC

Functions anticipated from IQAC^[6] are:

- Establishment of quality standards.
- Framework for institutional activities involving administration and academics.
- Enabling the formation of a learner-centric environment.
- Obtaining feedback from all stakeholders and analyzing it for improvising institutional processes.
- Recording of all those activities leading to quality enhancement.
- Taking up the role of being a nodal agency of the institution for quality control.
- Besides developing and maintaining of institutional database.
- Regular conduct of audits and its follow-up.
- Preparation and submission of the annual quality assurance report (AQAR) as per guidelines and parameters of NAAC.

BENEFITS OF HAVING A FUNCTIONAL IQAC

- Ensured quality culture.
- Improved institutional functioning.
- Organized communication within the institute.
- Valid organization system within the institute as well as with the university.

COMPOSITION OF IQAC

Every institution should establish an IQAC under the leadership of the head of the institution. This cell should include heads of significant academic and administrative units, several teachers, distinguished educationists, and representatives from local management and stakeholders. The suggested composition of the IQAC is:

1. Chairperson: Head of the Institution.
2. Senior administrative officers.
3. Teachers: Three to eight.
4. Management representative: One member.
5. Nominees: One or two from local society, students, and alumni.
6. Stakeholder representatives: One or two from employers, industrialists, or other stakeholders.
7. Coordinator/director: One senior teacher.

ROLE OF THE IQAC COORDINATOR

The IQAC coordinator plays a pivotal role in ensuring the

effective operation of the IQAC. This position should be filled by a senior individual with substantial experience and understanding of quality issues. The coordinator can be a full-time role or an additional responsibility for a senior academic or administrator. Administrative support should be provided to facilitate their duties. The coordinator should be proficient in computer and data management to enhance communication efficiency. Their primary responsibilities include leading the implementation of quality functions and leveraging existing units and mechanisms to support academic excellence, adapting them to meet the institution's specific needs.

ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT OF IQAC IN UNIVERSITY QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The IQAC is instrumental in the quality enhancement of accredited institutions. Its functions include:

1. Developing and applying quality benchmarks across various institutional activities.
2. Disseminating information on quality standards.
3. Organizing workshops seminars, and promoting quality circles.
4. Recording and monitoring the institution's quality measures.
5. Acting as the institution's quality-related activities agency.
6. Preparing the AQAR and other relevant reports.

In essence, the IQAC should play a critical role in ensuring high standards and efficiency in all educational activities within the institution.

CONCLUSION

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is a critical component for any higher educational institution, playing an indispensable role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of education. The IQAC must operate tirelessly, ensuring that the institution adheres to the highest standards of academic excellence and accountability. Its proactive involvement is essential not only for addressing areas of improvement but also for fostering a culture of continuous growth and innovation. An effective IQAC acts as a cornerstone for institutional success, driving both good

and poor performance toward constructive outcomes. By systematically monitoring and evaluating processes, the IQAC helps institutions meet their educational goals and adapt to evolving challenges consistently.

Ethical approval

The Institutional Review Board approval is not required.

Declaration of patient consent

Patient's consent not required as there are no patients in this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technology for manuscript preparation

The author confirms that there was no use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technology for assisting in the writing or editing of the manuscript and no images were manipulated using AI.

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How to cite this article: Avinash B. Internal quality assurance cell as a “think tank:” Taking initiative! *Sri Ramachandra J Health Sci.* 2024;4:12-4. doi: 10.25259/SRJHS_12_2024