

Minutes of the 13th meeting of the Empowered Committee on Basic Scientific Research held on 20.11.2007 at 11.00 a.m. in the UGC Office

The 13th meeting of the Empowered Committee on Basic Scientific Research was held on 20.11.2007 at 11.00 a.m. in the UGC Office.

The following attended the meeting :

1. Prof.Sukhadeo Thorat
Chairman, UGC
2. Prof.Mool Chand Sharma
Vice Chairman, UGC
3. Prof.M.M.Sharma
3, Jaswant Baugh
Behind Akbar Allya
V.N.Purav Marg
Chambder Nake
Mumbai - 400 071
4. Prof.Goverdhan Mehta
Hon.Prof. & CSIR
Bhatnagar Fellow
Indian Institute of Science
Bangalore - 560 012
5. Dr.Kota Harinarayan
Raja Ramana Fellow
Structure Division
National Aerospace Laboratories
Bangalore - 560 017
6. Prof.P.Rama Rao
Flat No. 301,
Naimisum, Plot No.22,
Tri Nagar Colony,
Hyderabad - 500 073
7. Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan
#, 1st Main Road,
Nehru Nagar, Adyar,
Chennai - 600 020
8. Dr.(Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal
Joint Secretary, UGC

7. Mrs.Parvati Bose
Under Secretary, UGC

Prof.R.P.Gandhi, Former Professor of Chemistry, Delhi University and INSA Honorary Scientist was also invited for discussions on the recommendations of the Empowered Committee for his possible appointment as Consultant for the scheme of Operation Faculty Recharge.

The Experts from 9 Universities whose proposals were short listed by the Empowered Committee for networking resource centres were also invited for making presentations before the Empowered Committee. In the beginning, the Committee took a joint meeting of the experts from all the Universities to brief them about the expectation of the Committee from the proposed networking centres. The experts were informed by the Committee that the proposed networking centres should not be considered as a fund raising activity and the Committee perceives these centres as peaks of excellence who have to demonstrate their strength for the benefit of cluster of universities. It would be a skill and capacity building programme in addition to being research intensive, requiring, an innovative approach to fulfill the objectives of the schemes.

The members mentioned that keeping in view the fact that the contribution of the universities to Research has fallen from 60% to 10% in the last 3 decades, it is evident to give a much larger boost to the research activities. The proposed networking centres have to re-energize the talent available in the Universities and their presentation should clearly indicate the innovations and outreach activities proposed by the department.

The Committee then invited the experts from every university one by one to make a presentation. The following science departments of the identified universities made the presentation before the Committee :

1. Division of Biological Sciences, IISc, Bangalore
2. School of Chemistry, University of Hyderabad
3. School of Life Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University
4. Department of Radio Physics & Electronics, University of Calcutta
5. Department of Chemistry, Jadavpur University
6. Department of Physics, Banaras Hindu University
7. Department of Physics, Andhra University
8. Department of Physics, Punjab University
9. School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamraj University

The Committee after detailed discussions decided to call for the revised proposals indicating the frontier areas of research in which the networking centre would be functioning, the brief description of research projects indicated to be undertaken, number of summer/winter schools to be conducted alongwith the number of participants, proposal for short-term/medium-term/long-term collaborations with the universities to be undertaken by the networking resource centre, the type of courses and

researches to be conducted, the facilities to be provided (research facilities, equipment, guidance) to the researchers who come to the department on continual basis. The number of such researchers to whom the department wishes to cater may also be indicated alongwith the proposed website to be developed to undertake the above activities with the hyper-link to the UGC Website etc.

It was decided to call revised proposals from all the above centres except from Department of Physics, University of Andhra Pradesh whose proposal was rejected by the Committee due to its past performance. The centres were requested to send the revised proposals within a period of 2 weeks for consideration by the Committee in its next meeting.

The Committee had brief discussions with Prof.R.P.Gandhi for his possible appointment as Consultant for the scheme of "Operation Faculty Recharge". The Committee informed Prof.Gandhi that the scheme of Operation Faculty Recharge was a challenging task as it involved selection of 1000 Faculty members which is an onerous task. the process has to be done expeditiously, electronically and in an innovative manner. The scheme would be having international visibility and the association of the name of UGC with these teachers will give them a brand value in recognition of their talent.

Prof.Gandhi in his brief remarks mentioned that it was a good scheme and would have a large impact on the quality of higher education in the country. However, his role would be limited to identifying the persons to be appointed under the scheme and the administrative activities have to be undertaken by the UGC. Prof.Gandhi was requested to give a proposal indicating his requirement for implementing the scheme within 2-3 weeks while ensuring that the selections are made in a transparent, merit based and in a fast-track manner. UGC would parallelly sensitize the universities to absorb UGC appointed faculty by signing an MOU with individual universities.

The agenda items were then taken up one by one :

Item No.1 :- Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 8.10.2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 08.10.2007 were confirmed.

Item No.2:- Action taken on the minutes

The Committee appreciated the action taken by the UGC in the last minutes.

Item No.3:- Information received with regard to strengthening of infrastructure in non-SAP Science Departments in Universities

The Committee expressed its appreciation for the large number of proposals received from Non SAP Departments and requested that the criteria applied

for the DRS Departments with regard to number of Ph.Ds produced in the last 3-5 years may be applied on all these departments and a fresh list be prepared of the Departments who fall under this criteria for consideration of the Committee.

Item No.4:- E-mail received from Dr.Shridhar Gadre enclosing Proforma for application for Dr.D.S.Kothari Post-Doctoral Fellowships.

Item No.5 :- Proforma prepared by Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan for application for Dr.D.S.Kothari Post-Doctoral Fellowships

The Empowered Committee considered both the items. The proforma approved by the Committee is enclosed.

Item No.6 :- Letter received from Sh.Sunil Kumar, JS(HE),MHRD Regarding Vigyan Joyti Shivir for providing Opportunity for bright young undergraduate Students to interact with outstanding scientiest.

Item No.7 :- Letter received from Shri Sunil Kumar, JS(HE), M/HRD regarding Revival of the programme of Summer schools and Winter schools

The Empowered Committee mentioned that this issue was discussed in the meeting of SAC-PM-MHRD on higher education held on 05.11.2007 and action has been initiated on these issues .

Item No.8 :- Letter received from Shri Ravi Mathur, JS, M/HRD regarding programme to develop nono-technology

The Empowered Committee suggested that this should be considered under the scheme of Innovative Courses of the UGC.

Item No.9 :- Letter received from Director, IUCAA, Pune.

The Committee desired that the initiatives taken by the UGC may be sent to Director, IUCAA for information.

Item No.10 Letter sent to the DG,CSIR, New Delhi regarding formal linkages.

The Committee appreciated the letter sent by the UGC and desired that the meeting may be fixed at the earliest possible.

Item No.11 :- Any other item

The Committee reconsidered its decision taken in the last meeting regarding providing a grant of Rs.30 lakhs to the Departments who have sent their utilization certificate for the first infrastructural grant of Rs.20 lakhs. The Committee authorised Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan to go through the proposal submitted by each university for infrastructural support and indicate the amount and the items for which the next grant may be given based on the optimum utilization of the earlier grant. Based on the authorization of the Empowered Committee, Dr.Thyagarajan analysed the(i) Statement of Expenditure/UC provided by 36 CAS/DSA departments of 29 universities and (ii) Fresh proposals for the second Instalment of Infrastructure strengthening grant received from 55 CAS/DSA departments of 36 universities. On the basis of the major pattern of proposals received, he recommended that the second installment of Rs.30.00 lakhs to each of the 55 CAS/DSA departments may be granted for effecting one or more of the following areas of proposals as per the priority of the host CAS/DSA department.

1. Annual Maintenance Contract for sophisticated equipments of the department
2. GLP standard furniture to the laboratories
3. Multimedia teaching aids
4. Modernization of existing student classrooms/seminar room
5. Video conferencing facilities for the seminar room
6. Repair of major equipments of the departments
7. Electrical rewiring of laboratories
8. Fire-safety requirements for laboratories
9. Ramp or special toilet for differently abled students/personnel

He further recommended that the grant letters should specifically state immediate submission of utilization certificates for the first installment of the grant already released and also the need for sending utilization certificate for the second installment released on or before 28th February, 2008. He suggested that subsequent to this meeting, if more CAS/DSA depts. send proposals to UGC, same methodology could be followed for providing second installment of grant.

The Empowered Committee expressed its gratitude to the Chairman, UGC for strengthening the BSR unit of the UGC and further desired that apart from the manpower the following infrastructural support should be provided to the BSR Unit.

1. 3 Desktop Computers with related accessories and Software
2. 3 Laser Printers
3. 2 Laptops

The Empowered Committee indicated that, if required, the budget for these items may be utilized from the funds allocated for the Empowered Committee.

It was proposed to hold the next meeting of the Committee on 3-4th January, 2008.

The meeting ended with the vote of thanks to the Chair.