

**NOTE ON THE BRAINSTORM SESSION OF THE MHRD/UGC
EMPOWERED COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STRATEGIES OF THE
BASIC SCIENCE RESEARCH STRENGTHENING PROGRAMMES
FOR THE YEAR 2008-2009 HELD ON 6TH MAY,2008.**

**The following members attended the Brainstorm Session 18th
meeting of the Empowered committee held on 6th May,2008.**

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

6. Mr. A.K. Dogra
Joint Secretary, UGC
7. Ms.Parbati Bose
Under Secretary, UGC

After formally approving the corrected minutes of the 17th meeting of the Empowered Committee held on 22nd april,2008, Dr.M.M.Sharma, the Chairman of the Committee expressed satisfaction on the proactive manner in which UGC has implemented all the schemes formulated by the Empowered Committee during the year 2007-2008 and thanked the Chairman, UGC for his personal involvement in the implementation of the schemes. The Chairman also placed on record with satisfaction the recognition given by the Parliamentary committee to the schemes of Empowered committee in its report to Government of India. Prof.G.Mehta supplemented details of appreciation that the schemes on Scientific Research strengthening that UGC has launched thro' this initiative has received thro'the Parliamentary Committee.

Final approval of the first batch of Dr.D.S.Kothari PDFs:

The Chairman after commending the remarkable work turned out by Dr.Shridhar Gadre in finalizing the first batch of selection of candidates for the award of Dr.D.S.Kothari Post Doctoral Fellowships and brought to the attention of the committee about the delay in approval by UGC due to a query on the decision on applying reservation policy for the award of these fellowships. The committee after a brief deliberation unanimously recorded that the UGC guidelines on reservation for fellowships would be applicable also to the Dr.D.S.Kothari PDFs. The Chairman, Empowered Committee requested Chairman,UGC to immediately approve the first list and instruct Dr.Gadre to announce it in the website of the scheme. It was also suggested that the scheme guidelines on the website should also include the statement on the applicability of reservation guidelines of UGC for this PDF. Dr.Dogra, Joint secretary who has taken over from Dr.Pankaj Mittal assured that the approval letter for PDFs would go before the end of the week.

Brainstorm on future strategies:

Initiating the Brainstorm session to work out future strategies, Chairman requested the members to express their views:

Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan placed before the Committee copies of his concept note for consideration (copy enclosed)

Prof. G.Mehta remarked that the first year approach has been more on the proactive 'top-down' mode to achieve coverage of more number of higher education institutions across the country . However, the second year approach need to be more objective with a built in mechanism of review and monitoring, he said. He further suggested the following:

- 1) The horizon of Infrastructure grant need to be upgraded to include creation of quality laboratory spaces for research in universities and colleges;
- 2) In consonance with the suggestion given by Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan, Spread factor across the country can be expanded by granting infrastructure grants and research fellowships to the science departments of all colleges that are accredited by NAAC at 'A' grade level minusing the CPE and autonomous colleges that have already been given such grants.
- 3) 10-15% of the infrastructure grants could be provided towards Purchase of print version books for the library.

Prof. Kota Harinarayana has made the following suggestions:

- 1) Networking of the departments of the Universities need to be stressed while providing infrastructure grants;
- 2) The libraries of these universities are to be provided with the means of downloading full length articles from scientific journals;
- 3) Since the present day universities and colleges are highly bureaucratic lacking mechanism for delegation of powers and time bound utilization of extramural grants provided, guidelines/norms are to be framed and sent to universities/colleges which are receiving grants under the BSR schemes;
- 4) Since strong faculty with academic expertise alone can deliver strong capacity built students, methodology of getting strong faculty need to be outlined.

Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan after briefing the enclosed concept note, made the following approaches for consideration:

- 1) A structured review of the quality of the implementation of the schemes under which grants have been provided to various categories of departments under the universities/colleges;
- 2) Expansion of the approved schemes to the eligible science departments of universities and colleges: eg., NAAC grade 'A' accredited colleges still not covered under CPE/autonomous college eligibility criteria and Non-SAP science departments of the universities by lowering the eligibility requirements in terms of number of faculty/ number of Ph.Ds produced/ number of publications made. This would effectively help to achieve the spread factor of the benefits of the schemes across the country;
- 3) All the still-to-be-implemented approved schemes are to be expedited on fast track methodology;
- 4) The new schemes suggested in the note could be linked to the approved schemes for providing additional impetus to the momentum of achieving the goals of the BSR programme
- 5) Re-appropriation of the budget allocation of 2008-2009 as per the schemes that are to be continued/implemented during this financial year.

Prof. P. Rama Rao made the following remarks and suggestions:

- 1) The BSR programme has proactively performed in an unprecedented manner during 2007-2008; but the approach has to be performance linked during 2008-2009;
- 2) A letter has to be sent by UGC to all the beneficiaries to get a report of performance and also asking the type of requirement needed for them during 2008-2009 besides asking for their feedback opinion on the "Infrastructure grant scheme"
- 3) To expedite the formation of the UGC-CSIR consortium, the designated joint committee needs to go ahead with its meetings to give a final shape for this effort to facilitate its implementation; It is better to network the CSIR laboratories with the state universities rather than Central universities, he opined;
- 4) The Faculty Recharge scheme and the Faculty upgradation initiatives need to be prioritized; For the later programme, a database of fellows/awardees of Science/Medical/Engineering Academies could be provided to the UGC Networking centers for their faculty development/Research development programmes;

- 5) Systemic reform at UGC need to be thought of for developing a structure for Science support.

Prof.M.M.Sharma has suggested to following plans:

- 1) Since various agencies recognize young scientists, can we under this BSR programme devise a mechanism to support INSA/Academies young scientists through the 'Infrastructure Grant' scheme?
- 2) Augmentation/upgradation of individual laboratories to provide quality research laboratories
- 3) Expanding the infrastructure grant sanction to cover maximum number of Non-SAP Science departments in the universities
- 4) The budget allocation for the year 2008-2009 cannot be just Rs.148 crores as informed by the UGC office and it has to be atleast Rs. 220 crores similar to the allocation of 2007-2008 plus 10% addition to take care of escalation.

As requested by the Chairman and members of the Empowered Committee, the Chairman UGC joined the meeting to whom Dr.M.M.Sharma briefed the deliberations had till then and also preferred his decisions on the following issues:

- 1) Approval of the first list of Dr.D.S.Kothari PDF candidates selected
- 2) The fellowship award function with the MHRD Minister for increased visibility
- 3) Budget allocation for 2008-2009 to be at least Rs.220 crores instead of the present Rs.148 crores stated by the UGC office

Chairman, UGC specifically instructed the office (i) to send the approved list of Dr.D.S. Kothari PDFs to Dr.Gadre and award letters to the selected candidates taking on file and the website that the UGC approved guidelines on reservations would be followed for this PDF scheme as well; (ii) to put up the file on Budget allocation for 2008-09 so that a clear cut allocation of Rs.220 crores could be earmarked;(iii) To take steps for organizing a fellowship launch function which should include all UGC fellowships besides Dr.D.S.Kothari PDF, like Rajiv Gandhi fellowship etc and seek a convenient date on which Empowered Committee members could also be present in the function; He also accepted to discuss the issue of housing the Faculty Recharge scheme with VC,JHU shortly.

Chairman, UGC also asked the committee(i) to instruct all the beneficiary universities/Colleges receiving fellowships for PH.D to follow the standardized process of Ph.D admission evolved by UGC as a precondition while awarding the fellowships and (ii) to review the NET examination issue and its applicability to different categories of candidates in its next meeting and **instructed the office to arrange to provide the members a status paper on the issue before the next meeting which he requested to be conducted during the early first week of June.**

After further discussions, the following decisions were taken to be completed for processing in the next meeting:

- 1) Proactive efforts to reach out to more number of Non-SAP Science departments for providing a methodology for Infrastructure support grant.

Action to be taken by UGC office to provide the entire categorized list of all NON-SAP departments who have applied for the infrastructure grant to **Prof. S.P.Thyagarajan who in turn would prepare a structured methodology for consideration of the Committee.**

- 2) To prepare the list of NAAC 'A' grade accredited colleges who have not earlier received infrastructure grant in their status as autonomous/CPE colleges.

Action to be taken by UGC office to procure the list of 'A' Grade accredited colleges from NAAC and prepare the final list to be considered as per (2) above.

- 3) **Sample survey** of some of the beneficiary University/ colleges to be done by the individual members of the Empowered committee in their respective cities and provide feed back to UGC and the committee.

Action to be taken: UGC to write to the institutions about this process.

- 4) **Status report** on implementation of the schemes sanctioned/funds released by the beneficiary institutions has to be received using a **format to be developed by Prof. S.P.Thyagarajan.**

5) A letter to VCs of the universities/ Principals of Colleges need to be sent by UGC reminding the un-use of the Infrastructure grants and about the proactive efforts to be taken by them for implementing these science strengthening schemes.

The meeting ended with thanks to the chair after deciding 3rd June,2008 at 11.30 am as the date and time for the next meeting of the Empowered Committee.

Annexure.

MHRD/UGC EMPOWERED COMMITTEE MEETING ON 6TH MAY, 2008 TO BRAINSTORM FUTURE APPROACHES OF STRENGTHENING BASIC SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES. (Concept note of Prof.S.P.Thyagarajan)

- I. Review & monitoring of BSR programmes implemented during 2007-08.**
 - a) Zonal visit & monitoring Committee interaction with beneficiary universities & colleges to be organized by UGC regional offices;
 - b) Expansion of 'Infrastructure support scheme' to the science Departments of all NAAC-'A' level accredited colleges which have so far not been included for financial support in the scheme;
 - c) Provision of JRF positions to CPE/Autonomous colleges/NAAC 'A' level accredited colleges which are recognized for the conduct of Ph.D after evaluating (i) Faculty strength in the science depts (ii) number of Ph.Ds produced during the last five Years and (iii) number of papers published in scientific journals by the dept during the last five years.
 - d) Second installment infrastructure support grant to universities and colleges that submitted UC for the First installment after assessing the nature of fund utilization;
 - e) Review of the compliance & performance of the JRFs awarded;
 - f) 'Operation Faculty Recharge' scheme- operational momentum to be increased; suggestion: JNU Life sciences which is the Biotechnology national level entrance exam centre and now selected as UGC-networking centre can be considered for being designated as the co-ordinating centre.
- II. New Schemes suggested:**
 - (i) "Listen to the Bhatnagar awardees" programmes at the UGC-Networking Centers as a motivational exercise for P.G/Ph.D scholars and young researchers;
 - (ii) "UGC-Innovative Research Partnership centres": As tripartite collaborative enterprise in Universities among

University research department. Small/medium level industry and venture capital agencies on the Finland model;

(iii) UGC Fellowships for Novel Ph.D programmes: (a) Integrated Ph.D programme for Science undergraduates and (b) sandwich Ph.D program for Engineering and Medical Post graduates;

(iv) 'Research Collaborator Exchange Programme' between National Institutes & State universities; Central Universities & State Universities;

(vi) UGC-CSIR Partnership programmes

(vii) "Breaking the Barrier Interdisciplinary Research support" for Under-attractive Science disciplines.
