Engg colleges oppose AICTE norm
Association Wants Annual E-Journal Subscription To Be Made Optional

Kochi: Private engineering colleges in the state, already burdened with vacant seats, are unwilling to shell out money on annual subscription of national and international e-journals. The All-India Council for Technical Education has made it mandatory for colleges to subscribe to e-journals for approval in next academic year.

The Kerala Self-Financing Engineering College Managements’ Association (KSFECMA) has, at a meeting, decided to approach Union minister of state for human resource development Shashi Tharoor with a request to make the subscription optional.

"Each college will have to shell out nearly Rs 17 lakh annually to subscribe to the e-journals recommended by the AICTE. Most journals are not required by colleges that run only BTech courses. Also, we will have to renew subscription every year,” association president Yoonus Kunjusaid.

"Access to quality education will be the slogan for 2013-14 to give more impetus to quality in technical education. The role of AICTE as a regulator will be further geared up to weed out the institutions not fulfilling the norms and standards,” the AICTE’s approval process handbook says.

An expert committee will verify the actual availability of equipment, computers, software, internet, printers, book titles, book volumes, subscription of national and international e-journals.

"Mere presentation of purchase orders/payment records for subscription, without actual availability, shall not be considered,” it says.

The AICTE has warned of action against those failing to meet requirements. "Any failure in meeting requirements will attract either suspension of approval for supernumerary seats, if any for an academic year, no admission status in one/more courses for an academic year, withdrawal of approval for programme/course and withdrawal of approval of the institution,” the handbook says.
Needed reforms

The University Grants Commission's proposal to link central funding under the 12th Five-Year Plan, the granting of mandatory accreditation to universities and colleges and their rating with their implementation of academic and administrative reforms must be welcomed. This could put pressure on educational institutions to shake off their lethargy in implementing reforms recommended by the UGC in 2008. These reforms include introduction of the semester system, choice-based credit system, curriculum development, transparency in the admission procedures and examination reforms. The reforms aim at improving the quality of education being imparted in our universities. With regard to the curriculum, for instance, the UGC made revision of the syllabus mandatory every three years at least. It also provided a model curriculum to guide this revision. Sadly, most colleges and universities across the country failed to implement the reforms, forcing the UGC to crack the whip.

Few Indian educational institutions figure among the best in the world. The reasons for this are not hard to find. Our educational institutions burden students with outdated syllabi, archaic testing and grading methods, and uninspiring teaching. The reforms will demand more of the students as well as the teachers. Students will have to study throughout the academic year in the proposed semester system rather than cram just before the annual examination in the existing system. An important obstacle in the way of implementation of reforms is the teaching fraternity. Under the reformed system, teachers will have to update their knowledge. They can be expected to protest the implementation of the reforms. The board of management of colleges have not been let off the hook. The reforms demand greater transparency in the admission process. This will address the corruption and profit-oriented education that has become the norm across the country.

The UGC reforms must be implemented as we owe our youth meaningful education, one that excites them to think in new ways and motivates them to aspire for excellence, even as it prepares them for the challenges and changes of the 21st century. Unfortunately most educational institutions are driven by profit - have not prioritised students in their imparting of education. By linking funds to reforms, the UGC has provided educational institutions with self-interest as a motivator for ushering in the changes. Hopefully this will work. Colleges will have to pull up their socks quickly as the UGC has given them until end-November to get their act together.

Now, control the computer cursor with thoughts

Washington: Researchers led by Indian-origin scientists claim to have designed the fastest and most accurate mathematical algorithm yet that can help disabled people manoeuvre computer cursors with their thoughts.

The algorithm's speed, accuracy and natural movement approach those of a real arm, researchers claim.

Researchers from Stanford have developed the algorithm for brain-implantable prosthetic systems, known as ReFIT, that vastly improves the speed and accuracy of neural prosthetics that control computer cursors.

In demonstrations with rhesus monkeys, cursors controlled by the new algorithm doubled the performance of existing systems and approached performance of the monkey's actual arm in controlling the cursor.

"These findings could lead to greatly improved prosthetic system performance and robustness in paralysed people, which we are actively pursuing as part of the clinical trial at Stanford," said researcher Krishna Shenoy. The system relies on a sensor implanted into the brain, which records "action potentials" in neural activity from an array of electrode sensors and sends data to a computer.
By Ritika Chopra
in New Delhi

With increasing instances of racial attacks and fake universities duping Indian students studying abroad, the central government now wants to ensure that there is help at hand for those falling prey to such scandals.

The human resource development (HRD) ministry, in consultation with the ministry of external affairs (MEA), is working on establishing a direct link with Indian students studying overseas through an online portal.

The HRD ministry, which along with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) will be responsible for maintaining the website, is hoping to launch it by January 2013.

According to HRD officials, the MEA has agreed "in principle" to have a nodal officer in each mission abroad to attend to the student complaints that come through the online portal.

"It was after the attack on Indian students in Australia that the government started thinking of ways to help them. Depending on the nature of the complaint, we (HRD ministry) will route them to the concerned agencies," a senior HRD ministry official said on the condition of anonymity.

Currently, Indian students approach the missions and embassies directly in the country they study in.

The government had also put pressure on the MEA to address the problem of fake universities.

According to studies, the number of Indian students going overseas for higher education has been steadily increasing over the last decade. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of Indian students in foreign countries grew by 73 per cent or three and a half times, according to a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore.

At the same time, there is also an increase in cases of Indian students victim to fraud and racial attacks. The incidence of hundreds of Indian students being conned by the California-based Tri-Valley University in 2011 is probably the most famous of them all. The university, which was not accredited by the California Department of Consumer Affairs and Bureau for Private and Postsecondary Education, was raided and shut down indecisively by the federal agents on January 19, 2011.

Just three months ago, Britain's higher education sector, the UK Border Agency stripped the London Metropolitan University (LMU) of its licence to admit international students in 52 countries. It will also host a list of institutions abroad which are functioning without accreditation or approval to alert students beforehand.

"We have created 12 categories such as theft and racial attacks under which the complaint can be lodged. We are now working with the MEA to find out who are the concerned people and authorities in different countries to address student grievances," said S.S. Mantha, head of AICTE, which will be responsible for capturing the grievances and forwarding it to the appropriate agency.

"This is definitely a good start because I know that the Indian missions abroad are not very helpful to students coming with individual problems," said Amit Bhatnagar, founder of Career Smart, a career counselling firm that also helps students applying to foreign universities.
Info block at competitive exams

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 19

ENGINEERING aspirants have started registering online for JEE (Main) while aspiring teachers have submitted forms for this year’s second UGC-NET, part of an estimated 20 lakh who appear every year for a number of competitive exams. Each year, for candidates left wondering which of the objective-type questions they got right, there has been little help from the authorities conducting the exams. Some put only the questions online, some do not even that, and few upload both questions and answers. The result has been a number of RTI queries for answer keys, and the mushrooming of private publications and coaching centres.

A look at key competitive exams, and how much information on questions and answers is available after they have been taken:

UPSC EXAMS
The country’s highest examination authority organises the Civil Services Exam, besides Combined Medical Services, Combined Defence Service, Indian Engineering Service, Indian Forest Service and various other exams. After a number of court cases, the UPSC has posted online the question papers for the 2012-13 exams — except those for the Civil Services mains. And even for the Civil Services prelims (now called CSAT) and all the other UPSC exams, the answers are not yet being provided. This is despite repeated RTI applications, Central Information Commission orders and court cases. The UPSC is, in fact, fighting disclosure orders in higher courts.

UGC EXAMS
The UGC is inconsistent between two key exams it conducts. For UGC-NET, held twice a year for aspiring university teachers, the UGC has put online all question papers since 2009, but the answer keys have not been provided. For CSIR-UGC NET, on the other hand, both the question papers and the answer keys for the June 2012 exam are on the website.

ICAR-NET
It is organised by Agricultural Science Recruitment Board. Neither the question papers nor the answer keys are available in the public domain. Close to 25,000 students candidates appear every year and many of them are fighting for this information under the RTI Act.

JEE (MAIN)
JEE (Main) has become the first-level eligibility test for admission to undergraduate courses at IITs, apart from NITs, IIITs, government-funded technical institutes, and several others. It’s previous format, it was known as AIEEE. The CBSE is the authority and till last year it had not been providing either the question papers or the answer keys. The CBSE once informed an RTI applicant that it has made provision to provide the answer keys of AIEEE after depositing the prescribed fee of Rs 500 once a certain number of days has passed following the declaration of results. For the X and XII finals, in contrast, the questions at least appear on the CBSE website.

JEE (ADVANCE)
Under the new format, this is the second stage for admission to IITs. A candidate can take it only if he or she clears JEE (Main). Earlier known simply as JEE, this is one exam for which details are readily available — all question papers along with the answer keys from 2010 to 2012 are online. Yet within the same IITs, details of postgraduate exams either the questions or the answers — are not online.

MEDICAL ENTRANCE
The entrance test will now be called National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test, or NEET. Following a Supreme Court directive, it will be conducted from 2013-14 by the CBSE with the help of the Medical Council of India. The CBSE has issued a circular and the MCI website has put the syllabus online, but there is no mention of question papers. In AIPMT, the earlier form of NEET, neither the questions nor the answers were provided.

CLAT
The Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) is an all-India entrance examination, conducted since 2008 by 14 national law universities and institutes for admission to a five-year integrated undergraduate and postgraduate programme. The authorities have announced that the previous four years’ question papers can be bought at Rs 100. They are, however, silent on the answer keys.
40 मुल्कों में इंडिया का ब्रैंड एंबेसेडर है डीयू

हाल ही में अपने भारतीय के दौरान प्रसार में विदेशों की जेता आरा सान सुकी अपने कॉलेज लेकिन शीर्षस्थ कॉलेज पढ़ूँ जी।

डीयू स्ट्यूट्ड ट्वेल्फ्स ब्राउस वेलेफन्स प्र. जे. एय. इंग्लैंड का कहना है कि डीयू में 40 से अधिक देशों के स्टूडेंट्स पढ़ते हैं। साबित ज्यादा स्टूडेंट्स नैपल, अफगानिस्तान, इटली, इराक, श्रीलंका, बांग्लादेश, मलायी, मलायी से आते हैं। यूरोपियन देशों से भी स्टूडेंट्स पढ़ते हैं जिनपर जीू आर है, लेकिन उनकी संख्या कम है।

सेंट टीनस कॉलेज, ब्रिटिश कॉलेज और फ्रांस, लेख शीर्षस्थ कॉलेज, हंसाल और हिंदू कॉलेज में अपनी विदेशी शीर्षस्थ पढ़ते हैं। हर साल करीब दो हजरत एंडर्सन आती हैं, जिनमें से 60 परीक्षाएं प्रेग्जुएशन लेकर कॉर्स के लिए होती हैं, जबकि 40 परीक्षाएं प्रेग्जुएशन लेकर कॉर्स के लिए होती हैं। कॉर्स में व्यापार एंडर्सन होते हैं। साइंस कॉर्स में 5-10 परीक्षाएं होती हैं। इंग्लैंड और इताल्याका औरस्क फॉरवर्स को कभी स्टूडेंट्स पढ़ते रहे हैं। प्रो. चुड़ा का कहना है कि हर साल विदेशी शीर्षस्थ को संख्या बढ़ा रहे हैं। एंडर्सन की विश्राम तो केवल एक बड़ा फॉरवर्स है।

मूह व इंजीनियरिंग कॉर्स में भी शीर्षस्थ आते हैं। कॉर्स की संख्या बढ़ती है। कॉर्स की विदेशी स्टूडेंट्स दो भी कॉर्स में कॉर्स की संख्या बढ़ती है। कॉर्स की संख्या को कम रखने की प्रयास कर रहे हैं। नवर्तकी में भी स्टूडेंट्स के लिए सेंट्रल प्रोफेस्सर न्यूक्स है।
Narayana Murthy gets global accolade
NEW DELHI: Philanthropist and co-founder of tech giant Infosys N R Narayana Murthy has been honoured with the James C Morgan Global Humanitarian Award, which recognises contribution of people using technology to change human lives. “I believe that technology not only has the power to make a difference in health, nutrition and sheltering the poor, but it also can enhance one’s confidence and dignity,” Murthy said in a statement.  

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