

Employability as a Major Component in Academic Auditing

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Abstract: An Academic Audit benefits in proactive planning for renewal of less effective components of any academic institution. The academic audits address key components like level of instructional procedures, strength of curriculum and assessment, quality of academic and administrative management etc. It is very necessary to cover employability as a major component under academic auditing in case of Business Administration Institutes. The paper discusses ways to enhance employability of students and their evaluation under the said academic auditing.

Keywords: Academic Audit, Employability, Training and Placement, Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The process of Academic Auditing intends to monitor and enhance the quality of education through proper guidelines for both teaching faculty and students, so as to ensure qualified students/researchers passing out from the academic Institutions.

For proper functioning of academics in an educational institution and to quantify the efforts dispensed by the faculty and students, some assessment components needed to be designed. These include the assessment of course delivery, as per the curriculum and syllabus, the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of students, overall discipline and the academic functioning of the Institution, delivery of the duties and responsibilities of faculty members and monitoring of the class, progress of courses, internal assessment, student welfare and grievances. As making students employable is the central objective of management education, the process of academic auditing should be linked with employability to the great extent.

The process of academic auditing, can aid the institution / faculty/ student for success in the Business Administration Education arena. Process of academic auditing generally includes the process of internal and external evaluation of courses, major/mini projects, seminars, delivery of P/F courses, overall discipline and academic functioning of the institution, duties and responsibilities of faculty members, Research and consultancy and class/course committees.

OBJECTIVES OF ACADEMIC AUDITING: 1

- (i) To ensure academic accountability.

- (ii) To define quality of each component of the functionalities and to ensure quality of Business Management education throughout the system.
- (iii) To safeguard functionalities of Management education.
- (iv) To define effectiveness of teaching – learning process and to devise methodology to confirm maximum output from faculty members as well as students.

A) Introduction of employability in Syllabus

Inclusion of employability skills in the learning objectives and outcome of the course is the major prerequisite of any graduate destination. The faculty should introduce these things briefly, on the first day of instruction so as to give an idea of what the course can impart to the students and its importance and relation to the area of specialization. The course plan shall be entered in the course diary, which would come as part of the course file. The faculty shall try their best to stick to the course plan. The Internal Audit Cell (IAC) will monitor the process. Generally, employability and recruitment of the students is considered as the core area under the Training and Placement departments of the institutions. If all the key staff will be aware of the achievements of the students regarding their fulfillment of course objectives especially employability skills, it is better to coordinate these activities on the institution level easily.

B) Alumni Associations and Employability

Alumni Associations can play very significant role in the employability development of the students. Successful alumni will interact with the current

students regarding issues related with their careers. Gains of such interactions will be evaluated in the academic audit process. These interactions will be more fruitful as they are more formal and friendly in nature and it is easier for the students to ask relevant questions and doubts to the alumni unhesitatingly.

C) Focus on employability as a major component

Curriculum that includes study components aiming at imparting skills necessary for acquiring outcomes is an ideal curriculum. If employability is the major outcome of management institutions; the curriculum must focus on the necessary skills and knowledge for making students employable. Autonomous and institutions affiliated to Deemed and Private Universities have more scope of curriculum designing and making changes in it as per the requirements. They can take into considerations requirements of the employers basically. The institutions affiliated to the state universities should be careful in putting forward their requirements in syllabi through their representatives of the Board of Studies. Whether the curriculum adequately focuses on the employability centered knowledge and skills will be evaluated in the Academic audits. Outcomes fulfilled through these kinds of curricula will also be evaluated for deciding the further scope of syllabi making:

“Board of Studies for every discipline comprises both internal and external academics and experts from industry and service sector in the curriculum development.”²

D) Academia-Industry interaction

It will be an ideal stage if representatives of the recruiters have place in the syllabus designing processes. It will really helpful in shaping the syllabi pragmatically and directly concerned with the training of the students appropriately and their expected placements with the respective employers. How this participation of the employers helped in the actual placements of the students will be evaluated in the Academic Audit.

The most important of the elements to be evaluated under the Academic Audit is students’ awareness of their gains through the course they are pursuing. On the very first day of the commencement of their course, they should be made aware of their learning objectives. They must have clear idea of what attributes and skills they are going to acquire through the course and how does it compliment with their being employable. No doubt, they will be made familiar with these things before their opting the concerned course/s, but the things will be explained in detail at their institution through orientation session. At the end of the course, the students’ feedback can be taken about how far the

delivery of the course is in line with the said teaching-learning objectives, how far the faculty members and all the learning infrastructure became successful in imparting the expected and whether the students themselves played their desired role in this process. This feedback will act as a mirror for all components involved in the academic and administrative management of the institution in general and the said course in particular. “Feedback from the students is targeted for teaching –learning evaluation, teachers, facilities, support services and overall learner centric issues.”³

E) Essential Work Experience for Students

The students should be given essential work experience. This provision should be a part of the curricula. In curriculum itself some work related projects can be recommended. Internships, year long placements and part study or work abroad are the known ways of imparting field related work experience to the students. Their achievements can be evaluated through the Academic Audits provided that the students will know beforehand the parameters of evaluation.

“Problem solving exercises, field studies/visits, case studies, surveys, industrial visits – hands on experience, and project works ensure skill development in relevant subject area of study.”⁴

F) Co-curricular Activities and Employability

Co-curricular activities should be proposed in the direction of developing employability skills among the students. There should be encouragement for the extra-curricular and co-curricular activities of the students. Students should be encouraged for the participation in the

activities of Department Associations, Professional bodies, Students’ Senate/Union, functions

coordinated by the institution etc. Programmes / lectures should be conducted that are beneficial to the students for the development of Professionalism. Benefits of these co-curricular activities can be measured in Academic Audits.

The attempts being made by the students in developing their employability skills should be appreciated. The training and placement departments can encourage the students for self-development in related skills. Somewhere in the course tenure gains of these kind of attempts should be evaluated as a part of academic audit.

Industry academia interaction must have student as their focal point of considerations. Students should be made aware of the recruiter/employer expectations directly from the representatives of the employers. Training and placement cells can play a mediator role in this.

There should be established a proper recording and monitoring system of the employability skills pursued by the students.

Above all, some informal talk sessions of staff and students regarding career options and other details of grabbing jobs will have long lasting impact on the students' mind.

Internal Audit Cell (IAC): is a group of faculty members having representation from each

department. The members of the IAC shall be nominated by the Head of the Institution, one

from each department, in the cadre of Professor or Associate Professor, including Training and Placement Officer. A senior member of IAC shall be its coordinator. The term of IAC shall be one academic year. IAC shall conduct internal academic audit and produce the required

documents and records to the External Auditor on demand.

Conclusion:

It is obvious that, inclusion of employability development among students as the prominent component of academic auditing will focus many other academic and extra-curricular areas. The skills and knowledge to be developed under employability skills will improve other allied facets of individual student as well as the institute. Proper evaluation and working upon the feedback of the external auditors continuously will be really beneficial to the institutes. In the institutes where placement is the most important recognition, this experiment will be certainly fruitful.

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