

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION AND
RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT IN TECHNICAL
EDUCATION
(MERITE)**

**EQUITY ACTION PLAN / INDIGENOUS
PEOPLE PLAN
(EAP/IPP)**

July 19, 2022
(Revised Report)

**Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Education (MoE)
Government of India**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project details

The Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) Project aims to improve the quality of student learning and governance of technical education in India in select states and is aligned with the NEP 2020 reforms. It will focus on (i) enhancing the environment of education & research through course offerings, pedagogical practices & assessment, and digitalization; (ii) improving the employability of engineering graduates by strengthening skills & entrepreneurship capabilities; (iii) increasing equitable access with a focus on women and SEDGs; (iv) strengthening sector steering through improvements in governance & quality assurance; (v) enhancing ecosystem by supporting multidisciplinary institutions & programs. The Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India, will implement MERITE. The DHE has a long-standing partnership with the World Bank by implementing the three preceding TEQIP projects.

1.2 Components of the Project

The Project will support three components: Strengthening equitable access and improving teaching, learning, and multidisciplinary education; ii) Improving research for better skills and innovation; and Sector steering, including governance and (HEI-) internal and external quality assurance.

Component 1: Strengthening equitable access and improving teaching, learning, and multidisciplinary education. This component will focus on activities that contribute to achieving PDO indicators on improving student skills, participation of underrepresented groups in engineering programs, student transition rate, and share of accredited programs. Activities will be organized under 3 sub-components:

- (i) *1.1 Modernizing Teaching-Learning and Assessments:* This will introduce multidisciplinary course/program options and programs and finance faculty development programs and the upgrades in physical infrastructure (laboratories, equipment, minor refurbishments) to support effective education delivery.
- (ii) *1.2 Enhancing Employability:* This will focus on strengthening student placement services in the participating institutes.
- (iii) *1.3 Promoting Equitable Access:* It will finance a series of supports for two groups of students – outreach and STEM mentoring for high school students to provide information on technical education programs, and academic and other support services for students entering engineering programs in participating institutes.

Component 2: Improving research for better skills and innovation

This component will support better research and innovation outcomes via competitive funding for research, strengthening business incubators, seed funds to potential entrepreneurs from faculty members, current students, or fresh graduates, and building institutional entrepreneurship and innovation culture. The focus will be on multidisciplinary/multi-sectorial research and technology development in public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) to address specific strategic sectors for the country's socio-economic development through a competitive Collaborative Research Fund (CRF).

Component 3: Sector steering, including governance and (HEI-) internal and external quality assurance

This component is divided into four sub-components on quality assurance (QA; 3.1) and governance (3.2), academic careers (3.3), and project management (3.4). Technical Assistance will be provided

under the sub-components for improving QA, capacity building, support for Ph.D. training, etc. Further, this component will cover the costs associated with the management of the project.

1.3 Beneficiaries¹

Main project beneficiaries are students enrolled in technical education institutions in participating states, academic staff including institutional leaders, participating technical education institutes, State Departments of Technical Education in selected states, central level regulatory bodies such as the AICTE and NBA and employers. The table below provides indicative list of primary beneficiaries that are expected to be enrolled and benefited at the project initiation and closing:

Category	Expected at the baseline	Expected Female	Expected SC/ST	Expected PWD	Expected to benefit (by project closing)	Expected Female	Expected SC/ST	Expected PWD
UG students	2,00,000-3,00,000	50,000-60,000	1,00,000-1,50,000	3,000	12,00,000-14,00,000	4,00,000-5,00,000	2,00,000-3,00,000	6,000
PG students	50,000-60,000	20,000-25,000	8,000-9,000	-	1,00,000-1,20,000	40,000-50,000	16,000-18,000	-
Faculty	10,000-11,000	3,000-4,000	1500-2000	-	14,000-15,000	4200-5000	2100-3000	-

Further to the above, the project is expected to benefit the following beneficiaries through its various components/subcomponents:

Stakeholders	No. of Beneficiaries (Tentative ²)
Chancellor/ Vice-Chancellor/ Directors/ Principals	200-300
Non-Teaching Staff	6,000-8,000

1.4 Purpose and Scope of the Equity Action Plan /Indigenous People's Plan

This EAP/IPPF is prepared in line with the Government of India's NEP and adherence with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) 7 on Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities. The Objective of the EAP/IPPF is: "to ensure that all students and faculty in the project institutions have equal opportunity to avail the benefits of the Project with substantial improvement in the performance of students with special attention to the needy and ST and SC categories." All project-assisted institutions will be responsible for preparing and implementing the EAP as an integral part of project implementation for MERITE. The EAP promotes sustainable development benefits and opportunities for the disadvantaged groups in a manner that is accessible and inclusive. The EAP identifies the key issues and problems affecting the academic performance and overall development of students and recommends a set of actions to address the same.

For the purpose of the project, the following will be considered vulnerable/ disadvantaged groups for this project:

¹ TEQIP-III Data of AY 2019-20

² Based on TEQIP-III experiences.

- a) Students, members of the teaching and non-teaching staff who belong to the SC/ST categories.
- b) Students, faculties, and staff belonging to PwD groups.
- c) Students, members of the teaching and non-teaching staff who are from rural areas.
- d) Girl students, female members of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

1.5 MERITE's project locations and investment

Project activities would be implemented nationwide; the specific locations for investment are not known at this stage. It is expected that some of the states/institutions would be from the aspirational/LWE areas, with beneficiaries belonging to the socially disadvantaged groups, which make up 11 and 3 percent, respectively, for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) of UG engineering student, significantly less than their population proportions. The project would finance, among other things, the establishment and renovation of research facilities and augmentation of digital infrastructure, and refurbishment/renovation of existing buildings (or parts of the building/block), including laboratories, workshops, library, and sanitation facilities, which would involve infrastructure augmentation and associated civil works.

1.6 Strategy

Every institution faces a different challenge in improving academic performance. In addition to the caliber of students in an institution, its facilities, management, quality and efficiency of the teaching faculty, and measures to address students' felt needs, including relating non-cognitive skills and behavioral issues, have a bearing on student performance. The Project institutions are to make Equity Action Plans (EAP/IIPF) to improve learning outcomes for students and employability of graduates with particular attention to the needy ones, including those from the SC and ST categories. The project aims to ensure that all participating institutions improve the transition rate (access and equity) (a key project performance indicator). Institutional targets are set for all students, with special attention to socially and economically underprivileged groups, including SC, ST, OBC, and Women students. Achievement must be maintained during subsequent years so that every institution achieves high graduation rates and transitions to the job markets. All Institutions should include Institutional EAP in their Institutional Development Proposals. The EAP should be a part of each Institution's MoU with the concerned project authorities.

2 Assessment of Key Social Issues

2.1 Objective and Methodology

The objective is to conduct a rapid assessment of the barriers faced by women, people from remote areas, and members of ethnic and other disadvantaged groups in participating in STEM and Engineering subjects and to design a plan to help students from these backgrounds to overcome these barriers.

A Series of consultations with the prospective states, researchers, subject-matter specialists, and students was conducted. Quantitative data was collected using secondary data, mainly from education statistics- AICTE, XXXXXX, and qualitative data were collected from group discussions with the states, researchers, students, and faculty from various social backgrounds. The EAP/IPPF draws extensively on the experience of the TEQIP series. The assessment findings are presented below:

2.1.1 Students

Issues faced by the students in engineering institutions:

Low enrolment of Disadvantaged Groups: One of the key challenges in the country is significant gender and class dominance in technical enrolment despite the government's efforts to narrow down the gaps in student enrollment in higher education. The overall enrolment of students in engineering education is 12%; participation of SEDGs is a mere 1.8%. Due to the low involvement of SEDGs and female students, the nation loses many talents from this group. It also results in less participation of such students in the job market and other developmental activities. The low enrolment arises from multiple reasons, including the lower propensity to complete secondary education; absence of educational institutes in their areas (particularly in rural settings); poverty, institutional inequity, lack of awareness about the multiple scholarships; the scarcity of SC/ST administrative units in the schools to guide regarding relevant schemes/financial aid; weak language skills in English, which is the medium of instruction or even in the primary vernacular language; and lack of opportunity to get tuitions or coaching, affordability, etc..

Gender disparity: Another key challenge is significant gender disparity in engineering enrolment despite a narrow gap in girls' enrollment in higher education. The overall enrolment of girls in STEM education is 43%; engineering programs are 27.5%. Year on year analysis reveals that while the number of girls opting for higher education has steadily increased, the number opting for engineering has not increased. The National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) data for 2012 to 2019 unveils that the average enrolment of girls was 9.13% in IITs and 18.17% in NITs, and 27.95% in other technical colleges, as against the national average of 27.5% (AISHE survey, 2019). The key reasons attributed to the underrepresentation are: gender stereotyping (considered to be a "He" STEM, with a firm male-dominated culture) and social norms; physical safety during the commute to college/university; lack of convenient services, infrastructure and resources in technical colleges; lack of female role models; sexual and other types of harassment in colleges/university; and lack of appropriate job placement support. Lower enrollment in STEM/technical education contributes to lower female labor force participation rates in STEM jobs (a mere 14 percent of women are in STEM jobs), especially in the lower number of women in better quality jobs.

Inability to adjust due to competitive situations: Findings relating to the constraints faced by disadvantaged students pursuing technical education reveal that the intensity of the constraints arising from the differing cultural conditions are the most common, which the students find difficult to adjust. Some students fail to secure employment because of overall low performance or inadequate skills after the course. Some of the reasons for these weaknesses are: low entry-level marks (i.e., inadequate preparedness for the rigorous engineering curriculum), irregular attendance in classes, low self-confidence, and weak language skills in English, which also affect interaction with others and class performance. It is observed that more vulnerable students do not communicate their difficulties and do not seek help due to factors including low self-esteem or even self-inflicted stigma. In addition, students may not do well because of several institutional factors, including vacancies in faculty and technical staff positions, deficiencies in faculty teaching skills, lack of digital infrastructure and literature on cutting edge issues, poor academic support, inadequate student support services, lack of effective monitoring of student performance, or regular feedback to students, inadequate hostel facilities, poor quality placement offices, etc.

Absence of social and gender friendly infrastructure: In other cases, a large number of dropouts is a result of a lack of or the absence of gender-friendly and social infrastructure, i.e., physical infrastructure, including water systems and toilets on the college campus not responsive to the current context, accessible and barrier-free campuses with different types of aids, equipment, and assistive technology for people with disabilities, etc. Other issues such as reliable grievance redress mechanics, inaccessible menstrual products, lack of awareness about gender equality, and lack of

healthy conversations on matters related to students' physical, emotional, and mental well-being affect the dropout and transition rate.

2.1.2 Faculties

Issues faced by faculties in engineering institutions:

Insufficient/lack of Faculty: Faculty is one crucial determinant of the quality of teaching and learning; however, there is a persistent problem of faculty shortages resulting in overall lower quality of provision. Faculty vacancies range from 30 to 50 percent in state universities and can be as high as 40 percent even in the leading institutes of technology in the country. These high vacancies are partly related to the low supply of doctoral degrees and partly a result of cumbersome recruitment and faculty management approach. This has led to underqualified candidates serving as Faculty with severe implications for the quality of education delivered³ and institutes' medium-term planning and development ability.

Inadequate Domain Knowledge: The need for having robust and up-to-date domain knowledge is well understood in the engineering sector, given the rapid development of technologies, new areas and even concepts. Pedagogical practices are ineffective, and only a few faculties participate in such programs or are not given enough opportunities by the institute to participate in upgrading their domain knowledge. Faculty in engineering institutions have very few research publications, and the overall research productivity of faculty members in engineering education is relatively low. Further, the experience of the TEQIP series reveals that faculties also lack pedagogy skills, especially in addressing the needs of weak/vulnerable students, sensitivity to gender equality and social inclusion issues in educational institutions, which in turn affects student performance.

2.1.3 Institutions

Issues at engineering institute affecting the faculties and students:

Lack of digital infrastructure: The experience of COVID-19 has shown institutions' lack of experience with modern teaching and learning technologies, limited digital skills, and the inability of the economically weak/disadvantaged students to access the online education (absence of digital infrastructure such as access to high-speed internet, Laptops/tablets, LMS, lack of provision of credits from MOOCs, etc.), which significantly impacted their learning. A large number of institutions lack awareness of cutting-edge technologies, which is supplemented by low motivation among faculty to adopt new instructional pedagogies.

Outdated Placement cells: Institutions face multiple issues regarding placements: *first* - fewer companies/industries visit Tier 2 and Tier 3 institutions to recruit graduates, *second* - obsolete curricula that have poor takers in the market; *third* - disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application, which most industries/companies find unproductive. Further, most of the placement officers are clueless about the current market trends and face difficulty in networking with the industry, organizing events and lectures with industry experts, organizing industry visits for students, locating internship and job opportunities, organizing placement drives on campus and providing training and assistance in CV writing, interviewing skills, etc.

Institutional structures: Many engineering students suffer from frustration, stress, anxiety, and depression due to several college factors such as homesickness, peer and family pressure to perform

³ Loyalka et al. (2016) find that the proportion of faculty with Ph.D. degrees is significantly related to the "value-added" of engineering programs.

well in exams, etc., which erodes the well-being of students, characterized by low self-esteem, loss of interest leading to the feeling of hopelessness.

Peer-to-peer mentorship and tutoring worked well in some collages during TEQIP-II & III since students feel comfortable with other students. Faculty mentors played an integral role in observing and monitoring student progress and served as guides throughout students' higher education experience. MERITE will take proactive steps to establish/strengthen academic advisement by faculty and provide students with counseling and peer support services. The project will also finance institutional pilots to test new and innovative ways of improving student adjustment and success in college, including through behavioral interventions and nudges.

2.1.4 ATUs (Affiliated Technical Universities)

Issues at engineering ATUs affecting the institutes, faculties and students:

Timing of Additional Courses and Repeat Exams: A significant difference that was observed between institutions is the timing of the repeat exams that can be taken by students who fail in several subjects. Ideally, make-up exams should be held within a month or so of the actual exams; however, in reality, they are kept a semester or a year later. This has critical repercussions – the students have to clear exams for the ongoing semester and the backlogs; in the want of necessary support from the institutions, they resort to private coaching - expensive and sometimes unreliable. This results in cumulative failures, leading some students to take six, seven, or even more years to complete the four-year engineering course.

Disconnect between curricula and industry demand: The quality of technical education largely depends on the industrial relevant curriculum. The absence of a robust, flexible curriculum affects the employability of final year students in engineering institutions. The Annual Employability Survey 2019 report by Aspiring Minds reveals that 80% of Indian engineers are not fit for any job in the knowledge economy, and only 2.5% of them possess tech skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI) that industry requires. The survey underlines the sorry state of the theory-based curriculum and lack of industry exposure.

3 Relevant Legal Framework and Development Strategies

3.1 Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Standards of GoI

Law/Regulation/Standard	Key Features	Applicability to MERITE project
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989	The Act aims to prevent the commission of offenses of atrocities against the members of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), to provide for Special Courts for the trial of such offenses and the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offenses and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.	The Act is applicable as the project will involve participation from people belonging to different castes/tribes.
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013	The Act provides for protection against sexual harassment of women at the workplace and the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment. It	The MERITE project aims to work closely with stakeholders, involving women at all levels. The Act will create a conducive

	mandates the institutionalization of an Internal Complaints Committee at all administrative units/offices with the representation of women equivalent to at least one-half of the total members of the committee and a Local Complaints Committee in every district. It also mandates training to enhance the knowledge levels of employees on forms of sexual harassment, complaint mechanism and inquiry process.	environment for women staff/faculty and students.
The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Rules, 1996	The Act gives effect to the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of the People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region. It mandates the constitution of the Central and State Coordination Committee for prevention and early detection of disabilities, promoting inclusion in education and employment opportunities, developing schemes to provide aids and appliances to PwDs, recognition of institutions for PwDs, and sponsoring research in the above-identified areas.	The act is relevant and directly feeds into the MERITE to promote assistive technology pathways to strengthen the provision of teaching and learning material for PwD and have a positive effect on the learning levels of PwD students.
Equal Remuneration Act, 1976	To provide for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers and for the prevention of discrimination, on the ground of sex, against women in the matter of employment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.	Women engaged in the activities supported by the project should be paid at par with their male counterparts.
The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961	The maternity benefit Act 1961 protects the employment of women during the time of her maternity and entitles her of a 'maternity benefit' - i.e., full paid absence from work - to take care for her child. The act is applicable to all establishments employing ten (10) or more persons.	Women engaged in the will be entitled to the benefit as per the act guidelines.
Guidelines for Management of Sanitary Waste, 2018	The Guidelines, as per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, provide recommendations for the safe disposal of sanitary waste, comprising of used sanitary towels	The Guidelines apply to the activities supported by the project (college toilets, hostels, labs, etc.) have the

	or napkins, tampons, and any other similar waste.	potential for the creation of sanitary waste.
National Education Policy 2020	The Policy introduced a new and forward-looking vision for India's Education system to adjust and thrive in the rapidly changing knowledge landscape. The priority areas identified include strengthening of the Central Advisory Board of Education, effective resourcing and governance, institutional restructuring and consolidation, technology integration, capacity building of teachers and affordable, quality, equitable and inclusive education for all.	The recently introduced Policy has a strong focus on strengthening the culture of inclusion, innovation, and institution in the education sphere of India and thus becomes relevant to the project at hand. MERITE is aligned with the provisions of NEP 2020.

3.2 World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard on Indigenous People

ESS	Key Features	Applicability on MERITE
ESS 7: Indigenous Peoples/ Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the development process fosters full respect for affected parties' human rights, dignity, aspirational, identity, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods. • Promote sustainable development benefits and opportunities in a manner that is accessible, culturally appropriate, and inclusive. • Establish and maintain an ongoing relationship based on meaningful consultation with project-affected parties. • Obtain the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected parties. • Recognize, respect, and preserve the culture, knowledge, and practices of Indigenous Peoples, and to provide them with an opportunity to adapt to changing conditions in a manner and in a timeframe acceptable to them. 	The standard is applicable as the project will involve participation from people belonging to different tribes. The project is also expected to include institutions/universities from Schedule V and Schedule VI areas.

4 Summary of Key Recommendations

Key recommended actions in the EAP are summarized below, and details are given in Table 1:

- 1) Improving the learning efficiency, English language skills, and non-cognitive skills of the students, especially those from socially and economically vulnerable groups including SC/ST, PwD, and women.
- 2) Improving the transition rate of SEDGs students by providing the necessary and timely remedial classes, diagnostic tests, soft skills training, exit exam trainings, career counseling, information regarding various scholarships/relevant schemes/financial aid, etc.
- 3) Making institutes socially and gender friendly to promote the enrolment of students from disadvantaged groups especially women and PwD students.
- 4) Awareness programs about various scholarships and other financial aid by government available for students from SEDG background.
- 5) Provision of digital infrastructure at institute for accessible teaching-learning/ exchange of knowledge, including literature on cutting edge issues.
- 6) Developing peer learning groups of students for joint study and joint projects (socially and gender inclusive groups). Systems for feedback sharing on student's performance.
- 7) Organizing camps at the school in the rural areas to share information and knowledge about engineering education.
- 8) Supporting faculty to improve their knowledge levels and sensitivity to gender equality and social inclusion issues in educational institutions.
- 9) Promoting mentorship amongst students and teachers (to aid needy students and younger faculty members).
- 10) Improving teacher effectiveness through training to upgrade their domain knowledge on cutting-edge technologies; training in pedagogy, particularly for teaching weak students, helping students with special needs achieve their learning goals; and behavioral training to the teachers to enhance/ foster positive behaviors towards their self-understanding, improving their sensitivity, leadership, and management skills.
- 11) Developing/strengthening robust placement, networking with the industry, organizing placement drives on campus and providing training and assistance in CV writing, interviewing skills for smooth transition of students from college to labor market, particularly to women students.
- 12) Grievance redress mechanism for timely resolution of the complaints lodged by students, faculties, staff, vendors, and other stakeholders.

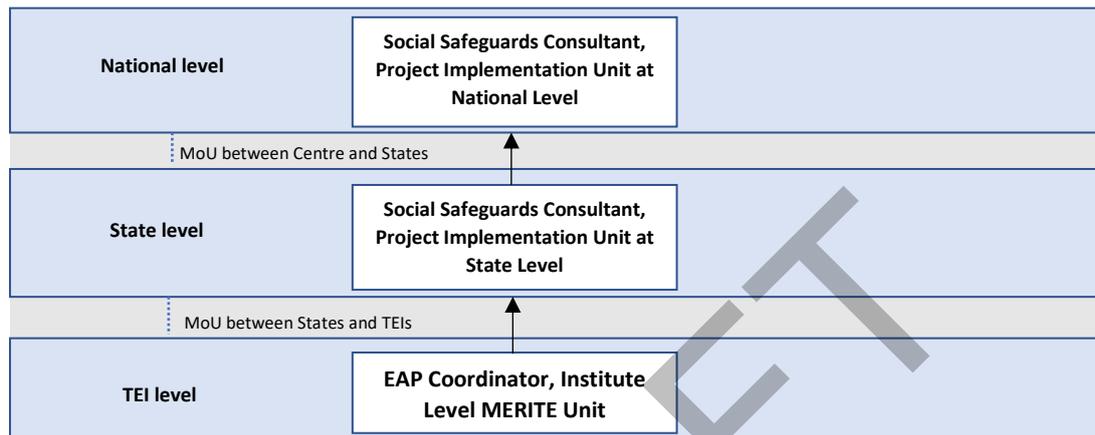
5 Implementation Arrangements

Overall responsibility will lie with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the MoE. The MoE will delegate day-to-day implementation to a sufficiently staffed Project Implementation Unit (PIU), which will undertake all implementation-related activities in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan (PIP), prepared by the MoE and agreed with the World Bank. The Project's dedicated consultants would be responsible for implementing and supervising the EAP at central level. It would include a Senior Social Specialist and a Social Officer to ensure compliance with applicable social requirements.

The MoE will enter into MoUs with each participating state. At the state level, State Departments of Technical Education will oversee and facilitate implementation in their institutions and supported by state-level project implementation units, to be operated by and accountable to the national-level PIU. SPIUs will work closely with the State Department of Technical Education and provide regular updates

to the Principal Secretary/Secretary Technical Education in the state. At SPIU level, a dedicated Social Specialist will implement and monitor the overall activities of the EAP.

At the institutional level, each participating institute will enter into an MoU with MoE or the respective state (in accordance with the nature of the institution, i.e., central versus state-level). The Board of Governors (or equivalent) will be the body with overall accountability, while the principal and senior management will be responsible for institutional project design and day-to-day implementation at the institutional level. They will be supported by an Implementation Development Unit which will include a senior faculty (preferably professor) designated as EAP coordinator to implement and monitor the EAP activities on daily basis.



Reporting

The TSG-MERITE (Social Safeguards Specialists) will review and assess the performance of the institutions based on their submission of yearly EAPs (Academic Year) and the outcomes reported in the MIS system. The EAPs submitted annually will also include the estimated budget required for each activity. Each institute will also define the targets for the activities conducted that year under EAP. Consultation with students will also be completed by the institute before finalizing the EAP plan. After getting due approval from the SPIU and TSG-MERITE, the institute will publish the EAP on its website and make all the stakeholders aware of it. During the Project period, the TSG-MERITE (Social Safeguards Specialists) will prepare quarterly reports on EAP performance of the institutions based on the information received from SPIUs. The report will include an update on the number of activities conducted, participation of students and faculties segregated under SC/ST, PwD and female categories, the outcome achieved, feedback of the students, the challenges faced by the institutions while implementing, budget utilized, etc. as per the pre-defined format. Further, a biennial report will include all of the above, plus trends analysis on the enrolment patterns (disaggregated by gender and category), internships and placements record (if applicable), and the due-diligence process followed during the civil works.

Capacity Building

The PIU at central level will conduct various seminars/ workshops to empower state units and institutes for the implementation of EAP activities during the project period. These seminars/ workshops will be organized on regular basis or as per the demand of any state or institute. Initially in the project implementation, the workshops on developing the EAP and understanding the requirement of the project as per the ESS 7 standard of the WB will be conducted by the PIU at central level for all state units and participating institutions. The state units may further organize the required EAP workshops as per the institute needs during the project period along with other topics such as

gender sensitization, etc. The institutions will organize different seminars/ workshops on EAP topics such as Menstrual health talks, etc. under the project for their students and teachers.

6 Monitoring & Evaluation

The national level PIU will be responsible for the overall Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) function of the project. The TEQIP series relied on a strong web-based MIS for M&E, which will be taken forward in MERITE. The project management component will support a similar web-based system that builds on existing MISs and allows for reporting on project indicators as well as those that are useful for the institute's internal decision-making process and accreditation requirements. This component will also support strengthening capacity for project management, results monitoring, data collection and reporting. The data and reports generated through the MIS will be used for annual and trimester progress reporting of the projects. The PIP will include a detailed monitoring plan for each indicator and outcome including the Performance Based Conditions (PBCs). Associated with each of these outcome indicators will be agreed baseline figures for 2023/24, target values for each year of project implementation, and a clear description of data collection and reports required to support the M&E of the project. For instance, the MIS system will collect the data on the students' performance with particular attention to the vulnerable categories. In addition, the project will work with the AICTE, NBA, ATUs, and Institutions to harmonize their reporting requirements to further simplify the reporting process for institutions. This will enable the MIS system to provide policymakers at national, state, and institutional levels with a summary analysis of the collected data through an interactive, web-based application capable of generating reports for all MERITE indicators and providing the unit level data required for the computation of each indicator. The system will incorporate a series of validity checks to avoid spurious data entry. Training provided to TSG-MERITE staff at the national, state, and institutional levels will strengthen its capacity.

7 Sustainability of EAP

Each institute under the MERITE project will ensure that the systems are well-established for ensuring equity even after the closure of this project. The institute may adopt the following mechanism to ensure sustainability of the activities:

- 1) Institutes will be required to put aside specific funds for ongoing maintenance and development of the institute after the project period so that continued investments in faculty skills, curriculum upgradation, research and innovation and equipment are possible.
- 2) Institute will submit a sustainability plan six months before the project completion as per the format, ensuring that most of the activities taken under the MERITE will be continued so that the performance of the students is not affected.
- 3) State governments will be onboarded one year before the completion of the project to ensure the financing of the activities from state funds after the project completion.
- 4) An additional source of funds may be explored through the alumni base developed under the project.
- 5) During the project, the institute will explore the different financing mechanisms (such as CSR and NGO funding) used to sustain the activities and make its system robust while the project is running.

8 Stakeholder Consultation and Disclosure

This EAP/IPPF was prepared and finalized through a series of free, prior and informed consultations with the primary stakeholders, the students and faculty members. The final round of stakeholder

consultation(s) were held XXXXXXXXXX on XXXXX. The EAP/IPPF has been disclosed by the MoE on its website and the document shall be locally disclosed at all the participating institutions.

9 Grievance Redress Mechanism

9.1 CTGRAMS

A grievance mechanism is an accessible and inclusive system, process, or procedure that receives and acts upon complaints and suggestions for improvement in a timely fashion and facilitates the resolution of concerns and grievances arising in connection with a project.

Every participating institution has a Grievance Redress Mechanism for students and special committees to deal with grievances against any incidence of sexual harassment. Any grievances can also be sent to the NPIU and SPIUs, through the CTGRAMS (Centralized TEQIP Grievance Redress and Monitoring System), a platform based on web technology that primarily aims to enable the submission of grievances by the aggrieved beneficiary from anywhere and anytime (24x7). Launched in August 2019 under the TEQIP-III project, the system was well received by the project stakeholders and had multiple channels for filing a complaint. Namely, web- portal, e-mail, phone, text messages, and complaint boxes at every institute; systems enabled auto-escalation of complaints in case of non-redressal. This portal facilitates grievances tracking through the system-generated unique registration number (URN). CTGRAMS will be expanded and institutionalized for MERITE stakeholders. The grievance mechanism will be free of charge to stakeholders. Accessibility for disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups would be essential, as well as documenting it.

The Details of the CTGRAMS on filing the complaints is placed at *Annex-1*.

9.2 Arrangement for Grievance Redress

Each institute/ ATU will appoint a GRO (Grievance Redress Officer), preferably a senior-level faculty (Professor/ Associate Professor), with prior experience in similar activities or as a student counselor. The details of the GRO, the procedure to submit the grievance, and the expected timeline, will be published on the institute's website and posted at different campus locations for wide dissemination.

Grievance Level	Responsibility	Mode of Grievances provided	Time for consideration of grievance
1 st Level: Institute Level	GRO	Online, Offline via phone, email, register.	7-10 days
1 st Level: ATU Level	GRO	Online, Offline via phone, email, register.	7-10 days
2 nd Level: State Implementation Unit	GRO (Dedicated Consultant)	Online, Offline via phone, email, post	15 days
3 rd Level: TSG-MERITE	GRO (Dedicated Consultant)	Online, Offline via phone, email, post	30 days

9.3 Additional Mechanisms - World Bank Grievance Redress System

Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a World Bank supported project may submit complaints to existing project-level GRM or the World Bank's GRS. The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address project-related concerns.

Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaints to the WORLD BANK's independent Inspection Panel, which determines whether harm has occurred, or could occur, as a result of WB's non-compliance with its policies and procedures. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the World Bank's attention, and Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond.

For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank's corporate GRS, please visit <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service#file>.

For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank Inspection Panel, please visit www.inspectionpanel.org.

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10 Equity Action Plan (EAP) for Institutions/ ATUs

Table 1: EAP/IPPF Actions for the students and faculty

S.No.	Items	Actions	Implementation Agency	Frequency	Monitoring Indicators
Academic measures: Students					
1.	Induction Program	At least three-week induction program for freshers as mandated by AICTE to get acquaint with the institute and its facilities. This will also help students particularly women and SEDGs familiarise with the institutions and courses.	Institution; facilitated by the EAP Coordinator	At the beginning of 1 st Year (Freshers)	Students participating disaggregated by caste and gender and special needs (PWD)
2.	To identify academic weaknesses in students belonging to the vulnerable groups and initiate remedial measures	Institutions to administer diagnostic tests at the beginning of each semester to identify the areas to be remediated; design and offer remedial classes/bridge courses ((in Indian languages, need based).	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	At the beginning of each semester	Percentage of students passing with a minimum of 60% of marks without a backlog
3.	To enhance communicative skills, presentation, and soft skills to boost the confidence level of students	Provision of literacy clubs to enhance English speaking/ writing skills, provide ample opportunities for students to use language in appropriate situations, and set up English language laboratories to offer training in practicing language structures	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	At least once a week in each semester	Improved presentation skills Improved transition rates Improved employability ratio
4.	Peer- Learning Groups	Develop/strengthen peer learning groups of students for joint study and joint projects (socially and gender inclusive groups); group can comprise academically and linguistically weak and strong students; group size can be 6-8	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	continuous	Improved class participation; better scores/credits improved transition rate
5.	Training to improve placements; exit exams such as GATE; career counseling, provision of digital learning including MOOCs certification	Organize sessions/classes for students (after class) to hone their technical and soft skills and preparing them for interviews and higher studies. Promote students to take MOOC courses for better understanding.	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator and Placement Cell Coordinator	Two or three times a week for 3 rd year and 4 th year students	Improvement in employability rate, higher studies rate, increased transition rate, etc.
6.	Counselling services for mental health	Prioritizing students' mental health by providing counseling via a psychiatrist or therapist to address issues of stress/anxiety	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous	Improved participation (class and other activities); Percentage improvement in the transition rate

S.No.	Items	Actions	Implementation Agency	Frequency	Monitoring Indicators
		(homesickness, exam stress, abuse, violence, etc.)			
Academic Measures: Faculties					
7.	Give under-qualified teachers priority in opportunities to upgrade their domain knowledge	Identify needs and indicate in their Faculty Development Plan how they would build equity to upgrade faculty qualifications and skills	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Yearly	Increase in the percentage of teachers enrolled in M. Tech. and Ph.Ds. Number of faculty participated in research/ conference. Number of papers/research documents published in journals/ news articles.
8.	Training in pedagogical skills, classroom management skills, emotional quotient, digital pedagogy, particularly to improve the performance of weak students	<p>i) Intensive teacher training programs [(based on Training Needs Analysis (TNA)] to appraise faculty on various techniques and strategies for teaching students with different learning styles</p> <p>ii) Short-term intensive training in emotional quotient—this will enable teachers to empathize with students who require emotional support</p> <p>All institutions to prepare Faculty Development Plan for the Project period (using identified providers for Pedagogy or National Training Calendar for subject training), giving priority to the teachers with the most significant gaps in knowledge and skills as diagnosed by the TNA</p> <p>All teachers are to be covered by training in pedagogy, including the teaching of weak students and understanding the needs of students with disabilities and helping them achieve their learning goals; an understanding of equity and equality, students' rights and entitlements, i.e., nondiscriminatory practices</p> <p>Domain training is to be done on the basis of need/ link up with industry to keep abreast of cutting-edge technology</p> <p>Training on the use of digital technology for</p>	NPIU, SPIU and Institution	TNA to be done before the preparation of Institutional Development Plans; reporting every six months and remedial actions on a continuous basis	Percent of planned training completed as reported/ aggregated six monthly Feedback of students, faculty through the satisfaction survey Improvement in students' participation in class Improvement in the transition rate

S.No.	Items	Actions	Implementation Agency	Frequency	Monitoring Indicators
		improved classroom participation and information dissemination Satisfaction Surveys to assess training achievements			
9.	Faculty Appraisal mechanism	Introduce the 360-degree appraisal system - an appraisal by the HoD and students. The assessment includes student feedback on faculty's content delivery, behavior in the class, and others.	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	End of each semester	The number of faculty receiving a minimum of "satisfactory" rating Percentage of faculty with improved rating in the subsequent assessment.
Non- Academic measures: Institute level					
10.	Awareness programs about various scholarships and other financial aid by government	Institutions to organize awareness programs for students, faculties, staff, parents, etc. on various scholarship/financial assistance	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous	The number of students receiving scholarships on time Vs. students applied for scholarships, disaggregated by caste and gender
11.	Hold knowledge-sharing workshops with other institutions yearly to improve knowledge exchange	The SPIUs and institutions to organize workshops with a thematic focus (progressive, state-of-the-art)	SPIU and Institution	Yearly	The number of workshops organized Number of institutions (including tier-1) that participated Number of students/faculty that made presentations/organized exhibitions on the cutting-edge technological tools/themes
12.	Digital infrastructure at institute for accessible teaching-learning/ exchange of knowledge	Assessment of digital capacity and development of digitalization strategy. Institutes to ensure substantial internet facilities and unlimited data for students (campus and hostels) and faculties, permissible digital infrastructure for faculties and students for teaching and learning.	NPIU, SPIU and Institution	At the time of IDP and actions implemented as proposed	Digital infrastructure at institute for accessible teaching-learning/ exchange of knowledge
13.	Institutionalize Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)	Ensure wide publication of CTGRAMS at the institution, including channels for registering a complaint and timeframe for resolution; Appoint GRO as a single point of contact for resolving grievances	Project Institutions, SPIU and NPIU	Continuous	GRO Number of complaints received and time taken to address grievances, including escalated to the next tier. Number of unsolved cases Trend analysis on a year-by-year basis on the number and nature of complaints received and resolved within the defined timeframe

S.No.	Items	Actions	Implementation Agency	Frequency	Monitoring Indicators
14.	Ensure that institutional mechanisms to protect and address the needs and concerns of women students are established; promoting the participation of female faculties in such decision-making committees	Minimum 30% representation of women in sexual harassment committees, gender committees, and similar committees.	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous/ As required	Number of females in the institutional committees, including at the leadership role (chair, co-chair etc.)
15.	Organizing gender sensitization programs	Conducting workshops/ seminars on menstrual health, reproductive health, gender-based violence etc., and ensuring participation of all faculty and students	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous	Reduction in the cases of harassment and abuse reported by female staff and faculty
16.	Develop or strengthen policies for combating violence and abuse on caste, culture, disability, gender, background, and linguistic differences.	Institute will develop guidelines and widely publicize the policies to combat violence and abuse based on caste, gender, background etc., including sexual harassment policies.	NPIU, SPIU and institutions.	Continuous	Policies to safeguard students – sexual harassment and anti-ragging policy Number of students aware of such policies and provisions
17.	Special efforts for training/ internship/ placement of vulnerable students, including female Develop or strengthen placement cell	Greater networking with the industry, organizing placement drives on campus and providing training and assistance in CV writing, mock interviews, building alumni database	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous	Feedback from the students Improvement in employability rate Employer satisfaction survey findings Alumni support for internships/placements
18.	Appointing Student Mentors and Faculty Advisers for Students	Assign senior students as mentors for 6-8 junior students, Appoint Faculty Advisers for 10-15 student mentors, Faculty Advisors to guide the students and monitor their progress, Student and Faculty Mentor should be given some professional training in mentoring and counseling to play this role	Institution; facilitated by the EAP coordinator	Continuous	Feedback from the students Improvement in class performance Improvement in the transition rate
19.	Develop and regularly update, MIS	Collect/analyze data disaggregated by gender (M/F) and caste and disability (SC/ST/OBC/PWD) to track their progress	NPIU, SPIU and institutions.	At the beginning of each session and updated regularly	MIS established and updated and disaggregated data by gender, caste, disability, geography available
20.	Outreach Programs	Organize camps at the school in the rural areas to share information and knowledge about engineering education; discussions may be held on entrance exams requirement,	EAP Coordinator	Half-yearly	Improvement in the enrolment of students from rural and vulnerable population

S.No.	Items	Actions	Implementation Agency	Frequency	Monitoring Indicators
		scholarships available, and prospects to encourage students from the rural areas			

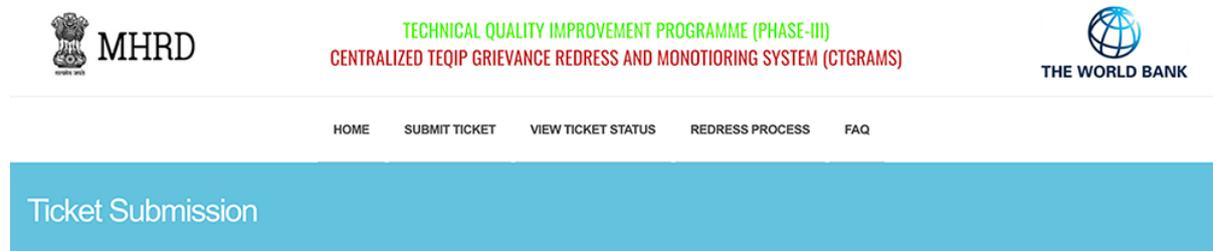
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11 Annexures

11.1 Annex-1 CTGRAMS grievance filing procedure

Step 1:

- Open the link of CTGRAMS at <http://teqip.in/grm/user.php>
- User will get two options to register the grievances either by email or by mobile no.



This screenshot shows a section of the website titled 'TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME' with the subtitle 'Grievance Redressal System'. Below this, it says 'Log your complain by OTP'. There are two blue buttons: 'Using Email' and 'Using Mobile No'.

Step 2:

- User will get an OTP in both the cases
- After entering the OTP, it will ask to fill the details like Name, Mobile no. and Email Id
- User will fill the details and click on save button



This screenshot shows the registration form fields. The title is 'TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME' and the subtitle is 'Grievance Redressal System'. The form includes three input fields: 'Email*' (with a greyed-out placeholder), 'Mobile No*' (with a placeholder 'Mobile Number'), and 'Name' (with a placeholder 'Name'). At the bottom of the form are two buttons: a blue 'Save' button and a red 'Next' button.

Step 3:

- User will get a unique URN no. It will be used for further tracing the status of the complaint.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Info!

Kindly note the URN number T190800004 for future use

Email

Mobile No*

Name

URN No

Save Next

Step 4:

- Click on Ok, then click on Next button.
- Now it will ask to fill further details related to the grievance of the user like category of the grievance (general, academic, financial etc.), name of the state of the user, Institute name and description of the complaint.
- User can also upload the documents/evidences related to the complaint/grievance

TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

TECHNICAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (PHASE-III)
CENTRALIZED TEQIP GRIEVANCE REDRESS AND MONITORING SYSTEM (CTGRAMS)

HOME SUBMIT TICKET VIEW TICKET STATUS REDRESS PROCESS FAQ

Mobile No*

Name

URN No
T190800004

Category*
GENERAL

State*
Tripura

Institute/Organization*
NIT Agartala

Description*
Description of your issue

Upload Supporting Document Upload Doc

Submit

Step 5:

- Click submit after filling all the relevant details.
- After submitting, the user will get an SMS on the given mobile no. regarding successful submission of the grievance.

Step 6:

- User can check the status of the complaint/grievance at <http://teqip.in/grm/checkComplainStatus.php>
- It will ask you to enter the URN no. which was generated during registering the complaint/grievance.

The screenshot shows the 'View Ticket Status' page. At the top, there are logos for MHRD and THE WORLD BANK, and the text 'TECHNICAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (PHASE-III) CENTRALIZED TEQIP GRIEVANCE REDRESS AND MONITORING SYSTEM (CTGRAMS)'. A navigation bar contains links: HOME, SUBMIT TICKET, VIEW TICKET STATUS, REDRESS PROCESS, and FAQ. Below this is a blue header with the text 'View Ticket Status'. The main content area features a form titled 'TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME' with the subtitle 'Grievance Redressal System'. The form has two input fields: 'Email*' and 'URN Number'. The 'URN Number' field contains the value 'T190800004'. Below the fields is a blue button labeled 'Get Status'.

Step 7:

- Click on Get Status to check the live status of your complaint/grievance

The screenshot shows the 'View Ticket Status' page after clicking 'Get Status'. The page layout is similar to the previous screenshot, but the main content area now displays the details for the selected ticket. The title is 'TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME' with the subtitle 'Grievance Redressal System'. Below this, it says 'Ticket Details for T190800004'. The details are listed as follows: Name: [redacted], Email ID: [redacted], Mobie No: [redacted], Category: PROCUREMENT, State: Bihar, Institute/Org: test, Submit Date: 2019-08-30 14:04:43, Issue: test. A blue bar highlights the 'Ticket Status: In Progress'. At the bottom, there is a link 'Click Here to Check Another Ticket'.