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**IMPORTANCE OF NAAC ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES FOR IMPROVING QUALITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Higher education is the backbone of a society. In addition to giving the country skilled labour, it improves the standard of the citizens' social, economic, and intellectual lives. When we discuss higher education, we primarily refer to the activities that take place at colleges and universities in the areas of teaching, research, demanding practical work, and social and community service. It pertains to both graduate and postgraduate levels in the area of teaching. India has had rapid and noticeable expansion in the number of universities and colleges during the past three decades, especially with the growing involvement of private individuals or agencies. However, because of the larger number, these Institutes face ongoing challenges in order to develop and meet the criteria of the global marketplace. High tuition prices, poor educational quality, regional differences, lack of access to technology, etc. are some of the ongoing difficulties faced by India, which has one of the largest and most diverse educational systems. Other than these, quality and sustenance are actually the most crucial, thus for NAAC, quality assurance is also the main goal. This essay seeks to define the function of NAAC accreditation in raising educational standards at institutions of higher learning.*

**KEYWORDS**

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), IQAC, SSR, IQAR, IIQA, accreditation, assessment, quality, assurance.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Any nation's progress depends heavily on education. It is a nation's backbone because it creates the human force, which is the most important factor in the development of a country and of civilization. Gaining ground and establishing a strong democratic society both depend on education<sup>[1]</sup>. Any nation's development is largely dependent on the expansion of its educational system. Any nation can only advance if its people are active, resourceful, entrepreneurial, and accountable. Therefore, higher education is regarded as a crucial tool for advancing any nation's social, economic, political, and technological development, especially for a developing nation like India. Higher education's reach and demand are expanding daily, and its most crucial goal is to develop intellects by offering top-notch instruction in order to advance international standards in higher education institutions<sup>[2]</sup>. The primary concern that needs to be addressed is how to give higher education without sacrificing the standard of instruction. Because both the higher education community, accreditation is important<sup>[1]</sup>. One of the main ways the higher education community establishes standards for quality is through accreditation. It also helps the public and the government identifies and articulate the overarching public interest in higher education. The aim of accreditation is to guarantee that higher education institutions deliver high-quality instruction<sup>[2]</sup>. The main goal of certification is to make sure that your programme performs the fundamental function of giving you an education. The process of determining whether or not an educational institution or programme satisfies predetermined standards of educational quality can be summed up as accreditation. This procedure is based on expert judgement. Its main function<sup>[2]</sup> is to provide prospective students and the general public with reassurance that graduates of an institution offering a variety of programmes have attained a minimal level of competence in the subject areas they choose to study, acting as a kind of consumer protection. In many nations, the ministry of education or other state organisations are legally responsible for accreditation. The primary goal of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous division of the University Grants Commission (UGC), is to evaluate and accredit the nation's institutions of higher learning<sup>[2]</sup>. All colleges are required by the UGC to complete the assessment accreditation process. The NAAC was founded in 1994 and has its headquarters in Bangalore. The successful collaboration between NAAC and the State governments has been a major factor in the assessment and certification process' great momentum among academics on quality-related concerns.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. Access to and accreditation of higher education institutions.
2. Raise public awareness of the superiority of higher education.
3. Encourage academic institutions to improve the standard of their teaching and research.
4. Put an emphasis on quality improvement.
5. Promote higher education innovation, accountability, and self-evaluation.
6. Encourage the essential improvements, innovations and reforms across the board for the institution for excellence.
7. Disseminate knowledge of effective quality control measures.

**METHODOLOGY**

The importance of NAAC certification and the preliminary steps that Institutes must be aware of before beginning with evaluation have been extensively covered. This has been thoroughly covered by NAAC on their website and in the published manuals<sup>[2]</sup>. The following steps are a general breakdown of the entire NAAC accreditation process:

1. Establishment and working of IQAC
2. Submission of AQAR
3. Submission of IIQA
4. Submission of SSR
5. DVV and its clarification
6. Peer Team visit and declaration of grade
7. Post NAAC activities

In the first step, the institution is required to seek Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA) and the second step is the assessment and accreditation of the institution. NAAC has identified seven criteria-Curricular Aspects, Teaching, Learning and Education, Researches, Consultancy and Extension, Infrastructure and learning Resources, Student support and Progression, Governance and Leadership and Innovative practices. The methodology of NAAC<sup>[2]</sup> is evolved over 15 years and has undergone several changes based on feedback from stakeholders to match pace with changing higher education scenario. In keeping with this tradition NAAC has initiated stakeholder consultation process of a long time also having contributed to the evolution of NAAC.

The Assessment and Accreditation is in three dimensions which are explained below:

**1. On-Line Submission of A Letter**

Higher Education Institutions with a record of at least two batches of students graduated, or been in existence for six years, whichever is earlier, are eligible to apply for the process of NAAC.

**2. Preparation of Self Study Report**

The self study report submission to NAAC is the first and most crucial stage in the assessment process. An institution, according to NAAC, that truly comprehends its own potentials, limitations, and strengths. Thus, the foundation of the assessment procedure is self-study. NAAC mandates that there be two components to the report. Part I may contain data about the institution under the seven criteria for assessment for which NAAC has developed a format. Based on the data collected in part I, the institution is expected to analyze its functioning and performance, and self-analysis becomes part II of the self-study report.

**3. Peer Team Visit**

A procedure that starts as soon as an institution submits its self-study report includes steps such as the selection of team members and their subsequent visit to the unit of accreditation. The institution has the chance to discuss and come up with ideas to improve and consolidate the academic environment thanks to the peer team's visit. A panel with national level representation is chosen by NAAC as the first step in creating the peer team<sup>[2]</sup>. The panel is then reviewed by the institution to ascertain whether it has any valid concerns about any of the panel members. Through three main activities visiting departments and facilities, speaking with various stakeholders of the institution, and reviewing documentary evidence the peer team performs an objective assessment of the quality of education provided in the institution during the on-site visit while keeping in mind the NAAC's guiding principles<sup>[7]</sup>.

**FUNCTIONS OF NAAC**

- Evaluating and accrediting programmes, departments, and institutions.
- Developing suitable accrediting tools and improving them as needed.
- Creating internal pre-visit documentation for assessors to review.
- Coordinating the "on-site" visit until it is successfully completed.
- To plan outreach initiatives for Assessment & Accreditation and quality in higher education.
- Create strategies for before and after accreditation.
- Arrange conferences, workshops, and seminars to share information and talk about problems with education quality.
- Educate institutions on how to create their Self-study Reports (SSRs).
- Encourage the creation of Quality Assurance units.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC)
- State level Quality Assurance Co-ordination Committee (SLQACC)
- State Quality Assurance Cell (SQAC)

**NEED OF ACCREDITATION**

The need for accreditation of educational institutions and programmes is recognized in both developed and developing nations for one or more of the following reasons.

- Funding choices.
- Professional certifications and qualifications recognized by the state.
- Institutional accountability to stakeholders.
- Supporting institutional activities for self-improvement.
- Monitoring the educational program's quality.

**ROLE OF ACCREDITATION**

- Supporting institutional efforts to increase quality.
- Confirming that a facility or programme complies with regulations.
- Aiding prospective students in finding reputable colleges.
- Supporting required adjustments, advancements, and reforms across all facets of the institutions working towards the aforementioned objective.
- Assisting in the selection of organisations and initiatives into which public and private monies can be put to use.
- Promoting responsibility and self-evaluation in higher education.
- Setting objectives for weaker programmes self-development and encouraging an overall improvement in standards throughout educational institutions.
- Complete faculty and staff participation in institutional planning and evaluation.
- Creating standards for professional certification and licensure as well as improving programmes that provide such training.
- Providing numerous stakeholders, especially students, with certainty and confidence in the quality.
- Keeping track of, monitoring, and assessing the educational standards and standards of instruction

**SIGNIFICANCE OF ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION**

- Assessment and accreditation<sup>[8]</sup> is driven by the market and has a global focus.
- Contributes to the notable improvement of the Institutions engaged in the accreditation process by evaluating the features of an Institution and its programmes against a set of established criteria.
- Assessment and Accreditation is the tool in reaching this objective.
- The accreditation process quantifies the institution's procedures' strengths and flaws and offers guidance and chances for further development.
- Funding organisations may choose to release grants to accredited institutions for research, expansion, etc. It offers a quality label or seal that sets the institution apart from its competitors on a national scale. As a result, institutions' brand name is more widely known and appreciated, which inspires them to pursue higher goals.
- By establishing an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in each college and university, it aids authorised institutions in quality maintenance and enhancement efforts.

**BENEFITS OF INSTITUTIONS**

- To get knowledge about its advantages and potential through a thorough review process.
- To launch cutting-edge, contemporary pedagogical approaches.
- Interactions inside and between institutions.
- To achieve their academic goals.
- Assists the institution in getting the money it needs from funding organisations so that grants can be released for research and expansion, among other things. Improves student enrolment both in terms of quality and quantity.
- Assists in developing a solid and demanding academic atmosphere inside the institution.
- Promotes graduate and professional mobility and the universal recognition of academic credentials.
- Make sure there is a greater focus on institutional performance and quality improvement.

- Ensure that the quality culture is internalised.
- Ensure that the institution's varied activities are improved and coordinated.
- Offer a solid foundation for decision-making to enhance institutional performance.
- Establish a structured system for internal communication and documentation.
- Assist educational institutions in achieving successful student learning outcomes.
- Encourage higher education institutions to promote a superior teaching, learning, and research environment.
- Promotes innovation, autonomy, self-evaluation, and accountability in higher education.
- Assists with the execution of training, consulting, and research projects pertaining to quality.
- Working together with other higher education stakeholders to assess, promote, and sustain excellence.

**GRADING SYSTEM OF NAAC**

Grading System of NAAC is the significant outcome of the assessment and the final institutional grading. After assessment, the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of an institution is computed for those institutions which clear the grade qualifiers<sup>[3]</sup>. "A grade qualifier is kept for the institution on qualify for valid accreditation. Institution must receive a minimum 1.51 CGPA aggregated score (quantitative and qualitative) in order to be eligible for any Grade (C to A++). After passing the grade qualifier, the institution's CGPA is determined<sup>[4]</sup>. The System Generated Scores (SGS) of the quantitative Metrics, which make up about 70% of the total, the scores from the qualitative, critical appraisal by the Peer Team through on-site visit, and the scores from the Student Satisfaction Survey are used to calculate the cumulative grade point average, or CGPA<sup>[9]</sup>.

**TABLE 1**

Cumulative Grade Point (CGPA)	Letter Grade
3.51-4.00	A++
3.26-3.50	A+
3.00-3.25	A
2.76-3.00	B++
2.51-2.75	B+
2.01-2.50	B
1.51-2.00	C
≤1.50	D (Not Accredited)

**ROLE OF NAAC IN CHANGING SCENARIO**

The role of NAAC in the evolving higher education<sup>[3]</sup> landscape needs to be redefined in light of recognition and programme accreditation, national university rankings, the creation of national benchmarks, a national and international database, a research and development centre, the development of reports and policy papers for the Government of India (GOI), the accreditation of multiple accrediting bodies, the recognition of regional and state level accreditation bodies, and other factors.

- All of the nation's higher education institutions may be required to undergo assessment and accreditation by the NAAC.
- NAAC might begin accrediting programmes. When compared to grading, rankings of schools may not be all that important.
- Every three years, all accreditation organisations, including NAAC, must renew their accreditation.
- While NAAC may receive accreditation from reputable worldwide accrediting organisations, NAAC may also serve in this capacity for all other accreditation organisations that the Government of India (GOI) has recognised.
- For the third cycle of institutional accreditation, a longer length of accreditation may be taken into consideration and NAAC grading and duration of accreditation may be linked.
- NAAC must continue to be the nation's leading organization<sup>[3]</sup> for higher education institution assessment and accreditation, offering vision and leadership.

**ANALYSIS**

The number of higher education institutions that volunteered for assessment and accreditation<sup>[4]</sup> based on the seven criteria developed by NAAC for its reaccreditation framework (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6 & C7): curricular aspects, teaching and learning, evaluation, research, consultation and extensions, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression, governance, leadership, and management, institutional values, and best practices. They are all unaccredited. The number<sup>[4]</sup> of valid accredited Institutions accredited, as on March 2022 out of the total number are presented below:

**TABLE 2**

Types of Universities	Total no. of Universities	Number of Accredited Universities	Percentage
Central Universities	56	41	73.21
State Universities	459	149	32.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>36.89</b>

The Categories of Central Universities have a higher percentage of recognized institutions under the Revised Accreditation Framework<sup>[5]</sup> during the study period (2017–2018). Currently accredited State Universities make up only one-third of all State Universities in the nation.

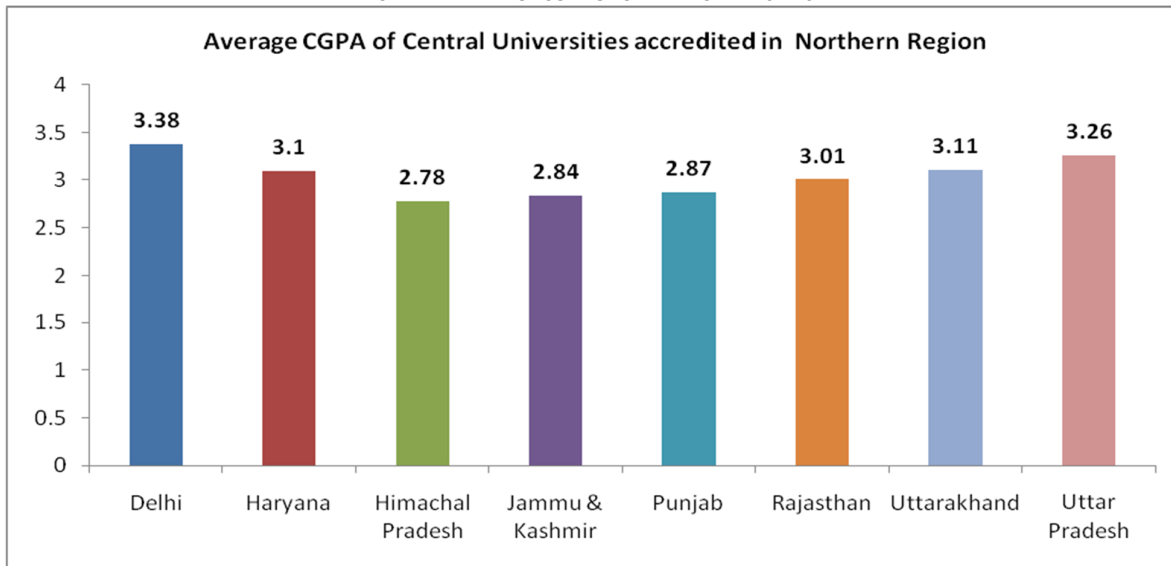
**North Region**

Comparatively speaking, the northern region outperformed with an average cumulative point of 3.04. Curriculum-related factors, teaching, learning, and evaluation, infrastructure, student assistance, and progression all received grades<sup>[6]</sup> that were higher than a 3.0 overall grade point average.

**TABLE 3: AVERAGE CGPA OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTH REGION**

State	CGPA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
Delhi	3.38	3.41	3.7	3.55	3.71	3.19	3.03	3.18
Haryana	3.1	3.1	3.14	3	3	3	3.2	3.4
Himachal Pradesh	2.78	3.43	2.97	2.76	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.4
Jammu & Kashmir	2.84	3.14	3.15	2.7	2.51	2.9	3.07	2.61
Punjab	2.87	2.89	3.4	3	3.7	3.5	2.8	2.8
Rajasthan	3.01	3.13	3.3	2.92	3	3.4	2.7	2.4
Uttarakhand	3.11	3.33	3.1	2.92	3.5	3	3.1	3
Uttar Pradesh	3.26	3.13	3.27	3.11	3.3	3.13	2.83	3.47
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>2.90</b>

CHART 1: AVERAGE CGPA OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES



**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF STATE UNIVERSITIES**

There are 459 State Universities scattered throughout the several states. State universities are abundant in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. They provide students with cheap access to a high-quality education.

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF STATE UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

Sr.No	State	Number	Sr.No	State	Number
1	Andhra Pradesh	20	14	Maharashtra	23
2	Assam	12	15	Manipur	1
3	Bihar	15	16	Odisha	16
4	Chhattisgarh	13	17	Punjab	9
5	Goa	1	18	Rajasthan	22
6	Gujarat	28	19	Tamil Nadu	22
7	Haryana	14	20	Telangana	16
8	Himachal Pradesh	4	21	Tripura	1
9	Jammu & Kashmir	9	22	Uttar Pradesh	30
10	Jharkhand	8	23	Uttarakhand	11
11	Karnataka	27	24	West Bengal	26
12	Kerala	13	25	NCT of Delhi	7
13	Madhya Pradesh	21	26	Chandigarh	1

State Universities have affiliated colleges and have the responsibilities to monitor the colleges affiliated to them. The scores of the State Universities are given below:

TABLE 5

CGPA	No of State Universities	Percentage
1.51 - 2.00	7	5
2.01 - 2.50	18	14
2.51 - 2.75	17	13
2.76 - 3.00	17	13
3.01 - 3.25	51	39
3.26 - 3.50	11	8
3.51 - 4.00	10	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the data<sup>[6]</sup>, the majority of accredited state universities performed exceptionally well, earning scores of 3 or higher, while 26% of accredited state universities scored average to above average, earning scores between 2.5 and 1.00. State universities' NAAC accreditation scores by criterion show that University of Punjab was the best in terms of curriculum, with an average CGPA of 3.34.

**CONCLUSION**

The world of tomorrow can be shaped by education at all levels, which can give people and communities the abilities, viewpoints, information, and values needed to live and work sustainably. To advance the caliber of higher education in India, NAAC has taken a variety of actions. The NAAC assessment has made significant efforts to instill a quality culture throughout India's higher education institutions. The main thing that keeps higher education institutions alive is quality. Higher education is useless if it is of poor quality. Higher education institutions with poor educational standards have proliferated recently like mushrooms. However, there has been a significant change in the overall landscape of higher education since the NAAC was established. The NAAC evaluation has led to quality improvement in the colleges. Both the college's academic and extracurricular activities have significantly improved.

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