

Best Practices

Best Practice I

Title of the Practice

Student Admission Process

Context

St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli has been offering its services to the student community in the field of higher education for the past 175 years. The college offers quality education to its students, and thus functions as the prominent institution in the middle part of Tamilnadu. The college has evolved a framework of Admission Procedures over the years that facilitates accommodating students from various sections of society. In the admission process, the Jesuit Management of the college actualizes its policy of *preferential option for the poor*. Though the college is meant primarily for the Catholic Minority students of the state of Tamilnadu, it does admit students from other states, union territories and countries, irrespective of caste, creed and culture.

Objectives

The guidelines for the Admission Process of St. Joseph's College is based on the following objectives:

- Preferential option for the poor
- Imparting holistic education that includes value based and skill based training to students from socially disadvantaged sections of the society
- Optimal use of technology to facilitate paper free admission procedure
- Following the State Government admission procedures for religious minority institutions
- Contributing to national development by providing an opportunity for the students with high performance to pursue higher education

Practice

The college follows the procedures that are much relevant in the institutional context in its admission process:

1. Admission Policy

The admission policy of the college is based on the **State Government Admission policy for minority institutions and the Jesuit Province policy**. As per the Jesuit Province policy, the college admits students from **economically and socially disadvantaged sections** of the society, and gives preference to the first generation learners, orphans and semi-orphans. In the socially disadvantaged groups, it gives more preference to the **Arundhathiyar** community, one of the most marginalised communities of the country. The college admits many students

from **rural areas, thus bridging the rural-urban divide**, also contributing to the development of the villages of the state. The **physically and visually challenged students** are admitted into the college, and the college has a strong infrastructure facility to cater to the special needs of these students. The college has a preferential option for students engaged in various **sports and games**. The college admits many students from other states and countries every academic year.

The admission of students under various categories is **strictly based on merit**, and the top scorers of any given category are given preference. The college does not admit students to any programme of study in excess, or above the number of seats sanctioned by the parent university. The college **does not collect any capitation fee or donation in any form** amounting to corrupt practices from or on behalf of any of the students admitted or their parents/guardians except the prescribed fee and other charges as fixed by the college and displayed on the website. In spite of the increase in the demand ratio of the various programmes, the fee structure of the college is relatively less when compared to that of the neighbouring colleges of the locality.

2. Applying Procedure

The college has a very systematic **Online Admission process** for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The college uses an **indigenously developed software** that has been tested sufficiently for its validity. All the details with reference to the admission process are posted on the website of the college (sjctni.edu).

Admission for the undergraduate courses is made on the basis of marks obtained by the applicants in the 10+2 level as it prevails in the Tamilnadu Higher Secondary School Education System. Admission for postgraduate courses is made on the basis of the marks obtained by the applicants in their bachelor's degree in the relevant discipline from a recognised college or university.

The candidates are required to fill in the applications online. The campus is very **student-friendly**; helpdesks manned by Staff and Student Volunteers provide relevant information to the parents and students who come to the campus for admission. The staff and the students of the Computer Centres of the College offer their services to the applicants.

3. Admission Process by the Admission Committee

The college constitutes the **Admission Committee** that plays a pivotal role in the selection of candidates by engaging in a careful scrutiny of the applications. The Heads and Administrators are involved in the admission process. The admission of students under various categories is strictly based on merit. The selected candidates in the first list are sent an e-offer of admission through email and messaging services, and the offer will be valid only till the date mentioned in the offer of admission. However, the stipulated time duration to appear for the Approval of Admission is relaxed for candidates from economically disadvantaged sections of the society. The Selection list is also **published on the website** of the college. Candidates are required to submit the mandatory documents for verification during the Approval of Admission. The first list is followed by the second and the third lists,

and the respective processes of Approval of Admission. The Committee also ensures the **transparency** of the process – application, selection, fee structure and payment of fees. All the activities of the Admission Committee are regularly recorded.

4. Admission to Hostels

The college has **six hostels** including one for sports persons and **one for girls** with a total number of 592 rooms. Nearly one-third of the total students on roll are inmates of the hostels. The hostels have spacious dining halls, playgrounds and recreational amenities. Students from economically disadvantaged sections of the society are given **partial and full fee concession** in the hostels.

5. Strengths of the Admission Process

Students and parents from rural areas are provided guidance in selecting and applying for relevant programmes. The college grants **partial and full concession** in Tuition fee and Hostel fee for students from poor economic and social backgrounds. Students with poor economic background are identified during the Admission process and they are provided with financial assistance by means of **scholarship** from the Management. A **daylong Orientation** is offered to the selected students along with their parents, thereby initiating the students into the value systems of the campus. As the majority of the students admitted into the college are from vernacular medium of education (mostly Tamil), they are trained in English even before the beginning of the semester. **A two-week long training through Bridge Course in English** is offered to the undergraduate students in LSRW skills with modern pedagogy.

6. Challenges

The policy of the college with a preferential option for the poor brings in a majority of students from rural areas, and hence low English proficiency among the students at the entry level. Inadequate student diversity to be rectified by attracting more students from other countries

7. Outcomes

- The meticulous care taken by the Management of the college in the admission procedures holds up the ideals and mission and vision of the institution.
- The college inculcates its value systems in the young minds, thus creating noble citizens who serve as *men and women for others*.
- The college also contributes to the development of the nation by training young men and women to be highly skill oriented, employable and capable of becoming successful entrepreneurs.
- The college also stands as an epitome of social justice and social equality by admitting students from many disadvantaged communities of the society.

Best Practice II

Title of the Practice

Quality Assurance through End to End Student Feedback

Context

Higher Education is one of the most vital aspects of modern India that determines the growth of the nation, and it is mandatory to evolve as many mechanisms as possible to check the quality of the Teaching-Learning process of institutions of Higher Education. St. Joseph's College, down the centuries, has been evolving many such mechanisms, and the **End-to-End Student Feedback System** that the college employs is one of the pioneering aspects in this realm. The college receives feedback on the various aspects of its functioning from all the stakeholders – faculty, non-teaching staff, students, alumni, parents and employers. Nevertheless, the feedback system that the students engage in is very comprehensive, from the entry of the student into the college, and continues even after the student exits the portals of St. Joseph's.

Objectives

- To assess the quality of the curriculum, performance of teaching faculty, performance of non-teaching staff, quality of infrastructural facilities and the effectiveness of the School system
- To assess the effectiveness of the Teaching-Learning and Evaluation process, Student Support Systems and system of governance of the institution
- To understand the academic and psychological needs of the students in order to create new and efficient channels through which the student community can be served
- To receive an unbiased evaluation on the various practices of the college with reference to quality aspects as spelt out in the parameters of NAAC

The Practice

The End to End Student Feedback is a mechanism evolved by the IQAC of the college to check the quality of the TLE and other activities of the institution. Except the Open Forum, the process of receiving feedback is conducted online. The questionnaires are very meticulously prepared by the IQAC, with the approval of the administrators, for all the feedback, and are revised based on the rising demands of the times. Dates are allotted for the students to engage in these activities, and the data received is analysed, and necessary action is taken, wherever necessary, for the better performance of the college. The students are engaged in the following feedback activities:

Students' Appraisal on Teaching Faculty: Odd Semester & Even Semester
Open Forum
Survey on Soft Skills
Survey on the Efficiency of the School System

Students Satisfaction Survey (SSS)

Exit Poll

Alumni Feedback

The college does not use Google Forms or other free survey tools to conduct the surveys. Rather, it uses indigenously developed software to receive feedback from the students. The Practice is performed in five phases: Planning, Collection of Data, Analysis, Reporting and Evaluation and Monitoring.

- All the students assess the performance of the faculty teaching the various courses in the **Students' Appraisal on Teaching Faculty** in both the semesters of the academic year. The appraisal is employed to assess the faculty's subject knowledge, punctuality to class, method of delivery, effective use of ICT tools, fluency in the English language, covering the topics on time, conduct of CIA components, assessment methods, ability to be a role model/mentor, etc.
- Open Forum is an annual event in which one or two representatives of from each class are invited to attend a meeting with the Management. The students are allowed to give genuine feedback on any aspect of the functioning of the institution. The Open Forum has strengthened a transparent practice of communication among the students, teachers and administrators.
- The Soft Skills course is considered to be one of the best practices of the college, as it plays a vital role in the development of personality, communication skills and placement of all the students. Hence, annual feedback is received from the undergraduate and postgraduate students who have undergone the course.
- Survey on the Efficiency of the School System is used to assess the effectiveness of the School System.
- SSS is conducted every year, and is used to study the various dimensions of the performance of the college.
- The outgoing students of UG and PG participate in Exit Poll that sums up their overall experience during their stay at St. Joseph's.
- Students often come back to the institution as Alumni, and give their feedback on how the PEOs of the departments have been achieved in their respective positions as employees, entrepreneurs or students pursuing Higher Education and research.

Students enjoy complete freedom in expressing their critical views on any aspect of the college as their identity is kept confidential.

Obstacles Faced and Strategies adopted to overcome them

It is a challenging task to make all the students understand the importance of making a sincere attempt to present a genuine feedback. Some students tend to complete it in a mechanical manner, for the sake of completing the task. Some students tend to be partial in favouring some faculty. Awareness on the importance of the activity is created through the mentors who explain the action taken aspect of the feedback of the students, and how it also plays a prominent role in the developmental measures undertaken by the college.

The Online Feedback obtained from students regarding Staff Members was earlier conducted for a span of 10 days in a leisure schedule without using the full resource potential of the computer centres. In 2013-14, the feedback was obtained from nearly 6000 students within a span of 2 days by fully utilizing our computer centre resources. The Software used for getting feedback before 2013-14 was not very dynamic and user friendly. Hence IQAC revamped the application to be more robust, dynamic and user friendly by incorporating features such as:

1. Easy Identification by the student about the faculty he/she is evaluating by incorporating a thumbnail image of the faculty
2. Questions are provided in both Tamil and English
3. Easy interface for students to provide their feedback

Impact of the Practice

The feedback received from the students on the performance of the faculty is analysed, and the grade sheet is issued to the entire faculty. The members of the Management address the faculty scoring very low grades in the appraisal. This enhances the effectiveness of the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation process of the college. Many decisions regarding the advancement of the college had been arrived at based on the constructive feedback received from the Open Forum. The other feedbacks facilitate measures for perfection of the respective systems involved. The system of acquiring feedback online supports the policy of the college to implement paperless communication, avoiding the use of a massive amount of paper to derive feedback from nearly 7000 students on various heads, and thus is a commendable eco-friendly practice.

Resources Required

Time Management is a crucial factor in the collection of all the feedback, and different feedbacks should be spaced out throughout the year. Technological and human resources are to be managed efficiently to analyse the feedback received, and arrive at outcomes.