

INTRODUCTION

An annual academic audit is a process used by universities to assess and enhance the quality of their academic programs. The audit involves a thorough examination of various aspects, including teaching methods, curriculum effectiveness, student support services, and faculty performance. By conducting regular academic audits, universities can pinpoint areas for improvement and implement changes to enhance the overall quality of education. This process contributes to the continuous improvement of academic standards and helps the institution meet its educational objectives.

CHRIST University has been conducting Internal Academic Audits since 2009. This introspective analysis has empowered the University to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and implement strategic improvements, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of its academic programmes and fostering a culture of continuous enhancement. The audit process has served as a valuable tool for informed decision-making, ensuring that the University remains aligned with its academic goals and standards. The NAAC parameters and the University Strategic Plan have been the basis for the conduct of the audit and evaluation of the performance of the departments.

The objectives of CHRIST University's Internal Academic Audit are multifaceted and aimed at promoting holistic excellence within each department. The audit seeks to assess the department's adherence to quality standards, ensuring that academic rigour is maintained at the highest level. Further, the audit endeavours to assess the department's capacity to innovate and cultivate best practices within its academic discipline. This proactive approach underscores the university's commitment to remaining at the forefront of educational advancements, creating an environment that encourages innovation and excellence in all its endeavours.

The execution of the Internal Academic Audit was characterised by a thorough and meticulously planned process, emphasising keen attention to clarity on the required supporting documents and the evaluation rubrics. A paramount focus was placed on objectivity throughout every stage, ensuring an impartial and fair assessment of the various components. To uphold complete transparency and objectivity, a deliberate step was taken by instructing the audit team to individually input their scores subsequent to a comprehensive discussion amongst themselves. This collaborative approach promoted a well-rounded evaluation and served as a safeguard against any potential biases, affirming the integrity of the audit process. The commitment to maintaining fairness and openness underscores the institution's dedication to upholding the highest standards in academic assessment and enhancement.

Thus, the Internal Academic Audit at CHRIST University serves as a dynamic and proactive tool, propelling the institution towards continuous enhancement. By addressing the outlined objectives, the university ensures the maintenance of high academic standards and the cultivation of an environment that nurtures innovation, excellence, and a commitment to the holistic development of its academic community.

Objectives of Internal Academic Audit

1. To assess the quality standards maintained by the department.
2. To analyse the curriculum development process and its relevance to contemporary trends in higher education
3. To measure the effectiveness of the Teaching-Learning process.
4. To bring out the department's research, innovation, and extension performance.
5. To assess the department's ability to monitor student progression and support extended to students and towards alumni engagement.
6. To assess the department's ability to create innovative and best practices in their academic discipline.

SECTION I – AUDIT PROCESS

Audit Planning and Execution

The Audit planning work started in September 2023, and the entire Audit Process was completed by 28 November 2023. The various phases in the Audit Planning and Execution included:

- Decision on the metrics to be included in the audit instrument
- Using the data submitted by departments for AQAR for Audit
- Auto population of supplementary data available in KP
- ERP audit module designing and testing
- Decision on the dates for conducting the Audit
- Orientation for Deans, Heads and Coordinators
- Selection of Auditors
- Orientation for Auditors
- Finalising the Audit Teams
- Department SSR Generation
- Scheduling the department-wise Audits
- Travel plans and logistics arrangements
- Developing the feedback forms and collection of feedback
- Score calculations
- Report preparation

Audit Instrument Development

The primary goal of the Academic Audit was to evaluate the quality standards upheld by the Departments and identify areas of improvement. The Audit Instrument was meticulously curated with 41 metrics classified under the following six criteria, aligning with the NAAC parameters.

- 1. Curriculum Design and Development:** This criterion delves into the curriculum development process, examining its alignment with contemporary trends in higher education. This involves assessing the currency and relevance of courses, incorporation of emerging technologies responsiveness to industry demands, focus on employability, entrepreneurship and skill development, and the evolving needs of students.
- 2. Teaching-Learning:** A critical aspect of an academic audit involves evaluating the effectiveness of the Teaching-Learning process. This criterion includes assessing teaching methodologies, faculty-student engagement, adoption of learner-centric pedagogies, the use of technology in education, and the availability of resources for effective learning. The goal is to enhance pedagogical approaches that foster a conducive and interactive learning environment and efforts to serve students of different backgrounds and abilities. It also probes into the competence and continuous professional development of faculty,
- 3. Research & Innovation:** This criterion aims to bring to light the department's contributions to research and innovation. It showcases the research culture of the department and the policies, practices and outcomes of research initiatives. It also involves evaluating the quantity and quality of research publications, patents, and collaborative projects.

4. **Consultancy, Extension & Collaboration:** Consultancy Shows the credibility of the department's research acumen to the outside world. Extension refers to developing sensitivities towards community issues, social inequity, etc., and inculcating social values in students. and collaboration is an integral component of a dynamic and responsive professional environment. These aspects contribute to knowledge exchange, problem-solving, and fostering innovation and growth. The assessment also considers the department's role in community engagement and the transfer of knowledge beyond the academic realm.
5. **Student support and Progression:** This criterion evaluates the department's ability to monitor and support student progression, efforts to enable them to acquire meaningful experiences of learning at the campus, and facilitate holistic development. This includes assessing mechanisms for tracking academic performance, providing necessary support services, and the department's efforts towards alumni engagement, recognising the value of an active and involved alumni network.
6. **Quality Initiatives:** The objective of this criterion is to assess the department's ability to instil innovation and best practices in its academic discipline. It encompasses innovative teaching methods, research approaches, and sustainable initiatives. The audit seeks to identify and promote practices that set the department apart as a leader in its field.

Clear Guidelines for the Supporting Document Requirements and Rubric for marks allocation were extensively deliberated and finalised. The final Audit Instrument had a total score of 500 marks distributed as follows:

- Curriculum Design and Development: 7 metrics - 80 marks
- Teaching-Learning: 6 metrics - 90 marks
- Research & Innovation: 12 metrics - 160 marks
- Consultancy, Extension & Collaboration: 5 metrics - 60 marks
- Student support and Progression: 7 metrics - 70 marks
- Quality Initiatives: 4 metrics - 40 marks

Audit Orientation

The Internal Academic Audit was conducted for 55 departments spread across six campuses of the University. An orientation session was organised on October 25, 2023, bringing together representatives from each of the 55 departments. The session garnered positive feedback and appreciation from the participating departments.

A total of 109 auditors were shortlisted for the audit process. This included Deans, Directors and experienced faculty members. Criteria for selecting auditors included a minimum of 3 years of experience within the University to ensure familiarity with institutional needs and practices. Each audit team consisted of three members, with the senior member serving as the team's chairperson. Additionally, efforts were made to include at least one auditor with prior audit experience in each team. Few auditors were assigned visits to other campuses, encouraging collegiality and facilitating cross-campus exposure.

An Orientation and Training session was conducted on 08 November 2023 for all auditors. Eighty-one auditors were allotted audit sessions, and the rest were kept as stand-by auditors.

Administrative Work, Logistics Planning and Execution

It included verification and generation of SSR and sharing it with auditors and departments. Transport arrangements for auditors commuting to other campuses in Bangalore were made.

Arrangements were also carried out for air tickets, boarding and lodging for auditors travelling to/from Pune Lavasa and Delhi NCR campuses. Food arrangements were made for all auditors during the days of the audit. On the days of the audit, pre-audit briefings to the audit team were conducted, and audit kits comprising the audit instrument, key metric calculations, and stationery items were distributed to the auditors.



SECTION II - AUDIT ANALYSIS

Criterion-wise Overall Score

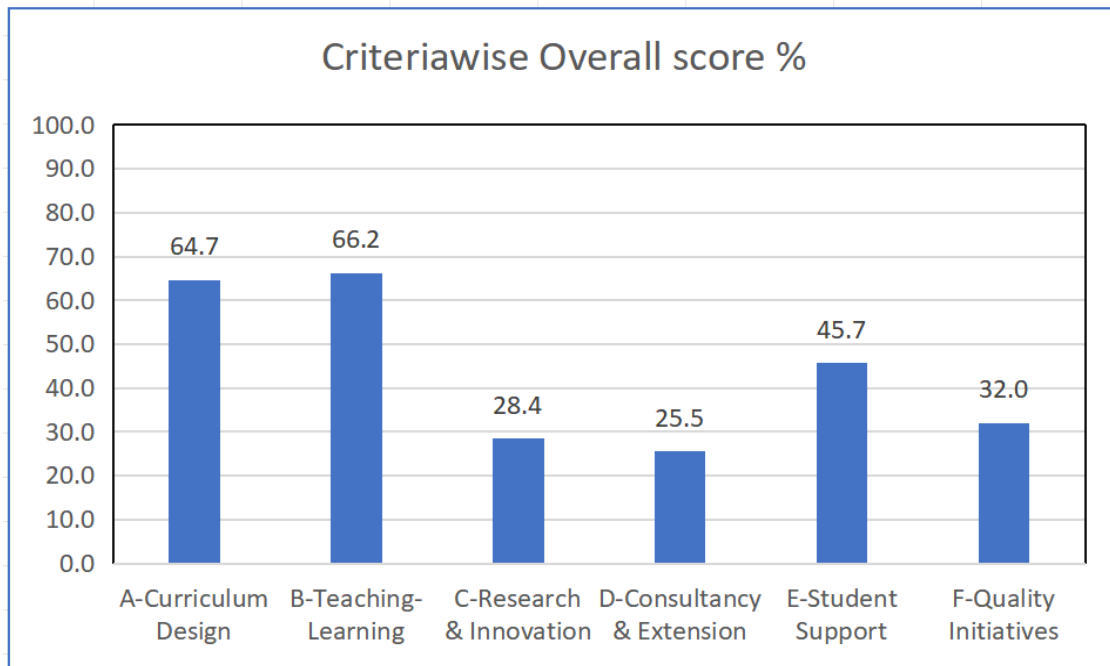


Fig 1: Criteria-wise Overall Score

The overall score based on specific criteria remains fairly consistent with previous years' results. Notably, the University maintains its strength in teaching-learning, which is supported by a well-structured curriculum. The student support activities and initiatives spearheaded by the various departments follow closely. The quality efforts, which include faculty development and departmental best practices, come in at number four. Research, consultancy, and extension activities continue to be the least performing aspects of the University's overall performance.

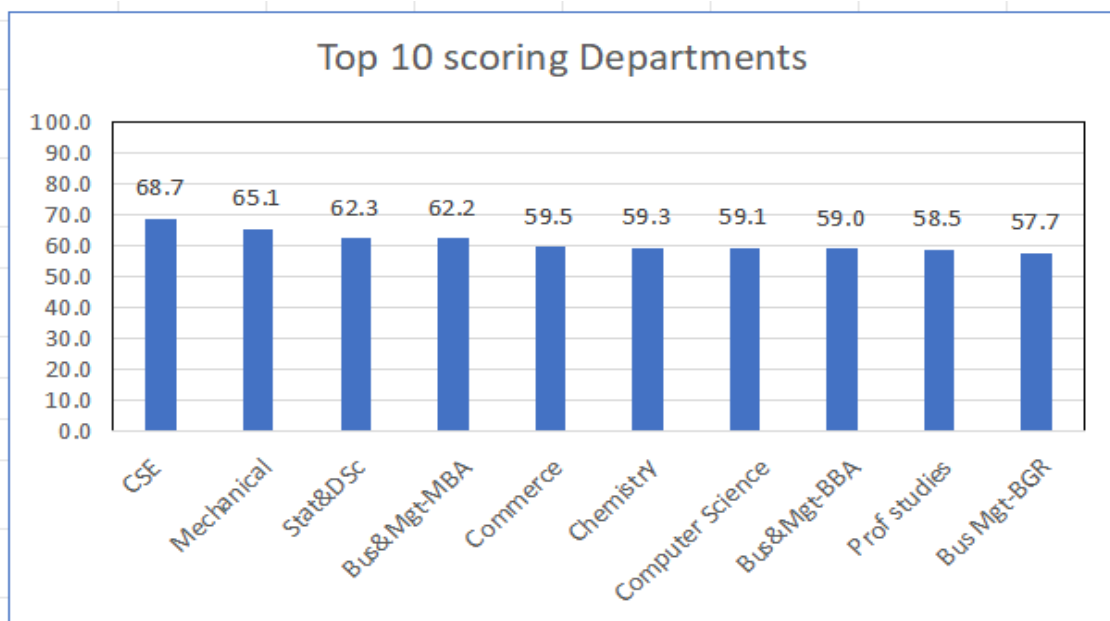


Fig 2: Top 10 Scoring Departments

There is a degree of consistency in the performance of individual departments. The total scores achieved closely align with the scores from previous years for most departments, with only a couple of exceptions. This trend reflects the departments' steadfast commitment and practices in sustaining performance towards all audit metrics and keeping audit-related documents in a systematic manner.

METRIC WISE ANALYSIS

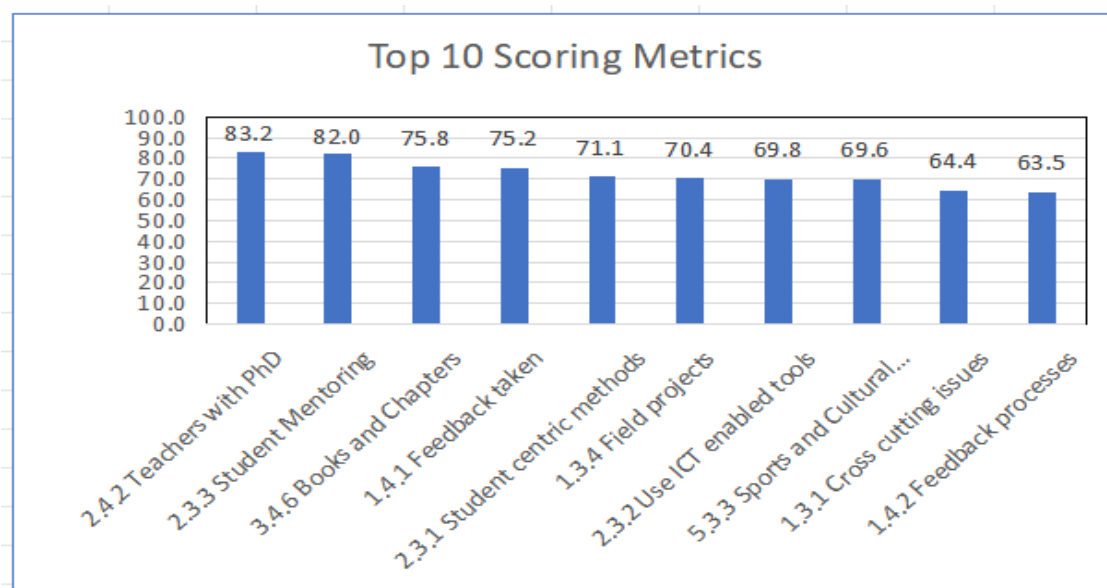


Fig 3: Top 10 Scoring Metrics

For a university, a pivotal asset is a highly qualified faculty. It is worth highlighting that 83.2% of the faculty possess a PhD. The sustained efforts of the various departments to encourage and support existing faculty in pursuing and completing their PhD, coupled with a proactive approach from the personnel office in recruiting faculty with PhD credentials, have yielded positive outcomes.

Student Mentoring stands out as the second-highest scoring metric. The departments follow a systematic mentoring process. This underscores their commitment to student progress and well-being, contributing to a conducive learning environment.

While all departments collect feedback, there is a recognised need for a more systematic approach to the feedback process. The analysis and subsequent actions based on feedback require substantial improvement.

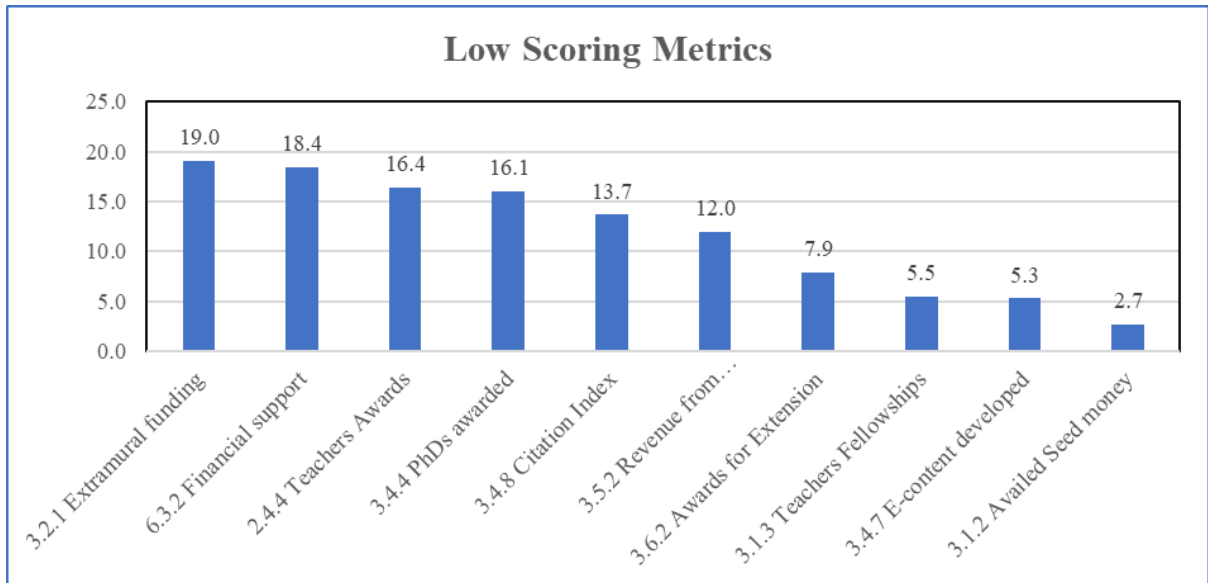


Fig 4: Low Scoring Metrics

It is apparent that most of the metrics indicating lower performance are associated with mobilising funds for research, revenue generation, fellowships, and research-related awards. This signifies a pivotal area requiring focused attention and strategic interventions. There is a clear need for improvement in the seed money availed by faculty members. Moreover, there is a necessity to focus on capacity enhancement programs aimed at developing e-content and actively contributing to UGC-recognized platforms. Therefore, a targeted and sustained approach to these aspects is vital for the comprehensive growth and advancement of the institution.

CRITERION-WISE TOP FIVE DEPARTMENTS

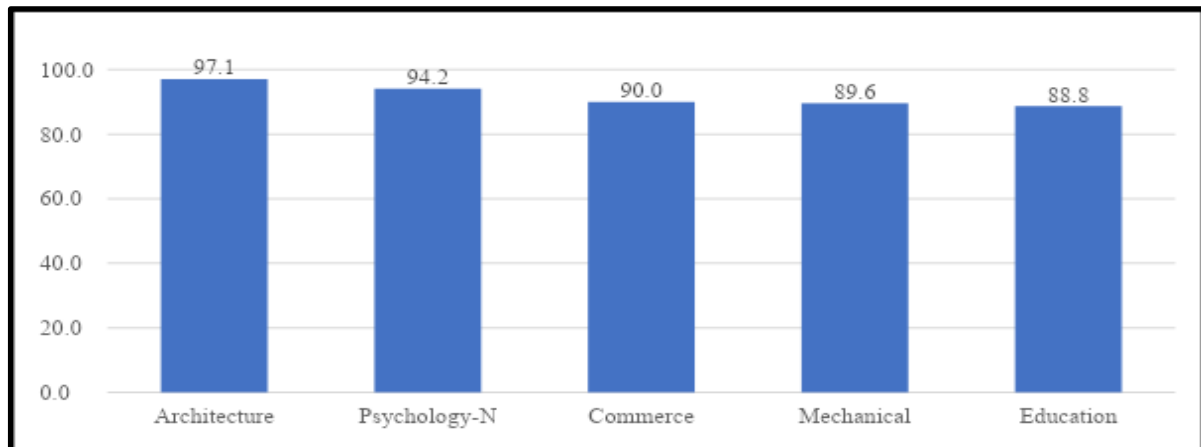


Fig 5: Curriculum Design and Development

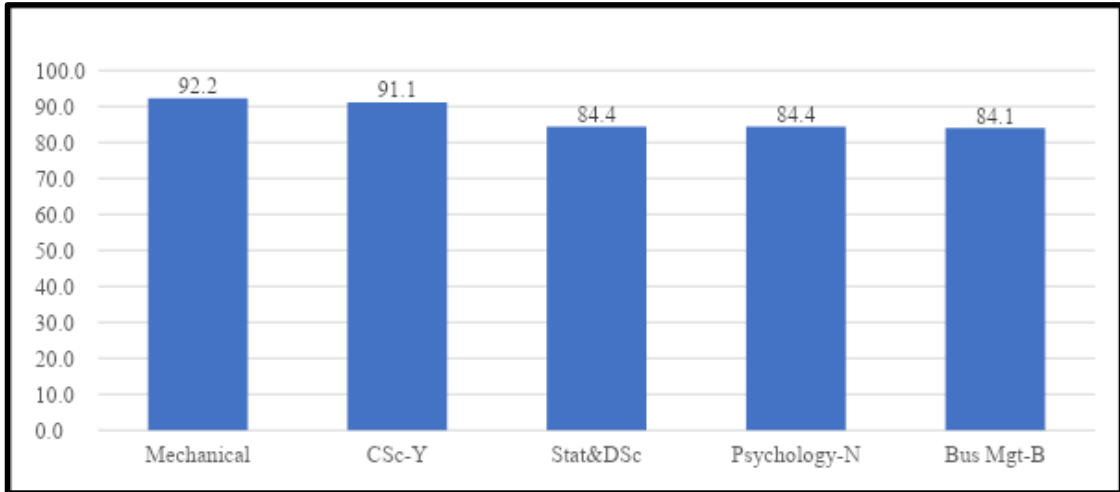


Fig 6: Teaching-Learning

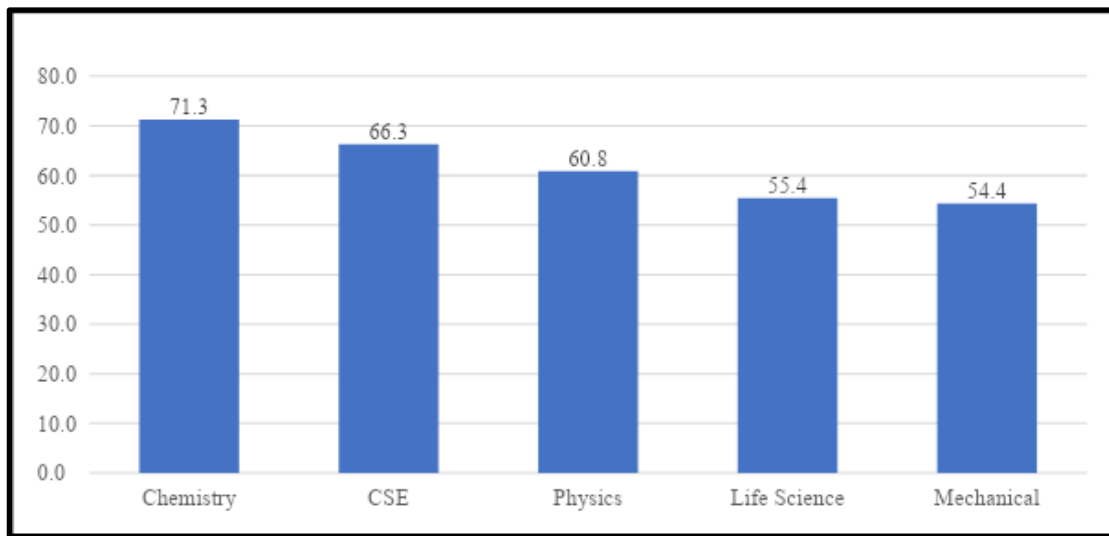


Fig 7: Research and Innovation

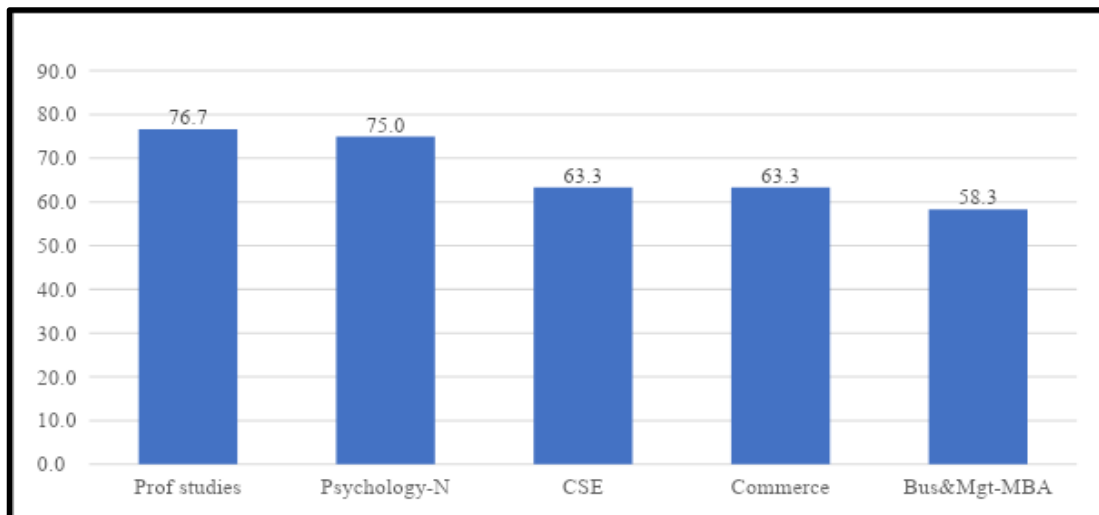


Fig 8: Consultancy, Extension, and Collaboration

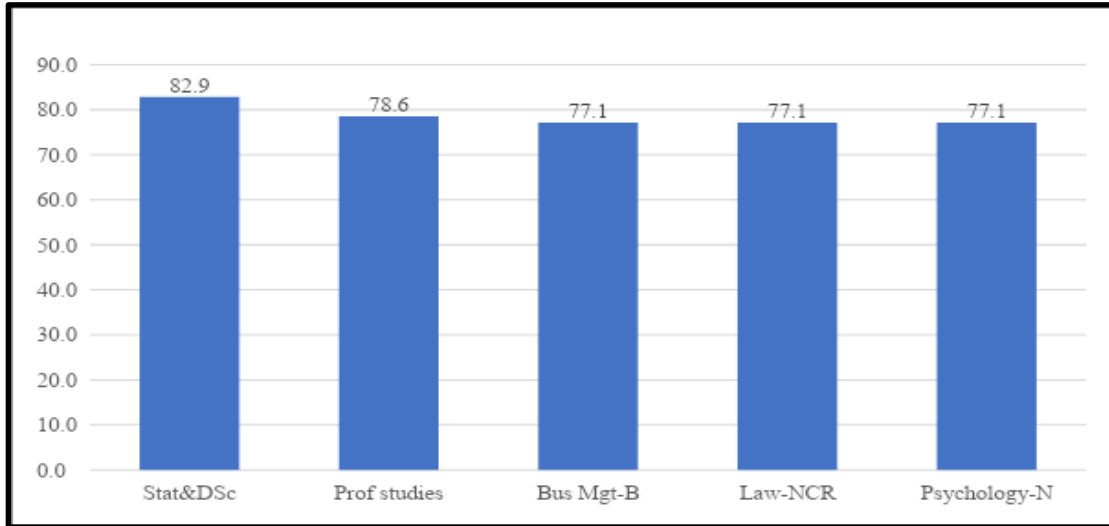


Fig 9: Student Support and Progression

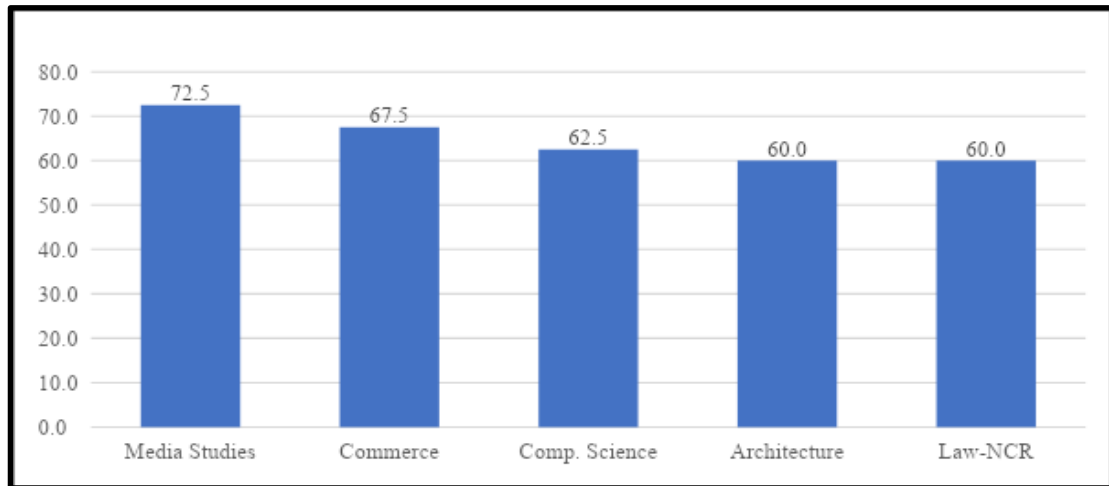


Fig 10: Quality Initiatives

SUMMARY OF CRITERION-WISE ANALYSIS

1. Department of Psychology NCR campus has featured among the top 5 in Four criteria: Curriculum Design and Development, Teaching-Learning, Consultancy, Extension and Collaboration, and Student Support and Progression.
2. The Department of Mechanical Engineering has featured among the top 5 in Three Criteria: Curriculum Design and Development, Teaching-Learning and Research and Innovation.
3. The Department of Commerce has featured among the top 5 in Three Criteria: Curriculum Design and Development, Consultancy, Extension and Collaboration, and Quality Initiatives.
4. The following departments have featured among the top 5 in Two Criteria:
 - Department of Computer Science Engineering: Research and Innovation, and Consultancy, Extension and Collaboration
 - School of Architecture: Curriculum Design and Development and Quality Initiatives
 - Department of Professional Studies: Consultancy, Extension and Collaboration, and Student Support and Progression

- Department of Statistics and Data Science: Teaching-Learning, and Student Support and Progression
 - School of Business and Management BGR: Teaching-Learning, and Student Support and Progression
 - School of Law NCR: Student Support and Progression, and Quality Initiatives
5. The following departments have featured among the top 5 in One Criterion:
- Department of Computer Science – YPR: Teaching-Learning
 - School of Education: Curriculum Design and Development
 - Department of Chemistry: Research and Innovation
 - Department of Physics: Research and Innovation
 - Department of Life Science: Research and Innovation
 - Department of Media Studies: Quality Initiatives
 - Department of Computer Science: Quality Initiatives
 - School of Business and Management - MBA: Consultancy, Extension and Collaboration

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The overall performance of the University, evaluated against specific criteria, exhibits a commendable level of consistency when compared to results from previous years. Particularly noteworthy is the continued proficiency in the teaching-learning domain in the University, and this accomplishment can be attributed to the presence of a robust and well-structured curriculum. This foundational strength is a key contributor to the University's continued success.

In close succession, the University showcases significant dedication to student support through various activities and initiatives led by different departments. The commitment to fostering a supportive and enriching environment for students is evident, underscoring the institution's holistic approach to education.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that despite these strengths, the evident challenges in the University's performance metrics predominantly revolve around critical aspects such as Research and Innovation, collaborations, revenue generation through consultancy, fellowships, and recognition through research-related awards. These aspects continue to lag behind, representing the least performing components in the University's holistic performance evaluation. This indicates an area that may require additional attention and strategic planning to align with the institution's broader objectives.

While all departments collect feedback, there is a recognised need for a more systematic approach to the feedback process. The analysis and subsequent actions based on feedback require substantial improvement. Streamlining and enhancing the feedback mechanism across departments would contribute to a more effective and responsive academic environment.

A key facet demanding immediate attention is the suboptimal utilisation of Seed Money by faculty members. Enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of the Seed Money facility should be a priority, and a comprehensive strategy to encourage faculty to make the most of this resource is crucial.

Additionally, there is a pressing necessity to concentrate efforts on capacity enhancement programs tailored to facilitate the creation of e-content. Efforts are also to be made to improve the University's performance in placements, progression, and qualifying in competitive examinations. Faculty members are also to be encouraged to participate in seminars, conferences, and other capacity-building programmes offered by external organisations with financial support from the University. They are also to be encouraged to take membership in professional bodies with financial assistance from the University.

SECTION III: AUDIT FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Feedback from Auditors and Departments

- The Audit instrument developed was user-friendly and has given better clarity to both Auditors and the Departments
- The time allowed for the audit can be increased to 2 hours
- Audit of one department per day for the auditors is ideal to do justice for report making
- The aspect of 'Not Applicable' pertaining to specific metrics was appreciated by the concerned departments
- A post-audit action plan from the department may be collected
- There has been a remarkable improvement in the awareness of what is required from the departments
- Best practices of specific departments and the documentation could be made available to other departments so that they can take inspiration from the same and make adaptations in their respective departments, especially for mentoring, best practices, conducting of events, internships, etc.
- In some criteria, the documents uploaded were not sufficient to judge the criteria, and there was no option for departments to upload the other documents
- Maximising data capturing through KP will reduce the documentation work
- Depending on the focus area of the department, weightage can be introduced for research, consultancy, extension and outreach activities
- The scoring criteria should be shared with departments in advance
- A short training could be provided to the departments on the preparation of Impact Analysis of Qualitative metrics
- Scoring for certain criteria requires to be centralised, as the same programs are offered on multiple campuses
- The feedback given by auditors was very useful, especially on how to create impact analysis reports and what to focus on in the upcoming year
- KP could be streamlined to capture the following
 - a) Mentoring data (visible to faculty and students)
 - b) Identification of slow and advanced learners through their internal marks uploaded in KP

Recommendation for Future Audits

- Annual audit dates can be captured in the academic calendar of the University.
- Align the Audit metrics with AQAR metrics and the Strategic Plan Performance Indicators.
- Departments should prepare post-audit action plans to improve performance in the required areas.
- Interim audits may be conducted at the School/Campus level under the coordination of the respective Deans and School/Campus Coordinators.
- Assessment of quantitative metrics may be done by an independent team/office in line with the DVV process. The assessors shall suggest areas to be clarified, if any, by the auditors during the audit process.