

The Honours Programme

Objectives

1. To provide teacher-trainees with composite training aimed at nurturing the head, hand and heart.
2. To empower teacher-trainees with aspects of personality development.
3. To sensitize students towards ethical issues within the domains of environment, women's issues and human rights.
4. To provide skill-based training that fosters self-reliance.
5. To expose students to areas of contemporary relevance that aid academic growth.
6. To provide experiential learning.
7. To schedule programmes and invite resource persons who are experts in their areas of specialisation.
8. To provide students an opportunity to accumulate credits that would reflect their performance milestones across the academic year.
9. To systematise and benchmark the allocation of credits.

Practice

The Honours Programme spans the entire academic calendar and is based on the IDEA model, which is a reverse model.

The IDEA Model

I: Identification of Need

The 360⁰ appraisals that are procured from the stakeholders at the end of the academic year provide the coordinator a bird's eye view of voids and lapses within the programme. This helps to customize the programme as per the needs felt within educational practices.

D: Development of Design

The programme is structured around seven dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1. Seven dimensions and 25 credits of the Honours Programme

| Category | Programme |
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| <p>Soft-Skills Enhancement (8 Credits)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages with the Environment NGO- SOSVA • Spiritual Retreat • Book Reviews • Talks on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Issues Related to Counselling Family Life and Sex Education ‘Management of Values’ • Seminars on Ethics |
| <p>Community Outreach (5 Credits)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excursion/ Study Tours • Extension Programme of DLLE • Community Service at Various Centres • Talk on First Aid • Water Harvesting Project |
| <p>Certificate Programmes (2 Credits)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights • Yoga |
| <p>Intercollegiate Festivals (2 Credits)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UDAAN Festival • Environment-fest, Planit-E |
| <p>Professional Skills (3 Credits)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk Show on Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation, ‘The Big 5’ |

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops on Learning Disabilities 'Selection of a Research Topic' Online Research |
| Communication Skills (2 Credits) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops on Communication Styles Street Play Scripting and Enacting |
| Tactile Training (3 Credits) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socially Useful Productive Work Soft Toys Tie and Dye Candle and Jewellery Making Glass Painting Ceramic Work |

Several sub-activities are conducted under each head. Credits are assigned to each dimension in accordance with the attention it demands within the programme. A year plan is drawn up after a brainstorming session among the staff, where possible meaningful topics are listed and resource persons suggested.

E: Enhancing and Empowering Skills

In *Soft-Skill Enhancement* the focus is on the holistic development of a pupil. Here a wide variety of issues are contextualized with a view to sensitizing a pupil toward ethical mores, leadership styles, spirituality, values of secularism, life-skills education, human rights, counselling, etc. The skill of reviewing books has been identified as an important exercise to initiate critical thinking. Cumulatively these activities sharpen in students empathy and compassion, while sensitizing them to the latest contemporary trends.

Community Outreach and Networking is given great importance. It provides pupils hands-on training in the field. It acts as an eye-opener to the harsh realities existing in a non-egalitarian world. *Intercollegiate Festivals* are times of revelry and pomp, where students participate as a student body under the auspices of the University of Mumbai or at a wider platform that starts at the school level and goes all the way to the undergraduate level. This becomes an inter-disciplinary exercise.

Tactile Training involves preparation of various handicrafts. This is a culture-sensitization activity. Students acquire skills through actually participating in the training being provided. Some learning is also acquired through peer-observation and peer-mentoring of various skills that are mastered collaboratively.

A: Assessment of Goals

Each activity carries a specific credit. The entire programme cumulatively totals 25 credits. Students are oriented to what the programme entails at the start of the academic year. They are motivated to participate with passion and zest, and earn an exemplar certification grade at the end of the programme. This programme calls for detailed monitoring and documentation of all its activities. Finally the grade limits are benchmarked, based on the performance of the whole class. Maximum number of students earn Grade B. The outliers within the group are few and are certified as Grade A and Grade C. This distribution satisfies the *Normal Probability Curve* trend.

Impact

The Honours Programme is envisioned to fulfill the demands made on education by the prevalent social milieu. The institution strives towards structuring and sustaining not just a course-content of relevance but also towards creating emancipated, empowered and enlightened teachers who foster excellence in the field of education.

The objectives of the Honours Programme are drawn up to be aligned with the institution's core values. One can see the ramifications of this holistic practice deeply

integrated with and entrenched into the curriculum prescribed for the fulfillment of the teacher-training course.

National Boards and accrediting agencies encourage institutions to incorporate programmes that add value to its course work. And, our Honours Programme is identified as our innovative best practice. It is monitored on the basis of credits assigned to the different dimensions of the Honours Programme. The certification at the end of the programme reveals the grade obtained by a student.

The impact of this practice has been elaborated upon in the following areas:

Institutional Self-worth: The exposure each student avails of can be compared to what a '*finishing school*' provides, which is a sought-after luxury that is a privilege of only the wealthy. The objective of the Honours Programme is to smoothen the demeanour of the teacher-trainee at no extra cost and within the stipulated working hours of the college. This has raised the desirability quotient of the college in terms of institutional effectiveness within the professional guild.

Choice-based Content: Within the gamut of this course, certain sections permit flexibility. Students can make choices based on their aptitudes and interests. This, in turn, hones the skills of not just the students but also the staff, keeping them abreast with recent trends, making it an exercise in comparative education for them. The programme pivots on the inter-disciplinary approach, catering to the head, hand and heart.

Student Empowerment: This exposure ensures that each student undergoes a metamorphosis. The entry- and exit-point evaluations stand testimony to this fact. It is easy to see the emergence of mindsets that are empathetic, ethical and bearing global perspectives. These are precisely the long-term goals of teacher-training. This certification gives our trainees an edge as they usher themselves as professionals into the teaching fraternity. It also catapults their employability scores.

Staff Empowerment: It is mandatory for the staff to attend the workshops and seminars as participants when the students are being addressed by a resource person. This goes a long

way in showcasing to the staff teaching strategies and progressive trends followed by other members of the teaching fraternity. This further empowers them with contextually relevant knowledge. Thus the staff continues to be zestful life-long learners.

Teacher Exchange: The entire programme calls for procuring resource persons who are eminent faculty and experts in diverse subject areas. This institutional need initiates and sustains communication channels, teacher exchanges and networking within the city at several institutional levels. Thus this proves to be a window to embrace and sustain cordial relationships.

College as a Nodal Centre: The programme initiates, sustains and perpetuates linkages within the community. The college's presence as a meaningful and powerful centre for dissemination of information and services gets established subtly. Thus the college becomes an agency providing informal education within the community.

Community-oriented Programmes: Several community service programmes are conducted to raise civic responsibility and civic sense.

St. Teresa's Convent High School and St. Teresa's Special School are offshoots of our institute. The Honours Programme enables pooling-in of resources between these institutions. Our presence is thus felt through the services that are shared; this networking proves to be a symbiotic relationship, fostering cohesion.

Paradigm Shift in Ideology of Assessment Practices: This programme endorses the importance of qualitative evaluation of the intangible aspects within education. To our students, who are the teachers of tomorrow, this is a great practical exercise. It highlights a shift in the style of evaluation by replacing numbers and percentages with credits and grades.

There is a lot of inertia within the Indian educational setup to accept this change. The qualitative assessment style is often considered to be a dampener by students and parents. It is our attempt to expose our target population of teacher-trainees to the true long-term goal of education, which is '*man-making*' and not franking humans as

commodities. Thus, this is a move toward helping them transit to a higher realm. In other words, it attempts to constructively reduce the undue pressures of today's education under which students are reeling.

In conclusion, the framework has been modified using permutations and combinations to streamline the transactions, thus raising its impact and gradually widening its scope.