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## ACADEMIC AUDIT IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Academic Audit in Teacher Education Institutions makes a meaningful contribution to quality enhancement. In order to apply effectively to education, academic audit means for determining the best practices of the best-in-class institutions and using the information as basis for goals, strategies and implementations. More simply academic audit for quality enhancement finds and implements the best practices that lead to significant improvement in the quality of educational provisions'. The procedure for conducting the Academic Audit in Teacher Education Institutions is reported in this paper which includes its different features, stages in its process, roles and responsibilities of panel members, steps in documentation, meetings in audit programme, outcomes and follow up.*

**KEY WORDS:** Academic Audit, Quality Education, Bench Mark.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Academic Audit in Teacher Education Institutions depends upon academic management and practices, human resources, Teaching- learning evaluation processes, research outputs, community outreaches and extensions, students' supports, initiatives and supplementations, infrastructure and other facilities. It enhances the students' success, academic excellence and research prominence, use the technology to expand opportunities and access, realize potential and generate efficiencies. There are several key aspects and assessment indicators like: (a) high, (b) good, (c) satisfactory and (d) unsatisfactory levels of academic accomplishments of an institution. These contribute to enrich the quality of teaching- learning, seminars, workshops, lectures, field visits etc. These actually contribute to the growth and development of an institution ([http://kcg.gujarat.gov.in/content/AAA\\_Toolkit\\_final.pdf](http://kcg.gujarat.gov.in/content/AAA_Toolkit_final.pdf) on dated 11/12/15).

In the present scenario, there is involvement of high level authorities and institution level leaderships i.e., administrators took changes they wanted to make. Thus, by a critical analysis of the current status of the teacher education institutions in India, specific issues that are critical to the further improvement of the institutions and the fundamental questions that should drive strategic planning for the institutions moving forward are missing in

many institutes, no doubt, some institutions are also running well. The qualified and hardworking faculties, administrators, staff and students in many private and government institutions have still unrest among them in case of facilities, pay scales and opportunities. Thus, a systematic and recurring review of academic programmes should be there for ongoing efforts to promote a critical reflection, self-assessment and strategic planning towards goal achievement. The reviews of distinguished faculties of a relevant discipline should be there in order to obtain an honest appraisal of an academic institution's strengths and weaknesses. The information that is gathered as part of the review process helps to foster academic excellence within the institution, identify methods to increase quality and provides critical guidance for administrative decisions. In addition, the systematic assessment of academic programmes and the use of assessment results to improve academic quality and effectiveness are the requirements of any institutional accreditation.

## MEANING OF AUDIT

'Audit' is a Latin term which is translated as, 'he heard'. It means the student experienced the course but he is not assessed. The meaning of audit in an educational term is the completion of a course of study in which no assessment of the performance of the student is made grade awarded. Some institutions record a grade of 'audit' to those who are elected not to receive a letter grade for a course in which they are typically awarded. In this type of case, 'audit' indicates that the individual merely received teaching rather than being evaluated as having achieved a given standard of knowledge of the subject. For an example: some students audit a class merely for enjoyment with no need or desire of academic credit i.e., for the purposes of self-enrichment and academic exploration. Sometimes this technique is employed by individuals who wish to take a specific course without the risk of under-performance resulting in a poor or failing grade. This may be helpful when reviewing a long-unstudied subject or when first beginning or exploring the study of a discipline where one has little experience or confidence. Thus, auditing is generally an option for higher learning institutions such as colleges (e. g. Teacher Education Institutes) and universities rather than grammar school or secondary school ([https:// en. Wikipedia. org/wiki/ Academic\\_audit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_audit) on dated 17/12/15). There are basically two types of audits in teacher education institutions namely: (a) Academic audit and (b) Administrative audit.

## THE ACADEMIC AUDIT IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

The Academic Audit in Teacher Education Institution/ Higher Education Institution provides an opportunity for a regular, strategic and entire overview of the teaching and learning activities of an institution. It helps the university to assure itself of (i) The efficacy and robustness of each college's quality management procedures and (ii) Continued enhancement of the quality of the students' experiences. Every institute in the university is reviewed over a 5-year cycle. This review normally includes any partnership activity. A report of the review is produced and the institute is asked to respond to the report by producing an action plan to address any issues identified. The final report and action plans are considered by the Head, reported to the Boards of Faculty. Progress in meeting and the Action Plans' objectives are monitored through the Action Planning process ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281892900\\_Academic\\_and\\_Administrative\\_Audit\\_A\\_Parameter\\_for\\_Quality\\_Education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281892900_Academic_and_Administrative_Audit_A_Parameter_for_Quality_Education) on dated 08/ 10/2015).

The academic audit in Teacher Education Institution has the different (a) Features, (b) Stages in its process, (c) Roles and responsibilities of panel members, (d) Steps in documentation and (e) Meetings in audit programme are described in the following points:

### (a) The main features of the Academic Audit in a Teacher Education Institution:

The Teacher Education Institutions' academic audit is designed to scrutinize the strategic management and oversight of academic standards and quality within teacher education institutions. Such audits are aligned with the visits and processes of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) – (i) University Grant Commission (UGC), (ii) National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and (iii) The Universities. It is based on the principle of using existing documentation such as: (a) Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) reports, (b) Survey action plans of National Service Scheme (NSS), (PRES), and (PTES), (c) External Examiner reports and (d) other material such as: documents prepared for the (RAE)/ (REF) or reports by the (QAA) and professional accrediting bodies. The academic audit of institutions' has four distinctive features:

1. It is an institution based. It means a constituent unit or department within an institution ( e. g. Bachelor of Education, B. Ed. and Master of Education, M. Ed.) can be reviewed independently.
2. It is based on a process of self-evaluation carried out by an institution itself.

3. It evaluates the full range of institution/ college's activities including academic partnerships, student exchanges and allowing balanced recommendations given by the authorized panel/ Audit Panel.

**Audit Panel:** The audit panel is chaired by the Pro Vice- Chancellor and it mostly consist of one of the Deans of Faculty or institution, Dean academic affairs (Students' Guild or FXU equivalent), a senior member of academic staff from outside the institution being audited, a senior member of academic staff from the institution being audited in the following year (usually the ADE/ADR), two External Assessors, Head of Academic Policy and Standards, a member of the Academic Policy and Standards division shall act as secretary. In appointing a Panel, it is important to reflect the balance of taught and graduate research provision in the institution.

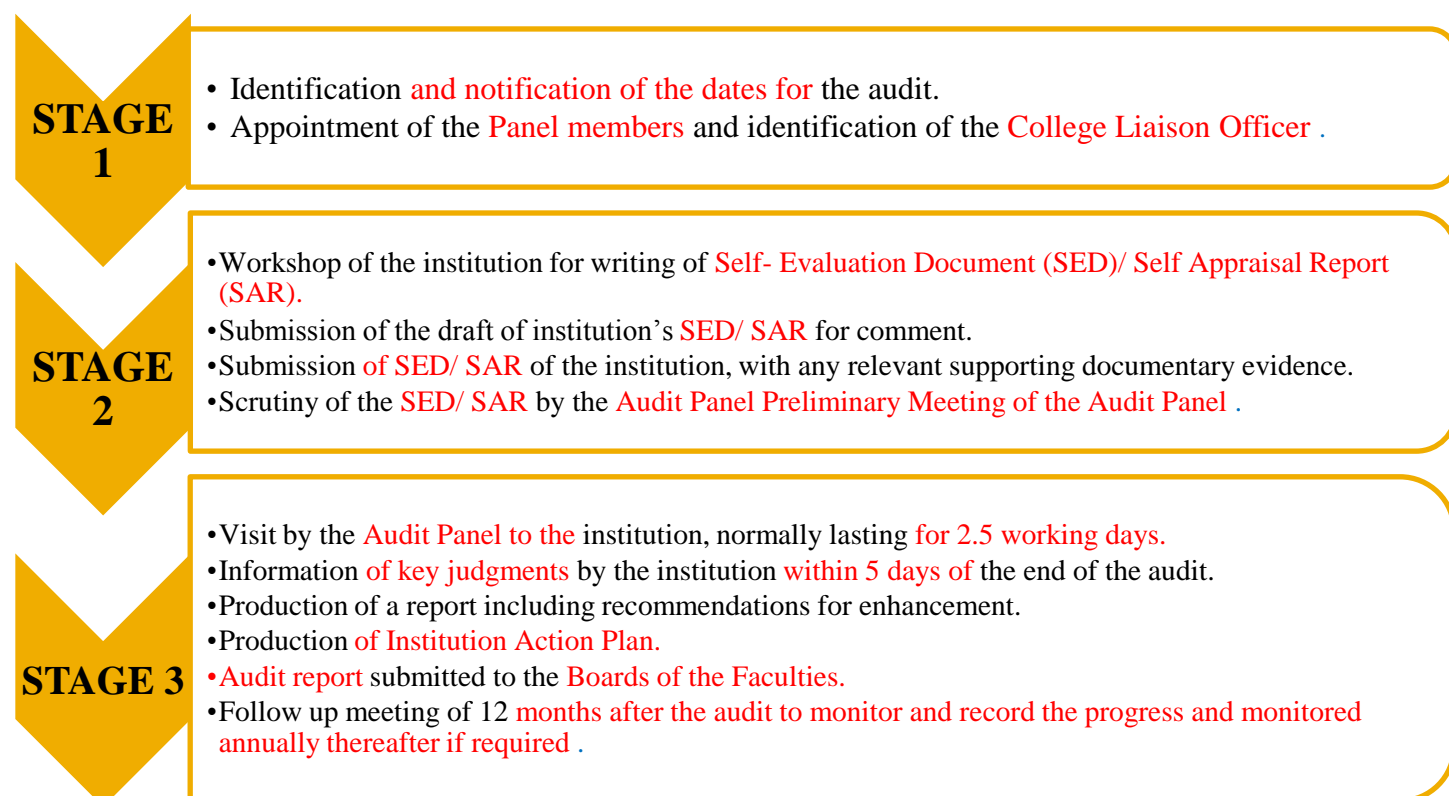
4. It takes the help of External Assessors to ensure objectivity.

**External Assessor:** An External Panel member is a senior academic or professional who is not a member of University of Exeter staff. He/ she have the knowledge of Higher Education and of the disciplines concerned. He/ she should have experience of internal audit/ review in their own institution or external review by the relevant professional body. He/ she should not have any formal links with the institution within the previous 3 years. The External Assessors play a vital role in assisting the Panel to identify key issues to be explored during the visit to the institution/ subject area and play a full part in the Panel's meetings with staff of the institution. In particular, External Assessors are able to identify excellence in provision; they are able to make comparisons with similar provision at other institutions and can offer feedback on the appropriateness of aims and learning outcomes to future career development. They are expected to provide comment on the currency and validity of programmes and contribute to the writing of specific sections of the audit report as directed by the Chair. External Assessors is appointed by Quality Review can receive a fee from the University for their contribution.

**(b) The Process of Academic Audit of an Institution:**

The process of academic audit involves the different stages are shown in the figure no. 1.

**Figure No. 1**  
**THE DIFFERENT STAGES INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF**  
**ACADEMIC AUDIT OF AN INSTITUTION**



Source: Primary Probe.

**(c) Roles and Responsibilities of the Audit Panel Members:**

The roles and responsibilities of all Panel members are to:

- (i) Identify the significant themes/ issues for discussion from scrutiny of the SED/ SAR and supporting documentation.
- (ii) Construct and manage an agenda for the Institution Academic Audit which enables to explore the themes/ issues through dialogue with the College area.
- (iii) Pursue lines of enquiry as allocated by the Chair which allow them to test whether current structures and procedures are fit for purpose, closing down lines of enquiry as soon as the

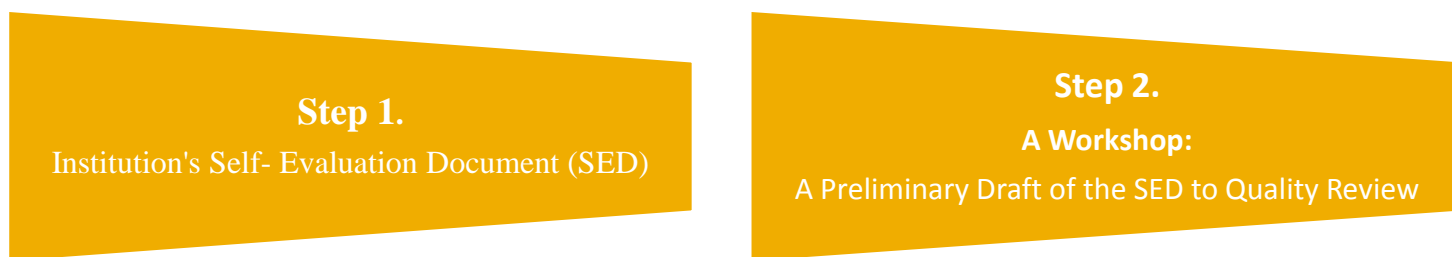
evidence is obtained. This can be done in advance where the evidence is clear within the SED/ SAR and supporting documentation.

- (iv) Make evidence- based judgments about the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards.
- (v) Make evidence- based judgments about the University's relationship with a partner institution.
- (vi) Contribute to the writing of specific sections of the Audit report as directed by the Chair as per the allocation outlined above (<http://raj-rajeshwari.com/downloads/JOURNAL%20BOOK.pdf> on dated 23/04/16.).

**(d) Documentation:**

The documentation of an Audit involves the various steps shown in figure no. 2:

**Figure No. 2**



**Step 1:** Institution produces a Self- Evaluation Document (SED)/ Self Appraisal Report (SAR) and keeps supporting documentation to a minimum. Since, the emphasis in the Audit process is on self-evaluation, the production of the Self-Evaluation Document by the institution is a most important part of the exercise and takes most of the time. The document normally, is not exceeding 20 pages (excluding appendices). Institution that produces larger SEDs can be asked to refine them before they can be sent to the Panel. Each SED include 'core' information presented in a structured way. Where appropriate it emphasizes future plans including student numbers, programme development, research and entrepreneurship, academic partnership activity, student exchanges and study abroad and financial projections. It contains an analysis of strengths, weaknesses and ability to meet objectives.

**Step 2:** A workshop is held with each institution 5 months before the Audit to assist with drafting the SED/ SAR. In addition Institutions are asked to provide a preliminary draft of the SED to Quality Review for comment 14 weeks before the Audit. It allows any omissions or excesses to be highlighted at an early stage.



When the draft SED is agreed by the Institution Education Strategy Group/Committee responsible for graduate research students, a copy is sent to the Audit secretary at least 9 weeks before the visit to enable it to be circulated to the Panel at least 8 weeks before the Audit.

**(e) Meetings in Audit Programme:**

The Audit is normally last for 2.5 days. The programme is drawn up by the Audit Secretary in consultation with the Panel Chair and the institution. The programme starts with a Preliminary Meeting of the Panel for 4 weeks before the review to identify specific themes for wider consideration during the review and close down any lines of enquiry that are concluded by a review of the SED and evidence. The review itself begins on the afternoon of day one with a meeting of the Panel to prepare for the meetings with staff and students. The final meeting of the second day reviews all evidence gathered and the reviews for the themes to be considered are discussed on the third day. The programme normally includes the following meetings:

1. Meetings with students about the full range of programmes, disciplines and years of study (including academic partnerships).
2. Meetings with the senior management of the institution.
3. Meetings with the staff of academic and professional services across the various disciplines (including academic partnerships) in the institution.
4. Meetings to discuss students' education and experiences about teacher, teaching and research facilities with teacher and taught.
5. Meetings to discuss quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms with teacher, taught and senior management.

The Review Panel keeps the potential issues confidential arising from the review meetings. The programme includes short periods in each day when the Panel has the private meetings, to allow time for discussion of issues raised by different groups.

A final Panel meeting to discuss judgments, recommendations and the structure of the report is also conducted by the panel members. At last, the various outcomes of academic audit in Teacher Education Institution are find out in the form of (a) high, (b) good, (c) satisfactory and (d) unsatisfactory levels and followed for the necessary improvement.

**OUTCOME AND FOLLOW UP:**

The Audit secretary facilitates the drafting of the report with all Panel members being required to write various sections and approve the final report. When the Panel agreed the report then it is sent to the institution for correction of any factual errors; the institution is not otherwise able to change the review report. The reports are received and finally confirmed by the Boards of the Faculties for subsequent approval by the DVC Education. The Panel seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and make judgments about the level of confidence that can be placed in the management of academic standards and quality enhancement. The Panel highlights the good practices and makes recommendations on any action that it considers needs to be taken by the institution or University. The judgments are framed on the basis of follows queries:

1. Does the institution's academic governance and management systems and processes fit for purpose/ not fit for purpose?
2. Does the institution's programmes meet/ do not meet the University's threshold standards within the quality assurance frameworks as outlined in the TQA Manual?
3. Does the quality of students' learning opportunities provided by the institution meets the University expectations/ requires improvement to meet University expectations/ does not meet University expectations as outlined in the TQA Manual?
4. Does the quality of information produced by the institution about its learning opportunities meets the University expectations/ requires improvement to meet University expectations/ does not meet University expectations as outlined in the TQA Manual?
5. Does the enhancement of students' learning opportunities meets University expectations/ requires improvement to meet University expectations/ does not meet University expectations as outlined in the TQA Manual?

The review report is as concise and as analytical as possible; following the report template it normally includes:

1. Judgments on whether the institution is managing academic standards and quality enhancement appropriately.
2. Areas of good practice.

3. Recommendations for improvement. These can be directed towards: (a) The College, (b) The University, (c) Professional service teams, (d) Recognition of curriculum developments and (e) Innovations that are taking place.
4. How the institution integrates research and teaching?

Once the report is in its final form, the institution and the University are asked to provide an action plan in response to any recommendations for enhancement. Both report and action plan are be subject for the consideration by the Deans of Faculty and Professional Services and approval by the Pro Vice- Chancellor, Education via the Boards of Faculty: (<https://www.researchgate.net/.../281892900> **Academic and Administrative on dated 13/ 01/16**).

## CONCLUSION

Academic Audit in Teacher Education Institutions is concerned with the quality, standards and recognitions. Consequent upon this trend, the academic audit in higher education is a need of the hour and it (i) discusses the various aspects and segments involved in the process of academic audit, (ii) focuses and increases the quality- ratio in higher education institutions by implementing academic audit, (iii) brings academicians, administrators together to discuss academic audit and exchange various ideas and (iv) plans to ensure quality culture and scrutinizes the present academic scenario.

There is a dire importance to focus on the issues like: how academic audit ascertain and assure the quality at different levels of higher education is significant? It focuses on the areas like: Is the higher education institution performing better than have ever performed? Is there any other institution that is performing well and from whom it can learn? Is there any practice that can improve the performance? Is it providing best practices in higher education? Is it advocating for self-improvement? Is it focusing on the Experts have identified different types of quality segments?

Thus, the main focus of activity of academic audit is also based on the development of an understanding of the fundamentals that lead to success; focus on continuous improvement efforts and management of the overall change process to close the gap between an existing practice of the institution and that of the best-in-class institutions with reference to the most relevant key performance variables. This approach is valuable for providing information to be used in the prioritization and decision-making processes of the institution. It replaces

‘gut feel’ or ‘stab in the dark’ with analysis on aspects like: How good is good as compared to what? ([http://www.TheHindu.com/features/education/careers/academic-audit-the-need-of-the-hour/article\\_6969479.ece](http://www.TheHindu.com/features/education/careers/academic-audit-the-need-of-the-hour/article_6969479.ece) on dated 22/03/15).

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