

Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development Department of Higher Education

Minutes of SPARC Apex Committee Meeting held on 16.08.2019 at Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi.

The Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) Apex Committee met to discuss the timelines and other modalities of the second call for projects under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Higher Education on 16th August 2019. The list of participants is enclosed.

2. Secretary, Higher Education extended warm welcome to the members of the committee and requested SPARC Nodal Institute, IIT Kharagpur to share the updates. The major deliberations of the committee are as follows:

- a) Prof. Goswami, IIT Kharagpur informed the Committee that a total of 1188 proposals were received in the last call and Apex Committee approved 394 Projects. Out of 394 approved projects, funds have already been released to 258. Out of remaining 136 projects, 68 projects did not receive any funds due to non availability of funds. Rest 68 projects, did not submit their revised budget including 6 institutions that did not share their account detail either.
- b) The Committee suggested that out of 136 projects (that haven't received any money), funds may be transferred to the concerned Institutes provided they have implemented EAT module or are EAT compliant.
- c) IIT Kharagpur intimated that 5 institutes (*IISc, Bengaluru; Homi Bhabha National Institute, Mumbai; AIIMS; University of Calicut and National Law University, Delhi*) have not become the child agency under the PFMS system, even after repeated requests. Also, the money which has already been released to various institutions, not through EAT module of PFMS, is not getting reflected properly. The Committee agreed that funds may be released to only those institutions which are under EAT module and became the "child agency" of IIT Kharagpur. Professor Chauhan has agreed to speak to the heads of these institutions to comply with EAT Module of PFMS.
- d) The Committee suggested for a PFMS Workshop to be organized by CCA, MHRD for all the SPARC institutions that are not EAT complaint to be attended by persons who are handling accounts/PFMS in these Institutions. The dates for workshop are: 09th, 11th, 12th, and 13th September 2019. The workshop will be conducted at MHRD in a cohort of 20 from non-complaint institutions. They should bring VPN enabled laptops along with them, for real time hands on training. The PFMS trainer will ensure that the attendee is able to handle the EAT module account herself/himself before she/he leave MHRD.

Monitoring Mechanism

- e) The Committee suggested that a "SPARC Proposal Monitoring Mechanism" may be developed in the SPARC portal. The Components of the project may be taken as the indicators for the purpose of monitoring. The component should be simple and generic, easy to fill by PIs. (*For example: one component may be exchange of scholars: started, partially started, not started.*) This should be visible to all. Before placing the same in the portal, a demo may be shared with the SPARC PIs for their understanding. By 31st August 2019 the Monitoring Mechanism may be made functional on SPARC portal.
- f) The Committee decided that those PIs who haven't send their revised budget, must do so by 31st August 2019 and if they don't comply, the projects may be treated as cancelled.

Next Call

- g) The Committee decided that there should be second call of SPARC. In view of the very few qualified proposals received in the field of Humanities in first call, the Committee decided that there should be a special emphasis on Social Sciences and Humanities. Professor Chauhan agreed to share a list of experts in Social Sciences as evaluators for the proposals in Social Science. The Committee entrusted Professor Verma to prepare a brief note on Quantitative Social Sciences and share it with Professor Vaidya Subramaniam who would further enhance the brief on Social Sciences and Humanities in light of themes proposed under STRIDE with around 20 sub-themes under the thrust area.
- h) The next call for application may be started 01st September, 2019 and keep open till 31st October, 2019.
- i) The Committee suggested to remove the following eligibility criteria from the SPARC Scheme Details, page 2, paragraph 2 "Only such private institutions which are falling in the above category, and also recognized under 12(B) of UGC Act are eligible."
- j) The Committee decided to update the list of Indian institutions on the basis of NIRF 2019 ranking, which include addition & deletion of institutions. Similar changes may also be carried out in the list of eligible foreign institutions on the basis of QS 2020 ranking. However, no changes to be effected in respect of Institutions already selected following 2018 rankings.
- k) The Committee has decided that all categories of NIRF should be there in the drop down menu of SPARC eligibility head.
- l) The Committee decided that at this stage inclusion of non-QS ranking institutions in SPARC is not feasible.

- m) The Committee has decided that the duration of Foreign PI in India cannot be less than 2 weeks per visit and not less than 2 months during the entire period of the project.
 - n) The Committee has decided that foreign travel expenditure of Indian PIs cannot be covered under contingency fund but PI can use CPDA, if available. If the CPDA has been exhausted, then the PIs can project their travel expenses in the proposal and re submit the same for approval. The decision will be taken on the case-to-case basis. If required, a separate Head for travel expenditure may be considered.
 - o) The Committee has decided that VISA fee and Medical/Health Insurance will be covered under SPARC funds. Also allowance to the students will be as per actual. If any foreign country is insisting on 3 months bank balance etc, IIT Kharagpur may write to them that this is a GoI programme and to waive off such restrictions.
 - p) The Committee has decided that GIAN norms will also be applicable for SPARC workshops registration, in case of outside participation.
 - q) The Committee has decided that the date on the sanction order will be considered as starting date of the project and not the date of release of funds. However, extension can be considered to those projects whose funding got delayed, on a case to case basis.
 - r) The Committee has opined that decision on travel of Foreign PIs by Air India may be taken at institutional level according to GoI norms.
 - s) The Committee decided that budget proposed in an approved proposal cannot be changed. However, re-appropriation among heads may be allowed within the overall approved ceiling.
 - t) The Committee decided that only in case of PI or Co-PI's superannuation or change of the institutions; change of PI or Co-PI is permissible.
 - u) The Committee has decided that during the stay of foreign PIs in India, they may not go to other institutions.
 - v) The Committee has decided that IIT Kharagpur may go for a MoU with AIIS for promotion of SPARC.
3. The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.

List of Participants

1. Mr. R. Subrahmanyam, Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD – Chair
2. Professor V. S. Chauhan, Chairman, Executive Committee, NAAC
3. Professor Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, AICTE
4. Professor S. K. Bhattacharyya, Director (officiating), IIT, Kharagpur
5. Mr. Madan Mohan, ADG (ICC), MHRD
6. Ms. Darshana M Dabral, JS&FA, MHRD
7. Dr. Shailja Vaidya Gupta, Advisor, DBT
8. Professor Adrijit Goswami, IIT, Kharagpur
9. Dr. S. Vaidhyasubramaniam, Vice Chancellor, SASTRA Deemed University
10. Professor Sandeep Verma, Secretary, SERB
11. Ms. Aparna Ray, Deputy Secretary, MEA
12. Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, Joint Secretary, UGC
13. Mr. Anil Kumar, Director, Finance, MHRD
14. Mr. V.K. Siljo, Director, ICC, MHRD
15. Mr. Praveen N., CCA, MHRD