**Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Higher Education**
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**Minutes of SPARC Apex Committee Meeting held on 10.07.2020
at Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi and through VC Mode**

The Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) Apex Committee met to discuss the projects under second call for proposals in SPARC and other issues arising out of Covid19 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Higher Education on 10th July 2020 at 1600 hrs.

The list of participants is **enclosed**.

2. Secretary, Higher Education extended warm welcome to the members of the committee. JS (ICC) followed with a presentation on the current status of the scheme. Director Director, IIT Kharagpur Prof V.K.Tiwari gave inputs about the progress of the scheme so far, and how it had got restricted due to COVID 19.

3. The major deliberations of the Apex Committee were as follows:

i. The Committee noted that the progress of the scheme has been slow. The Covid 19 pandemic has further put restrictions on mobility of students and faculty, amking it difficult to carry out joint research.

ii. Chairman, UGC said the scheme should focus on socially relevant projects which pertain to areas of significance under the current circumstances.

iii. Chairman, AICTE advised that all sanctioned schemes must go on in the online mode and by carrying on work which do not require mobility. He also advised giving further six months to the PIs to complete their projects. For the new set of projects he suggested that focus should be on those that can be done in the online mode.

iv. Prof V S Chauhan noted that the visit of Indian PIs to foreign universities has been low. They should be encouraged to visit foreign universities.

v. Dr S Vaidhyasubramaniam suggested that a simple matrix should be created indicating areas that PIs need to focus in reporting their progress. He suggested that PIs should be given some time to upload their progress in the given matrix on the SPARC portal. This will help to focus on projects that can be expedited.

vi. Director (IIT) and Prof I. Manna suggested conducting webinars, micro-courses, even of 12 hours duration, and online reports if experimentation and

mobility is not possible. It was also suggested that the focus should be given on online academic exchanges

vii. Secretary, SERB, DST agreed and said we should promote online work and focus on knowledge creation like books, monographs etc and putting it onto the SPARC Portal.

viii. JS (DPA-II), MEA elaborated on MEA's ITEC scheme and informed the Apex Committee that 800 foreign government employees have been imparted training through online workshops under ITEC Scheme.

ix. JS&FA highlighted the need for all institutions to come onto the EAT module. She said that since SPARC is a Central Sector Scheme, no funds can be released until all problems regarding EAT module are fixed.

4. The decisions taken by the Apex Committee after deliberations are as follows:

i. All sanctioned projects will continue and an assurance to this effect will be given to the PIs. A matrix for reporting progress has to be formulated, and all PIs must be asked to upload their progress on the SPARC portal in this matrix latest by the 31st of July2020.

ii. There should be focus on academic collaborations that can be done online. Use of digital media like webinars, online lectures should be utilized to the maximum for knowledge creation including online courses, monographs, books, research papers etc.

iii. Socially relevant projects and those in cross disciplinary areas should be promoted.

iv. Regarding the new proposals, IIT Kharagpur may re-evaluate them and shortlist those that can be done even in the restricted mobility conditions. APEX Committee will then meet again to take a decision on approving them.

v. Secretary HE will chair a meeting with MEA, MHRD, DST, DBT etc. regarding leveraging all the schemes pertaining to international collaboration so that convergence can be created in the matter, especially while improving focus on India's neighbourhood countries.

vi. Training workshop for the non-EAT compliant institutes may be conducted by O/o Pr. CCA in collaboration with IIT Kharagpur to resolve all the issues relating to EAT Module.

vii. On the issue regarding honorarium to foreign PIs for webinars, it was decided that IIT Kharagpur, in consultation with other IITs, Chairman AICTE and DST, will prepare a draft and submit the same to MHRD for approval.

viii. Since this is a scheme for academic and research collaboration, joint publication of papers may be encouraged.

5. The meeting ended with a note of thanks to the chair.

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List of Participants who joined in person

1. Shri. Amit Khare, Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD **– Chair**

2. Shri. Rakesh Ranjan, AS (TE), MHRD

3. Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, JS (IISER), MHRD

4.Smt Darshana M Dabral, JS&FA, MHRD

5.Smt Neeta Prasad, JS (ICC), MHRD

6. Shri. Siljo V.K., Director (ICC,) MHRD

List of Participants who joined through VC mode

1. Prof. D.P. Singh, Chairman, UGC

2. Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, AICTE

3. Prof. V. S. Chauhan, Chairman, Executive Committee, NAAC

4.Dr. S. Vaidhyasubramaniam, Vice Chancellor, SASTRA Deemed University

5.Prof. V.K. Tiwari, Director, IIT Kharagpur

6. Prof. Indranil Manna, IIT Kharagpur

7. Professor Adrijit Goswami, IIT Kharagpur

8. Dr. Sandeep Verma, Secretary, SERB

9.Dr. Meenakshi Munshi, Scientist 'G', DBT

10. Dr. Devyani Khobragade, JS (DPA-II), MEA

11. Manju Singh, JS (IC), UGC

12. Mr Narender Singh, Deputy Controller of Accounts, MHRD