

Introduction of Core Electives

Objective of the Practice:

The objective for introduction of “core electives” is to provide the students with a bridge course which helps them maintain continuity with their choice of electives in the second year and gives freedom to the institute to be able to introduce the new courses without burdening the students with extra credit hours. This is extremely important because as per AICTE guidelines the total credits for a PGDM course were 102 credits. Courses with zero credits were not liked by the students as it added to the classroom hours without adding anything to their scores while new courses with credits tended to increase the credit much beyond the stipulated AICTE norms.

The Context:

Towards the end of 2017 faculty members in the area of Marketing started feeling the need for a bridge course in Marketing Management in the third trimester. The reason for such a course was two folds – majority of the students were taking electives in marketing but in the third trimester there was no course in marketing management. Marketing management was taught in the 1st and the 2nd trimester and then from the 4th trimester onwards students were pushed into advanced courses of marketing. While this was being discussed another issue was raised that given the push towards “Start-Up India” a course on entrepreneurship needed to be introduced. However, introducing these courses meant that IMI Bhubaneswar was exceeding the number of credits prescribed for the PGDM programme. As such, IMI Bhubaneswar constituted a “*Course Restructuring Committee*” to look into the issue and to suggest ways and means to introduce such courses without increasing the credit load.

The Practice:

The Course Restructuring Committee, after several rounds of deliberation, concluded that the only way to introduce these courses was to offer some of them as Core Courses but with an elective flavor. This way the courses could be counted as core courses in the third trimester and large numbers could be offered to the students so that they could pick and choose from the basket of core courses which will act as a bridge between the first-year courses and the second-year electives. Once the concept was prima facie approved, the respective area chairs were asked to submit courses which they wanted as core-electives for their area. Based on the recommendation received from the various areas, the following subjects were offered as core electives in 2018: (i) Management Science Application (ii) Financial Markets and Instruments (iii) Leadership and Interpersonal Group Processes (iv) Marketing Strategy (v) Entrepreneurship Theory and Practices and (vi) Economic Analysis for Business Decisions. In 2020 due to demand for newer courses, some of them were dropped and newer electives added. The electives which were offered in 2020 are: (i) Management Science Application (ii) Marketing Strategy (iii) Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (iv) Machine Learning using R and Python (v) Financial Markets and Instruments and (vi) Organisation Design and Theory.

The 87th Faculty Council Meeting approved the concept of core-electives and paved way to create flexibility within the AICTE structure. The Faculty Council meeting also laid down certain guidelines for floating of the Core Electives. It was also decided that from the next academic year onwards each area can nominate only one course as core elective.

Out of the six (6) courses floated as core electives, students are required to choose any four (4) courses. This allows the students the flexibility of choosing subjects which they propose to take up in the second year as electives and it also provide a platform where they can sample the flavor of electives and make informed choices regarding the electives in the second year. It provides the institutes the flexibility of

introducing new courses without disturbing the course structure or adding extra credit load on to the students.

Evidence of Success:

As already mentioned, the concept of core-electives proved popular with the students at IMI Bhubaneswar. Courses such as “*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*” were given due recognition keeping the spirit of “*Start-up India*” in mind. The practice also gave the area of marketing management a bridge course through which it could keep the students engaged in marketing. The area, after internal deliberation, introduced **MarkStrat Simulation**. Markstrat is a marketing simulation software which offers MBA students a risk-free platform in order to test theories and make decisions. Markstrat simulation has been developed by one of the world’s leading university INSEAD, Paris, France. It gives MBA students a way to apply the theory they learned during their lessons under real market conditions. The course proved popular with the students and is almost always subscribed to its fullest capacity. Similarly, the area of Human Resource Management introduced “*Organisation Design and Theory*” – a concept which was not covered in the course structure. Also, with the increasing thrust on Analytics, “*Machine Learning using R and Python*” was introduced to the students. This course provided a platform where the students could learn the basics of R and Python and then use the softwares in their elective analytical courses. It also allowed the students to have a taste of the key concepts of the electives and make better decisions regarding their choice of electives in the second year – leading to higher student satisfaction.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

The biggest problem encountered was to identify the subject which were to be offered as core electives. The choice was important because it could severely affect the choice of electives by the students in the second year. A lot of deliberation went into the choice of core-electives so that the subjects were not only fun to learn but also acted as bridge between the knowledge acquired in the first year and that of the second year. Another challenge was to convince the students regarding the utility of core electives. Many of the students were surprised that electives were being offered in the third trimester. Counselling, open house sessions were undertaken by the faculty members to explain the concept to the students. Once accepted, the students enjoyed the choices of the core electives.

Notes:

The ability to offer core electives was obviously extremely beneficial for IMI Bhubaneswar. This allowed us to maintain the credit hours and provided us with flexibility to offer new and distinct courses which could pique the interest of the students. Other institutions adopting this practice must ensure that the choice of core electives should be done with care as the subject choice can impact the overall orientation of a student towards an elective.